

Participatory Community Awareness on Conservation of Globally Important Sites at West Central Nepal.



A Report

Submitted to

Rufford Small Grant Foundation, UK

By

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May 2008

Background

Lumbini, Birth Place of Lord Buddha is listed a "World Heritage Site" by UNESCO in 1997 and declared "Fountain of World Peace" by World Buddhist Federation because of its immense historical and archeological importance. Many countries and leading Buddhist institutions have constructed magnificent monasteries and monuments in Lumbini garden reflecting their respective indigenous architecture.

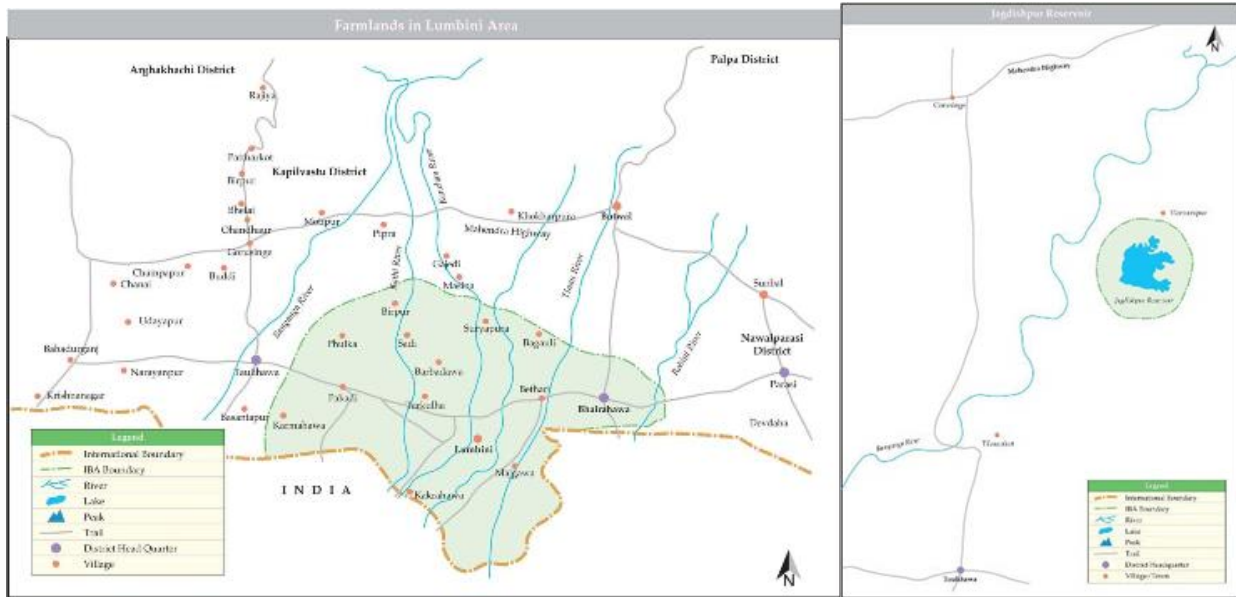
The farmlands of Lumbini have been identified as an Important Bird Area (IBA), acknowledged in the document 'Important Bird Area in Nepal-key sites for conservation' (Baral et al 2005). Eight globally threatened bird species have been recorded in this area including White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis* and Indian Spotted Eagle *Aquila hastate* that both breed, and also Slender-billed Vulture *Gyps tenuirostris*, Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* and Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* that are all seen regularly, however, no strategy or action plan for this IBA has been formulated. This area has the best known population of the globally threatened Sarus Crane *Grus antigone* in Nepal and is the only known site in the country where the species breeds regularly. It is an important sites for visitors and pilgrims all over the world. The principal authority for the administration of Lumbini is the Lumbini Development Trust LDT which was established in 1985.

Jagdishpur is currently the largest reservoir in the country with a surface area of 157 ha and was constructed for the purpose of irrigation. It was created over the location of Jakhira Lake and surrounding agricultural land in the early 1970s. The construction of a rock-filled dyke took place in the early 1980s. The water in the reservoir is fed from the nearby Banganga River that has a catchment area in the Churia Hills. Incoming suspended silts and nutrients are deposited in the reservoir mouth. The reservoir is surrounded by cultivated land and there are two small lakes known as Sagarhawa and Niglihawa situated in the area that serves as a buffer habitat for bird movements.

The reservoir bank is planted with *Dalbergia sissoo* and *Acacia catechu*. The aquatic vegetation is represented by extensive coverage of floating leaved species, mainly *Nelumbo nucifera*, followed by *Hygrophiza aristata* and *Potamogetan nodosa*. The abundant submerged species include *Naja minor*, *Certophyllum demersum* and *Hydrilla verticillata*. *Ipomea carnea ssp. fistulosa* and *Typha angustifolia* grow around the reservoir margin. The site provides important resident, wintering and stopover habitats for waders, other water birds, and small passerines. Noteworthy are the grebes, cormorants, herons and egrets (terns and gulls, birds of prey, rails, coot and waterhens, Jacanas, as well as cranes and kingfishers. The wetland supports a small population of the globally threatened Smooth-coated Otter *Lutogale perspicillata*. A total of 25 species of fish are recorded.

The authorities of the Department of irrigation, Kapilvastu District Office are responsible for the management of the irrigation system. The outside forest area is managed by District Forest Office with the help of local community. The site was proposed as a bird sanctuary, but nothing has been done so far to achieve this. Local people have been approached to develop the

reservoir as a tourist destination. Threats to the site include hunting, disturbance, deposition of aquatic macrophytes, water pollution from agricultural chemicals (fertilizers and pesticides), and alien invasive species such as *Eichhornia crassipes*.



Rational

Hindus and Boudhist along with large number of international and domestic tourists visit Lumbini every year. Lumbini is the fourth largest tourist destination in Nepal. The UNESCO report 'Lumbini: Present Status and Future Challenges' (2006) mention 41.83% of tourists visit Lumbini for purposes not related to religion. This indicates that extra religious activities should be developed and organized besides religious functions. The site is equally significant for ecosystem conservation as the farmlands and wetlands of Lumbini are significantly important for the birds hence globally recognised as an Important Bird Area in Nepal. Many other important fauna and flora are also found here. Environmentally unfriendly activities of the local due to lack of education and awareness as well as emerging industrial growth are bringing adverse negative impact on the ecological environment of these globally important sites for culture and biodiversity. Jagdishpur reservoir, ramsar site lying close to Lumbini is also facing the same problems. This project aiming to educate and aware the local public on birds, biodiversity and environment and encourage tour operators to inform Lumbini and Jagdishpur reserviour's global significance for biodiversity so that there is a great potentiality for tour operators to hold back those guests who are already here for few more days, which shall definitely add up with one more stone for economic growth of people of Lumbini and Jagdishpur area.

Objectives

- To educate and aware the local public on birds, biodiversity and environment of Lumbini and Jagdishpur area.

- To encourage tour operators in promoting ecotourism in Lumbini and Jagdishpur area.

Activities

Village level sensitisation meeting

A sensitization visit was carried in various VDCs of Lumbini (Mahilawar, Ekla, Khudabagar, Lumbini, Tenuhawa) and Jagdishpur (Niglihawa) in October 2006 to capture the local knowledge on biodiversity and its conservation. At the time of the visit all the VDC offices were not functional due to the Maoist Insurgency. Informal meetings and discussions with the local communities were held at VDC chairman's house.

Through the community work of some NGOs the local communities were aware of some limited important species like Sarus Crane, Blue bull, Lesser Adjutant colony, Fruit bat colony, Rhesus monkey colony. They were also aware of their habitat, however they are unaware of the needs and threats to other farmland bird species and wildlife and have never received any trainings or information by a conservation organization. They were totally unaware of the fact that farmland of Lumbini is an IBA. They could identify some common birds in the field guide, however they are unable to recognize its value to them and their farmed environment. They openly informed that in some villages birds are still killed to eat.



Comparatively the biodiversity knowledge of the local communities of Jagdishpur is very poor. This could be due to very less activity of the NGOs in the area and very limited visitors. They knew that the number of bird increases during the winter due to visit of the migratory birds but they could identify only few birds like Ruddy Shelduck. They are aware of the ongoing hunting activities in the reservoir and agree that the number of birds have gone down within few years.



Meeting with tourism entrepreneurs

A total of 17 hotels (Table 1) in and around Lumbini were visited and discussed on Tourism at Lumbini. Almost all of the hotel management was not aware of Lumbini, globally recognized as an Important Bird Area and potential site for eco tourism apart from cultural tourism. They were all informed about the biodiversity values of Lumbini especially birds. Globally threatened bird poster and IBA poster were distributed to them. They were suggested to put additional attraction for visitor like guided birdwatching tour, nature walk so that their length of stay could be expanded and bring more economic benefit.

Table 1: List of Hotels in Lumbini.

S. No	Name of Hotel	Address
1.	Lumbini Hokke Lodge	Master plan area, Lumbini
2.	Mikasa Lodge	Master plan area, Lumbini
3.	Sri-lanka Pilgrim rest house	Master plan area, Lumbini
4.	Lumbini Buddha Hotel	Mahilwar
5.	New crystal Hotel	Mahilwar
6.	Buddha Maya Garden Hotel	Lankapur
7.	Siddhartha Guest house	Mahilwar
8.	Gautam Buddha Lodge	Padariya
9.	Peace land Restaurant and Lodge	Mahilwar
10.	Staff Hotel	Mahilwar
11.	Ghandruk Restaurant	Mahilwar
12.	Manakamana Lodge	Mahilwar
13.	Lumbini Village Lodge	Mahilwar
14.	Lumbini Guest House	Mahilwar

15.	Royal Guest House	Mahilwar
16.	Rainbow Hotel	Mahilwar
17.	Lumbini Buddha Garden	Parsa Chaura

Conservation organisation and programmes in Lumbini and Jagdispur area

Lumbini Development Trust

Under the 1985 Lumbini Development Trust Act, the Lumbini Development Trust (LDT) was made the legal entity for the Lumbini Development Area LDA and is responsible for the implementation of the Lumbini Master Plan.

Lumbini Crane Conservation Centre (LCCC) at present the Lumbini Crane Conservation center is a leading environmental organization involved in the LDA environment. Under the 50 year lease agreement between LDT and the International Crane Foundation signed in December 1994, LCCC is managing the 100 ha Lumbini Sarus Crane Sanctuary in the northern block of LDA.



The major activities of LCCC are:

- Annual counting of Sarus Cranes and seasonal survey of other important birds like vultures and storks
- Infrastructure for tourism like Watch tower, nature trail, sheds etc
- Demonstration of wise use of wetland
- Education and awareness related to Crane.

Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme (TRPAP) is a governmental project launched in September 2001 with the technical and financial assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the department For International Development (DFID) and SNV Netherlands

Development Organisation. The aim is to reduce poverty and to conserve the natural and cultural heritage of Lumbini. It helps poor communities to enhance capacity for sustainable rural tourism through various supports, such as training, skill development, establishment of a village tourism development fund, improvement of infrastructure, and by building institutional mechanisms and developing policies.

This programme has just come to an end in 2006. To attract tourism income into the region, several village tours have been established. Billboards with habitat maps have been erected outside each village, guides have been trained to provide village and wildlife tours and women from the village trained in making handicrafts to sell.

Save Lumbini Kapilvastu Society

This is a local level organization mainly focused on research, preservation of heritage, publicity and advocacy of all the important cultural sites of Lumbini and Kapilvastu. Recently they have also been involved in wetland conservation and supporting the conservation and publicity of Jagdishpur Reservoir at various capacities.

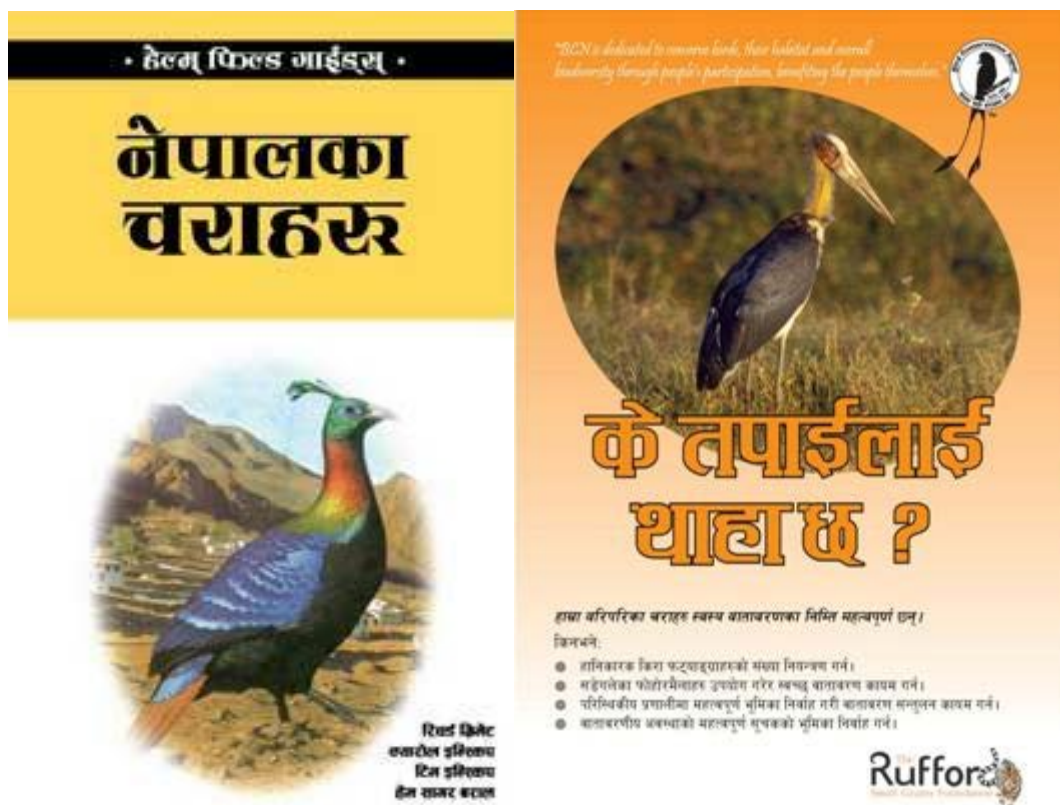
Jagdishpur Reservoir Conservation Society

This is the main working group formed by the local communities of Niglihawa VDC. They are mostly active in safeguarding the reservoir, tourism promotion and skill enhancement. With their limited knowledge and very less approach of national and international level NGOs, they have not been able to work more effectively.

Effective education material for the local communities

Existing educational materials like bird ID leaflet (Birds of Lumbini) and educational handbook produced by LCCC were referred. Some important section of the educational handbook was translated in Nepali language and distributed among the participants. BCN's Globally threatened bird poster and IBA posters were also very useful in raising awareness among the general public. A field guide to the birds of Nepal in Nepali language, which consists of more than 780 colourful illustrations and bird descriptions, was a useful resource material for the nature guide training.

Apart from these resources 5000 copies of Nepali language leaflet highlighting biodiversity values of Lumbini and Jagdishpur was produced



Education and awareness to the target group

In order to aware students and teachers about the Important Bird Area different high schools in Lumbini and Kapilvastu were visited. A total of 5 schools in Rupandehi district and 1 in Kapilvastu were visited (Table 2). As students play leading role in their locality and in motivating their locality, this school-targeted programme was conducted with the aim to give awareness about farmlands of Lumbini and Jagidshpur Reservoir being designated as an important bird area by Birdlife International. Stress was given to cooperate in conserving the birds in the area.

Table 2: List of schools visited

S.N	Name and Address of School	Classes Targeted	District
1	Tenuhawa Lower Secondary School, Tenuhawa	8	Rupandehi
2	Shree Buddha Secondary School, Madhubani	8, 9	Rupandehi
3.	Khudabagar Secondary School, Khudabagar	8, 9	Rupandehi
4	Lumbini Adarsha School, Lumbini	9	Rupandehi
5	Jana Adarsha Secondary School, Lumbini	8, 9	Rupandehi
6	Kanakmuni Higher Secondary School	10	Kapilvastu

Conservation awareness programmes were also extended to 5 Village Development Committees around Lumbini IBA targeting the local farmers. Community Learning Centres (CLC) were visited in all VDCs (Lumbini Adarsha VDC, Madhubani VDC, Ekala VDC, Tenuhawa VDC, Khudabagar

VDC) and different conservation awareness posters were provided to the authorities. CLCs are centre for learning for all the people of the VDCs. The awareness programme conducted in these centres will certainly help in gaining support for conservation initiatives of birds and biodiversity in the area.

In addition, different VDC officials (Lumbini Adarsha VDC, Madhubani VDC, Ekala VDC, Tenuhawa VDC, Khudabagar VDC) were also met with a purpose of making the officials aware about the current situation of some endangered birds like vultures in the area and the role they could play for their conservation.

Nature guide training for the locals

A three day nature guide training with special focus on birds at Lumbini (16-18 February 2007) and Jagdishpur (19-21 February 2007) was conducted. A total of 29 from all 5 Village Development Committees VDCs of Mahilawar, Ekla, Khudabagar, Lumbini, Tenuhawa and 8 members of Local Guide association participated the training at Lumbini. The training was organized at Lumbini Buddha Garden resort. A total of 35 from 3 VDCs Niglihawa, Jahadi, Tilaurakot and local guide from Taulihawa, the nearest town from Jagdishpur participated the training at Jagdishpur. The training at Jagdishpur was organized at Kanak Muni Higher Secondary School.



The main course covered during the training are:

- IBA introduction/IBA criteria
- Lumbini and Jagdishpur as an IBA/World heritage site and Ramsar site
- Biodiversity and Ecosystem
- Biodiversity values of Lumbini and Jagdishpur IBA
- Cultural tourism and Nature based or Eco tourism (Bird Eco tourism)

- Bird Identification/monitoring techniques
- Wildlife conservation and sustainable development



The theory class was followed by field practice on observing birds and other wildlife. Field guide to the birds of Nepal in Nepali language was distributed to all the participants. An action plan was made in which 2 representatives from each VDCs and the local guides practiced observing birds and other wildlife under the guidance of Dinesh Giri, manager Lumbini Buddha Garden resort and naturalist. The participants also conducted an awareness programme in their VDCs with awareness materials provided by BCN.

Big hoarding board placement at the main entrance gate of Lumbini and also at Jagdishpur reservoir

Two separate hoarding boards of size 8x12ft were placed in Lumbini and Jagdishpur. The hoarding board of Lumbini carries the message Farmlands of Lumbini a World Heritage Site and an Important Bird Area both in English and Nepali with pictures of some colourful important birds. The board is erected just at the main entrance gate of the Lumbini on the right. Every visitor can notice the board easily. The Nepal Tourism Board and Himalayan Nature have also



provided some financial support for the board so their logos are also placed in the board.



The hoarding board of Jagdishpur carries the message as Jagdishpur reservoir a Ramsar site and an important bird area both in English and Nepali with pictures of water birds. The board has been erected in the strategic direction of the reservoir. WWF Nepal's Fresh Water Programme has provided some financial support for the board so their logo has been placed in the board. There is no such information board around the reservoir so this board has been the main highlight of this Ramsar site. A recent visit of representative from Ramsar Secretariat was also very impressed by the board.



Stakeholders meeting

A district level stakeholder meeting was organized at Lumbini (15 November 2007) and Kapilvastu (17 November 2007). Senior government officials (LDO), DDC and VDC chairmen,

NGO, INGO representatives, Security personals, political leaders, Schoolteachers, business entrepreneurs, CFUG member and other relevant personals participated in the meeting. They were briefed about the significance of the sites in terms of biodiversity and the activities carried out by the project work. They were very impressed knowing the fact that the place where they are living has a good biodiversity value and is globally recognized as an IBA. The participants showed their interest in conserving and tourism promotion in the area. The DDC, VDC and business entrepreneurs also showed their willingness to allocate some funds for biodiversity conservation. The meeting was concluded with the consideration that LTD will be the main focal point at Lumbini and will coordinate with the stakeholders in biodiversity conservation and eco tourism promotion. The local guide group will play a main role in education and awareness. In Jagdishpur the Jagdishpur Reservior Conservation Society will be the main focal point and will coordinate with other stakeholders. BCN will provide technical support as per their request.

Media coverage

The training programme was broadcasted by Lumbini FM and Taulihawa FM. The news was also published in the local newspaper Telar.

Recommendation

The farmlands and wetlands of Lumbini and Jagdishpur are very important in terms of birds and biodiversity so the ongoing farming practice in those areas are highly significant for their conservation. Farmers have no technical knowledge, so providing training and education workshops in the management for farmland birds and the protection of natural resources directly to the farmers is important. Most farmers are illiterate so providing written materials may not be appropriate, instead providing talks and demonstrations on good farming practice will be more practical. Training on organic farming, EMI technology, vermin composting, wetland management will be more effective.

Annex

List of participants in Nature Guide Training in Lumbini

S No	Name	VDC
1	Yajir Ahmed Khan	Lumbini Adarsha
2	Ibrar Khan	"
3	Hajrat Balal Khan	"
4	Habib Ahmed Khan	"
5	Imtayas Ahmed Khan	"
6	Abdul Mobin Khan	"
7	Kamlesh Kumar Pandey	Ekala
8	Prahlad Yadav	"
9	Santaram Mali	"
10	Bishnu Prasad Yadav	Khudabagar
11	Chulai Harjan	"
12	Seshram Yadav	"
13	Indal Prasad Choudhary	"
14	Sugriv Sahati	"
15	Lilamani Sharma	Madhubani
16	Pancham Prasad Harjan	"
17	Sugriv Prasad Yadav	"
18	Rajendra Man Shrestha	"
19	Om Prakash Tripathi	"
20	Shiv Prasad Harjan	"
21	Bed Prakash Yadav	"
22	Tahir	"
23	Jyot Shrivastava	Lumbini Adharsa
24	Abdul Zab	Tenuhawa
25	Rajendra Prasad Shrivastava	"
25	Khurshid Anwat Khan	"
26	Manjural Haque	"
27	Amirullah Khan	"
28	Arun Thakur	Lumbin Adharsa

List of participants in Nature Guide Training in Jagdishpur

S No	Name	VDC
1	Madhav Prasad Pokharel	Niglihawa
2	Meghram Bhusal	"
3	Rajesh Singh Chettri	"
4	Kapil Mani Khanal	"
5	Manoj Pariyal	"
6	Jamlal Uthuraya	"
7	Oath Ram Yadav	"
8	Kuchwa Chaudhary	"
9	Nirmala Tharu	"
10	Shiva Murat Kewat	"
11	Dhan Mati Pashi	"
12	Kul Mati Kewat	"
13	Lal Mati Pashi	"
14	Sursati Pashi	"
15	Anjani Pashi	"
16	Sabitri Rajbhat	"
17	Bhola Pashi	"
18	Munar Rajbhat	Jahadi
19	Jai Nepal Pashi	"
20	Dina Nath Yadav	"
21	Raghu Kewat	"
22	Bideshi Chaudhary	"
23	Prem Bahadur Wagle	"
24	Abdul Rashid Khan	"
25	Khumananda	"
26	Jit Bahadur Rana	Taulihawa
27	Dali Maya Thapa	"
28	Abdul Satar Khan	"
29	Lalit Gurung	Niglihawa
30	Krishna Kurmi	Taulihawa
31	Kamal Paswan	"
32	Kaish Mohammad	"
33	Ram Milan Choudhary	Niglihawa
34	Marali Pashi	"
35	Ram Sewak Pashi	"

Financial Statement

S No	Particulars	Total cost £
1	Flights	400
2	Local transport	300
3	Accommodation and subsistence	600
4	Designing and producing 2 Hoarding Boards	200
5	Labour charge for Hoarding board placement	50
6	Information leaflets (5000 copies)	120
7	Allowances/per diems for resource person	600
8	Field Guide to the Birds of Nepal (60 copies)	400
9	Stationeries	200
10	Subsistence for trainee	350
11	Communication	150
12	Total	3370

Additional costs £330 for producing hoarding board was supported by WWF Nepal and Himalayan Nature. Local communities provided community learning centers (CLC) and school hall for trainings as an in kind contribution.