



CASE STUDY 6.4

MONITORING COMMUNITY-LEVEL NATURAL RESOURCE DISPUTES IN NEPAL WITH A CONFLICT-TRACKER TOOL

DHARAM RAJ UPRETTY AND DEV DATTA BHATTA • Practical Action Nepal

MOLLY KELLOGG, ALBERT MARTINEZ, AND SILJA HALLE • United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

LUKAS RÜTTINGER • adelphi

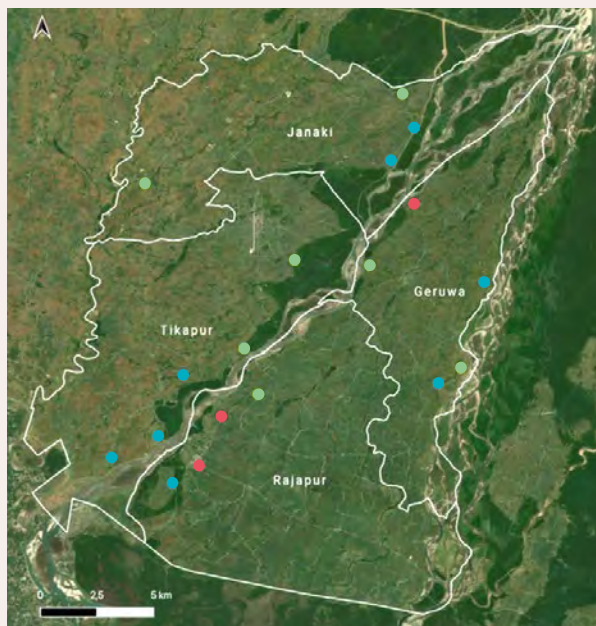
In 2018, the EU-UNEP Partnership on Climate Change, Environment and Security established a pilot project in the Bardiya and Kailali districts of West Karnali, Nepal to improve understanding of climate change risks in the country and test integrated approaches to programming that addressed the underlying drivers of insecurity and enhanced resilience to climate change. Using a combination of climate change adaptation and peacebuilding activities, the project aimed to promote sustainable and climate-resilient livelihood options for vulnerable groups, strengthen local governance capacities for natural resource dispute resolution, and enhance social cohesion and trust between communities.

A conflict tracking tool was used to identify the main conflicts in the Karnali River Basin (FIGURE 6.5) to guide project design and prioritize interventions, and to track them for monitoring, evaluation, and learning purposes. The tool was essentially a georeferenced database capturing each dispute's location in longitude and latitude, the stated reason for the conflict, its intensity, the actors involved in its resolution, and its resolution status. Some of the identified disputes included, for

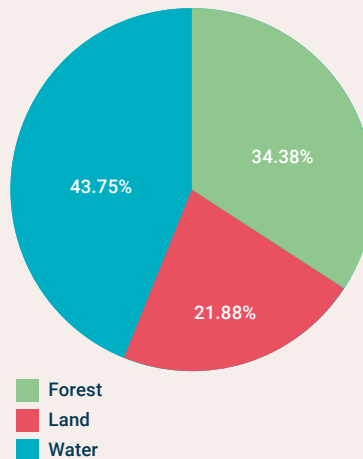
example, a disagreement over a community forest boundary between communities, a dispute over the public use of a pond which sat on both public and private land, or a conflict between government and community members over the extraction of river resources in areas where the Karnali River had changed course due to erosion and cut into private land.

In total, the project identified and tracked 32 disputes at the community level related to natural resources, using the conflict tracker tool to determine that conflict resolution and mitigation mechanisms supported by the project contributed to the reduction or full resolution of 75 percent of the 32 tracked disputes during the two years of project implementation (FIGURE 6.6). The data collected through the tool not only enhanced the evaluation of the impact of its interventions, but also supported more detailed learning on the resolution of different types of disputes. Indeed, most of the resolved or reduced disputes were over forest or water, while land-related disputes, such as conflicts over public land use and boundaries, proved the most complex and challenging to address.

FIGURE 6.5: LOCATION OF NATURAL RESOURCE-RELATED DISPUTES IDENTIFIED AND TRACKED IN NEPAL'S KARNALI RIVER VALLEY AT THE TIME OF PROJECT INCEPTION (2018).



Categorization of disputes over natural resources categorized by forest, land, and water (n = 32)



Source: UNEP 2023.

One of the disputes resolved by the communities was over water use between upstream communities in Sonahagaun and downstream communities in Sanakati. The water supply was limited, and downstream residents in Sanakati often did not have enough water for their farming and household needs, leading to disputes with Sonahagaun. To improve the equitable use of water, the project supported the establishment of an inclusive water committee, built capacity on conflict resolution, and facilitated spaces for dialogue to agree on a fair distribution plan and manage water use, which significantly

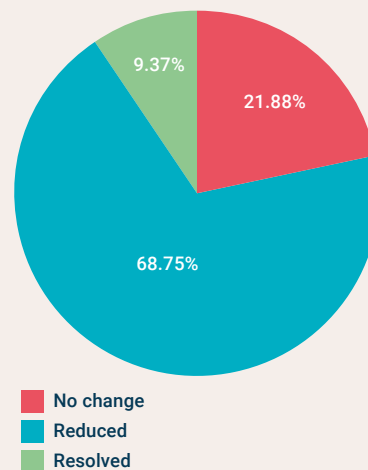
improved communication between the two communities and resolved the longstanding dispute.

This case shows that a combination of a simple database and GIS can enhance environmental peacebuilding approaches at the design, monitoring, and evaluation levels by helping actors to track the evolution of community conflicts related to natural resources, environmental degradation, and climate change issues throughout the project life cycle.

FIGURE 6.6: STATUS OF THE NATURAL RESOURCE-RELATED DISPUTES ADDRESSED BY THE PROJECT THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN THE KARNALI RIVER VALLEY.



Status of natural resource-related disputes at project closure (n = 32)



Source: UNEP 2023.