SOWA RIGPA (AMCHI MEDICINE) CONSERVATION PROJECT, LO-MANTHANG VDC, UPPER MUSTANG, NEPAL

Today, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), as many as 80% of the world’s peoples depend on traditional medicine and plant extracts for their primary health care needs. In Tibetan medicine, the value of medicinal herbs has long been understood and good use made of the hundreds of plant species that grow wild across the Himalayas. (India, Nepal, Bhutan, TAR, PR China, Mongolia) Large pharmaceutical companies are now showing a great interest in medicinal plants and are researching their effectiveness. However, in the Himalayas as well as elsewhere, over-harvesting is becoming a serious problem. Poor local villagers are paid to collect medicinal plants for export. Wholesale collection is common, leaving few remaining plants to set seed and produce viable populations. Himalayan Medicinal & Aromatic Plants are excessively used for commercial purpose (including herbal products, spices, natural dying), traditional & folk medicine and bio-chemistry making scarcity of the plants in the Nepal Himalaya. The project aims to integrate Amchi’s Indigenous Environmental Knowledge and Practices with Community-Based Biodiversity Conservation, Sustainable Livelihoods and Culturally Appropriate Health Care in Mustang District, Nepal.


Over the years, the amchi course was refined and formalised, as Lo Kunphen worked with the HAA and Government of Nepal Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) in 2006, Lo Kunphen was registered by CTEVT as a technical school, the first and only institution in Nepal to offer a formal qualification in amchi medicine. Through the CTEVT approved kargiopa course and development of the next level of study, Durappa Certificate in Amchi Medicine, which now forms the first stage of becoming a qualified amchi. It also ensures development of higher level of study, Durappa (Certificate in Amchi Medicine), exploring scholarship opportunities for the brightest students as well as maintain patient data record and analysis in three village clinics providing clinical apprenticeship & experimentation on treatment measure also lobbying for Policy on Sustainable Harvesting & Trade of NTFPs and Capacity Building on NTFPs Management 8. Marketing Linkage Research & Analysis for product identification.

The mountain communities of Mustang District stand to benefit directly from the increased availability of medicinal herbs; moreover, with the dissemination of a successful model of cultivation based on this trial project, the Himalayan Amchi Association (HAA) can expand these benefits to include other mountain communities in Nepal Himalaya and beyond. This work will advance HAA’s capacity to deliver effective primary health care and enhance our understanding of the links between people’s health, plant conservation, resource management and improved livelihood. In this context, the knowledge and practices of the amchi will be promoted for conservation and sustainable use of medicinal plants and local livelihood benefits.