Autumn School in collaboration with Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh

A training programme on “Adapting to Climate Change: A Focus on Biodiversity in the Eastern Himalayas” was conducted from October 22 to November 3, 2018 at Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU), Roing Hills, Dibrugarh, Arunachal Pradesh. The programme was organized by ATREE and the Department of Botany, RGU with support from the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India.

This training programme delved into various concepts about ecology, climate change, interaction of climate change and biodiversity, ecosystem services and functions, sustainable development as well as social science. These aided the participants in understanding the adverse role of environmental change (synergistic effects of climate change and other non-climatic environmental stressors) on the biodiversity and people of the Northeastern Himalayas.

The primary goal of the programme was working towards achieving India’s conservation targets; target 2 aims at integrating biodiversity conservation values in national and state planning, developing and poverty alleviation strategies. In addition, the programme attempted at linking to the National Action Plan for Climate Change, specifically - National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan ecosystems and National Mission for Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change. We hope that the training might aid the participants in informing relevant strategies for region-specific conservation, management and climate adaptation programs.

The programme was attended by 23 participants representing all eight states in Northeast India. The resource persons were from ATREE, RGU and BNHS (Bombay Natural History Society). Over two weeks, the participants sharpened their skills on various aspects of ecology - biodiversity and its measurement, ecosystem function and services, global environmental change, socio-economic systems, research tools and methods, macroecology, birds and migration, climate change and adaptation strategies and citizen science. The first week focused on in-class methods including lectures and discussions; the second week focused on field methods through group projects.

Feedback from the participants indicated a successful programme in terms of participant representation, quality of content, resource material and training. The participants acknowledged that the training was interesting and topics explained well. The content of the lectures and discussions provided context to the group projects and lastly the programme was applicable to the participants’ current work.

- Rubin Sagar (rubin.sagar@atree.org)
Entrepreneurship Development Workshop

Entrepreneurship development is a major focus of the government and non-government sector for livelihood development of rural communities. ATREE has promoted many Self Help Groups and Cooperatives through its projects and programmes in the rural communities lying in and around Senchel Wildlife Sanctuary and Singalila National Park. A Workshop was conducted on 18th and 19th December 2018 to bring key leaders of these SHGs, Co-operative, Community Leaders and Key Officials of the Government Department to identify the gaps in entrepreneurship development. The General Manager of District Industries Center conducted an interactive session with the participants on identifying sectors for entrepreneurship development. He explained the details Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) which enables entrepreneurs to access financial assistance which are facilitated by the District Industries Center. Presentations were made by ATREE staff on Agricultural Business and Agri-Products, Rural Tourism as an enterprise, local craftsmanship, private public partnership in entrepreneurship development, and importance of business and financial planning for building entrepreneurship models in Darjeeling.

- Pasang Lepcha (pasang.lepcha@atree.org)

Learning visit for Tourism Entrepreneurs

A tourism exposure visit was organized to Chalamthang, Singtam, South Sikkim on the 28th and 29th of December 2018 to share information and experience on community based tourism practices adopted by the Chalamthang Tourism Development Committee. 8 members of Tourism Management Committees from Darjeeling district along with ATREE staff participated in this two-day programme. There were interactive sessions, observation of bamboo crafts and village walks to provide ideas on what could be adopted in the Darjeeling sites. Chalamthang is one of the leading destinations in Sikkim for rural tourism. Tourism has helped the village retain its youth in the village, build their capacity and further provided them an opportunity to become entrepreneurs.

The support they have received from the government agencies have further motivated them into developing the destination with more activities that focus on the biodiversity, local crafts and cuisines, cultural and ethnic heritage of the area. The Committee has come up with ingenious ways to make the experience authentic and distinctive for tourists.

- Poonam Rai (poonam.rai@atree.org)

Training on Sustainable Coffee Farming

A training programme for coffee planters was organized by ATREE with support from the Horticulture and Agriculture Department. The main purpose of this workshop on sustainable coffee farming was to bring coffee planters together and provide a method and structure for making coffee farming feasible and sustainable. This training helped in increasing the new coffee planter's knowledge and skills in sustainable and environmentally friendly coffee production. Environmentally certified coffee is increasingly becoming a requirement in national and international markets; therefore, the practitioners were informed about the benefits of organic and sustainable practices. The training targeted farmers, teachers and Womens Self-Help Groups, thus ensuring wider dissemination. Apart from this training, the trainers found out the scope of working on citrus
Training of coffee planters in Dabaipani, Tukdah Tea Estate

Learning & capacity building visit of ICS Entrepreneurs Ilam, Nepal

A TREE has been promoting Improved Cook Stoves (ICS) in Darjeeling by training community members as promoters/technicians. This has been possible with collaboration and technical support from NCDC (Namsaling Community Development Center) Nepal who have been the technical partner for introducing this energy efficient technology in our project sites in Darjeeling. ATREE has trained community members on construction and maintenance of ICS through various trainings. As a result, two ICS micro enterprise groups have been formed for 2 project clusters involving 30 villages for promotion and construction of ICS. Three senior ATREE field staff and 6 members of 2 micro enterprise groups from Darjeeling visited NCDC, Ilam, Nepal to learn about the best practices in ICS adoption. Apart from the ICS learning visit the participants interacted with community members and learnt about techniques of integrated farming systems, kiwi cultivation, animal husbandry and saving of local/indigenous seeds.

- Pasang Lepcha (pasang.lepcha@atree.org)

Grants received/sanctioned

1. Conservation of The Critically Endangered White-Bellied Heron, *Adea insignis* In Northeast India supported by National Geographic Society

2. Identifying, assessing, delineating and mapping areas with High Conservation Values (HCVs) and developing management recommendations/plans for them in SECURE Himalaya project landscapes in selected districts of Sikkim supported by UNDP

3. Designing a comprehensive human-wildlife conflict (HWC) management strategy in selected districts/landscapes of Sikkim supported by UNDP Project

4. Piloting climate resilient crops in Darjeeling. Farm Sector Promotion Fund (FSPF) of NABARD Regional Office, Kolkata: 700016

- Dr. Sarala Khaling (sarala.khaling@atree.org)

ATREE's mission is to promote socially just environmental conservation and sustainable development by generating rigorous interdisciplinary knowledge that engages actively with academia, policy makers, practitioners, activists, students and wider public audiences. ATREE's Northeast/Eastern Himalayas Office has a direct presence in the Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas and Assam, and works with a range of local partners in the other states of north east India.

For more information contact

Dr. Sarala Khaling
Regional Director
sarala.khaling@atree.org

Rohit George
rohit.george@atree.org