Mainstreaming Conservation and Sustainable Use of Medicinal Plant Diversity in Three Indian States

Background

Over 6000 species of medicinal plants are found in India. Traditional medicine based on medicinal plants and other natural resources is the primary source of health care for 65 percent of the population. Nearly 90 percent of medicinal plants are sourced from forests. However, due to increase in demand of medicinal plants, the pressure on forests is increasing, leading to unsustainable extraction of resources and creating an imbalance in the ecosystem. Therefore, conservation and sustainable use of medicinal plants is vital for 4635 ethnic communities in India, their history and culture and more importantly to ensure health, livelihood security, and to maintain an ecological balance.

About the project

The project aimed to mainstream long-term conservation and sustainable use of India’s medicinal plants into forest management policy and practice at the national, state and local levels in three Indian states: Arunachal Pradesh in north-eastern India, Chhattisgarh in central India and Uttarakhand in north-western India. These states represent India’s enormous medicinal and aromatic plant diversity and are home to more than 30 Globally Significant Medicinal Plants (GSMPS). The project has demonstrated replicable models of in-situ and ex-situ conservation and promoted cultivation of highly traded Medicinal Plants. Institutional mechanisms have been put in place towards sustainable harvest and use of medicinal plants by facilitating the state governments in establishing Biodiversity Management Committees and building their capacities to prepare biodiversity registers and community protocols. The project has been successful in sharing experiences and learnings through innovative communication tools and knowledge sharing platforms under South-South Cooperation.
Developments so far

Mainstreaming conservation and Sustainable use of Medicinal Plants in Policies and Protocols

• Detailed analysis of relevant national and state legislation was carried out proposing mainstreaming conservation of medicinal plants. The State Government of Arunachal Pradesh has notified the Arunachal Pradesh Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Policy 2015.

• The project has initiated a National Inter-sectoral Strategy on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Medicinal Plants. The three project states too have initiated such strategy.

• The project significantly contributed to the revision of the National Forest Working Plan Code by including medicinal plants into it. The Code came into effect from 1 April, 2014.

• ‘Sui Generis legal mechanism for protecting traditional knowledge of medicinal plants in India’ was prepared, based on a detailed review of international treaties and national legislation.

Demonstration of replicable models of in-situ and ex-situ conservation of medicinal plants

• Twenty Medicinal Plants Conservation Development Areas covering 24,047 hectare, were developed in three project states which also includes conservation of 32 GSMPs.

• The three project states have undertaken plantation of various medicinal plants including GSMPs on 13,130 hectare.

Institutional mechanisms established, towards sustainable harvest and use of medicinal plants and to ensure equitable access and sharing of benefits

• The State of Uttarakhand has included a chapter on conservation and sustainable use of medicinal plants in each of its four forest divisional working plans. Similar efforts resulted Arunachal Pradesh to include a chapter on medicinal plants in one Forest Divisional plan. For the State of Chhattisgarh, data was provided for revision of four plans.

• Information is compiled on availability of medicinal plants and local biological resources, their medicinal and other uses. This wealth of knowledge is now available in 16 People’s Biodiversity Registers.

Training, Capacity Building & Knowledge sharing

• Twelve Bio-cultural Community Protocols have been prepared with detailed terms for accessing and sharing benefits arising out of use of genetic resources.

• Sustainable Harvest Protocols have been developed for 10 key-species including Cinnamomum tamala, Dioscorea hispida, Andrographis paniculata, Terminalia arjuna, Semecarpus anacardium, Embelia tsjeriam-cottam, Celastrus paniculatus, Rubia cordifolia.

• Chhattisgarh State Medicinal Plants Board has received funding of INR 7.36 crores from the state Forest Department under Community Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority for replicating project activities in new sites.

• Foundation for Revitalization of Local Health Traditions, initiated a long term strategy for threat assessment and monitoring the conservation status of medicinal plants in India. The threat status of 46 endemic medicinal plants species is uploaded in International Union for Conservation of Nature – Species Information Services system.

1 WHO. (2002). Traditional Medicine Strategy 2002-2005
2 UNU-IAS. (2012). Biodiversity, Traditional Knowledge and Community Health: strengthening Linkages
3 Medicinal Plant Conservation and Development Areas (MPDAs) (1500 hectares) also includes Medicinal Plant Conservation Areas (MPCAs) which is the protected core area of 200 Ha where sustainable collection is permitted

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