Governance outcomes on biodiversity and local livelihoods: a case from Chitwan National Park, Nepal

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(Prepared as part of GEMCONBIO third country case study)
Presentation outline

• Chitwan valley, the Park and the people
• A brief historical overview
• Chitwan National Park: governance structure and process
• Park-people relation
• Governance change - outcome impacts
• Policy recommendations
# Nepal at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>World (million)</th>
<th>Nepal (million)</th>
<th>Nepal’s share (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>6335.1</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land area</td>
<td>13173 ha</td>
<td>14.7 ha</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest area</td>
<td>3952 ha</td>
<td>5.8 ha</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chitwan valley, the people and the Park

The Valley
• Location: Central –southern
• Fertile, rich in natural wealth
• Densely populated
• High social differentiation
• Large proportion of landless
• Heavy reliance on natural resources

The Park
• Covers 932 sq. km. bordering with India in the south
• Rich in one horned rhino, tigers, crocodiles.
• Popular tourist destination (over 100000 tourists in 1999)
• Has received national and international attentions
# A brief history of CNP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Until 1950s</td>
<td>Sparse indigenous settlements, large part of the valley forest was protected for royal hunting</td>
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<tr>
<td>1950s</td>
<td>opened for resettlement, hill migrants flocked in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>Deforestation and heavy loss of biodiversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Southern part is demarcated as the National Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Nepal Army began to guard the Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Listed as a World Heritage Site</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>Various ICDPs were implemented</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Introduction of Buffer Zone Programme</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Governance structure

Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation

Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation

Park Warden

Rangers

Nepal Army

Unit in CNP

Buffer zone Council

User Committees

User groups

User groups

User groups

User groups

Legend

- buffer zone
- core zone
Local livelihoods around the Park

Peasant farmers rely on subsistence farming & reside along the highway.

Poor and landless reside close to the Park & often rely on fishing, wild fruits and vegetables.

Costs and benefits are shared disproportionately between these groups.
Park–people relation

- Over 0.3 million people live around the Park who rely heavily on the biomass

- Violent conflicts over resources between park authorities/army and local people that continues to some extent

- Redistribution of the Park’s income under buffer zone programme has helped reduce these conflicts

- However, local elites have benefited and the poor people have often been excluded from the programme

- Poor and landless people continue to rely on the Park resources though often on illegal extraction
Outcomes of governance change

- **Royal hunting site** – people have access on natural resources except hunting
- **National Park** - all customary and traditional rights denied, increased park-people conflicts
- **ICDPS** – support in infrastructure development but limited access to natural resources
- **Buffer zone** - redistribution of part of Park’s income, poor often excluded
- **Community forestry** – Promoted collective management of forests outside the Park, regeneration of resources, less pressure on the Park
Policy process: unequal footing

• Park authority as sole agency: little room for public voices and concerns
• Lack of effective opposition: unorganised local people, underdeveloped civil society
• Inadequate studies on ecological dynamics: ecological sustainability and effects of decentralised management
• International agenda: often override national interests (CITES, WHS etc.)
Recommendation to EU policy

- EU should ensure local participation at least in EU funded conservation programmes
- Biodiversity conservation programme must be linked with livelihoods benefits
- Active role of civil society in governing biological resources at all levels - local, national and international levels should be encouraged
- Support for informed decisions by the states while endorsing MEAs that shape people-environment relations at the local level
Thank You

Comments and suggestions are welcome