

Report on

# Exchange visit by Nepalese Delegates to learn from the GEF project on Land Degradation in China

(5-14 May, 2013)



May, 2013

## **Background**

WWF Nepal organized an exchange visit to China for the senior officials of the government of Nepal. The objective of the visit was to understand the GEF Land Degradation (LD) Project being implemented in western china. Representatives from Ministry of Land Reform and Management, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture Development, Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment and Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation were present in the delegation. The list of Nepalese delegation is in Appendix 1. Joint Secretary from Ministry of Land Reform and Management headed the delegation.

Nepal is gearing its effort towards the implementation of its first LD project where WWF will be facilitating the project formulation process as the project agency. The project will be implemented in collaboration with the line ministries and local partners. Learning from similar work in the neighboring country was taken as the immediate first steps to move forward in developing and implementing the LD project.

The rational for selecting China as the potential site for exchange visit was that China not only shares the northern boundary with Nepal, it is also pioneer on its work on combating land degradation. The history of combating land degradation in China is more than 50 years and of GEF support in addressing the same is more than a decade long. In addition, China is an emerging economy country and the success of landscape restoration in China is widely accepted as the global success story on restoring degraded lands. The land restoration program in China has been given a highest priority and patronage by the political leadership of China.

## Objectives

The objectives of the visit were:

- to assess strategies to combat the desertification,
- to study the mode of engagement with key stakeholders,
- to learn good practices and the success factors,
- to understand the issues related to monitoring and evaluation, reporting and sustainability of the project.

## Visit Program

The visit program was locally hosted by PRC-GEF Partnership on Land degradation In Dry lands Ecosystems project. The program was scheduled in such a way that the visiting Nepalese delegation

could participate in the International Workshop on ***Sustainable Land Management policies and practices*** jointly hosted by State Forestry Administration (SFA) and



Shaanxi in China



PRC-GEF Partnership Project in Beijing. After that, the visiting team will go to the field in Shaanxi province to observe the field activities and interact with the local and provincial stakeholders.

The workshop not only provided an opportunity to learn the concept and approaches being practiced to address the Land degradation issues but also a platform to interact with higher officials of the Department of Science and Technology and other Departments of the State Forestry Administration (SFA), officials of GEF secretariat, participants of ADB and World Bank. Afterwards, a 5 day visit to

different sites of the GEF Land degradation project under implemented in Shaanxi Province provided an opportunity to observe the ongoing efforts and impacts of a decade project implementation. Some glimpses of the visit are in Appendix 2. During the course of field visit, the members of Nepalese delegation carried out interaction with the implementing agencies, beneficiaries and different stakeholders. We could see the country sides, feel the enormous development efforts made by the PRC in the rural areas. The over land travel provided very rich experience of the transforming rural china. We also enjoyed the hospitability of the Chinese counterparts. The itinerary is in Appendix 3.

### **PRC–GEF Partnership on Land Degradation in Dryland Ecosystems Project**

Vast stretch of land in Western China is dry and semi dry lands. It was shared that dryland areas of the western PRC cover roughly 40 percent of the country's total land area. These lands were deforested and mismanaged through unsustainable agriculture and water conservation during the period of cultural revolution. A GEF project to address these problems of degradation and desertification has initiated. The ongoing **"PRC–GEF Partnership on Land Degradation in Dryland Ecosystems"** is a mega project. The total financing of the project is US\$401.91 million. The GEF Grant is US\$22.9 million, a very high co-financing rate of 1:18. The GEF Agencies for the project are IFAD, World Bank and ADB. The program is implemented by the central government and is taking place in six provinces: Inner Mongolia, Shaanxi, Qinghai, Gansu, Ningxia, and Xinjiang. The program covered a 10-year period from 2003–12. Now it is entering into another phase. The goal of the partnership project is to strengthen the enabling environment and promote an integrated approach to reduce land degradation, alleviate poverty, and conserve biodiversity, while also restoring, sustaining, and enhancing the protective and productive functions and services of dryland ecosystem resources in western PRC. This is one of the successful project of China. The detail of the project is in <http://www.thegef.org/gef/node/2161>.

## Lesson Learnt

The exchange visit brought through various facets of Rural China. The delegates highly appreciate that they could see the real rural China, and Chinese effort to address the issues of Land Desertification and Degradation. In addition to the social and personal touch of visiting China, following are the key lessons learnt from the visit.

- Nepalese delegates realized that the two countries could further enhance the cooperation through sharing of knowledge strong across their respective departments and local bodies.
- The strong monitoring mechanism in practice in China is something Nepal has to learn from. It was exciting to see that the data collected through monitoring are used in planning process.
- The members of Nepalese delegation were highly impressed by the amount of knowledge collected and shared through the implementation of project. This is something Nepal needs to learn how the best practice could be shared with the external communities. The international workshop carried out by PRC-GEF partnership Project inspired us for integrated and coordinated efforts in the project that we plan to implement in Nepal also.
- There is high degree of a possibility of future long-term cooperation of the Government of Nepal with the SFA for the sustainable Landscape Management.
- Nepalese delegates appreciate the best use of the money from the Government and the donors (GEF). The principle of GEF funds to act as triggering fund has realized in China in true sense.
- PRC-GEF partnership project has brought visible significant change in the field of SLM, IEM and maintaining ecological balance in China.
- All stakeholders engaged in the partnership Project are committed to their job and all are maintaining the highest level of integrity.

- Nepalese delegation studied the different approaches and models for combating land degradation. These were SLM, IEM, Watershed management, Green economic development model, PPP approach in SLM.
- We also observed and appreciated the dedication and commitments of project staffs and local community in program implementation.
- Nepal shared its country context during the international workshop. Chinese authorities, in particular the SFA representative present in the meeting appreciate the work we have been doing. This has created an environment of future exchange visit between the two countries.
- The land tenure issue, the dry land agriculture practice and resettlement of the rural people are something that we need to know further from the Chinese experience.
- Nepalese felt the large scale of the intervention.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The exchange visit was successful both in terms of sharing our status in combating land degradation in Nepal and also as an opportunity to gain exposure on the programs and practices that Chinese at large and GEF project in particular is doing to combat land degradation. The team actively participated in the international conference on sustainable land management policies and practices held at Beijing which has benefited with sufficient knowledge on the relevant programs and practices implemented in different countries and project sites within China. During the visit to project sites of Shaanxi province, the team also got direct exposure to the different models/practices implemented in the fields and good opportunity to interact with project staffs and local beneficiaries.

Based on the entire visit and different interactions, the following recommendations can be drawn regarding an effective implementation of similar programs in order to combat land degradation problems of Nepal.

There is great opportunity to enhance partnership on sustainable land management with SFA. The SFA (Department of Policies and regulations) is interested to enhance cooperation with Nepal and would like to visit Nepal in near future. Nepal can learn a lot on Land use policy formulation and implementation from the experience of China. We can also learn a lot from the M & E experience of GEF project in China, Following are specific recommendations that we could recommend to the respective ministries.

1. The best example of restoration of degraded land can be seen in China, particularly in the west. We could use some of their techniques in the mountain region of Nepal. Adapted lessons can be used in Churia also. Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (MFSC) and Ministry of Agriculture Development (MoAD) will lead this learning endeavor.

2. Strong inter-ministerial coordination must be established in implementing programs to overcome land degradation issues as it is linked with different sectors. Collaboration among Forestry, Land reform, Agriculture, Environment and Local Development sector is a must. It is necessary to establish such a mechanism in Nepal. Ministry of Land Reform and Management (MLRM) being the nodal ministry on land related issue is considered to be the best agency to undertake such coordination.
3. Existing acts and policies should be updated in order to make it conducive for effective implementation of integrated interventions. The inter-ministerial coordination mechanism on land degradation established as above will oversee the review and revision of the policy framework to combat land degradation.
4. Nepal should focus on the best use of GEF fund for combating LD with the best use of other resources being used in Churia. The upcoming GEF project on land degradation should gear its efforts to this effort.
5. Since China has a tremendous experience and success stories on combating land degradation problems, bilateral cooperation or partnership programs between Nepal and China can be beneficial for continuous learning and sharing best practices and strategies to each other. Ministry of Finance (MOF) and MLRM should explore such opportunity. WWF will provide technical backstopping to this respect.
6. A separate mission to China is recommended to learn the land tenure and land management practice. MLRM in collaboration with WWF will look for this opportunity.



Appendix 1. Members of the Nepalese delegation participated in the exchange visit:

Rohit Kumar Bhattarai	Joint Secretary, Ministry of Land Reform and Management
Narayan Chaudhary	Joint Secretary, Ministry of Land Reform and Management
Diwakar Maskey	Soil Conservation Officer, Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation
Tek Bahadur Khatri	Under Secretary, Ministry of Finance
Ravi Kumar Dangol	Agricultural Economist, Ministry of Agriculture Development
Bipeen Acharya	Section Officer, Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment
Shiva Raj Bhatta	Deputy Director, WWF Nepal
Santosh Mani Nepal	Director, Policy and Support, WWF Nepal

## Appendix 2. Some glimpses of exchange visit



With PRC-GEF and SFA Officials, Jingbian Country, Shaanxi



Preparing Pine (*P. sylvestris* var *mongolica*) seedlings at nursery



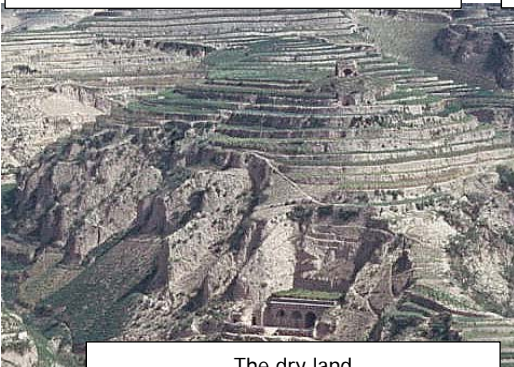
Restored area



Sand Stabilization, Jingbian, Shanaxi



Plantation along the counter (old)



The dry land



Retention of Soil moisture for agriculture crops



At PRC-GEF pilot site Wuqi county



At Discussion with local farmers





With provincial team at Shaanxi



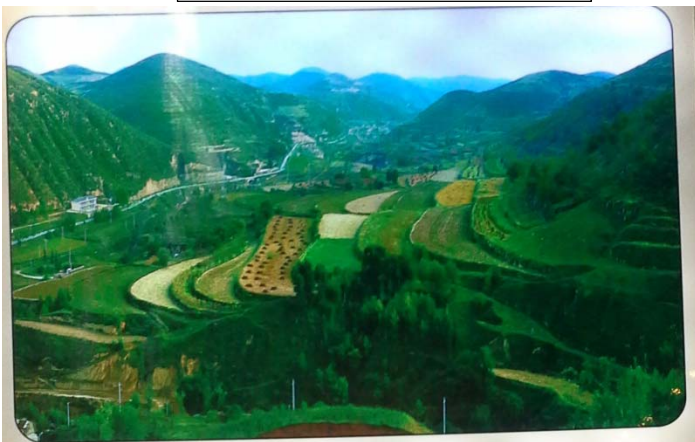
At a banquet



In the Great Wall



International Delegate with Madame J. Zehui. Vice Chair of the NCPRE.



陕西吴起县退耕前后对比



Change from Agriculture to Forestry over last 2 decades



Nepalese Delegates at International Conference on SLM



At Tiananmen Square

Appendix 3. Itinerary of the visit.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Place</b>
5/6/2013	To be confirmed	Nepal-China	International Bamboo and Rattan Tower, Beijing
5/7/2013	9:00-18:00	International Conference	International Bamboo and Rattan Tower, Beijing
5/8/2013	9:00-18:00	International Conference	International Bamboo and Rattan Tower, Beijing
5/9/2013	Morning	Visit Great Wall	
	Afternoon	Beijing-Shaaxi (Flight), Pick up in Xi'an, Shaaxi Province	Liyuan Hotel in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province
	Afternoon	Visit to The Terra Cotta Warriors, (Chinese traditional culture) (if you all are interested in, this part could be planned in another day, with longer time)	Liyuan Hotel in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province
5/10/2013	9:00-11:00	Workshop with projects representatives under the Partnership (government officials from forestry, water conservation etc. will participate in)	Liyuan Hotel in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province
	14:00	Field visit to Louguantai Wildlife Conservation Center: wildlife conservation experience sharing	Liyuan Hotel in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province
5/11/2013	8:00	Go to pilot site of SLM, Wuqi Pilot site	Hotel in Wuqi County, Shaaxi Province
5/12/2013	8:30-11:30	Field visit to Wuqi Pilot site	Hotel in Wuqi County, Shaaxi Province

	14:30-16:00	Visit to the Land conversion from Farmland to Forestland mus3um in Wuqi County	
	16:30	Go to Jingbian County, another pilot site	Hotel in Jingbian County, Shaaxi Province
5/13/2013	8:30-11:30	Field visit to Jingbian Pilot site	
	14:00	Go to Yan'an city, visit to Revolutionary memorial hall	Hotel in Yan'an City, Shaaxi Province
5/14/2013	8:00	Yan'an city to Xi'an airport	Flight to Chengdu, To be confirmed