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*Note: Information events at University level are not reported in Deliverable 18, as they are scheduled for mid-term of ASSESS-HKH (autumn 2007). Information events at Universities in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan will then be held. The scientific community will also be able to gain information during various national and international scientific meetings, symposia, or congresses. A detailed description will also be given at a later date.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The “Development of an Assessment System to Evaluate the Ecological Status of Rivers in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region” (ASSESS-HKH) represents a novelty in the field of bio-indication in the Hindu-Kush Himalayan (HKH) region. For the first time, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Pakistan are involved in a common research activity that aims at the development of new tools for river quality assessment using benthic macroinvertebrates.

The river quality in the HKH region suffers from a variety of different impacts, such as organic pollution, uncontrolled waste disposal, damming, water abstraction for irrigation, eutrophication, pesticide influx, and sediment entry. Most of these impacts arise from an intensive human usage of rivers to meet essential necessities, such as drinking water and water for washing or bathing. Rivers may also have a religious component, for example, for burial places. Hence, people’s daily life in the HKH region is strongly linked to rivers and, therefore, also affected by the river quality.

Before certain measures are undertaken to improve the quality of rivers, the quality has to be evaluated first. The principle objective of ASSESS-HKH is, therefore, to develop such a bio-indication system capable of assessing the river quality. For this reason, the research activities are also related to some extent to the people living at the research area. ASSESS-HKH additionally aims at informing the public about the research programme, its objectives, and the overall benefit for the public. The information is structured on different levels depending on the audience to be targeted. The scientific community will be informed during information events held at Universities in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan. The community will also be able to gain information during various national and international scientific meetings, symposia, or congresses. A detailed description will be given at a later date.

This report covers the local information events targeting the local public, i. e. the people living adjacent to or near the rivers investigated for ASSESS-HKH. The information events are important to raise the public awareness and consequently the public acceptance of the research activities. Public acceptance is regarded as an fundamental step towards a successful water management.

During the ASSESS-HKH kick-off meeting, an agreement was made that local information events shall be held in parallel to macroinvertebrate sampling instead of before it. The reasons for this deviation from the statements made in the technical annex were i) that the arrangements necessary for sampling will take very much effort and, therefore, will not leave sufficient time for information events before the sampling programme starts, and ii) that many candidate sites for sampling are located far away from the research institutes, so that information events held independent from sampling would double the effort and costs, at least for travelling. For this reasons, it was agreed on having local information events mainly while doing the field work for the first sampling period.

This time shift implicates that local information events are still to be held (mid to end of November 2005), while this report is written. Hence, results and impressions of local information events are not yet available for this report. Therefore, information strategies and materials that were prepared for local information events are presented in the following.

## LOCAL INFORMATION EVENTS

### Audience and objectives of local information events

Local information events aim at informing the *local public* about ASSESS-HKH. This includes local water managers, representatives of the local (and district) government, various stakeholders, and in particular those people who live and work at the investigated area. In order to reach water managers, the local government, and important stakeholders, they will be invited beforehand by short notes in local newspapers or individually by telephone calls. Governmental representatives and stakeholders represent an important audience as both their awareness of the problems targeted by ASSESS-HKH and their acceptance of the research work will strongly promote the success of ASSESS-HKH.

Another important audience is constituted by the local public, i. e. people who live or work at the area investigated within ASSESS-HKH. This includes, for example, local inhabitants, farmers, fishers, bathing and washing people, or children playing at river banks. Usually, the inhabitants of the villages and settlements or, in case of larger towns, districts will be addressed for a local information event and therefore invited with flyers and appropriate posters. As children are very important multipliers of information, local information events shall also target them, which could be reached by holding events at schools or gymnasiums.

The following objectives may be reached during local information events:

- *Information* on ASSESS-HKH

The local government, stakeholders, and the public are informed about the general project objectives, the sampling programme, the assessment system, the partner countries, the co-operation between Europe and South Asia

- Creation of governmental, stakeholder's, and public *awareness* of river quality issues

River quality aspects and its relation to various pressures and impacts that affect river quality are explained. The relation of specific water uses and resulting quality impacts is shown. In particular, impacts that interfere with public necessities are highlighted.

- Creation of governmental, stakeholder's, and public *awareness* for river-dwelling organisms

The concept and advantage of bio-indication is briefly explained with examples. Different benthic macro-invertebrates are shown (fresh living specimens sampled shortly before and re-introduced to the river thereafter). People are asked to take and turn stones from the river bed themselves to investigate the animals living on the bottom surface.

- Creation of governmental, stakeholder's, and public *acceptance* of ASSESS-HKH

Comprehensive local acceptance of the research work undertaken during ASSESS-HKH and in particular of the project's objectives will be an essential step towards a long term establishment of water management and monitoring programmes in the HKH region.

- Communication of *benefits* and improvements for the public on the field of water management

Ways and specific aspects of how local stakeholders and the local public may benefit from the activities undertaken within ASSESS-HKH are discussed.

## Workflow

Prior to information events, representatives of the local government and important stakeholders are invited, such as town majors, water managers, staff members of water boards and sewage plants, and farmers.

Three different steps have been scheduled to hold local information events. The first is to give general information on ASSESS-HKH. Therefore, local events are organised and held at public buildings, such as schools, town halls, or gymnasiums. A simple presentation and explanation of ASSESS-HKH is given. The public is invited before and is informed by means of public flyers. Several public posters are used for the local events to illustrate and summarise the information given during the event. The public has the opportunity to raise questions and give feedback on ASSESS-HKH.

The second step of local information events is to get the public to a river bank and practically show, how sampling is undertaken for ASSESS-HKH. A macro-invertebrate sample is taken and macro-invertebrates are shown and explained to the public. The principle of bio-indication is presented by a few different bio-indicators, such as worms and non-biting midges, or EPT taxa. People are asked to sample themselves.

In a third step, short questionnaires are disseminated in both English and local language to gain a generalised and standardised feedback from the local public (for details see section "Dissemination material"). An additional audit questionnaire is completed by the person responsible for the event and provides general information on the event, such as: date, location, number of participants and corresponding target group, or estimation of success.

## Frequency

There was no fixed number of information events defined for Workpackage 8 “Dissemination”. However, at least one local information event is scheduled for each major research area per country, i. e. one event per stream type and country (Table 1). Additional information events will help to reach the public, in particular in those cases, where research is spread over a wide area. As the investigation area has not yet been defined for all stream types and partner countries, the total number of local information events to be held is still open.

*Table 1: Overview of scheduled local information events and available dissemination material (as at the end of October 2005)*

State of local information events	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Nepal	Pakistan*
<b>Local information events scheduled</b>	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	yes	n.a.*
<b>Date(s)</b>	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2005-11-09 2005-11-13	n.a.*
<b>Number</b>	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2	n.a.*
<b>Target groups informed/invited</b>	n.a.	Local public (newspaper article)	n.a.	Local government, stakeholders	n.a.*
<b>Dissemination material prepared</b>	Flyer and three posters in English, response and audit questionnaires in English	Flyer and three posters in English, response and audit questionnaires in English	Flyer and three posters in English, response and audit questionnaires in English	Flyer in Nepali and English, three posters in English, response and audit questionnaires in English	Flyer and three posters in English, response and audit questionnaires in English

*\*Note: Due to the disastrous earthquake in northeast Pakistan and northwest India on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005, research activities in Pakistan were postponed. This includes local information events, which will be held at a later date in Pakistan.*

## Dissemination material

The dissemination material was created to support the organisation and implementation of local information events. All materials have been fitted to the corresponding partner’s necessities, i. e. with related contact addresses. If necessary, flyers and other dissemination materials are provided in local language. Therefore, Asian partners are in charge of translation.

The dissemination material was made available to the whole consortium of ASSESS-HKH through the project website [www.assess-hkh.at](http://www.assess-hkh.at). A password is needed for viewing “Internal Downloads” and downloading dissemination material.

## **Flyers**

The *public flyer* aims at informing the general public briefly about the contents and objectives of ASSESS-HKH, and the research activities in general. It is used to create public awareness of pollution and other stressors that may significantly threaten river quality. Moreover, a rough overview of bio-indication is given. The consortium is presented and contact persons are given for the corresponding country to provide further detailed information. Flyers will be available in both English and local language. The English version is given in Annex 1.

## **Posters**

Several *public posters* have been created to support the local information events and to illustrate the basic information. Public posters address people without professional ecological knowledge, their text is limited to basic statements and explanation, and framed by various photographs and diagrams.

## **Questionnaires**

Two questionnaires have been prepared to gather general information on local information events. The *response questionnaire* aims at getting a feedback from event participants. For example: whether and how a participant was invited; whether he/she represents a stakeholder or governmental organisation; whether he/she is familiar with river assessment, understands, and supports it. A comment section can be used for more general feedback.

The *audit questionnaire* was designed to get general data on the event itself. That is, how many persons participated, the way they have been invited, the organisations they represented, the dissemination material that was used, and the feedback and questions that were raised during the event.

Both queries will then be used to analyse the local information events. The analysis addresses the overall question, whether the events were successful. If they were (or were not), the reasons shall be identified. The maintenance of successful information transfer to the public is likely to be one of the essential steps for the communication of ASSESS-HKH.

## **ANNEXES**

Annex 1: Flyer #1 Local Information Events (UDE F#1) (Example AHEC, India)

Annex 2: Poster #1 Local Information Events (UDE P#1) (Example AHEC, India)

Annex 3: Poster #2 Local Information Events (UDE P#2) (Example AHEC, India)

Annex 4: Poster #3 Local Information Events (ICIMOD P#1)

Annex 5: Poster #4 Scientific (UDE P#3)

Annex 6: Questionnaire #1 Local Information Events Response English (UDE QR#1)  
(Example AHEC, India)

Annex 7: Questionnaire #2 Local Information Events Audit English (UDE QA#1) (Example  
AHEC, India)