



Field Trip Report A. Schmid, Nepal

I. Summary

With Respect to Results:

The projects of the two organisations EcoHimal and Red Cross in Nepal were visited as planned. Especially the talks with representatives of the communities and the direct beneficiaries allowed for evaluation of the effectiveness and sustainability of the measures taken. The feeling of „ownership“ and the participation of the beneficiaries in the measures should be rated as particularly positive. Results on efficiency, relevance and sustainability of the interventions are available.

Nepal is among the poorest countries in South Asia. Approx. 80% of the diseases are caused by insufficient hygiene and water supply. In the remote rural areas the situation is especially precarious which is why the efforts of the two NGOs for basic health services (construction of latrines and drinking water systems, awareness-raising on hygiene and health etc.) are of particular importance for the population in the project regions.

Assessment, Comments:

The two projects which were visited both proceed in a satisfactory manner and will show sustainably positive effects after completion. They are in line with the national development strategies, are coordinated with the local authorities and are well embedded on site with the local project partners. Know-how and commitment by the staff of EcoHimal and Red Cross deserves special mentioning. One problem in the regions is out-migration for jobs. The majority of the male population works abroad or in the capital Kathmandu. Therefore, the support for women plays a special role in the projects.

Follow-up

The insights gained from the project visits were discussed on site with the people in charge from the Austrian and local contract partners and will be forwarded in writing within ADA and the respective Austrian NGOs.



II. Results of Project Visits

**Framework Programme 1980-06/2010 EcoHimal: Health and Village Development in Eastern Nepal; Project period: 01.01.2010 - 31.12.2011
OEZA-Financing: EUR 720,000.00 (80% of the total project costs)**

EcoHimal has been active in the mountain regions of the Himalayas and the Hindukush for 20 years. Since 1991, EcoHimal has been conducting projects in the fields of rural development and health. Health is also a major goal of Nepalese development policy; the government of Nepal has given priority to the improvement of the health sector, however, does not provide sufficient funds for this purpose.

The goal of the framework programme of EcoHimal is to provide improved access to more effective and higher quality health services, especially for disadvantaged groups in the villages of Eastern Nepal. The target group of the programme are approx. 1,200 households in the rural population of the Middle Hills, preferably ethnic minorities, women and children. The regional focus of activities lies in the remote mountain villages Pawai Village Development Committee (VDC), Solu Khumbu District and Bakachol VDC, Khotang District.

Field trip with Elisabeth Mackner (in charge of programme at EcoHimal Austria), Narajan Dhakal (in charge of programme at EcoHimal Nepal), Sangita Shakya (Health Officer EcoHimal Nepal), Khem Karki (livestock EcoHimal Nepal).

Results: Programme activities are in line with the national government programme of Nepal for promotion of health and the local demand for basic services in the areas of health and water supply. The village development strategy is geared towards participation and ownership: the local population and the communities get involved in the programme activities by means of labour and financial contributions. Apart from building the required infrastructure the programme offers awareness-raising and trainings in hygiene and health, capacity-building of local groups (such as village committees, women groups etc.) and income-earning opportunities. In the field of advocacy the project cooperates with the radio station „Association of Community Radio Broadcast Nepal“ (ACORAB) in Kathmandu. The programme meets the requirements of capacity-building by using a holistic approach and strengthening skills on the levels „individual, organisation, society“.

The status of the programme interventions visited corresponds to the plannings and the programme reports. Special mention should be given to the commitment and technical expertise of the persons in charge of the programme in Austria as well as the local staff of EcoHimal (Kathmandu team and local officers in the visited regions of Pawai and Bakachol). The local staff working in the two project areas are responsible for the topics health, infrastructure, agriculture, livestock and community development. The staff of EcoHimal Nepal working in Kathmandu know the local situation very well and visit the regions regularly and/or stay for longer periods in the project areas. This ensures that training of local staff, strengthening of organisational structures as well as monitoring and control of the measures function very well. Another aspect which was very obvious and should be positively rated is the active participation of the local communities and target groups. They get involved financially and by providing labour, for instance in the construction of latrines, water supply systems, smoke-reduced fireplaces for the kitchens.

Guidelines, concrete plans and responsibilities were formulated for the protection of water sources. All households contribute a small amount of money to a maintenance fund. This strategy is important not only for the maintenance of the structures but also for questions of ownership and responsibilities.

For the improvement of the health situation the households are supported also in agricultural efforts by motivating them to plant so-called „nutrition gardens“ near their houses. These small vegetable gardens and orchards help to improve their diets by enlarging and diversifying the available choice of vegetables, herbs and fruit. In addition, the sale of vegetables (especially garlic, chili, ginger) creates an extra income. Another income-earning measure relates to the breeding of livestock: upon request, the households get a number of chicken, goats, pigs, sheep and oxen which have to be returned in equal numbers after a certain period of time. The income situation in the regions has improved significantly over the past 18 months. The women groups receive micro-credits which are managed by the groups themselves. The women meet once a month and have shown good results so far.

Together with the Nepali government and other organisations a „Health Camp“ was organized in Phaplu in which more than 40 women took part. A total of seven women from Pawai and Bakachol with uterine prolapse were operated on; on four women a ring was inserted; the other participating women were examined and some received medication.

Advocacy is provided by the programme through the cooperation with a radio station. A campaign on health aspects is broadcast once a week.

Recommendations:

- In the field of **Advocacy** EcoHimal - together with the radio station - might develop more strategies on how lobbying might improve village development and the health situation in remote areas at the national level. Programmes and strategies by the Nepali government for the health sector exist. However, they are not sufficiently implemented. Results in this area should be targeted on a long-term basis.
- Stronger emphasis should be placed on the situation of **young people** to make them stay in the region as much as possible where they find opportunities that meets their interests.
- One focus might be placed in the long run on the strengthening of **women** regarding participation in the local government bodies. In the households, the women are responsible for the economic and financial situation but have no voice in the organisations at village level. However, the cultural situation needs to be taken into account. This development cannot be enforced by the Austrian side but has to grow within the society.
- The **Programme approach** needs to be more focussed: According to the programme document the methodological results at national level should be fed into the EZA health sector. This happens currently at district level. EcoHimal was supposed to prepare and implement a plan in the last year of programme implementation how the results can be systematised and made available to others.
- There is a need for a **stronger exchange** with organisations active in rural development (health and sanitation) in Nepal. In order to use synergies and to learn from one another it would be advantageous for the organisations to exchange ideas and experiences on certain topics or methods more often.