

Summary of half-day interactions on 'Forging solidarities among Indigenous and Community Conservation Areas (ICCA) in Nepal'

Venue: Chitwan, south central Nepal and Pokhara, western Nepal

Schedule: December 27 and 29, 2009

ForestAction organised half-day interactions on '*Forging solidarities among Indigenous and Community Conservation Areas (ICCA) in Nepal*' in Chitwan and Pokhara, on Dec. 27 and 29 respectively. The interactions among local community representatives were intended to discuss the concept and significance of ICCAs; enhance the understanding of ICCAs in a Nepalese context and explore possibilities of networking among individuals and institutions actively engaged in conserving areas of biodiversity significance.

Community representatives and leaders from buffer zone community forests and buffer zone wetlands of Chitwan National Park, community conserved landscape of Panchasey area (mid hill, western Nepal), Annapurna Conservation Area (Sikles, Lumley, Khar Barahi – villages in the conservation area) , community managed wetlands (*Gajedi Lake* in Rupendehi, south-western Nepal and Rupa Lake in Kaski district), religious forests, and community forests beyond the protected areas exchanged their experiences of biodiversity conservation and contribution in local livelihoods. Besides, the policy and rights issues were also discussed. The participants reached to a common understanding that the state must recognise and respect grassroots initiatives on biodiversity conservation. They also realised the need for further dialogues, communication and networking among themselves to advance rights of indigenous people and local communities engaged in biodiversity conservation.

While the concept and international discourse of ICCAs were perceived affirmatively by the participants, a need for further discussion on the topic at various scales was also realized. Non-indigenous representatives of local communities in Chitwan shared some scepticism on the special rights of indigenous peoples and the explicit use of the term 'Indigenous' in the terminology of ICCA. In contrast, in Pokhara there was a general acceptance and appreciation on issues of indigenous people vis-à-vis conservation. On the whole, the two preliminary meetings contributed largely to kick start discussion on ICCAs; forge networking among these groups and direction for a national gathering of ICCAs to be held in a few months time. The meeting also advanced the idea of exploring possibilities of developing a core forest zone surrounded by community forests (located in Jalthal area of Jhapa district, eastern lowland Nepal) as community managed conservation area.