

A Report on Workshop with Environment and Science Teachers

1. **Activity:** Workshop
2. **Title:** Conservation Education at schools
3. **Date:** 30th September, 2007
4. **Venue:** Narayangarh, Chitwan
5. **Background:**

One of the major setback for conservation campaign is the lack of knowledge on conservation, its importance on human life and co-relation between human and nature. Bufferzone communities have not understood (as they should have) the co-existent relation between human and nature. One of the best way to sensitize future generation about this reality is through school and various form of school education.

The term "Conservation Education" is not new for the schools at bufferzone area of Chitwan National Park. Some contents of conservation education has been included in the curriculum of high level classes of the school which are meant for overall students of the country. But it is inadequate and unable to address the necessity of the students of bufferzone who ought to know more since they are going to lead the community in the future. Apart from the curriculum, fewer extra curricular practices on conservation education have been also initiated by the schools with the support of non governmental organizations and bufferzone area users committees. But it is not found to be planned, managed, specific and objective. And prominently, there are not any means to measure the achievement level of the students.

Realizing these facts, workshop program has been conceived among 20 science and environment teachers of CNP core bufferzone area schools to share and bolster current practices on conservation education and to make future headway.



5. Objectives :

The objectives of the workshop were:

- a) to share and analyse on current practices of conservation education activities at schools.
- b) to identify the ways to promote school conservation education activities.
- c) to provide extra inputs to the science and environment teachers on rhino and conservation issues.

6. Methodology :

At first, schools located at the core bufferzone areas of Chitwan National Park were short listed. Project staffs of EPRC approached to the bufferzone schools with the formal letter. Among the selected, five were the schools where the rhino clubs have been formed by the EPRC. School teachers were informed about the contents of the workshop earlier so as to ensure objective and effectiveness of the program.

The participant teachers were from the bufferzone core areas of the Chitwan National Park including Chitwan and Nawalparasi district. Hence, the venue was selected at most suitable and accessible place Narayangarh, Chitwan.

As per the pre-determined schedule, all the 20 participants arrived at 9 am on the program day. The workshop was divided into three sessions. First session was inaugural program, second was core session and at last closing session.

Chief Education Officer of Chitwan district, Mr. Gopal Krishna Poudel was invited as the chief guest of the program. He inaugurated the workshop and delivered key speech. He said he had never been participated nor invited in a program focused on conservation education during his government service period of more than two decades in education sector. He stressed conservation education would be crucial to neutralize growing conflict between park and people. 'Teachers have significant role to furnish appropriate knowledge on conservation aspects both in school and community because they are pivotal actor of the community', he added on his speech. He has also pledged to provide required support to promote conservation education at schools.



Two participating teachers, Mr. Mukta Bahadur Poudel (Laxmi Secondary School, Jagatpur) and Mr. Narayan Prasad Aryal (Kumarwanti Higher Secondary School, Kolhuwa) each from Chitwan and Nawalparasi district have been called to deliver views on the relevancy of the program. They opined that workshop and its conclusion would be the turning point for systematic, managed and meaningful conservation education at the schools.

Mr. Deepak Acharya, program co-ordinator of EPRC presided the inaugural session and stated workshop would be an important step to promote and expedite objectful conservation education in the bufferzone schools. He stressed that the papers and handouts prepared for the school teachers would help them to provide extra inputs to the students on conservation, rhinos and other flora faunas.

After a short break, core session was conducted. Mr. Acharya, co-ordinator of EPRC and



acting chief-warden of Chitwan National Park, Mr. Kamal Jung Kunwar has facilitated the program. Mr. Nirmal Aryal, Program Officer of EPRC and Mr. Bishnu Hari Wagle, board member of Media Consultancy Nepal assisted on reporting and overall activities.

Firstly, participating science and environment teachers were requested to inform, share and provide introspective views on current practices of conservation education at the schools, one by one. Most of them stated they have been limited to the curriculum contents. Some

conservation education related activities used to be undertaken in the schools where conservation related students clubs had been established. But activities were impromptu, unsystematic and less frequent. The activities of those clubs are mostly plantation inside and around the school. Teachers have grievances towards the governmental and non governmental organizations on being apathy to support conservation education activities at school. They have stressed on the needs of more programs for conservation related school clubs.

During this program, teachers have raised several questions to the acting chief warden of CNP, Mr. Kunwar regarding means and prospects of enhancing conservation education at schools, probable supporting agencies, perception of bufferzone people towards the park activities etc. Mr. Kunwar confessed park has not been able to conduct school education program at the bufferzone schools though conservation education is one of the priority areas. He said park has key responsibility to implement conservation education but has to strive with several constraints.



The second topic of the core session was "stakeholders role to promote conservation education". The topic was cross shared among the participants and facilitators. Most of the teachers said District Education Office should have to take initiation and co-ordinate to induce, implement and monitor conservation education at the buffer zone schools. They said development of local curriculum on conservation education needs a lot of expertise since it has never been done before.

Participants also have pointed out the role of bufferzone committee to support conservation education. According to the Bufferzone Management Guideline, bufferzone committee should spend at least 10% budget in the conservation education. But in real practices, it never happened. Teachers have emphasized to sensitize and aware bufferzone committee's to spend on school conservation education. They have also requested conservation related



organizations to include school conservation education in their planning. Teachers have blatantly expressed their views towards the prevailing practices of compensation against wildlife attacks on human, livestock and crops. They said it is difficult to motivate students towards the conservation if their

community is being suffering from wildlife. Hence, teachers have requested to the park official, bufferzone representatives to make compensation mechanism swift, prompt and appropriate.

Participant teachers have expressed serious concern over the gap between park and people. They requested park to focus on community based activities and to increase communication with people. Teachers expressed grievance that their role in the conservation has not been utilised as it should have. They said teachers are ready to mediate between park and people conflict, community based awareness.

Third topic of the program was quite analytical where the participating teachers have analysed on 'conservation education in existing curriculum'. During the discussion about this topic, teachers have opined existing curriculum is not able to furnish the requirement of the students of the areas around national parks, reserves. The contents related with conservation education are included only from lower secondary level. The most students of vulnerable indigenous groups rarely crossed the primary level education, hence conservation education should be included from the primary level, teachers suggested. Similarly, they have emphasized to provide informal conservation education to the vulnerable community too.



The last topic 'ways to promote school conservation education' headed towards the conclusion with intensive work out of the participants. Participants were divided into four groups. Each group members discussed with each other and finally concluded to the points.

Each group has presented their conclusion in chart paper. One hour was given to prepare the paper and 20 minutes was allocated for each group presentation. After the completion of the group presentation, a final conclusion has been drawn. Among the conclusions, key points were to induce conservation education as the local curriculum in the schools of bufferzone area, to increase investment and prioritize on school conservation education, to amend the policy related with compensation and community programs.

Several handouts were distributed and contents were explained. Handouts prepared in Nepalese language consisted information about the rhino and conservation related topics prepared by the EPRC team and subject experts. School teachers have low access to rhino and conservation updates and thus handouts would be helpful to provide additional inputs to the students. They have been also provided English and Nepalese version of the Conservation Watch Fortnightly Newsletter. Teachers said handouts would be useful to go depth on rhino and conservation issues. They have even promised to display the Nepalese version of newsletter regularly in the school and also in the community as much as possible.



Closing session was conducted at last. Two of the participants each from Chitwan and Nawalparasi district are requested to analyse on achievement of the workshop. They said they are glad to participate in the program on school conservation education and conclusions and recommendations of the program would be fruitful to promote conservation education at the schools. Program Co-ordinator of EPRC, Mr. Deepak Acharya thanked all participants for actively participating in the program and making it successful. He said the

conclusion of the program will be forwarded to concerned authorities and issue of school conservation education would be subjected for further debate and discussion.

7. Significant voices :

a) Gopal Krishna Poudel (Chief District Education Officer, Chitwan): School Conservation Education is new and interesting topic. I have been participating in this topic for the very first time. Conservation crusader would not get success until the people knows about the essence of conservation. Upcoming generation should not be deprived on conservation. School conservation education is much pertinent and is need of present time particularly for the bufferzone areas. I heartedly welcome the concept to include school conservation education as a local curriculum and ready to support from my side but resource crunch will be the major stumbling blocks.

b) Kamal Jung Kunwar (Acting Chief Warden, Chitwan National Park): Conservation Education is one of the prioritized objectives but due to different constraints we have not been able to implement it. I did not hesitate to confess our inability to implement conservation education. We are facing several criticism from various quarters, but we need help from the organizations like EPRC who are providing constructive support, suggestions and recommendation to us.

I want to say sorry for not being touch with you on this issue. I again thank EPRC for providing this platform which have started wonderful initiation. We are ready to support for implementing school conservation education as a local curriculum and other school educational activities but it needs multisectoral co-ordination and co-operation. Extensive debate and discussion with conservation and educational experts, buffer zone members and concerned stakeholders is needed.

I believe school conservation education would attract more attention if the schools formed network and submit the concept in organized form. This would help to allocate budget and other support during planning phase. The concept of school conservation education lies at zero point till now and I feel this program has extracted this issue from it's zero point and hope it will not end here.

c) Durga Prasad Dhakal (Saraswoti Secondary School, Megghauli):

Our students, their families are suffering from the rhinos. Bluntly speaking, some suffering students have enmity towards the wildlife. I think school conservation education should go simultaneously with gradual improvement on policy so that students could be motivated towards the conservation not in the school but also in the family and community.

d) Shiva Prasad Gautam (Saraswoti Secondary School, Jeetpur) :

Some of my students have to stay whole night in the machan to safeguard their crops. As a result, they are being unable to complete their homework and remained sluggish in the classroom. Three years ago, ninth grader student of my school was arrested by the park officials for rhino poaching. He used to stay whole night at the machan regularly. Some locals suggested him to use single phase line to distract the rhinos from the field. Fed up with regular night vigilance, he applied so but unfortunately one rhino died by the current in the first day. He was apprehended, imprisoned and latter released on bail. He was not a poacher but his ignorance put him in a criminal row. Had he got appropriate information, he would never have dared so. This is an example which justify the needs of conservation education and awareness at the school and in community too.

e) Kamal Prasad Pathak (Kumarwanti Higher Secondary School, Kolhuwa) :

Rhino club has been established in my school by EPRC. It has conducted various programs too. But I think, school should have to envisage sustainability of the club and its activities. Teachers donot get training, refresher to consolidate and bolster their practices. Teachers should be regularly instilled on conservation issues. School education program should be implemented by including it in the curriculum and also as extra-curricular activities, competitions. It would be more beneficial if community people are also invited in those activities.

f) Dipak Raj Ghimire (Jhuwani Secondary School, Jhuwani) :

Schools who are performing conservation related activities do not have sharing mechanism to get improved. I think the network of the schools on conservation would be helpful to build up efficacy and self-sustained capacity. Most of the schools are only limited to the plantation activities in the name of conservation activities. District Education office is the key actor to initiate for conservation education curriculum. Hence, it should be continuously traced, apprised and supported.

g) Shiva Raj Adhikari (Bachhauli Secondary School, Bhaccauli) :

We should have to identify and explore the role of community based organizations to promote school conservation education. For e.g. in our school areas, a community forest used to generate more than NRs 5 million per annum as a revenue from the tourist. But they spend nominal on conservation education and huge chunk of the money spend in the name of conservation education goes on observation tour which is less productive in my view. Local community based organizations are sustainable source to conduct conservation activities in the school and in the society. Community forest and bufferzone user committee did not spend 10% of their income for conservation education. Bufferzone council and park should have strict scrutiny on it.

h) Bhimlal Acharya (Malpur Lower Secondary School, Malpur):

Inclusion of conservation education in a separate curriculum is the best way to promote conservation education. Various conservation clubs are established but they are unmanaged and unsystematic. In some schools, students clubs of same motives are established in various names. This sort of overlapping should be checked out and new school should be destined.

i) Nawaraj Koirala (Laxmi Secondary School, Jagatpur):

Ethnic and indigenous people are more vulnerable for poaching. But most of their children quit the schools after primary level so as to support their family. Our existing curriculum contains the content of conservation education from the lower secondary level only. Hence, I think conservation education should be started from the beginning. Drop out students and

their parents should also be sensitized on conservation though informally at their work places. We, the teachers have obligation towards the community as others but can contribute more than other in conservation education. We are ready to flow conservation education message in and out of the school.

8) Output :

- a) 20 science and environment teachers of bufferzone area of CNP have introspective sharing and analysis on prevalent practices on conservation education.
- b) Participating teachers have performed intensive discussions and made recommendations to promote school conservation education.
- c) Participating teachers have been provided extra inputs so as to help them in increased and better knowledge on rhino and conservation issues.

9) Conclusion :

The workshop has been crucial to promote conservation education through schools. Top educational and park authority of Chitwan have pledged to render the support. If the recommendations made by participants, commitment and suggestions of the Chief Education Officer and Acting Chief Warden of CNP are traced continuously, conservation education in the CNP will get new momentum. The enthusiasm and excitement of the bufferzone teachers are much appreciable.

10) Recommendations :

- a) Conservation education should be included as local curriculum in bufferzone schools.
- b) District Education Office should lead and carry strenuous efforts to include conservation education as a local curriculum.
- c) Bufferzone user committes, community forest committes should prioritize school conservation education and increase investment on it.
- d) Conservation related I/NGOs should include school conservation education in the planning.
- e) Network should be developed between the bufferzone schools in order to share on practices of conservation education, to solicit support for school conservation education activities and ultimately to shape up organised and self-sustained mechanism.
- f) The potentialities of science and environment teachers should be utilised as "Conservation Guide" in the school and community too. They should be provided refresher activities periodically.
- g) Community people should be involved in school level conservation related activities.
- h) Informal conservation education should be rendered to ethnic and indigenous community and drop out students.
- i) Conservation related clubs should be expanded on more bufferzone schools but overlapping should be strictly prohibited.
- j) Policy and practice regarding compensation issues should be revised, grassroot level activities should be enhanced by concerned parties which helps to create conducive and friendly environment for conservation education at schools and community.

11. Participants list :

S.N.	Name	Organization / School
1	Gopal Krishna Paudel	District Education Office(Chitwan)
2	Kamal Jung Kunwar	Chitwan National Park
3	Nanda Kishor Chaudhari	Kapiya Secondary School, Kumroj (Chitwan)
4	Narayan Chapagain	Sajhapur Secondary School, Megghauli (Chitwan)
5	Santaram Mahato	Shree Secondary School,Ganganagar (Chitwan)
6	Tikaram Ghimire	Shree Secondary School,Ganganagar (Chitwan)
7	Bhimlal Acharya	Malpur Lower Sec. School, Bachhauli (Chitwan)
8	Shiva Raj Adhikari	Bachhauli Secondary School,Bachhauli (Chitwan)
9	Dipak Raj Ghimire	Jhuwani Secondary School, Jhuwani (Chitwan)
10	Kamal Prasad Pathak	Kumarwanti Higher Secondary School, Kolhuwa (Nawalparasi)
11	Dilli Ram Neupane	Saraswati Secondary School,Gochhada(Nawalparasi)
12	Uma Kanta Bhattarai	Saraswati Secondary School,Gochhada(Nawalparasi)
13	Narayan Prasad Aryal	Kumarwanti Higher Sec.School, Kolhuwa(Nawalparasi)
14	Dol Prasad Pathak	Janata Secondary School, Nandabhauju (Nawalparasi)
15	Tilakram Chaudhari	Janata Secondary School, Nandabhauju (Nawalparasi)
16	Nabaraj Koirala	Laxmi Secondary School, Jagatpur (Chitwan)
17	Mukta Bahadur Poudel	Laxmi Secondary School, Jagatpur(Chitwan)
18	Shiva Prasad Gautam	Saraswati Secondary School,Jeetpur(Chitwan)
19	Durga Prasad Dhakal	Saraswati Secondary School,Jeetpur (Chitwan)
20	Bhuvan Baral	Saraswati Secondary School, Jagatpur (Chitwan)
21	Ishowri Poudel	Sajhapur Secondary School, Megghauli (Chitwan)
22	Shiva Lal Mahato	Janaki Secondary School, Megghauli (Chitwan)