

# Kunming Biodiversity Fund

## Final Project Narrative Report

Reporting Period: from 02.2025 to 11.2025

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Project Title &amp; Number</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Title: Strengthening Community Engagement for Biodiversity Conservation in the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area</li> <li>MPTF Office Project ID:<sup>2</sup> 00141045</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results<sup>1</sup></b></p> <p><i>Kanchenjunga Conservation Area in Taplejung District of Eastern Nepal, South Asia.</i></p> <p><i>Priority area/ strategic results</i></p> <p>Indigenous Peoples and local communities' engagement in biodiversity conservation, identification of biodiversity hotspots and assessment of the current management effectiveness of the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area against the IUCN Green List standard.</p> <p>The project contributes to UNSDCF area 3.1: Promote a healthy, safe, inclusive, clean and green productive environment along with climate change mitigation</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Participating Organization(s)</b></p> <p>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Implementing Partners</b></p> <p>Ministry of Forests and Environment, Government of Nepal</p> <p>International Union for Conservation of Nature</p> <p>Kangchenjunga Conservation Area Management Council (KCAMC)</p> <p>Samriddha Pahad</p>

<sup>1</sup> Strategic Results, as formulated in the Strategic UN Planning Framework (e.g. UNDAF) or project document;

<sup>2</sup> The MPTF Office Project ID/Reference Number is on the project's factsheet page on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#).

Programme/Project Cost (US\$)
Total approved budget as per project document: \$199543 MPTF /JP Contribution <sup>3</sup> : NA • <i>by Agency (if applicable)</i> Agency Contribution • <i>by Agency (if applicable)</i> US\$ 27624
Government Contribution <i>(if applicable) NA</i>
Other Contributions (donors) <i>(if applicable)</i>
<b>TOTAL: US\$ 227167</b>
Project Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.
Evaluation Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Date: <i>dd.mm.yyyy</i>
For UNESCO, project evaluations are not required for projects with a budget below USD 1.5 million.
Evaluation Report - Attached <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Date: <i>dd.mm.yyyy</i>

Project Duration
Overall Duration ( <i>months</i> ) 9 months Start Date <sup>4</sup> ( <i>dd.mm.yyyy</i> ) 13. Feb.2025
Original End Date <sup>5</sup> 24.Oct. 2025
Actual End date <sup>6</sup> 30.Nov. 2025
Have agency(ies) operationally closed the Programme in its(their) system? <span style="float: right;">Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></span>
Expected Financial Closure date <sup>7</sup> : 31 December 2025
Report Submitted By
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Name: Barsha Lekhi</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Title: Project Officer</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Participating Organization (Lead): UNESCO</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Email address: b.lekhi@unesco.org</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> The MPTF/JP Contribution is the amount transferred to the Participating UN Organizations.

<sup>4</sup> Date of the first transfer of the funds from the MPTF Office as Administrative Agent (available on the [Gateway](#)).

<sup>5</sup> As per approval of the original project document by the relevant decision-making body/Steering Committee.

<sup>6</sup> If there has been an extension, then the approved end date should be reflected. The end date is the same as the operational closure date which is when all activities must be completed. As per the MOU, agencies are to notify the MPTF Office when a programme completes its operational activities. Please see [MPTF Office Closure Guidelines](#).

<sup>7</sup> Financial Closure requires the return of unspent balances and submission of the [Certified Final Financial Statement and Report](#).

## **FINAL PROJECT REPORT FORMAT**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The project “Strengthening Community Engagement for Biodiversity Conservation in the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area”, implemented by UNESCO Nepal with support from the Kunming Biodiversity Fund (KBF), aimed to strengthen community-led biodiversity monitoring, governance and management effectiveness in Kanchenjunga Conservation Area. The initiative addressed biodiversity knowledge gaps by placing Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) at the center of wildlife monitoring and decision-making, as well as assessing management practices in line with international conservation standards.

The project combined modern scientific monitoring tools such as trail cameras and GPS devices along with Indigenous ecological knowledge, while strengthening conservation learning through local schools. A core objective was to place communities at the center of biodiversity (wildlife) documentation by building local capacity to collect credible data and contribute to evidence-based conservation planning and reporting.

Key results from the pilot implementation included the training of 46 community members, teachers, and students (30 men and 16 women) in biodiversity monitoring techniques. The project deployed 14 camera traps and two GPS devices across community forests managed by user committees in Phaktanglung Rural Municipality (Wards 5 and 6). In addition, bilingual (English and Nepali) biodiversity related resource booklet (guidelines) were developed to support conservation learning and sustain engagement with local schools.

The initiative generated valuable conservation evidence and local learning. Camera-trap monitoring and participatory knowledge mapping identified several biodiversity hotspots within community-managed forests, including areas associated with the Laligurans, Simbuwa Khola, and Sekathum user committees. Monitoring documented the presence of key species such as snow leopard, red panda, black bear, and dhole, contributing to improved understanding of species distribution within the landscape.

A notable ecological finding was the recording of a snow leopard at approximately 1,525 meters, an unusually low elevation compared to typical habitat ranges for the species. This observation highlights the importance of continued monitoring and adaptive management to better understand potential ecological changes and wildlife movement patterns within the Kanchenjunga landscape.

The project contributed to improving conservation governance and management effectiveness of the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area. A comprehensive assessment was conducted against the IUCN Green List Standard, confirming that KCA meets the minimum requirements to enter the Green List Application Phase and identifying key areas for strengthening monitoring systems, governance arrangements, and data management. In parallel, a landscape-level analysis identified potential Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) across approximately 2,599 km<sup>2</sup> of connected ecosystems, highlighting opportunities to expand conservation coverage beyond protected areas. Capacity-building workshops and dissemination events at local and national levels engaged 136 participants (105 Male and 31 female) from government agencies, conservation organizations, community representatives and Indigenous peoples, strengthening stakeholder

understanding of conservation governance frameworks and facilitated dialogue among government agencies, conservation organizations, and community representatives.

The project also strengthened collaboration among local communities, conservation organizations, and government agencies, including UNESCO Nepal, IUCN Nepal, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area Management Council (KCAMC), and local governments. The project also generated interest from the Blueberry Hill Charitable Incorporated Organisation, based in the United Kingdom and University of the Highlands and Islands (in Scotland), to further support the initiative by providing assistance in the preparation of the dossier for the nomination of the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA) to be designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Beyond field-level results, the project contributed to broader conservation policy dialogue. Dissemination workshops held in Taplejung and Kathmandu validated project findings, consolidated stakeholder recommendations, and advanced discussions on IUCN Green List standards, potential Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs), and pathways for strengthening the management effectiveness of the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area. The project also initiated discussions on the potential Biosphere Reserve designation for the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area, which has been reflected in the *Living Sagarmatha: Strategic Framework for Sustainable Mountain Development in Nepal*, recognizing biodiversity conservation in KCA as a national priority and helping ensure the long-term sustainability of project outcomes.

Through these efforts, the project contributes to Nepal's commitments under the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), particularly Target 3, by strengthening protected area management and exploring opportunities to expand area-based conservation through OECMs. Technical assessments also evaluated the management effectiveness of the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area against the IUCN Green List Standard and identified twenty potential OECM sites across the broader Kanchenjunga Landscape.

Overall, the project demonstrates the potential of community-centred biodiversity monitoring systems to generate credible conservation data, strengthen local stewardship, and support nationally and globally aligned biodiversity governance.

## **I. Purpose**

The Kanchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA) is located in Taplejung District in northeastern Nepal and covers approximately 2,035 square kilometers. The area lies within the Eastern Himalayas, one of the world's most significant biodiversity hotspots, known for its exceptional species richness and diverse ecosystems ranging from subtropical forests to alpine habitats. The conservation area supports a wide range of flora and fauna, including globally significant species such as the snow leopard, red panda, musk deer, and Himalayan black bear, and forms part of the broader Kanchenjunga Landscape, which provides important ecological connectivity across national borders. KCA is recognized as Nepal's first community-managed conservation area, governed through the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area Management Council (KCAMC) and local Conservation Area Management Committees. This participatory governance system provides a unique opportunity to demonstrate how community stewardship and inclusive conservation approaches can contribute to global biodiversity targets and strengthen management effectiveness within protected areas.

The project was designed to strengthen community engagement in biodiversity conservation through participatory monitoring, knowledge integration, and conservation education. The initiative also aimed to improve conservation governance and management effectiveness in KCA while aligning local conservation actions with international frameworks such as the IUCN Green List Standard and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs). These approaches support broader global commitments under the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), particularly Target 3 on expanding and effectively managing area-based conservation.

### **Project Objectives**

- Strengthen the capacity of community members and students to monitor biodiversity (wildlife) using modern scientific tools such as camera traps and GPS devices.
- Integrate Indigenous ecological knowledge with scientific monitoring approaches, enabling communities to contribute to evidence-based conservation planning and reporting.
- Promote biodiversity awareness and conservation education among local schools through the development of educational materials and engagement activities.
- To strengthen governance and management practices in the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area by ensuring informed and capacitated stakeholders.
- Identify biodiversity hotspots and priority areas for conservation, supporting community-based conservation planning and informing future initiatives related to OECMs and landscape-level conservation.
- Improve conservation governance and management effectiveness in KCA while aligning local conservation actions with international frameworks such as the IUCN Green List Standard and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs).

## **II. Assessment of Programme Results**

### **i) Narrative reporting on results:**

The project achieved notable progress toward ensuring that Indigenous Peoples (Limbu, Sherpa, Tamag and Rai) and Local Communities (Dalit), with meaningful participation of women and youth, are actively engaged in community-driven biodiversity conservation efforts in KCA. Through a 2-days training, participatory monitoring and ecological knowledge integration, indigenous and local communities developed improved technical capacity and ownership over biodiversity (wildlife) monitoring and conservation practices.

A total of 46 community members, teachers, and students (30 men and 16 women) were trained in biodiversity monitoring techniques using camera traps and GPS devices. These participants included members of community forest user committees, eco-club teachers, students,

women's groups, and anti-poaching units. The training enabled community members to collect biodiversity data and contribute to monitoring wildlife movements within community forests.

The project also strengthened the integration of Indigenous ecological knowledge with scientific monitoring tools, enabling communities to identify wildlife corridors, biodiversity hotspots and areas experiencing human wildlife conflict. This integration enhanced the quality of biodiversity information and supported more informed conservation planning.

The project generated important ecological evidence through camera trapping and participatory knowledge collection. Key wildlife species documented included snow leopard, red panda, Himalayan black bear, yellow-throated marten, and dhole, confirming the ecological significance of community-managed forests surrounding KCA. One notable ecological finding was the recording of a snow leopard at an elevation of approximately 1,525 meters, significantly lower than the species' typical range of 3,000–5,000 meters. This observation suggests possible changes in wildlife movement patterns related to prey availability, climate change, or habitat disturbance.

It also contributed to strengthening conservation governance and institutional collaboration within the KCA landscape. Through partnerships with IUCN Nepal, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area Management Council (KCAMC), the project supported participatory conservation planning and policy dialogue. The project team assessed current management effectiveness of KCA against the IUCN Green List Standard, reviewing key components such as biodiversity conservation, governance systems, Indigenous knowledge, and stakeholder engagement. The assessment confirmed that KCA meets the baseline criteria for the Green List Application Phase. The project also assessed and identified 20 potential OECM sites, Red Panda Corridor and Tinjure -Milke Jaljale being the two key sites for OECM designation. For the purpose capacity workshops were organized at three administrative levels: Federal Level (Kathmandu): 35 participants (22 M, 13 F); Provincial Level (Province 1): 46 participants (40 M, 6F); Local Level (Phungling, Taplejung): 55 participants (43 M, 12 F including 3 students)

At the strategic level, the project contributed to Nepal's commitments under the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), particularly Target 3 (30×30) on expanding and strengthening area-based conservation measures. Through technical assessments conducted by IUCN experts, the project evaluated the management effectiveness of KCA against the IUCN Green List Standard, confirming that the conservation area meets the baseline requirements for the Green List Application Phase and has strong potential to advance toward certification with targeted improvements.

In addition, the project supported the identification of potential Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) across the wider Kanchenjunga landscape. A spatial analysis of connected landscapes above 2,000 meters assessed 2,599 km<sup>2</sup> of habitat, of which 72% overlapped with biodiversity-important areas such as Important Bird Areas, Important Plant Areas, and Key Biodiversity Areas.

## **OUTPUTS**

The project achieved several key outputs that directly contributed to the achievement of the intended outcomes.

Output 1: Strengthened capacities of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), including women and girls, in biodiversity conservation in Kanchenjunga Conservation Area.

Through targeted training and hands-on field exercises, the project built the capacity of community members, teachers, and students to use biodiversity (wildlife) monitoring tools. Forty-six participants received training in camera trapping, GPS navigation, wildlife documentation, and participatory biodiversity mapping. The project deployed 14 camera traps and 2 GPS devices across community forests in Phaktanglung Rural Municipality (wards 5 and 6), covering areas managed by Laligurans, Simbuwa Khola, Sekathum, and Bihani user committees. These monitoring tools enabled the collection of wildlife data and identification of biodiversity hotspots in community forests.

Through the integration of camera trap monitoring and Indigenous ecological knowledge, the project identified biodiversity hotspots within community forests, particularly in the Laligurans, Simbuwa Khola, and Sekathum user committee forests, which demonstrated high species richness and ecological connectivity. These findings provide valuable evidence for strengthening conservation planning and wildlife monitoring within the KCA landscape.

The project developed a bilingual biodiversity resource booklet (English and Nepali) and supported school-based conservation activities involving three secondary schools in the project area. These activities helped raise environmental awareness among students and created opportunities for hands-on learning through participation in camera trap installation and biodiversity (wildlife) monitoring.

Dissemination workshops held in Taplejung and Kathmandu provided platforms for local communities, government representatives, and conservation partners to review and validate project findings. The workshops facilitated dialogue on future conservation priorities, including Green List certification, OECM identification, and potential nomination of KCA as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

**OUTPUT 2: Management effectiveness of Kanchenjunga Conservation Area assessed and the communities capacitated on the sustainable management of natural resources.**

The project strengthened the management effectiveness of the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA) by conducting a comprehensive assessment against the IUCN Green List Standard and strengthening the capacities of stakeholders to support sustainable natural resource management. A multidisciplinary team of three experts evaluated KCA's governance systems, management planning, biodiversity outcomes, and stakeholder engagement. The assessment confirmed that KCA meets the minimum requirements for the Green List Application Phase, demonstrating strong potential to progress toward full certification with improvements in biodiversity monitoring, data management, and institutional coordination.

The assessment also highlighted the strengths of KCA's community-based governance model, led by the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area Management Council (KCAMC) and local Conservation Area Management Committees. This participatory governance system promotes inclusive decision-making and strengthens the role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in conservation management. Complementary landscape-level analysis identified potential Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) across approximately 2,599 km<sup>2</sup> of connected ecosystems, of which 72% overlap with biodiversity-important areas, demonstrating the potential to expand conservation coverage beyond the existing protected area network.

In parallel, the project strengthened the capacities of communities, government stakeholders, and conservation partners to apply international conservation frameworks and support sustainable resource management. Capacity-building and dissemination workshops held at federal, provincial, and local levels improved understanding of the IUCN Green List Standard, OECM approaches, and their relevance to achieving KM-GBF Target 3 (30×30) and SDG 15 (Target 15.4, focusing on conserving mountain ecosystems) and SDG 17-Partnerships for the Goals by strengthening collaboration among stakeholders to jointly advance biodiversity conservation in Kanchenjunga landscape. These processes enhanced collaboration among UNESCO Nepal, IUCN Nepal, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, KCAMC, and local communities, while creating a shared platform for strengthening conservation governance and long-term biodiversity management in the Kanchenjunga landscape.

These outputs contributed directly to strengthening conservation governance and coordination among stakeholders involved in biodiversity conservation in the Kanchenjunga landscape.

### Qualitative Assessment

Overall, the project strengthened community engagement in biodiversity conservation within KCA. The integration of scientific monitoring tools with Indigenous ecological knowledge proved to be an effective approach for generating credible biodiversity data while reinforcing community stewardship. The project benefited significantly from strong partnerships and institutional collaboration. UNESCO Nepal provided overall coordination and technical guidance, while IUCN Nepal contributed expertise in Green List assessments and OECM identification. The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation and the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area Management Council ensured alignment with national conservation policies and supported local implementation.

Local community institutions, including community forest user groups and eco-clubs in schools, played a central role in implementing monitoring activities and maintaining conservation efforts at the grassroots level. The project also demonstrated the catalytic role of the Kunming Biodiversity Fund (KBF) by enabling technical assessments, stakeholder engagement, and community-based monitoring initiatives that contribute to broader national and global biodiversity objectives.

#### ii) Indicator Based Performance Assessment:

	<u>Achieved</u> Indicator Targets	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)	Source of Verification
<b>Outcome 1<sup>8</sup></b> Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), with meaningful participation of women and girls, are engaged in community-driven	46 participants trained (30 male, 16 female) including community members, eco-club teachers and students. Community members	No major variance. Project successfully mobilized communities and schools for biodiversity monitoring and conservation	Workshop report, mission reports, <a href="#">project brochure</a>

<sup>8</sup> Note: Outcomes, outputs, indicators and targets should be as outlines in the Project Document so that you report on your actual achievements against planned targets. Add rows as required for Outcome 2, 3 etc.

<p>efforts and initiatives to conserve biodiversity.</p> <p><b>Indicator:</b> Number of IPLCs trained and engaged in biodiversity monitoring</p> <p><b>Baseline:</b> 0</p> <p><b>Planned Target:</b> None/40</p>	<p>participated in biodiversity monitoring and camera trap installation.</p>	<p>education within the project timeframe.</p> <p>Female participation in camera trap installation was limited due to difficult terrain and safety concerns during the rainy season.</p>	
<p><b>Output 1.1</b> Strengthened capacities of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), including women and girls, in biodiversity conservation in Kanchenjunga Conservation Area.</p> <p><b>Indicator 1.1.1</b> Number of consultation and capacity-building workshops conducted</p> <p><b>Baseline:</b> 0</p> <p><b>Planned Target:</b> 2</p> <p><b>Indicator 1.1.2:</b> Number of community members trained in biodiversity monitoring tools.</p> <p><b>Baseline:</b> 0</p> <p><b>Planned Target:</b> 40</p>	<p>One multi-stakeholder consultation workshop held to identify pilot sites and strengthen coordination among KCA stakeholders.</p> <p>Two consultation workshops held to identify the areas for camera trap installation using indigenous ecological knowledge.</p> <p>One four-day capacity building workshop on scientific tools like camera trap and GPS.</p> <p>46 (30 Male and 16 female) participants trained in camera trap monitoring and GPS navigation.</p>	<p>No variance. Workshop successfully conducted as planned.</p> <p>No major variance. Training completed as planned.</p>	<p>Consultation workshop report, <a href="#">project brochure</a>.</p> <p>Workshop report, <a href="#">project brochure</a></p>
<p><b>Indicator 1.1.3:</b> Biodiversity hotspots identified through monitoring and community knowledge</p> <p><b>Baseline:</b> No documented biodiversity</p>	<p>Three Biodiversity hotspots identified in areas of Laligurans, Simbuwa Khola, and Sekathum forests. Key species documented include snow leopard, red panda,</p>	<p>No variance but limited monitoring duration due to short project period.</p>	<p>Biodiversity hotspot report</p>

<p>hotspot mapping in pilot sites</p> <p><b>Planned Target: 1</b></p>	<p>black bear and dhole.</p>		
<p><b>Indicator 1.1.3:</b> Number of school students engaged in biodiversity monitoring through camera trapping and recognition mechanisms to acknowledge student contributions to conservation.</p> <p><b>Baseline:</b> No exposure to students on scientific monitoring tools in schools in project site.</p> <p><b>Planned Target:</b> 3 schools, 100 students</p>	<p>Conservation education activities were conducted in three schools in (Tapethok, Lelep, and Hellok) KCA, reaching over 300 students, with more than 15 students and teachers trained in using camera traps and GPS for biodiversity (wildlife) monitoring.</p> <p>Target achieved through activities like quiz competitions, essay writing activities, and practical orientation on biodiversity monitoring tools in three schools.</p> <p>Resource booklet <i>Learning Biodiversity- Practical Guidelines for Schools; GPS use guideline</i> developed.</p>	<p>School related activities were implemented within a limited timeframe due to the Dashain-Tihar festival holidays, which reduced the available implementation period, however, activities were completed through close coordination with schools.</p>	<p>School activity report, published resource booklet, namely <a href="#"><i>Learning Biodiversity- Practical Guidelines for Schools</i></a></p>
<p><b>Outcome 2</b> Concerned stakeholders of Kanchenjunga Conservation Area are informed to deliver successful conservation outcomes through effective and equitable governance and management.</p> <p><b>Indicator:</b> Level of stakeholder awareness and engagement on conservation governance frameworks (IUCN Green List and OECMs)</p> <p><b>Baseline:</b> 0</p>	<p>Multi-level stakeholder engagement achieved through consultation and dissemination workshops involving 136 participants (105 Male and 31 female) from government agencies, conservation organizations, community representatives and Indigenous peoples.</p>	<p>No major variance. Stakeholders at federal, provincial and local levels participated in consultations and dissemination workshops, improving understanding of international conservation standards and governance frameworks.</p>	<p>Progress report, workshop reports.</p>

<p><b>Planned Target:</b> Increase stakeholder awareness and engagement on conservation governance and management frameworks</p>			
<p><b>Output 2.1</b> Management effectiveness of Kanchenjunga Conservation Area assessed and the communities capacitated on the sustainable management of natural resources.</p> <p><b>Indicator 2.1.1</b> Number of workshops conducted to inform stakeholders about the IUCN Green List and OECM frameworks</p> <p><b>Baseline:</b>0</p> <p><b>Planned Target:</b> 6</p>	<p>6 workshops conducted at federal, provincial and local levels involving government institutions, conservation partners and community representatives, one during the consultation and the other for validation purposes.</p>	<p>No variance. Workshops conducted as planned.</p>	<p>Progress report</p>
<p><b>Indicator 2.1.2</b> Assessment of Management effectiveness of KCA</p> <p><b>Baseline:</b> No systematic management effectiveness assessment aligned with Green List standards</p> <p><b>Planned Target:</b> Conduct Green List assessment and identify management effectiveness gaps</p>	<p>Comprehensive assessment conducted against the IUCN Green List Standard, confirming that KCA meets the minimum requirements for the Green List Application Phase and identifying key gaps for improvement.</p>	<p>No variance. Assessment completed successfully.</p>	<p><a href="#">IUCN Green List Assessment Report</a></p>
<p><b>Indicator 2.1.3</b> Identification of number of potential OECM sites</p> <p><b>Baseline:</b> No identified OECM sites within the Kanchenjunga landscape</p>	<p>Approximately 2,599 km<sup>2</sup> of connected ecosystems assessed for OECM identification across the Kanchenjunga landscape.</p>	<p>No variance</p>	<p><a href="#">OECM assessment report</a></p>

<b>Planned Target:</b> Identify potential OECM sites	20 potential OECM sites identified, including key ecological corridors such as the Red Panda Corridor and Tinjure-Milke-Jaljale complex.		
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### **iii) Evaluation, Best Practices and Lessons Learned**

An assessment was conducted by IUCN that evaluated the management effectiveness of KCA against the IUCN Green List Standard, examining governance, management systems, biodiversity outcomes, and stakeholder participation. The assessment concluded that KCA meets the baseline criteria for the Green List Application Phase and has strong potential to advance toward certification with improvements in monitoring systems, data management, and institutional coordination.

Additionally, a landscape-level study identified potential OECM sites adjoining KCA, providing an important opportunity to expand conservation coverage beyond protected areas while recognizing community-led conservation initiatives.

### **Challenges and Mitigation Measures**

The project faced several operational challenges during implementation, particularly related to seasonal weather conditions, logistical constraints, and timing of local academic calendars. Field activities coincided with the monsoon season, which brought heavy rainfall, landslides, and temporary road and bridge blockages in the remote mountain terrain of Taplejung District. These conditions occasionally disrupted travel, delayed field visits, and complicated the installation and monitoring of camera traps in forest areas. In addition, some planned engagement activities with schools were affected by school holidays and festival periods, which temporarily reduced the availability of teachers and students participating in biodiversity monitoring activities.

To mitigate these challenges, the project team adopted flexible implementation arrangements, adjusting field schedules in consultation with local stakeholders and communities. Activities were rescheduled when weather conditions improved, and coordination with KCAMC and eco-club teachers helped ensure that monitoring equipment could still be installed and maintained in selected sites. Close collaboration with members of KCAMC and user committee also helped identify safe access routes and suitable locations for camera trap placement despite difficult terrain. Although one camera trap was lost due to landslide impacts during the rainy season, the monitoring system overall remained functional and continued to generate useful biodiversity data.

Despite these operational constraints, the project successfully delivered all planned outputs within the project timeframe. The flexibility of implementation arrangements, combined with strong local partnerships and community engagement, enabled the project to maintain momentum and achieve its objectives. The results generated biodiversity (wildlife) monitoring data, identification of biodiversity hotspots, and strengthened stakeholder awareness of conservation governance frameworks provide a valuable foundation for future conservation planning, scaling of community-based monitoring systems, and resource mobilization for long-term biodiversity management in the Kanchenjunga landscape.

### **Lessons Learned and Best Practices**

- Community-led monitoring is highly effective when combined with scientific tools and Indigenous knowledge.
- School-based conservation programs are powerful mechanisms for building long-term environmental awareness.
- Participatory conservation governance strengthens ownership and sustainability of conservation initiatives.

- Landscape-level approaches such as OECMs are important for improving ecological connectivity beyond protected areas.
- Hands-on learning and school engagement (eco-teachers and students supporting monitoring) builds inter-generational stewardship and anchors conservation in everyday education practice.
- The development of a documentary video summarizing project activities and outcomes proved to be an effective tool for communicating results and raising awareness about community-led biodiversity conservation in the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area. It enhanced knowledge sharing among stakeholders and supported broader outreach and policy dialogue on conservation efforts.
- Short-duration projects can effectively demonstrate proof-of-concept, but multi-season monitoring is necessary to produce stronger trend-related ecological evidence for adaptive management.
- Weather/terrain risks must be treated as a core design constraint (safety protocols, buffer time, contingency planning).
- Dissemination/validation accelerate policy uptake: they translate community evidence into shared priorities for management planning, safeguards, and longer-term designations (Green List, possible Biosphere Reserve).

These lessons provide valuable insights for scaling community-driven conservation initiatives in other protected landscapes.

#### iv) A Specific Story

*"For generations, our ancestors have preserved Kanchenjunga for us. Now, just like me, the responsibility is of our generation. That is why I participated in the training,"* said Mingma Phuji Sherpa, a student from Phaktalung, Taplejung.

For centuries, the Indigenous communities of Taplejung lived in harmony with the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA). However, modern challenges like climate change, poaching, and infrastructure development began to deteriorate this connection. While the local guardians never lacked the motivation to protect their home, they lacked the modern tools needed to counter these evolving threats.

To bridge this gap, the UNESCO project, funded by the Kunming Biodiversity Fund, focused on empowering the local youth and community. By providing training in GPS and camera trap technology, the initiative blended ancestral knowledge with scientific evidence. This not only created a comprehensive biodiversity inventory but also contributed to establishing a self-sustaining governance model that also involves women and marginalized groups into decision-making.

Santa Lumbu, a teacher who participated in one of the training sessions alongside his students, resonates with this feeling. He said, *"After the theoretical knowledge at the workshop, we went to the field to set up cameras in the jungle. Now, both my students and I are confident in setting up and managing these camera traps ourselves."*

Read the full story: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-project-equips-local-communities-serve-biodiversity-nepal>

#### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBMIS - Community Based Monitoring Information System

DNPWC - Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation

IUCN - International Union for Conservation of Nature

IPLCs - Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

KBF - Kunming Biodiversity Fund

KCA - Kanchenjunga Conservation Area

KCAMC - Kanchenjunga Conservation Area Management Council

KM-GBF – Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

MAB - Man and the Biosphere Programme

OECM - Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measure

PRA - Participatory Rural Appraisal

SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization