VIII.1.A.2. Users Analysis of Protected Areas - A Case Study of Binsar Wild Life Sanctuary in Kumaon

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India faces an enormous pressure of managing her natural resource base, so as to maintain a sustainable level of economic growth. The issue has become all the more important because the rural and urban poor in India, as well as in many other developing countries, are often worst hit by environmental degradation, especially loss of biodiversity and changes therein. To avoid biodiversity loss, a large number of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries are declared as protected areas, managed solely for conservation under the statute of law. The aim is to provide protection and conservation of habitats and their associated species, as well as their sustainable use, while maintaining quality of life.

With this backdrop, a study is undertaken for protected area, viz. Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary (BWS) in the Kumaon region of Uttar Pradesh. It is hypothesized that with high densities of population, the protected areas tend to impact closely the livelihoods of local communities, living in and around the sanctuary. It may demonstrate an interaction nature of human economic activity and wildlife preservation through interdependence of the local people and the natural resources for various use and non-use benefits or values. The study, based on primary survey, seeks to examine the sustainability of resource use, dependability of local people on the reserve for subsistence and other needs and the consequent pressures on the biodiversity of BWS. In this context, it provides social value of consumption of resources of BWS by the users and an overview of trade of between development and preservation values that may exist. The study also quantifies consumer surplus benefits from preservation and recreation of BWS on the basis of willingness to pay of local users in order to continue receiving benefits from the reserve. Through sensitivity analysis, it tries to capture the impact of households income, size of land holdings, livestock owned, perceptions regarding extent of degradation and other variables on their willingness to pay. Finally, it elicits the perceptions of households regarding management of reserve on joint basis and proposes policy options for biodiversity conservation within this protected area, without affecting their socio-economic conditions.