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7 YEARS OF USAID SUPPORT FOR WWF ACTIVITIES IN NEPAL'S KANGCHENJUNGA REGION (2010-2017)

Krishna Limbu fixing a water sprinkler in his orange nursery in Tapethok.

PHOTO: Samir Jung Thapa / WWF Nepal

KANCHENJUNGA CONSERVATION AREA, EASTERN NEPAL

With an elevation of 8586 m, Kanchenjunga is the world's third highest mountain. While Nepal's Kanchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA) only covers 1.38% of the nation's territory, it harbors some of the world's most important biodiversity - including the endangered snow leopard and a great diversity of birds, as well as forming the headwaters of rivers that provide water for millions of people residing downstream. Since 2010, WWF-Nepal, CARE-Nepal and the KCA Management Council have implemented two USAID-funded projects in the KCA: "Sustainable Conservation Approaches in Priority Ecosystems (SCAPES) in the Sacred Himalayan Landscape (SHL)" and "Conservation and Adaptation in Asia's High Mountain Landscapes and Communities (AHM)." A recent study examined the specific socio-economic impacts brought about by USAID funding for conservation and development activities benefiting the 6500 residents from 1257 households in the KCA.



MAJOR LIVELIHOOD BENEFITS

Over the last 7 years, USAID support in the KCA has brought about beneficial changes in community livelihoods through activities that include introduction of cardamom as a cash crop, improved irrigation and drinking water facilities, greenhouses, fruit farming, micro-credit for women's groups, tree seedling production, improved pasture management, and improved cook stoves. The recent study shows that all households in KCA received some benefit from WWF interventions. The most successful of these interventions for people's livelihoods include:

IRRIGATION

Adaptive irrigation has benefited **28%** of KCA households, improving their incomes by allowing them to shift from growing grain and potatoes to higher value crops like cardamom, increasing agriculture revenue by over **USD 400,000** annually for the KCA from this intervention alone.

GREENHOUSE AGRICULTURE

More than **90%** of surveyed households engaged in greenhouse farming reported increased agricultural production and a new ability to grow higher value crops that were not possible earlier in the cold mountain environment. As a result, incomes have increased by a total of **USD 18,000** annually for the 199 KCA households that have adopted greenhouses.

IMPROVED COOKSTOVES

A total of **34% of households** in the KCA have switched to improved metal stoves, saving more than **280 truck loads** of firewood per year. Time saved by reducing the need to harvest wood can be used for other pursuits.

PASTURE MANAGEMENT

An estimated **50% of the population** of the KCA has benefited from improved pasture management activities, including trail improvements, bridge construction, and improved water supply that has increased the use of disused pastures, and improved pasture health.

Pema Sherpa waters vegetables in her greenhouse in the mountains of the Kangchenjunga Conservation Area.

PHOTO: Mamata Pokharel / WWF Nepal

**For more information, please contact Deepak Upadhyia: deepak.upadhyia@wwfnepal.org*

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