# Voluntary Conservation Activities as Platforms for Youth Development

Youth Engagement in Integrated Conservation and Development Initiatives in Nepal

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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract

This thesis examines the role of youth in the participatory natural resources management and conservation work of WWF Nepal and the reasons why the organisation engages youth in its integrated conservation and development initiatives. Furthermore, the study analyses what kinds of experiences and personal development the youth have gained and built while participating in two different voluntary conservation groups: the anti-poaching and the Population, Health and Environment project (PHE) supported peer-to-peer education groups.

The theoretical framework consists of three discourses: community-based natural resources management and conservation, the integrated conservation and development approach and the field of youth research, especially the research on the theory of Positive Youth Development. The concept of the "six Cs" that refers to the evolvement of the elements of competence, confidence, character, connection, caring, and contribution is used to examine the development of personal features in the youth volunteers. The data consist of two parts: interviews with WWF Nepal staff, which were conducted personally during 2012, and a survey with 254 youth participants conducted by WWF Nepal in 2013.

Four different strategies could be separated in WWF Nepal's conservation work regarding children and youth, namely: 1) bringing up responsible citizens; 2) influencing parents and wider community; 3) supporting youth to be active agents in conservation; and 4) ensuring the sustainability of conservation by targeting youth. These strategies indicate that children and youth are not only seen as recipients of conservation information but rather as key stakeholders in implementing conservation work, as well as achieving goals for long-term conservation and sustainable development.

The survey discovered that the voluntary conservation activities supported by WWF Nepal seem to contribute to some extent to the development of various personal features in young people, such as self-confidence, problem-solving and resistance skills, ability to take leadership, and warm relationships with peers, family and adults. In addition, the study found evidence of the development of empathy toward nature and people and the will to contribute positively to self, others, and the environment. The study argues that linking voluntary environmental youth activities with the integrated conservation and development initiatives could result in increased conservation awareness, personal skills, and confidence in the youth, which could in return benefit the effectiveness and sustainability of the conservation and development efforts. However, voluntary activities were found to face such challenges and shortages as insufficient opportunities for participation, little or no power for the youth to influence the programmes, and lack of proper equipment. To sustain the motivation of young people and activate more of them to volunteer, this study argues that their desires should be recognised and participatory engagement should be further improved when developing voluntary activities.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords
 Youth, integrated conservation and development, community based natural resources management, positive youth development

Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract

Tutkimus tarkastelee maaseudun nuorten osallistumista ympäristönsuojelu- ja sosiaalisen kehityksen hankkeiden toteutukseen eteläisessä Nepalissa sekä sitä, millaisia tavoitteita ympäristöjärjestö WWF Nepalilla on maaseudun nuorten osallistamisessa omaan toimintaansa. Lisäksi tarkastellaan vapaaehtoistoiminnan vaikutuksia salametsästyksen vastaisissa partioissa ja ympäristönsuojelua sekä seksuaali- ja terveyskasvatusta yhdistävässä toiminnassa mukana olleisiin nepalilaisnuoriin heidän omien näkemystensä ja kokemustensa kautta.

Tutkielman teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu kolmesta osa-alueesta, joita ovat yhteisöpohjainen sekä osallistava luonnonvarojen hallinta ja suojelu, suojelua ja sosiaalista kehitystä yhdistävä lähestymistapa sekä nuorten positiivista henkilökohtaista kehitystä käsittelevä Positive Youth Development -teoria. Teorian mukaan nuorten pätevyys, itsevarmuus, luonteenlujuus, sosiaaliset suhteet, välittäminen ja halu toimia vahvistuvat vapaaehtoistoiminnan kautta. Työn aineisto koostuu vuonna 2012 WWF Nepalin henkilökunnan kanssa toteutetuista haastatteluista ja vuonna 2013 WWF Nepalin avustuksella toteutetusta kyselystä, johon osallistui 254 WWF Nepalin tukemissa ympäristöhankkeissa toimivaa vapaaehtoista nuorta.

WWF Nepalin nuoria koskevasta toiminnasta nousi esiin neljä eri tavoitetta: 1) vastuullisten kansalaisten kasvattaminen, 2) vanhempiin ja laajempaan yhteisöön vaikuttaminen nuorten kautta, 3) nuorten kannustaminen oma-aloitteiseen suojelutoimintaan ja 4) pitkäaikaisten suojelutavoitteiden toteutumisen varmistaminen nuorten avulla. Tutkielma osoittaa, että lapset ja nuoret nähdään oleellisina toimijoina niin suojelutoimenpiteiden toteutuksessa kuin pitkäaikaisten suojelutavoitteiden ja kestävän kehityksen saavuttamisessa.

Nuoret itse kokivat erilaisten henkilökohtaisten ominaisuuksiensa, kuten itsevarmuuden, ongelmanratkaisukyvyn, johtamistaitojen ja sosiaalisten suhteiden vahvistuneen sinä aikana, kun he olivat osallistuneet vapaaehtoisesti ympäristönsuojelutoimintaan. Lisäksi tutkimus osoitti, että nuoret tunsivat empatiaa luontoa, eläimiä ja muita ihmisiä kohtaan sekä kokivat tarvetta toimia itsensä, muiden ihmisten ja luonnon puolesta. Tutkimus esittää, että yhdistämällä suojelu- ja kehityshankkeisiin myös vapaaehtoista nuorille suunnattua toimintaa voidaan parantaa nuorten suojelumyönteisiä asenteita, heidän henkilökohtaisten ominaisuuksiensa vahvistumista ja oma-aloitteisuutta. Tämä hyödyttäisi vastavuoroisesti myös suojelu- ja kehityshankkeiden tehokkuutta sekä kestävyyttä. Tutkimuksessa selvisi, että nuorten motivaatiota vapaaehtoiseen toimintaan heikentävät kuitenkin muun muassa heikot ja epätasa-arvoiset osallistumis- ja vaikuttamismahdollisuudet, ympäristön puutteellinen tuki ja arvostus sekä kunnollisten tarvikkeiden puute. Nuorten aktiivisuutta osallistua ympäristönsuojelu- ja kehitystoimintaan tulisi parantaa muun muassa huomioimalla paremmin heidän omat tarpeensa ja toiveensa sekä kehittämällä heidän osallistumis- ja vaikuttamismahdollisuuksiaan.

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Namaste!

# Contents

# Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ACA | Annapurna Conservation Area |
| BZ | Buffer Zone |
| BZMCs | Buffer Zone Management Committees |
| (Five) Cs | Refer to *competence, confidence, connection, character, caring* |
| (Sixth) C | Refers to *contribution* |
| CAMC | Conservation Area Management Committees |
| CBAPO | Community-Based Anti Poaching Operations |
| CBC | Community-Based Conservation |
| CBNRM | Community-Based Natural Resources Management |
| CBNRMC | Community-Based Natural Resources Management and Conservation |
| CFCC | Community Forest Coordination Committee |
| CFUG | Community Forest User Group |
| CFCC | Community Forest Coordination Committee |
| EE | Environmental Education |
| FPAN | Family Planning Association Nepal |
| ICD | Integrated Conservation and Development |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NRM | Natural Resources Management |
| PHE | Population, Health and Environment |
| PYD | Positive Youth Development |
| SHL | Sacred Himalayan Landscape |
| SRH | Sexual and Reproductive Health |
| TAL-CBRP | Terai Arc Landscape Corridor and Bottleneck Restoration Project |
| UCs | User Councils |
| UGs | User Groups |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| WWF | World Wide Fund for Nature |

# 1 Introduction

Participatory approach and community involvement are substantive elements in the conservation and natural resources management policies and practices of today (Salafsky & Wollenberg 2000; Brown 2002; Bajracharya et al. 2007; Paudel et al. 2007a; Salafsky 2010). Community-based natural resource management and conservation (CBNRMC) has two objectives: the protection of key species and habitats while meeting the livelihood needs of the local people who live adjacent to the conservation areas (Campbell & Vainio-Mattila 2003; Wells & McShane 2004). Furthermore, through integrated conservation and development initiatives (ICDs), the generation of livelihoods that not only improve the economic development of the rural poor, but also contribute to conservation are supported (Wells & McShane 2004). In Nepal, ICD initiatives aim at conserving important wildlife and ecosystems inside protected areas while improving people's livelihoods in the surrounding buffer zones and connecting corridor areas, where local communities are the main managers and users of forests and other ecosystems (Bajracharya et al. 2007; Paudel et al. 2007b; Pokharel et al. 2007).

The environmental organisation WWF Nepal, which has implemented conservation programmes together with the government of Nepal since 1967, sees community stewardship in natural resources management as an essential strategy in achieving sustainability of conservation. As a part of its integrated conservation and development approach, WWF Nepal has developed various concepts to engage community members in conservation practices. (WWF Nepal 2012a.) In the 2012 annual report of WWF Nepal, the country director states: *"-- it is in this role that we have found a key ally – the local people, with whom we work, inspire and empower to lead an evolutionary movement in conservation"* (WWF Nepal 2012b). However, participatory approach to conservation and development is not a problem-free concept. Challenges for instance regarding equity, effectiveness, sustainability, and economic attractiveness are present when working with heterogeneous communities where people have varying needs, interests, and motivations. (Agarwal 2001; Ribot & Peluso 2003; Reed et al. 2009.)

The population of children and youth in the rural communities that lie around the protected areas and in the buffer zones and corridors is notable: around half of the total population in Nepal consists of children and youth below the age of 24 (ILO 2010). WWF Nepal has also recognised the potential of children and youth in the rural communities and has engaged youth in different activities for the benefit of conservation (WWF Nepal 2012a). One of the main objectives in engaging youth and children is creating positive behaviour change with the help of environmental education and activities (ibid. 2012a). This form of thinking is also recognised by Chawla (2007), as well as Alwin and McCammon (2003), who state that when participating in conservation at an early age, young people can have a significant influence on environmental issues as youth and potentially later as adults. Furthermore, they point out that adolescence is the period when young people are most open to social forces and socialisation influences and when their values and worldviews undergo significant formation. Therefore, according to them, identities formed in adolescence are likely to inform values, attitudes, and behaviour throughout life. (Alwin & McCammon 2003; Chawla 2007.) Furthermore, WWF Nepal wants to involve youth in conservation and livelihood development activities to discourage them from participating in illegal activities, such as poaching (WWF Nepal 2011). Rural youth in Nepal suffer from unemployment or are forced to work in the informal sector with low wages and dangerous working conditions (ILO 2010). These young people are easy targets for wildlife poachers and traffickers who exploit them in exchange for a small fee (WWF Nepal 2011).

Nevertheless, actively involving local youth in conservation and development initiatives faces challenges (WWF Nepal 2011). In Nepal, youth migration abroad, especially to the Gulf countries, is common due to lack of employment opportunities and the general unstable and fragile political situation that provides little hope for the younger generation (ILO 2010; Nepal Central Bureau of Statistics 2011; WWF Nepal 2011). A case study analysis on conservation and livelihoods linkages in the Khata Corridor in the Terai region in southern Nepal (WWF Nepal 2011) shows that dependence on remittances can promote more migration of young people, leading to a reduction in the number of young people in the community. The absence of youth not only causes social imbalance in the communities but also complicates the conservation initiatives that depend on the help from local youth (Lokshin & Glinskaya 2008; WWF Nepal 2011).

To fight against the challenge of youth migration and to give the local youth meaningful activities, WWF Nepal has supported several voluntary youth-led conservation and livelihood activities through its Terai Arc Landscape Conservation and Livelihood Programme. Examples of these include eco clubs, anti-poaching and patrolling groups, wildlife and biodiversity monitoring tasks, as well as peer-to-peer education groups operating under the integrated Population, Health and Environment project (PHE), implemented jointly with the Family Planning Association of Nepal (FPAN). (WWF Nepal 2013; Interview 10 April 2012.) Although these activities have attracted a great number of youth volunteers in many districts in Terai, the case study from the Khata Corridor (WWF Nepal 2011) shows that it is challenging to retain their engagement. Therefore, WWF Nepal has also supported the establishment of other than conservation activities for youth, such as skill-based entrepreneurship, scholarships, cultural clubs, and recreation ventures (ibid. 2011). Similar approach to youth engagement can also be discovered in the theory of Positive Youth Development (PYD) (Lerner et al. 2005a), which emphasises that the youth should be viewed as resources to be developed, instead of focusing on the negative risks they might face, such as involvement with illegal activities or unemployment. The PYD theory further highlights that by focusing on their strengths and helping them to become more self-aware and self-confident, the youth can grow up into active and healthy citizens with strong potential to catalyse positive change in society (Lerner et al. 2005a). Different youth programmes and voluntary youth activities, such as sports, youth clubs, nature groups, scouts, or music groups, are important platforms for the development of positive features in youth. In addition, support from adults and the surrounding community is considered important in the process of youth development (Larson 2000; Lerner et al. 2005b). The personal development in youth happens when the five different features – competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring – are strengthened. In addition, when these "five Cs" are present in a young person, there emerges a sixth C – contribution -, which means that the young person develops a desire to contribute positively to self, family, community, and civil society. (Lerner et al. 2005a.)

My interest in this topic has mostly developed during my professional travels to Nepal, Indonesia, and Tanzania while working as a forest officer with WWF Finland. In these countries, I have been able to visit rural areas where the local WWF offices are implementing conservation and development projects. During these field visits, I have

observed how the rural youth are involved in the conservation programmes. I have come to realise that in many cases young people are not assigned specific roles in the programmes even though, based on my observations, they are often lacking meaningful action and would be eager and interested in taking part in conservation activities. In Nepal, on the other hand, I had seen that local youth were often implementing various conservation activities themselves and seemed to be quite proud of it. All this inspired me to conduct this study.

My aim in this study is to analyse how rural youth contribute to conservation and village development activities by examining the role of youth in the participatory natural resources management and conservation work of WWF Nepal. Furthermore, I examine what kinds of experiences and personal development the youth have gained and built while participating in two different voluntary conservation groups: the anti-poaching and the Population, Health and Environment project (PHE) supported peer-to-peer education groups.

The main research questions are:

1. What kind of strategies does WWF Nepal use to engage youth in integrated conservation and development initiatives?

2. To what extent do youth volunteers express the personal features, the "six Cs" - competence, confidence, character, connection, caring, and contribution?

3. What motivates the youth to participate, and what other positive and/or negative experiences have they gained while taking part in the voluntary conservation activities?

The inspiration for this study stems from different research fields: first, community-based natural resources management and conservation; second, the integrated conservation and development approach; and third, the field of youth research, especially the theory of Positive Youth Development.

This study consists of seven chapters. This introduction is followed by the theoretical framework, which presents the scientific discussion related to this research. Chapter 3 includes the methodology and data. Chapters 4 and 5 present the results in two parts: first the outcomes from the interviews with WWF Nepal staff, and second the outcomes from the survey with the youth. Chapter 6 includes the analysis of the strategies of WWF Nepal regarding the role of youth in participatory natural resources management. Furthermore chapter 6 analyses the experiences and views of youth volunteers and examines whether participating in conservation activities has supported the development of personal features in these youth. Finally, chapter 7 concludes the study and discusses about the benefits as well as challenges of voluntary environmental youth activities and what outcomes could be achieved when engaging youth in conservation and development initiatives. In addition chapter 7 presents suggestions for further research.

# 2 Conceptual Framework: Conservation, Participation and Youth

The conceptual framework of this study is built on three discourses: first, the community-based natural resources management and conservation CBNRMC (also referred to as participatory natural resources management and conservation); second, the integrated conservation and development approach (ICD), and third, the field of youth research, especially on the theory of Positive Youth Development.

## 2.1 Evolution of Natural Resources Management and Conservation

### 2.1.1 *Community-Based Approach to Natural Resources Management*

The community-based natural resources management and conservation approach links two objectives together: first, enhancing wildlife and biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of natural resources (such as forests or water resources), and second, improving livelihoods of the local people that live in or close to the conserved or managed natural resources (Campbell & Vainio-Mattila 2003; Wells & McShane 2004). According to Fisher et al. (2005), CBNRM consists of a wide variety of initiatives, including community forestry, collaborative forest management, and community fisheries. Salafsky and Wollenberg (2000) further describe CBNRM as a way to recognise local peoples' role in natural resources management and conservation, and develop dependent relationships between biodiversity and local people through giving opportunities for direct benefits from the environment and its sustainable management. In this context, it is hoped that incentives to stop external threats to biodiversity, such as over-grazing, illegal logging, or poaching, would develop (Salafsky & Wollenberg 2000; Wells & McShane 2004.)

A manual on community-based natural resources management published originally in 1986 and later in 2006 by the international conservation organisation WWF describes in it the context of South Africa as follows: "*CBNRM is an approach to the management of land and natural resources which is relevant to, and has the potential to provide solutions to some of the problems found within the communal lands of Southern Africa, where the majority of people live with, and depend on, natural resources.*" The manual

further explains that *"CBNRM evolved over the last 20 years with the realization that for sustainable use of natural resources, people living with the resources should be responsible for their management and benefit from using the natural resources."* (WWF 2006: 5).

### 2.1.2   The 1980s - from Isolation and Exclusion to People in Conservation

According to Wells and McShane (2004), the first steps of combining people and conservation were taken in the 1980s when conservationists primarily in developing countries began working with local communities to combine efforts to enhance conservation and social development around national parks and protected areas. This approach rose from the failures with the conventional "fortress and fines conservation" approach that had mainly excluded people from the conservation areas and focused on strict protection of important wildlife habitats with the help of park rangers and army (Fisher et al. 2005: 20). In the 1960s and 1970s, nature was considered both in developed and developing countries as untouched wilderness where wild animals live but where human did not belong. This was especially common in Africa, where non-native colonialists fond of wildlife hunting were active in establishing national parks and protected areas that physically excluded people. (Brown 2002.) Even though conservation was in many cases justified with phrases such as *"in the name of all people", "for common human interests"*, and *"for the benefit and enjoyment of all"*, the actual gains from these areas were hardly equally distributed (Fisher et al. 2005: 19). The local people were forced to live outside the protected areas with no access to the parks, and their customary rights to the lands were denied (Salafsky & Wollenberg 2000; Mehta & Heinen 2001; Brown 2002; Pokharel et al. 2007). In the end, this approach was proved impractical because it was almost impossible to deny the access of local people to the areas they had used for centuries (Salafsky & Wollenberg 2000). Moreover, the exclusion of local people from their own lands was seen as a violation to their human rights since they were also denied the access to their livelihoods, traditions, and culture (Fisher et al. 2005).

In the 1980s, the general political atmosphere toward people-oriented strategies for conservation evolved around the world when the social issues, such as rural livelihood

development and people's rights, gained strength in the general societal discussion (Adams et al. 2004; Wells & McShane 2004). Poverty was also seen as one of the underlying causes of environmental degradation as poor people were "forced" to rely on natural resources. As a result, conservation practitioners realised that local communities and people needed to be included in the conservation programmes as relevant actors who can help to achieve the conservation goals if properly targeted with benefits and who, on the other hand, can be in the way of achieving the goals if excluded. (Agrawal & Gibson 1999; Campbell & Vainio-Mattila 2003; Berkes 2004; Wells & McShane 2004.) Furthermore, the isolated conservation areas were not sufficient to sustain vital populations of plant and animal species, which forced the conservationists to expand their views on the protected areas (Fisher et al. 2005).

The first strategies to combine the development needs of local people with the conservation needs were based on the Man and Biosphere approach that was developed by UNESCO (Salafsky & Wollenberg 2000; Campbell & Vainio-Mattila 2003; Wells & McShane 2004). According to Salafsky and Wollenberg (2000), in a biosphere reserve, people are entitled to use biological resources according to defined spatial zones; namely the core zone that is strictly protected and the surrounding buffer zone where local people are allowed to collect different natural products and continue to implement their livelihoods. In practice, this approach aims at reducing pressure on protected areas by strengthening park management in the core zone and providing compensation or substitution to local people for loss of access to resources in the buffer zone. (ibid. 2000.)

In the 1990s, a shift from isolated protected areas to the establishment of wider conservation landscapes took place in the natural resources management arena (Brown et al 2004.) According to Sayer (2009) and Brown et al. (2004), the landscape approach to conservation and livelihood development can consider the linkages between nature and people in a holistic manner and address the trade-offs between conservation and local livelihoods. In addition, through the landscape level approach, it is easier to prioritise conservation efforts to critical places, such as corridors and bottlenecks, and analyse the functioning of watersheds and river systems, as well as forest connectivity. (Brown et al. 2004; Sayer 2009.)

### *2.1.3 The 1990s - Integrating Conservation and Development*

Since the 1990s, conservation practitioners have developed new, more innovative approaches to integrate conservation and development by emphasising more the direct link between the two. Furthermore, conservation and development practitioners aim to recognise local people's role in conservation and develop dependent relationships between biodiversity and local people through giving opportunities for direct benefits from conserving biodiversity (Wells & Brandon 1993; Wells & McShane 2004). A widely used term for this kind of approach is the concept of *Integrated Conservation and Development* (ICD), which is defined by Wells and McShane (2004) as "*an approach to the management and conservation of natural resources in areas of significant biodiversity value that aims to reconcile the biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development interests of multiple stakeholders at local regional, national and international levels*". The three core elements in this approach are: more effective biodiversity conservation, increased local community participation in conservation and development, and economic development for the rural poor (ibid. 2004). Livelihoods that drive conservation are essential in the ICD approach. Examples of these practices include ecotourism enterprises, wildlife tour guide jobs, or businesses for harvesting non-timber forest products. (Salafsky & Wollenberg 2000.) According to WWF Nepal (2011), village banks, alternative energy options, environmental and other education programmes, training in improved agriculture practices, micro-enterprise development, and health services are just some of the examples that conservation organisations promote as part of the integrated conservation and development projects today. In addition, according to WWF Nepal, new innovative partnerships, such as working together with forest-based trade unions or population and health organisations, take the integrated conservation and development even further (WWF Nepal 2012a).

Fisher (2005) as well as Campbell and Vainio-Mattila (2003) point out that the ICD approach has become popular among international development agencies and donors, resulting in increased funding for conservation projects that support development activities and poverty reduction among rural communities around parks and reserves. This kind of "pro-poor conservation" often aims at targeting the poor and marginalised people within the communities that most heavily depend on the natural resources or are forced to derive benefits from such illegal activities as poaching. (Campbell & Vainio-

Mattila 2003; Fisher 2005.) Advocates for pro-poor conservation typically recognise that the goals and outcomes of pro-poor conservation are different from conservation that narrowly focuses on the preservation of biodiversity (Robinson 2010). WWF Nepal is not an exception in this regard since it also promotes the participation of the poor and marginalised members of the rural communities: "*WWF Nepal will identify and work with the asset-deprived, vulnerable and marginalized groups, who are often the most severely affected by resource depletion and climate change.*" (WWF Nepal 2012a: 38).

### 2.1.4   Conservation in Nepal - Community Forests and Buffer Zones

In Nepal, the evolution of conservation and the inclusion of people in natural resources management have followed a path similar to the general conservation development. The establishment of the first protected areas started in the 1950s when King Mahendra saw his last hunting areas disappearing and took initiative to establish protected areas across the country, often with the help of Western conservationists. Initially, the Chitwan National Park in the lowlands of southern Nepal and other parks were designated as hunting reserves aimed at protecting game species, such as rhinoceros and tigers. (Bajracharya et al. 2007.) In addition, conservation areas were created in the mountains to protect the degrading mountainous landscape. According to Mehta and Heinen (2001), the first protected areas were centrally established with little consultation with local people living in and around them. Furthermore, population pressure, lack of access and rights to land, and human-wildlife conflicts generated dissatisfaction among people living close to the protected areas, especially in the lowlands of Nepal (Mehta & Heinen 2001; Chhetri 2006; Paudel et al. 2007a).

In the mid-1970s, community participation in conservation also started to receive attention in Nepal; during the 1980s and 1990s various participatory initiatives were introduced in the country. The Conservation Area Act in 1989 was the basis for the creation of conservation areas that promoted community-based conservation (CBC) and community development, and allowed participatory management and resource use for local people. One of the first initiatives was the Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA) that was established in 1986 in the mountains. The central idea of conservation areas was that local communities, government and NGOs manage the conservation areas

jointly. For instance, such local institutions as the conservation area management committees (CAMCs) have legal rights to use and manage designated forested areas in accordance with an operation plan prepared by the committees following some standard guidelines. (Mehta & Heinen 2001; Bajracharya et al. 2007; Paudel et al. 2007a.)

While the first conservation policies in Nepal preliminary aimed at targeting the decreasing wildlife populations, the government of Nepal also felt concern over the country's rapidly degrading forests and started to hand over some degraded lands to communities in hope for establishment or restoration of plantation by them (Ribot et al. 2006). However, the first community forest model, the Panchayat Forest system in the late 1970s, faced challenges because it was considered too large to operate effectively and equally and tended to be dominated by the traditional elite in rural society. Yet, the community forest model included in the Nepal's Forestry Sector Master Plan from 1988 was already emphasising the issues of gender equality, conservation, and community participation. (Pokharel et al. 2007.) In the 1990s the community forest system evolved further. The Forest Act of 1993, together with the establishment of community forest user groups (CFUGs) and community forest coordination committees (CFCCs), enabled the government to hand over identified areas of forest to CFUGs and shifted the management and decision-making regarding the community forests to the local people. The act states that CFUGs are legal, autonomous and corporate bodies having full power, authority and responsibility to protect, manage and utilise forest and other resources as per the decisions taken by their assemblies and according to their self-prepared constitutions and operational plans. (Pokharel et al. 2007.) While user groups are the main managers and beneficiaries of the community forests, the land legally still remains with the state. Nevertheless, ever since the nineties, there has been a steady increase in the number of community forest user groups and the community forest area in Nepal. This can also be attributed to the decentralised forest policy that aims to reduce deforestation, provide greater benefits to local users and managers, reduce costs of administration, and enhance participation by common Nepali villagers in the process of forest management. (Ribot et al. 2006; Pokharel et al. 2007.)

In the late 1990s and early twenty-first century, the importance of expanding conservation further than isolated protected areas was also realised in Nepal, resulting in the establishment of two main conservation landscapes in the country: the Terai Arc

Landscape (TAL) in the lowlands of Nepal, which aims to link 11 Nepalese and Indian trans-border protected areas together through ecological corridors, and the Sacred Himalayan Landscape (SHL), reaching from the northeast of Nepal to the Annapurna mountains in the middle of the country. The SHL links the three major trans-boundary conservation areas in China, India, and Bhutan and includes four protected areas in northern Nepal. (WWF Nepal 2012a.) In Nepal, the conservation landscapes include protected areas of different kinds, buffer zones, ecological corridors, bottlenecks, and human settlements (Mehta & Heinen 2001; Wikramanayake et al. 2004; Paudel et al. 2007b).

The development of community-based natural resources management and conservation, together with the landscape level approach, also resulted in the introduction of a buffer zone programme in Nepal. Buffer zones are declared outside and adjacent to national park or reserve boundaries and are inhabited by local communities. The first buffer zone was established around the Chitwan National Park in 1996. The programme has established a three-tier community-based institutional model that includes user groups (UGs), user committees (UCs), and a buffer zone management council. The core idea of the buffer zone programme in Nepal is to combine sustainable natural resources management with socio-economic development of local communities. Many of the forests in the buffer zones have also been handed out as community forests, and natural resource management in the buffer zone is decentralised to user committees and user groups. Since wildlife is also present in the buffer zones, schemes for compensation against the loss of property and human causalities caused by wildlife have been introduced. (Paudel et al. 2007b.) According to the Buffer Zone Management Act (1993), local buffer zone user group committees are granted management and user rights to forest resources. In addition, 30 – 50 per cent of the funds earned by parks or reserves, for example fees from tourism and sales of forest products, are earmarked for such local community development as improving local infrastructure, introducing energy saving technologies, supporting educational programmes, and developing income-generating activities. (Mehta & Heinen 2001; Paudel et al. 2007b).

In addition, in Nepal and especially in Terai in the lowlands of southern Nepal, conservation and development efforts have been focused on ecological corridors and bottlenecks that cut through the protected landscape. Community-based corridor

conservation and management in Terai follow similar approaches with buffer zone programme, although in geographical terms the corridors are different since their purpose is to act as linkages between protected areas and provide secured pathways for different species to move around. Various restoration and conservation initiatives, as well as livelihood development efforts, have been implemented in the corridors and bottlenecks in order to maintain the ecological connectivity across the whole conservation landscape and improve people's well-being. The corridor management in Nepal has been implemented mainly through Community Forest Coordination Committees with support from the government and NGOs. (WWF Nepal 2011.)

### 2.1.5  Challenges Facing Integrated Approaches

The participatory and integrated approaches to natural resources management and conservation tend to face various challenges due to the complexities arising from unequal power relations and the efforts of combining multiple interests. McShane et al. (2011) state that despite significant investments in hundreds of relatively expensive projects aiming at integrating conservation and development, it is very challenging to succeed in reconciling local people's needs and aspirations while preserving protected areas. The reasons for failure are many and depend a great deal on the circumstances where the integrated conservation and development initiative takes place (ibid. 2011). A study by Bajracharya et al. (2007), regarding community participation in conservation area management in Nepal, points out that people's judgement of conservation is based on what benefits it brings to them, and their participation is possible only if conservation enhances the local economy. Therefore, conservation should generate local employment and livelihood options. In addition, they emphasise that it is important for local people to invest in development projects that generate economic benefits, such as forest management, hydropower, or tourism. (Bajracharya et al. 2007.) Mustalahti (2009) also argues that people's attitudes toward NRM and conservation efforts are determined by how much influencing power they have regarding the decision-making concerning the resources, as well as the potential to generate benefits from these recourses. However, creating economic benefits from conservation can be difficult in an environment where people have no previous knowledge about entrepreneurship and where there exist no markets. In addition, the establishment of functional economic

activities requires time and resource inputs, which local people might find impossible to commit to in their normal daily lives. Furthermore, time is a constraint especially if the initiative runs on outside support and on a project basis, lasting only for a couple of years. The end of the project might come before anything permanent has been established, and the risk of failing is high if there is a lack of government support and commitment to institutionalise the participatory processes. This is often the case because most of the IDC programmes are running on funding from such international donors as Western governments or environmental or development organisations who are also pushing for their own agendas, while the commitment from central and local governments to these programmes is low. (Wells & McShane 2004; Mustalahti 2007; Mustalahti & Lund 2009; Mustalahti 2011; McShane et al. 2011.)

Criticism has also been raised toward conservation and development practitioners for their lack of understanding of social structures and inequalities in local communities. Many projects have failed to distribute benefits effectively, disproportionately benefiting more powerful interests rather than the poorest groups or others in the communities that actually use or rely on the natural resource in question (Brown 1998; Agrawal & Gibson 1999; Ribot et al. 2006; Agrawal & Gupta 2005; Mustalahti 2006; Paudel et al. 2007a; Reed et al. 2009; McShane et al. 2011). Agarwal (2001) calls this "participatory exclusion", which means the failure to equally include all actors of local society, such as women, in the seemingly participatory institutions, for example community forest groups (Agarwal 2001). For instance, in Nepal, participatory natural resources management and conservation have been implemented through local community forest user groups and buffer-zone user groups consisting of men and women from different backgrounds. Furthermore, these groups are coordinated by community forest coordination committees (CFCCs) and buffer-zone management committees (BZMCs), again consisting of individuals with various motivations and objectives. (Pokharel et al. 2007.) While equal participation for instance of women in these groups has been emphasised, Agarwal (2001) points out that the approach has not succeeded perfectly. A community in rural Nepal is likely to have its own political, economic, and religious elites, as well as various groups ranging from socially excluded members and poorest of the poor to mothers' and youth groups (Pokharel et al. 2007). In their study about the buffer zone programme, Paudel et al. (2007b) revealed that in spite of its good achievements, it also faced such shortcomings as elite capture, poor

participation of marginalised groups, undue focus on infrastructure, and little improvement in income and employment of the poor. (Paudel et al. 2007b). Also, Bajracharya et al. (2007), in their study about community participation in conservation area management in Nepal, state that despite efforts to create and distribute benefits equally, those benefits are quite often captured by influential people in the community. One solution to the problem would be institutional arrangements with positive discrimination for disadvantaged groups, particularly for poverty reduction. (Bajracharya et al. 2007.)

According to McShane et al. (2011), criticism from the ecological perspective points out that integrated approaches shift the focus excessively from biodiversity conservation onto serving people. By developing economically and socially attractive communities, it is possible that even more people are tempted to migrate to these areas so that they could enjoy some of the benefits. This in turn creates more pressure on natural resources. Some also believe that economic development increases consumption and therefore the need for even more natural resources. (ibid. 2011.) Robinson (2010) further remarks that the reality for conservation practitioners today is quite challenging since they are forced to consider a wide range of issues far from the core conservation topics, such as reducing the poverty of local people and improving livelihoods, as well as promoting social justice and cultural integrity.

### 2.1.6   *Participation – Issues and Incentives*

Agarwal (2001) presents the central idea behind participatory approach to natural resources management as the inclusion of people who are most affected in the decision-making, planning, and implementation of the intervention that is taking place. Ribot (2002) argues that the shift of management power to local people in natural resources management, which he calls the decentralisation, is important because natural resources are locally specific, diverse and have multiple uses. Furthermore, the access to natural resources and the restrictions related to them need local control in order to avoid conflicts between different groups. (ibid. 2002.) For instance, rural community forestry groups in Nepal that influence the conservation and management processes regarding their surrounding forests represent one example of participatory natural resources

management and conservation (Agrawal & Gupta 2005).

Participation has several modes as well as levels of people's inclusion. According to Agarwal (2001:1624), *"at its narrowest, participation in a group is defined in terms of nominal membership and at its broadest in terms of a dynamic interactive process in which the disadvantaged have voice and influence in decision-making"*. Agarwal further divides the concept of participation in terms of objectives, where at its narrowest participation is measured by its potential to improve effectiveness of activities and at its broadest by its ability to enhance equity, efficiency, empowerment, and environmental sustainability (ibid. 2001). Campbell and Vainio-Mattila (2003) explain participation in two different ways: either as a means of project implementation, where change from people's passive voice to active voice will take place, or as an end result of the intervention process, where a long-term engagement by those involved will occur at the end of the project. Ribot (2002), on the other hand, emphasises decentralisation of power to the local level as an institutional change, where the ideal outcome is that the local institution is the basis of effective local environmental decision-making and the local people are the decision-makers (Ribot 2002). Mustalahti (2007) also argues that in true participation, local people are given responsibilities and power in the decision-making processes regarding control over resource use, management, and conservation. She further emphasises that participation is not only about using local people as labour force in NRM and conservation efforts.

Agarwal describes the efficiency of participation as follows: 1) nominal participation which means only a membership in a group; 2) passive participation where a person is informed about meetings, and can attend meetings and listen but without speaking up; 3) consultative participation where a person is asked for an opinion in specific matters, but without guarantee of influencing decisions; 4) activity-specific participation where a person is asked (or can volunteer) to undertake specific actions; 5) active participation where a person can express opinions (also without special inquiry) or take initiatives of other sorts; and 6) interactive (empowering) participation where a person has a genuine voice and influence in the group's decisions. (Agarwal 2001.)

Nevertheless, the level and efficiency of participation is affected by various factors depending on the context where it is implemented. For instance, Ribot and Peluso

(2003) argue that the shift of management power to local people is a complex process and is influenced by different forms of "access mechanisms", namely access to technology, capital, markets, labour, knowledge, authority, identity, and social relations. Furthermore, Agrawal and Gupta (2005) argue that the likelihood of participation in community level user groups in Nepal is greater for those who are economically and socially better-off or have some kind of relations to the government officials that decide on the local use of natural resources. They further state that people who have the possibility to participate for instance in different resource user groups are also more likely to benefit from the decentralisation policies. This describes the complexity related to the equity of participatory approaches. (ibid. 2005.)

## 2.2   Conservation and Youth

### 2.2.1   *From Environmental Education to Environmental Activities*

The youth are one important subgroup in the context of rural community and are therefore also relevant in regard to the participatory approach to conservation. In Nepal, for instance, about 20 per cent of the total population are young people aged between 15 and 24 and approximately 35 per cent of the population are children below 14 years of age (ILO 2010). Yet, it is challenging to find research that analyses youth participation in community-based natural resources management and conservation in developing countries. However, youth participation is emphasised in the field of environmental education (EE) (see, for instance, Reid et al. 2008). In the context of developing countries, the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya (McDuff & Jacobson 2000), the Jane Goodall Institute's Roots & Shoots (R&S) in Tanzania, and the Wildlife Clubs of Uganda (WCU) (both in Johnson-Pynn & Johnson 2005) are examples of environmental education programmes that aim at educating youth about the environment and wildlife, as well as the importance of sustainable natural resources management and conservation. Another objective of these programmes is to encourage youth to act as stewards of their own natural heritage. In addition, the goal is to raise environmental awareness and sense of responsibility among the young people because they are the adults and decision makers of the future (McDuff & Jacobson 2000; Johnson-Pynn & Johnson 2005).

Literature shows that common forums where youth-based conservation activities take place are school-based programmes such as eco clubs (McDuff & Jacobson 2000; Johnson-Pynn & Johnson 2005; WWF Nepal 2011). Youth-implemented hands-on activities are often designed to protect the environment and wildlife, connect with communities, and foster personal development. Examples of such activities are establishment of vegetable gardens and tree nurseries, planting of tree seedlings, and organising various awareness-raising campaigns and rallies such as anti-pollution, anti-poaching or anti-plastic campaigns (ibid.). In addition, some youth-based conservation projects combine environmental and health topics, including awareness rising on HIV/AIDS, malaria prevention, family planning, and sexual and reproductive health issues, and how these are linked to the healthy environment (Johnson-Pynn & Johnson 2005; Oglethorpe et al. 2008). In Nepal, local youth are engaged in conservation and development activities through schools' eco clubs, anti-poaching and patrolling groups, peer education groups, cultural drama and dance groups, by joining wildlife and biodiversity monitoring tasks, and as social mobilisers (WWF Nepal 2011).

### 2.2.2 Creating Conservation Awareness and Empowerment

Often the main aim of engaging youth in environmental activities is to raise their awareness about the importance of conservation. Chawla (2007) emphasises that care for the environment in adulthood is frequently associated with positive experiences of nature in childhood or adolescence, along with childhood role models who gave the natural world appreciative attention. A study on the motivations of present-day environmental youth leaders (Arnold et al. 2009) showed that childhood outdoor experiences in nature, supportive parents, friends, and environmental role models, as well as voluntary environmental activities, have influenced young people to become environmental leaders of today. A study by Wells and Lekies (2006) shows similar results indicating that exposure to "wild nature" in childhood, through activities such as walking, playing, or hiking in natural areas, camping, hunting, or fishing, has a significant positive association both with adult environmental attitudes and behaviour. According to their study, early experiences related to the natural environment are likely to set a child on a trajectory toward environmentalism (Wells & Lekies 2006). However, sometimes the aim in engaging youth is not only to raise and distribute

awareness on the importance of the healthy environment but also to discourage them from taking part in illegal activities, such as poaching (WWF Nepal 2011).

Environmental programmes targeted to youth can also result in outcomes other than conservation awareness. Johnson-Pynn and Johnson (2005) point out that programmes where youth take action while learning can have positive results in problem-solving ability, moral reasoning, and academic performance. Further evidence shows an increase in empathic understanding and positive attitudes toward diverse groups in society, such as elders and ethnic minorities. Building resilience in youth through specific youth-tailored environmental activities is a means of promoting protective factors that better prepare youth to handle stress, trauma, depression, and anxiety. (Johnson-Pynn & Johnson 2005.) The same observations are emphasised by Schusler and Krasny (2010), who remark that outcomes from youth environmental action programmes are consistent with the theory of Positive Youth Development, which promotes the physical, intellectual, psychological, and social well-being of young people. Another example of positive social outcomes from conservation activities comes from Kenya. McDuff and Jacobson (2000) describe how students in Wildlife Clubs of Kenya (the first student conservation movement on the African continent) reported feeling empowered by participating in capacity building that was not directed by colonialists. McDuff and Jacobson (2000) also mention that many of today's leading conservationists in Kenya were once wildlife club members or sponsoring teachers. Schusler and Krasny (2010) describe a case where, as a result of working with local environmental issues, Hawaiian students developed many such personal skills as critical thinking, communication, familiarity with technology, and improved self-confidence and competence. Furthermore, they argue that through environmental action, it is possible to build individuals' capabilities and willingness to further contribute to personal and community transformation. Johnson-Pynn and Johnson (2005) also discovered that voluntary conservation activities, such as nature clubs, can help to increase conservation knowledge and social development in the youth participants, as well as to raise community awareness regarding conservation.

### 2.2.3  Recognising Youth

According to Flanagan et al. (2007) (see also Checkoway & Gutiérrez 2006), "youth at

risk" has been the prevailing angle in youth research, and the youth have been seen and noticed through the problems that face them. Adults, like parents, teachers, social workers, and youth workers, have felt that their responsibility is to help the troubled youth – the ones who end up involved in illegal activities, drug abuse, or violence, or who have problems with school, unemployment, or suffer from social exclusion. (ibid. 2007.) Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, a slightly different approach to youth research has evolved. For instance, concepts on youth empowerment (Jennings et al. 2006), community youth development (CYD) (Hughes & Curnan 2000), youth action (Irby et al. 2001), and Positive Youth Development (PYD) (Lerner et al. 2005a) all emphasise young people as assets and critical actors in society who should have an equal voice in planning, decision-making, and implementation of issues that concern them. Moreover, these approaches believe that when youth voices are heard and taken seriously, they contribute to social change (Jennings et al. 2006; Flanagan et al. 2007).

Furthermore, especially in the recent research on community and societal change, youth have been seen as active agents in the community change process, particularly concerning such social issues as health and sexual education, prevention of violence and drug abuse, and improvement of schooling. (Finn & Checkoway 1998; Irby et al. 2001; Tolman et al. 2001; Checkoway & Gutiérrez 2006.)

### 2.2.4   *Positive Youth Development Theory*

According to Lerner et al. (2005a), Positive Youth Development (PYD) theory has its roots in many research fields ranging from comparative psychology and evolutionary psychology to life-course sociology and community psychology. The PYD theory emphasises that by focusing on the strengths of the youth and helping them to become more self-aware and self-confident, they can grow up into active and healthy citizens with strong potential to catalyse positive change in society (Lerner et al. 2005a). The personal development in youth happens when the personal features, the five "Cs", are strengthened. The five features refer to: 1) competence, such as better leadership and problem-solving skills; 2) confidence as in improved self-esteem and positive views on one's future; 3) connection, that is strong relationships with family, friends and community members; 4) character, including courage to defend one self and others; and

5) caring, for example sense of responsibility and care for others and the environment. In addition, the PYD theory predicts that when these developments take place, it is likely that a sixth feature, namely contribution, will occur in youth. (Lerner et al. 2005b.) Contribution means that an activity, such as participating in an environmental group, will create a further urge in the youth to take self-imposed positive action to change one's community or society (ibid. 2005b).

Lerner et al. (2003) emphasise that the basis for successful youth development is the interaction with supportive adults and community. Therefore, the positive youth development approach is especially popular in youth and community-based programmes, where it is relatively easy to support youth in skill-development and increase their involvement in the community planning and decision-making (ibid.). Scales et al. (2000) have identified participation in youth programmes as the key asset linked to positive development, or thriving, among contemporary American youth (Scales et el. 2000). Furthermore, Larson (2000) states that structured voluntary activities, or youth activities that are organised by adults, such as extracurricular school activities and community youth activities, as well as structured activities that the youth participate in on their own, are a perfect platform for favourable changes and development in youth. Examples of these are sports, music groups, or scouts. Larson, after studying the occurrence of initiative in the youth, points out that *"during youth activities, adolescents experience a unique combination of intrinsic motivation and concentration that is rarely present during their daily experiences in schoolwork and unstructured leisure"*. (Larson 2000:178.) In addition, youth-based environmental action (Schusler & Krasny 2010) is found to create favourable social development in youth.

Although voluntary youth activities can contribute to the development of personal features in youth, being involved does not automatically result in positive changes. According to Checkoway and Gutiérrez (2006:2), *"youth participation is about the real influence of young people in institutions and decisions, not about their passive presence as human subjects or service recipients"*. Youth participation includes efforts by young people to plan programmes of their own choosing, by adults to involve young people in their agencies, and by both to work together in intergenerational partnerships

(Checkoway & Gutiérrez 2006). A study by Finn and Checkoway (1998) that analyses several community-based youth initiatives in the United States shows that through direct participation in their communities, young people are developing knowledge, practical skills, and organisational capacity to create lasting change in their own lives, as well as in the community. These examples show that instead of traditional youth service delivery process where an adult aims to help a young person in his or her life challenges, it is possible to build competence and leadership in youth through equal youth-adult relationships. Giving youth responsibilities creates will and self-confidence that results in competence to assess community conditions, set priorities, formulate plans, and build support for community programme implementation. Young people in these case studies create mechanisms for organisational leadership and contribute to new forms of community development. (Finn & Checkoway 1998.) Furthermore, Scales et al. (2000) suggest that the youth participating in voluntary programmes are likely to show negligible or low levels of risk behaviour and internalising problems (Scales et al. 2000).

### 2.2.5  *Youth Contributing to Conservation*

It has been argued here that participating in environmental activities can create both conservation awareness and a wide range of other personal features in the youth. In addition, the will to contribute positively can evolve in youth volunteers and further result in favourable changes in communities and society. Therefore, linking youth environmental activities to the framework of integrated conservation and development programmes could contribute positively to the effectiveness and sustainability of these initiatives by empowering youth to take action and leadership (see Figure 1).

Youth contributing positively to conservation and social development

Youth targeted in integrated conservation and development initiatives

Increased will among youth to take positive action

Youth-led conservation and development activities

Increased conservation awareness, skills, confidence, motivation and empowerment of youth
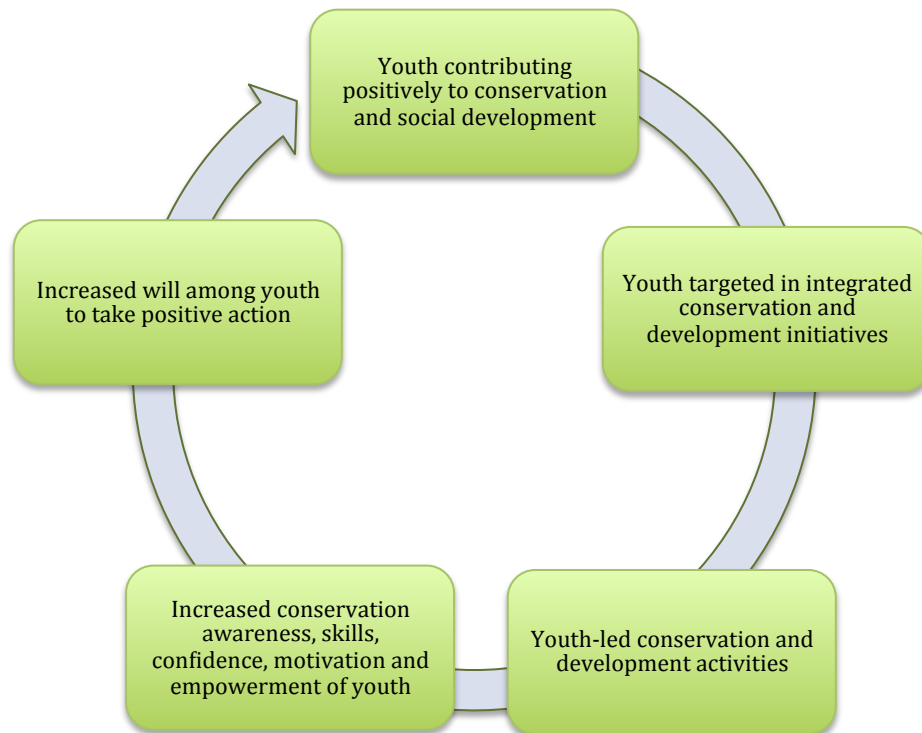
*Figure 1. Linking voluntary youth activities in the framework of integrated conservation and development initiatives could contribute positively to both the evolvement of personal features in youth, as well as social development and conservation efforts. The figure is inspired by the thriving process that takes place in young people, presented in Lerner et al. 2003.*

# 3 Material and Methods

## 3.1 Methodology and Methods

This research is a case study that examines how young people in rural communities contribute to conservation and village development activities in southern Nepal; it examines the role of youth in integrated conservation and development initiatives of WWF Nepal. Furthermore, I study the kinds of experiences and personal development the youth have built while participating in two different voluntary conservation groups: the anti-poaching and the Population, Health and Environment project (PHE) supported peer-to-peer education groups. To get a comprehensive understanding of the case, I used various data sources together with different research methods. Otherwise, the approach would have been too narrow, and the linkages between the issues would not necessarily have been exposed. This kind of *mixed method research* or *methodological triangulation,* where the data are collected from different sources using more than one research method, can help to give a more holistic picture of the situation and potentially increase the reliability of the data (Creswell 2003; Hirsjärvi et al. 2006). According to Creswell (2003), mixed methods can refer both to a methodology as well as a method. As methodology, it involves collecting, analysing, and mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches at many phases in the research process, and as method, it focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies (ibid. 2003).

To build background information and develop conceptual understanding on the topic, I first studied and reviewed relevant literature, which included scientific research especially on community-based natural resources management, integrated conservation and development approach, as well as youth participation and youth development. Additional information was also gathered from various technical project reports of WWF Nepal. Afterwards two sets of data: 1) interviews, which I conducted personally, and 2) a survey, which was conducted by WWF Nepal, were used as the basis for this study.

### 3.1.1  Interviews

I collected pre-study data consisting of interviews and observations during a professional visit to Nepal in April 2012 before I had determined the final research questions. The interviews were semi-structured personal interviews with seven members of the WWF Nepal staff. The questions dealt with issues such as how and why WWF Nepal engages youth in conservation and what the strengths and challenges are when working with youth. The interview situations were informal and included a great deal of free discussion. The interviews were conducted in the WWF Nepal office in Kathmandu, in the field in Terai in southern Nepal, and in the town of Pokhara. In addition, one interview was done in a cafeteria in Kathmandu. The interviews lasted from half an hour to two hours and were recorded with iPhone. Later in Finland, the interviews were transcribed, analysed, and divided into thematic categories.

### 3.1.2  Survey

The structured survey was conducted with the help of WWF Nepal in two districts in the Terai Arc Landscape in southern Nepal at the beginning of 2013. First, I prepared the survey questionnaire in English and then during a professional visit to Nepal I finalised and translated it into Nepali together with two of my colleagues from WWF Nepal. The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) included questions for instance about the respondent's background, motivations to join the activity, views on the elements of positive youth development, and views on the strengths and challenges of youth. Most of the questions were structured having one to three answer options but there were also six open-ended questions that in the end gave a large amount of important information about the respondent's feelings and views. The question patterns were mainly developed based on a survey handbook developed especially for evaluating youth programmes (Sabatelli & Anderson 2005). In this book, seven outcome categories have been listed to best measure the positive development in the youth. In this survey, I have modified and combined those seven categories into five categories based on the five elements of positive youth development: competence, confidence, connection, character and caring, and added a sixth category, contribution.

*Target Population*

The target population for the survey were the youth who at the time of the survey were participating in one of the two conservation-related voluntary youth activities, namely the community-based anti-poaching operation groups (CBAPOs) and Population, Health and Environment project peer groups (PHE peer groups). These groups had participants that were well-suited to represent "youth", mainly with the average age of 16-28 years old. After the survey, it was noted that many of the respondents were older than 28 years and some less than 16 years, although the original aim of the survey was to include participants only from the ages between 16-28 years old. However, since these participants were members of the voluntary groups, I decided to include all of them in this study as youth. I later realised that it was good to have also participants that were younger and older than I had originally planned, because it gave me a good opportunity to examine and compare whether there were differences between the age groups.

Presently, there are altogether about 400 CBAPOs in the whole of Nepal, consisting of approximately 10-15 people who are mostly young men. (WWF Nepal 2013.) The CBAPO groups patrol in the corridor and bottleneck community forests and monitor that no illegal activities such as poaching or illegal logging take place. They also monitor the movement of the animals such as rhinos. The groups report about their observations to the community forest coordination committees (CFCCs) and national park authorities. Recently, in some places the groups have helped to catch several dangerous poachers. Since the work of the groups is very risky, different motivation incentives, including engaging the youth in skills and entrepreneurship training and providing them with micro-credit support, have been developed. (WWF Nepal 2011.)

WWF Nepal partners with the Family Planning Association of Nepal (FPAN) in a joint project integrating population, health and environmental management in order to improve the well-being of both people and nature. The main strategy is to engage local youth to be peer educators and execute youth-to-youth learning and sharing on themes related to health and environment such as sexual health, birth control, early marriage, sanitation, climate change, and conservation, and moreover, the role of youth related to these issues. In addition, the youth conduct behaviour change trainings that aim at

bringing changes in people's attitudes, perceptions, and behaviour toward sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and biodiversity conservation. According to the 2012 annual report of the PHE project, over a thousand young people in the Terai Arc Landscape have been actively involved in the PHE peer education activities. (WWF Finland & WWF Nepal 2012.)

*Sampling*

The Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) is a relatively big area, with over 23 000 sq. km, consisting of 14 districts, and inhabited by approximately seven million people (WWF Nepal 2012a). There are six protected areas and national parks, as well as multiple buffer zones and ecological corridor areas in TAL. According to WWF Nepal, the four most critical corridor areas and the three most critical bottleneck areas are in TAL. The main method used was multistage sampling, and the first selection was focused on the areas that are most critical in terms of conservation and sustainable livelihood development. Therefore, one corridor area, Khata, and one bottleneck area, Lamahi-Gadawa, were chosen. They represent about 25 per cent of the total identified corridor areas and 33 per cent of the total bottleneck areas in Terai. (undated email conversation.) The site selection was done with the help of WWF project staff, first consulting respective field supervisors, social mobilisers, and project managers. The next step was defining the number of representatives of youth groups and taking a representative sample, around 10 per cent, of the two youth groups together. A total of 254 people were selected for the survey: 127 from Khata and 127 from Gadawa. Since the number of representatives in CBAPOs is bigger than in the PHE peer groups, a ratio of approximately 60:40 in Gadawa and 70:30 in Khata was applied. Finally, a participant list was prepared with the help from respective community coordination committee members in both places.

*Survey Location*
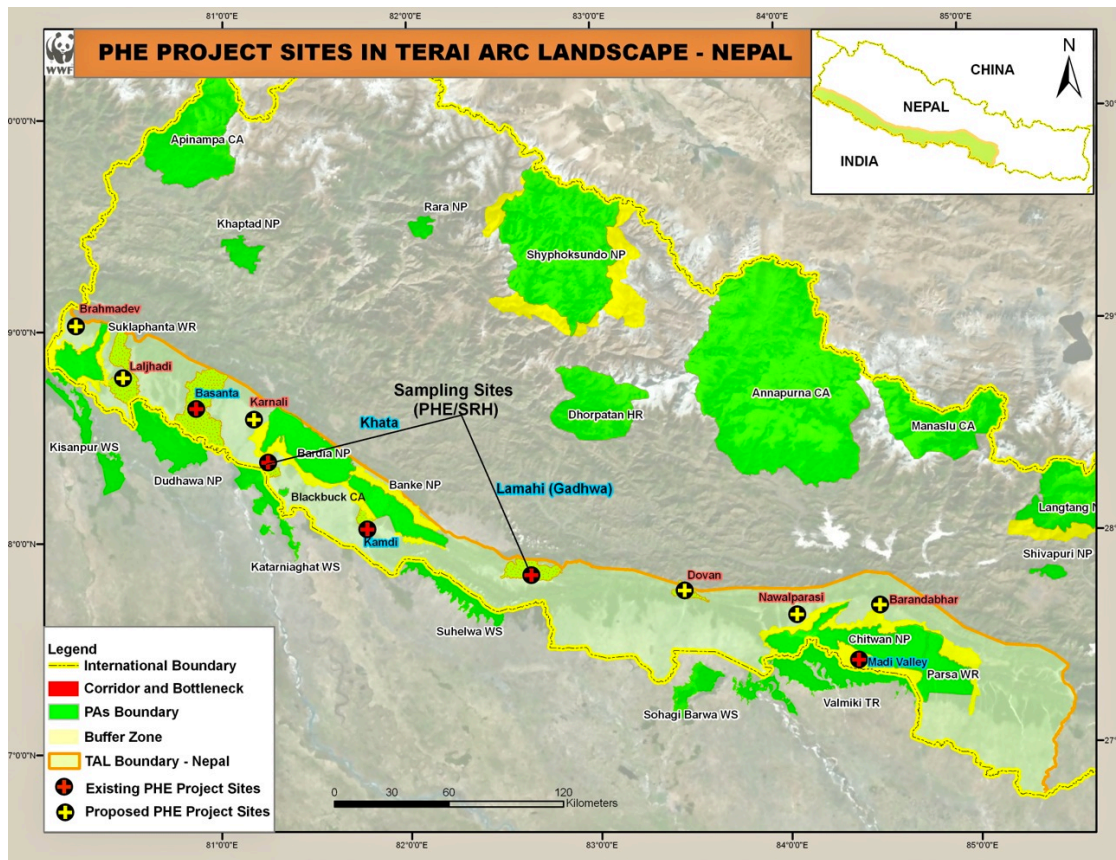


*Picture 1. The Project Sites Khata and Gadawa in Southern Nepal. Source: GIS Unit/WWF Nepal.*

The Khata Corridor

The Khata ecological corridor is located in the west of the Terai Arc Landscape and connects the Bardia National Park in Nepal with the Katarniyaghat Wildlife Sanctuary in India. The area is highly important for biodiversity, especially for the movement of flagship species, such as tiger. This is why it is called "corridor". The forests in the corridor are community forests and managed by the communities themselves. The population of Khata is approximately 34 000 with about 5500 households (WWF Finland & WWF Nepal 2012). For over ten years, WWF Nepal has supported the Khata Community Forest Coordination Committee (CFCC) through the Terai Arc Landscape corridor and bottleneck restoration project (TAL-CBRP) to implement various conservation and livelihood activities with the aim of protecting critical wildlife and sustaining and developing viable livelihood for the local people (WWF Nepal 2011).

The livelihood strategies of the local people vary from traditional farming and livestock herding to collection of non-timber forest products and working as waged labour (WWF Nepal 2011). The people living in the Khata corridor come from different ethnic and caste backgrounds and mostly represent the indigenous Tharus, the low-caste Dalits, and hill migrants. The Khata CFCC also coordinates 34 community-based and youth-led anti-poaching operation groups and supports other voluntary activities for youth, such as traditional dance and computer classes. (WWF Nepal 2011.) During the last decade, the Khata CFCC has been able to establish a cooperative system of functional savings and loans and generate commendable amount of funding that has been invested in the community welfare, including education and health activities, social schemes, as well as community and conservation activities. In addition, through the cooperative, the Khata CFCC has launched different welfare and pro-poor schemes, for example children's savings, women's savings, support to youth, and subsidised loans for income generation activities. (WWF Nepal 2011.)

According to the survey participants from Khata, their community does not seem to face many social or environmental challenges. However, the presence of traditional cultural and religious norms and values sometimes results in superstition, discrimination, and resistance to adopt new ideas and forms of operating. For instance, young people in Khata mentioned child marriage, high number of children, and reluctance to accept birth control methods as social issues. In addition, "youth moving abroad", "disappearing of cultural identity", "acceptance of western culture", and "lack of awareness due to poor education" were named as social challenges in Khata. Environmental problems in Khata relate mainly to lack of complete conservation of forests and wildlife, free grazing and too much cattle, and poor waste management. Also, forest fires, poaching and smuggling, and human-wildlife conflicts are sometimes causing troubles in the community.

Gadawa

Gadawa is located in the central Terai Arc Landscape, and from the conservation point of view, is considered a critical transit area for illegal wood smuggling. The area is an extension to the so-called "Lamahi bottleneck", which is a densely inhabited area that cuts the biological connection built up by protected areas in the middle of the Terai Arc Landscape. The population in Gadawa is over 50 000 with a little less than 9 000

households. In recent years, WWF Nepal has started to support the engagement of local youth in such conservation activities as prevention of poaching and illegal wildlife and wood trade. In addition, young people have been engaged in the PHE activities. (WWF Finland & WWF Nepal 2011; Pathak et al. 2013; email conversation 12 February 2014.) When compared to Khata, Gadawa suffers from various social problems that relate mostly to alcohol and other substance abuse, domestic violence, disputes between people, robbery, and wood smuggling. Also illiteracy, youth unemployment, youth migration abroad, and poverty were pointed out as big challenges in the community. Gadawa is very vulnerable to floods and landslides that are caused by heavy rains and riverbank erosion. Furthermore, the community suffers from unpredictable weather patterns such as too much rain, delay in annual rainy seasons or drought, which are thought to result from climate change. In addition, deforestation, soil degradation and scarcity and contamination of groundwater sources, illegal logging, and wood trafficking trouble the community and cause both environmental and health problems (Pathak et al. 2013).

*Data Collection*

The field survey was done with the help from WWF project staff and local resource persons. Due to my pregnancy and challenges in timetables, I did not participate in the collection of the field data myself. Three local resource persons in Gadawa and two local resource persons in Khata were chosen to conduct the collection of information. In addition, one field mobiliser from the field office of the TAL-project was appointed to supervise the collection of information and to look after its quality and minimise information loss. A two and a half day orientation workshop and pre-testing of the questionnaire was organised in the Dang district with the help of WWF Nepal's technical staff and the local resource persons and field mobiliser. The aim was to familiarise them with the survey questionnaire and prepare them to carry out the final survey on their own. After the workshop, the final survey was conducted simultaneously in Khata and Gadawa during one week. The data were verified and checked directly in the field first by the data collectors and second by the social mobiliser. After all the data were collected, they were delivered to the head office of WWF Nepal in Kathmandu, where one person entered all the data into Excel and made

the last verifications. The final data were sent to the researcher in Finland by email and analysed with Excel and SPSS programmes.

## 3.2 Researcher's Role and Suitability of the Methods

Originally, I decided to use survey as a research tool since it enabled me to collect a large amount of data at once on a target population that was very big and located in two different places in Nepal very far from me. In addition, I wanted to have enough participants in the survey to have a representative sample of the target population. This way the survey results could also give me perspective on the larger target population and not only on a few participants. The benefit of conducting a survey is its effectiveness: it is relatively easy to collect a lot of information fast and easily when compared for instance to personal interviews. Also, if the questions are carefully built, it will be easy to analyse the data with the help of Excel or SPSS. Furthermore, the influence of the researcher on the respondents is very low unless the questions are leading. (Valli 2001.) On the other hand, with structured survey questions it is impossible to receive detailed personal views and opinions from the respondents so the data remain quite general. It is also challenging and time-consuming to develop the questionnaire form so that it is compact, easy to understand, non-biased and non-leading, and sufficiently interesting. When the questionnaire is too complex and long, the likelihood of missing responses increases. (Valli 2001.) I feel that a few personal interviews with young people would have given me more in-depth additional information. The open-ended questions in the survey questionnaire turned out to be valuable and gave a good deal of supportive information. For instance, the quote: "*I get knowledge about community & environment but there is no sustainability as a volunteer*" from a respondent in Khata tells me a great deal about the complexity of the voluntary activities.

I believe that my prior experiences in regard to the study area, environment, local people and WWF Nepal have helped me to develop a good contextual understanding of the issues in question, which in turn has also helped me in understanding the data of this study. However, in order to be objective, I have tried to ensure that the main information for this study has been the transcribed interviews and the structured survey results, and I have tried to avoid referring to other experiences or observations that I had

collected during my professional work. Although this research is my personal endeavour, I feel accountable to my WWF Nepal colleagues, who have helped me a great deal in collecting the data and who also in the end will benefit from having the final results published. In addition, I feel accountable to the respondents who took the time to participate in the survey. Therefore, my intention is to ensure that the study results will also be presented in the communities where the original survey was conducted.

Since all the members of WWF Nepal staff that I interviewed were my colleagues and I knew them at least on a professional level, it was easy for me to interview them, and I felt that they were honest with me. Before I conducted the interviews, I always clarified that it was for my personal research purposes and not related to WWF Finland's work. However, my representing WWF Finland, which is considered a "donor" WWF organisation, might have influenced the interviews at some level, which could be observed when the issues of "needing support to do this and that" came up during the interviews.

Since the survey was conducted in the name of WWF Nepal, the possibility of social desirability bias should be taken into account. This means that respondents might have favoured positive answers to please the interviewer and the organisation. This could be seen in the quotes that were given by some of the respondents in the feedback section: "*I wish for a better program*" and *"I hope change will come after this survey"*, which indicate that some of the respondents might have had expectations that changes would result from the survey. However, the results also included many critical views and suggestions, which suggests that respondents have been truthful in expressing their views. It is also possible that due to the complexity of the survey process, some faults and misunderstandings might have occurred along the way. For instance, it is possible that the wording in the questionnaires in the Nepali language is somewhat different from the English versions, or that in the data collection situations, the questions have been understood differently from how they were originally planned.

# 4 The Role of Youth in WWF Nepal's Conservation Strategies

WWF Nepal does not have a separate strategy on specifically engaging children and youth in conservation work; however, their role is emphasised in the latest WWF Nepal strategic plan especially in the section of conservation education and capacity building (WWF Nepal 2012a). WWF Nepal took the first steps in environmental education already in the early 1990s when it established the first eco clubs in the Bardiya district, next to the Bardiya national park: *"Idea is old, engagement of children started right after WWF Nepal was established"* (Interview 16 April 2012). In recent years, WWF Nepal has also started to recognise the role of youth particularly in controlling wildlife crime with the help of youth-led anti-poaching operations (WWF Nepal 2012a). In the strategic plan of WWF Nepal, the youth are seen both as a potential challenge given the problems with unemployment and youth migration, which are common especially in the rural areas. Even more so, they are regarded as an important resource: *"The increasing youth population is also an asset which can be rightly channelled for the benefit of conservation."* (WWF Nepal 2012a). WWF Nepal has recently started to come up with projects and campaigns that have been targeted directly to youth: *"Now we have realised that youth need to be given responsibility to lead conservation activities."* (Interview 16 April 2012).

Based on the interviews with seven members of the WWF Nepal staff, a few different motives and aims were discovered behind the conservation work engaging children and youth.

## 4.1 Bringing up Responsible Citizens

The first strategy regarding the engagement of children and youth in conservation work was to influence children and youth to make them aware at an early age of the importance of preserving the environment and wildlife and making choices that ensure sustainable development in life. This way, WWF Nepal believes, these children will become considerate adults: *"We want to prepare them beforehand to be more conservation minded and more responsible citizens"* (Interview 16 April 2012). WWF

Nepal sees that unlike adults, children are considered to be open-minded and easily adopting the conservation values: "*Children are open to ideas, their minds are not yet fixed and they are receptive. They also love nature so it's easy to get them even more involved in conservation*" (Interview 16 April 2012). Age is also a relevant factor when conservation education is planned: "*Below 5 years and above 15 it's more challenging to influence children, their mindset is already fixed. Between 6-7 years to 14-15 years is great age to motivate children*" (Interview 16 April 2012).

WWF Nepal does not expect that most of the children and youth involved in conservation will become conservationists when they grow older, but it hopes that engagement in conservation when children will influence their decisions as adults. "*We don't expect everyone to be conservation specialists, but we wish they will have fundamental conservation thinking in mind. They can become conservation workers but if they do something else, they will still be conservation minded in their own fields*" (Interview 16 April 2012). According to one interviewee, WWF Nepal also aims to target its awareness-raising work wider in order to reach the youth who are not interested in conservation as such but plan to be wealthy, successful and powerful when they grow older: "*these are the ones who will design the roads and the dams in the future so we need to influence them*" (Interview 16 April 2012).

In addition to preparing children for the future, WWF Nepal sees their role relevant in the present-day conservation work. The content and the goals in the environmental education work of WWF Nepal vary: "*We have different targets for the environmental education for children in different places: children of Bardiya* (a national park) *have crucial role in conserving tiger and rhino but in Kathmandu their role is for instance to keep rivers clean.*" (Interview 16 April 2012). WWF Nepal focuses its work especially on corridors and buffer zones adjacent to national parks and other protected areas. Eco clubs in schools in these areas are seen as one of the best channels to spread conservation message: "*In rural areas there are not many information sources other than school therefore it's a good channel to spread information.*" (Interview 16 April 2012). In Nepal, the government schools especially in the rural areas function with very little money and resources, with a high drop-out rate. WWF Nepal's strategy is to focus on these schools because there the help is needed and a small investment can bring

about big results: *"10 000 rupees in city is nothing but in rural areas you can make a difference with that money"* (Interview 16 April 2012).

WWF Nepal also has a tradition of cooperating with national celebrities such as actors and musicians, and appointing them as conservation ambassadors. Having a role model and a youth icon to spread the conservation message has been a strategic approach for WWF Nepal in the rural areas, in particular. Every year the current Miss Nepal acts as a youth ambassador and visits rural areas meeting and discussing with the local youth. *"When Miss Nepal is the youth ambassador some people question it by asking why are you using woman as a product? But she is a youth icon – thousands youth will listen to her; out of that handful will take action. Young woman can spread the conservation message."* Having Miss Nepal as a youth role model is not the only objective: *"In addition beautiful woman will marry a man with power and money and he will also show example of responsible action"* (Interview 16 April 2012).

## 4.2   Influencing Adults through Children and Youth

The second strategy for WWF Nepal with regard to working with children and youth is to reach to the adults of the community through their children and that way spread the conservation message wider: *"It's difficult to gather large amount of community people together but in schools it's easy to gather more than 100 children that represent the community. They take the conservation message to their parents and community"* (Interview 16 April 2012). According to the interviewees, it is often difficult and time-consuming to try to encourage adults to change their behaviour toward a more responsible and sustainable path. However, children are seen as an effective channel to influence the thinking of adults: *"We can't change adults' thoughts but we can influence the children's views and that way the adults' thoughts – it's called behavioural change. Parents never deny what children tell them. It's some kind of psychological thing. Parents are happy when children are excited."* (Interview 16 April 2012). Reaching the parents through their children is seen as cost-effective: *"When we mentor 100 kids, 50 kids go home and tell parents about the conservation issues. Out of those 10-20 parents might change their attitudes – it's a cost-effective way to do conservation"* (Interview 16 April 2012).

Based on the discussions with WWF staff stationed in the field in rural areas, the local youth are also seen as good messengers when conservation issues are introduced in the communities: *"Youth and students are the best ones to take conservation message to communities."* (Interview 9 April 2012). However, Nepal is highly diverse when it comes to the societal structures. Differences on how communities are run vary whether in rural or urban areas or in mountains or lowlands. Therefore, there are also differences in the activity levels of youth in different communities. In general, the youth in rural areas are seen as highly motivated to take action: *"Youth in rural areas are very motivated – they cycle 25 -50 kilometres with poor bikes to reach a rally place where conservation activities take place"* (Interview 16 April 2012), but in some communities, it is more challenging to reach to the youth: *"In rural areas youth are in the frontline when education, awareness campaigns, entrepreneurship training etc. takes place. In a democratic society youth are in the frontline but in the traditional communities youth are not traditionally in the frontline."* (Interview 11 April 2012).

## 4.3   Engaging Youth as Active Agents in Conservation

According to all of the interviewees, young people do not have to be convinced to take action: *"Youth are receptive, encouraged, have good energy, are productive, and have passion."* (Interview 16 April 2012). More recently, youth have also been seen as an important additional human resource in conservation work, and support for them to become active agents in conservation has been developed. *"Youth are enthusiastic, eager to learn, don't care about money, don't care about career, want to experience, want to have challenging tasks, want opportunities and want knowledge and experiences."* (Interview 16 April 2012). Ensuring that the youth have the possibility to take action rather than just being recipients of information is considered important in motivating them: *"It's about the importance of conservation will - sensitising children and youth in actions rather than only reading a book is crucial. We must have action-oriented approach."* (Interview 10 April 2012).

WWF Nepal has supported the development of different voluntary conservation activities to encourage youth both in rural and urban areas to take action. Youth-led

community-based anti-poaching operation groups conduct patrolling in their local forests in order to expose illegal activities and also help the national park authorities in catching poachers. Local resource persons (LRPs) in villages carry out different tasks such as camera trapping, water quality measurement, and forest carbon inventory. Youth peer educators conduct youth-to-youth learning on issues related to population, health, and environment. Some of the qualities of youth are useful in the conservation activities but guidance from adults is still needed: "*Youth can react fast for instance in the anti-poaching units and reach the crime scene fast but they are also sometimes hot-blooded and might go too strong on the poachers*" (Discussion in the field 9 April 2012).

Lately, WWF Nepal has also engaged environmental and forestry students in activities ranging from training on climate change and forest-related issues, conducting forest carbon inventory in the field, to co-organising workshops and developing campaigns on various environmental issues. Cooperation with the academia was described by one interviewee as follows: "*Environment should be cross-cutting theme in all studies from politics to business and engineering since those students are in an important role in future green economy. It doesn't help if only environment students and environment sector lecture about green economy, we need to engage youth in all sectors.*" (Interview 15 April 2012).

### *Capacity Building*

In addition to utilising youth as additional help in conservation work, capacity building of the Nepalese youth was mentioned: "*In Nepal so many foreigners come as consultants and experts while we need to build the capacity in the Nepalese themselves. Engaging youth and students in the fieldwork is cost-effective, builds confidence and skills in youth, and the benefits go to the youth and the communities. It's about capacity building in local level.*" (Interview 15 April 2012).

According to one interviewee (15 April 2012), WWF Nepal could learn from the youth, and not only vice versa: "*Youth don't have blinkers, they can see 360 degrees, they have views which are beyond WWF thinking.*" So far, however, a proper system to collect ideas from young people seems to be missing: "*We would have a good chance to*

*get fresh ideas from interns and students but we miss those opportunities because we don't have time to interact with them.*" (Interview 15 April 2012). The importance of supporting and encouraging the young people who join WWF activities to make their own choices and to have self-confidence was also mentioned: "*It's important (for the youth) to believe in yourself and follow your own passions and don't go for the general issues that are hot at the moment*" (Interview 15 April 2012).

## 4.4 Ensuring the Sustainability of Conservation by Targeting Youth

As mentioned earlier, WWF Nepal is concerned over the challenges facing rural youth. For instance, the unemployed youth who are lacking meaningful action in their lives are at a risk of negative behaviour, such as poaching or other illegal activities. "*Very crucial age is 16-25 years, they don't have clear idea about their future. It's dangerous and they might go to bad behaviour as well. We can still influence them and mobilise them for conservation.*" (Interview 16 April 2012).

In addition, youth migration, especially to the Gulf countries, poses challenges to conservation efforts: "*Youth tell that they do not want to go abroad but they ask us: how do we stay here? Youth are now engaged in many things but for how long? They will go to Gulf and elsewhere, to avoid that we need to make them conservation leaders.*" (Interview 11 April 2012). The growing absence of youth in many rural villages has long-lasting effects on local societies, ultimately also affecting the sustainability of conservation efforts: "*Youth need to stay for social relationship as well, to take care of elders, ensure food production and making children. The absence of youth has bigger affects than just conservation. Without youth, there are no community volunteers.*" (Interview 11 April 2012). Although it is difficult for a conservation organisation to try to solve social problems, some solutions to youth problems have also been developed by WWF: "*We can't generate employment, but we could engage them in activities, monitoring, patrolling etc. Give them skills, small tasks in information centre or as tourist guides, introduce them with modern-type of business and entrepreneurship. Can we engage them for long time? Can we provide them with roles and skills - economic skills? We need to meet their needs!*" (Interview 11 April 2012).

WWF Nepal has recently also started to add alternative, other than directly conservation-related, voluntary activities for youth in their programmes. For instance, computer classes and traditional Tharu dance training are interlinked to anti-poaching and peer education activities. The aim is to give youth meaningful action and motivate them toward conservation. "*In the curve of social change 15-25 years is the critical age, youth are not responsible for household or income, youth are "arrogant", but also open to ideas or negative or positive influence from outside. We need to create activities for youth, e.g. sports or other, to engage youth and have them protecting buffer zones from outsiders.* " (Interview 11 April 2012).

The latest programme that WWF Nepal launched for youth between the ages of 16 and 26 is called Generation Green. It aims to build a supporter base of 500 000 young people in Nepal. It hopes to have these young people actively engaged in conservation and environment protection programmes in the future. The project invites adult role models and youth icons from different fields such as politics, sports, entertainment, and business to mentor youth and show an example on a path toward being responsible citizens and leaders of tomorrow: *"We didn't have special programme for youth before but the Generation Green will be one, its aim is to make them good citizens."* (Interview 16 April 2012). At the time of writing this in February 2014, the programme had just been launched (www.wwfnepal.org).

# 5 Survey Results – the Views of the Youth Volunteers

## 5.1 The Survey Participants

Half of the survey participants were from Khata (127 participants) and half from Gadawa (127 participants). In both places, the participants were members of the community-based anti-poaching operation groups (CBAPOs) (70 per cent in Khata and 57 per cent in Gadawa) or Population, Health and Environment programme peer groups (30 per cent in Khata and 43 per cent in Gadawa). Most of the respondents were between 21-24 years old (30 per cent) or over 28 years old (28 per cent). In Khata, over 60 per cent of the participants were between 13-24 years old, whereas in Gadawa the participants were older: over 60 per cent were over 25 years old. Both PHE peer groups had a majority of their members from the age group of 21-24 years old, while the CBAPO group in Khata had a majority from the 13-20 age group and CBAPO group in Gadawa from the group of over 28 year-olds (see Figure 2). Two-thirds of the participants were male and one-third female. Males dominated in both of the CBAPO groups, whereas the PHE peer groups had almost the same number of male and female participants (Figure 3).
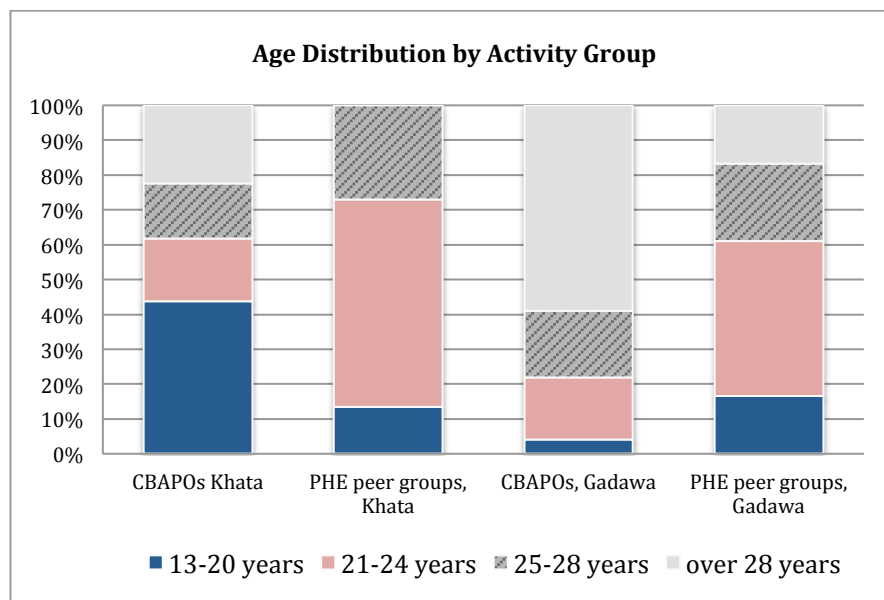


*Figure 2. Age Distribution of the Respondents in Different Activity Groups*
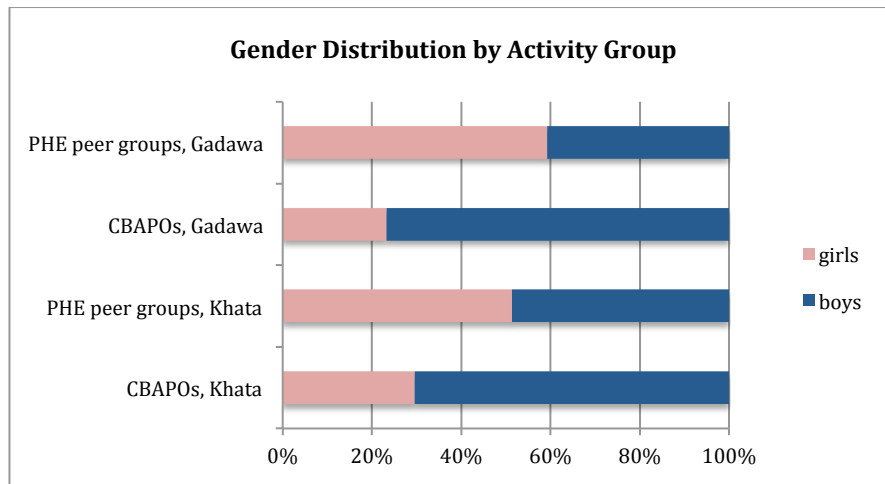
*Figure 3. Gender Distribution of the Respondents in Different Activity Groups*

*Strengths and Problems of Youth in Khata and Gadawa*

The participants' views about the strengths of youth in their communities were quite similar in both places. Instead, the views about problems facing the youth differed between Khata and Gadawa. The ability to learn new things fast, having modern skills, and care over environment were chosen as the most popular strengths of youth in both Khata and Gadawa. Next, following these, the respondents from Gadawa seemed to value the mobility of youth as an important strength while the participants from Khata thought the ability to gather a lot of youth together was an important strength. (see Figure 4.)
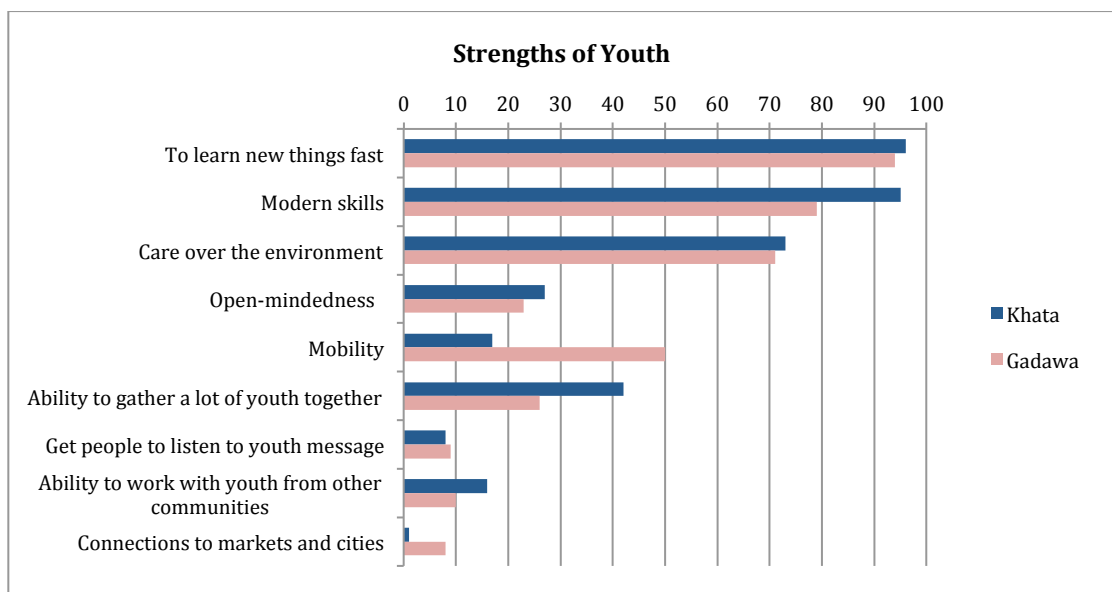


*Figure 4. Strengths of Youth According to the Survey Participants*

According to the survey participants, youth unemployment in both places was considered by far the most serious problem facing the youth (see Figure 5.). Poor opportunities for studying and youth migration were named as the second and third biggest problems in Khata, while in Gadawa youth migration was ranked the second, followed by the lack of extra-curricular activities in the third place. In Khata, substance abuse was not considered a problem unlike in Gadawa. In addition, in Khata there did not seem to be a shortage of extra-curricular activities while in Gadawa this was considered a serious problem. Differences are also seen in regard to early marriage, viewed as a bigger challenge in Khata than in Gadawa.
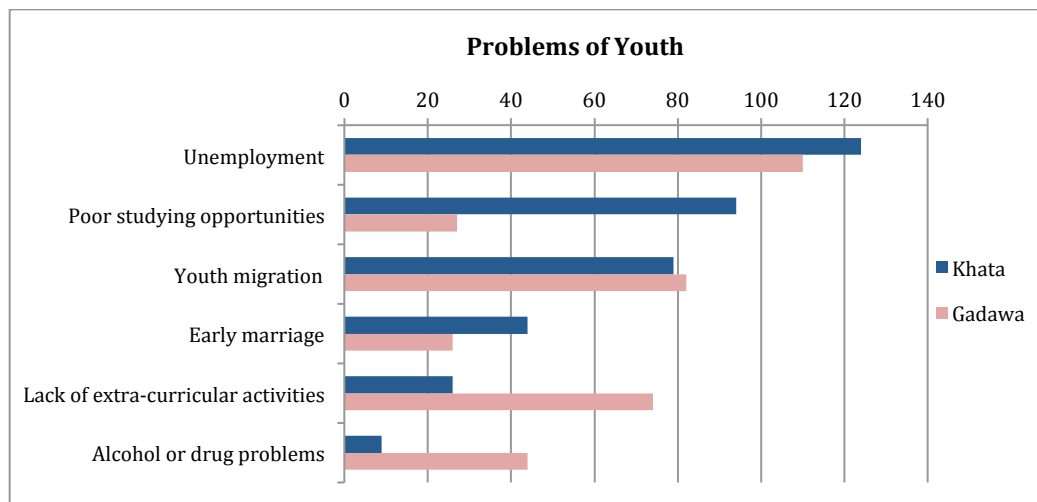


*Figure 5. Problems of Youth According to the Survey Participants*

*Motivation to Participate in the Voluntary Activities*

The main motivations among the respondents to join the anti-poaching or peer education activities were an urge to help one's own community and the environment, as well as the desire to learn new things. These were the most popular reasons within all groups. Many respondents also felt that joining the activity would be helpful for their future (see Figure 6). In regard to how the respondents joined the activities in the first place, differences could be observed between activity groups and places (see Figure 7.). In Gadawa, the most common way of joining the activities within both of the groups was being encouraged by a community member. In Khata, the CBAPO members had either heard about the activity personally and wanted to join or were asked by a friend, whereas the PHE peer group members were encouraged by a community member,

wanted to join personally after hearing about the activity or were asked by a friend. The PHE peer group in Khata was the only group that did not mention the influence of an outside organisation at all, whereas in the other groups this reason was mentioned a few times. Within the younger respondents (13-20 years), the influence of friends was significant since "*my friend asked me to join*" was the most common reason to join, while the older groups were more influenced by their surrounding community.
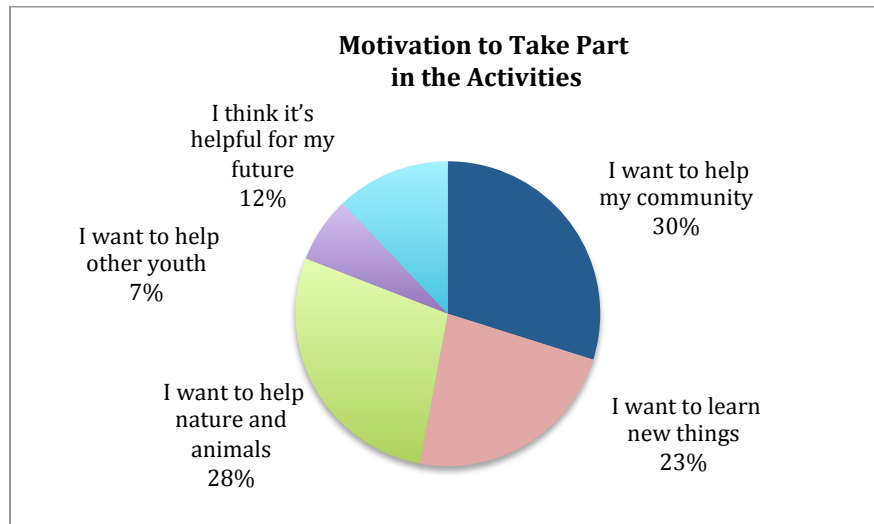


*Figure 6. Respondents' Main Motivations to Participate in the Activities*
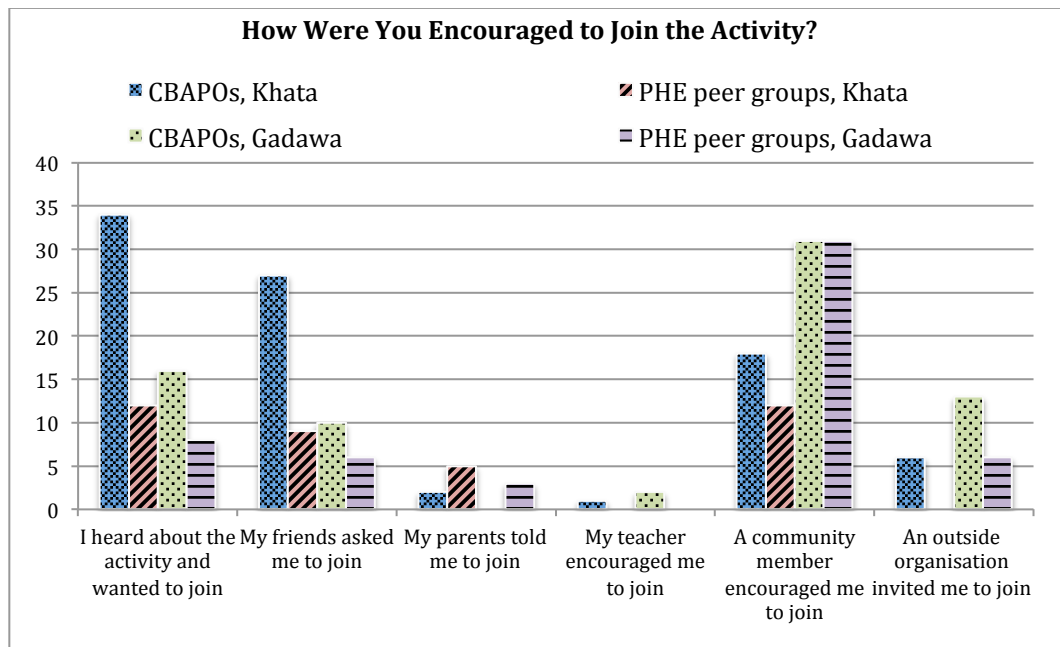


*Figure 7. Different Reasons for Joining the Activities.*

There was variance in the duration of participation when compared between age, activity groups and places (see Figure 8). The participants of the PHE peer groups in Khata had been active the longest (over 40 per cent for over four years and almost 80 per cent for over two years), while with the PHE peer group in Gadawa the average duration of participation was one to two years. Both CBAPO groups seemed to have many new members (less than one year) but also members that had been involved for over four years (35 per cent in Khata and 15 per cent in Gadawa).

**How Long Have You Been Participating in the Activity?**
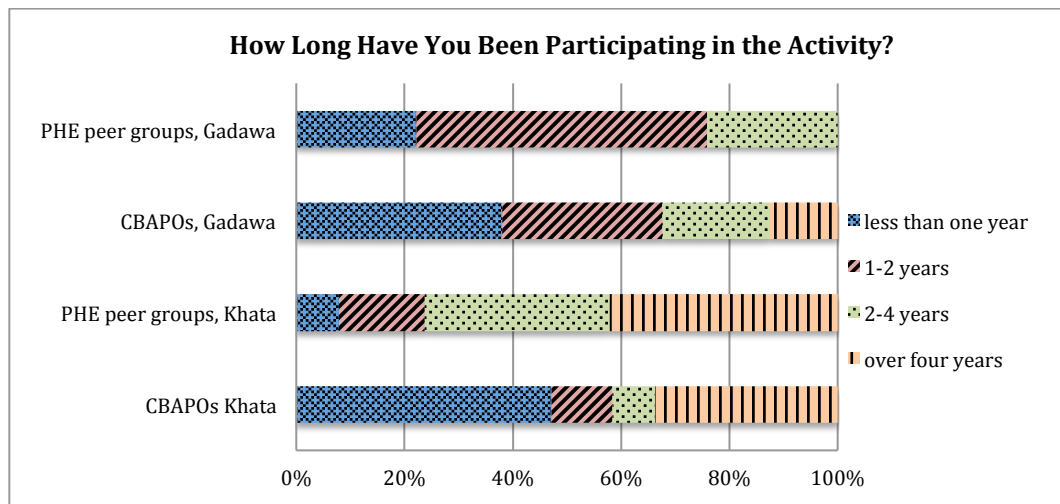


*Figure 8. Duration of Participation in Different Activity Groups.*

Most of the participants said they spent one to three times per month with the group, except the CBAPO group in Gadawa, where over 40 per cent seemed to participate weekly in the activities (see Figure 9). Likewise, the PHE peer group in Gadawa and the CBAPO group on Khata had some participants that were active one to three times a week. It is possible that there is a more active group, the "core group", within the respondents who are active on a weekly basis while the rest take part less frequently. Differences between age groups were not observed.
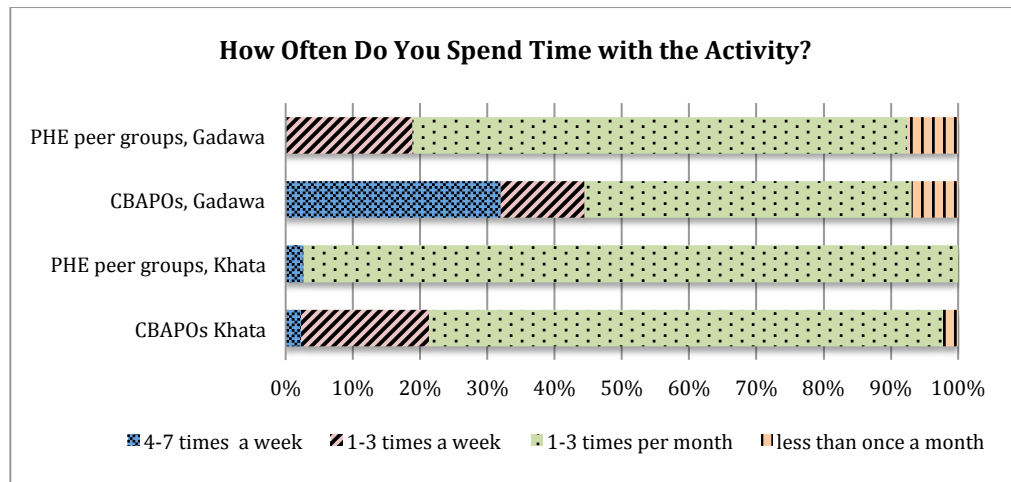
*Figure 9. Amount of Time Spent with the Different Activities.*

## 5.2 The Six Cs - Elements of Youth Development

The following sections explain the extent to which the respondents possess "the six Cs" - competence, confidence, connection, caring, character, and contribution –, which are considered the elements of personal development taking place in young people, according to the theory of Positive Youth Development. The *Competence* part deals with topics around life skills, such as ability to solve problems and develop friendships. The *Confidence* section addresses features related to the sense of self, such as self-esteem, sense of purpose, and view of the future. The *Connection* part focuses on relationships with family, friends, and community. The *Character* section deals with such issues as tolerance and taking action against negative behaviour. The *Caring* part addresses issues related to compassion toward other people and the environment. (Sabatelli & Anderson 2005.) Finally, the section focusing on "*contribution*", which is considered the "sixth C", is presented. This part addresses the willingness to volunteer and take self-imposed action to help one's own community.

The respondents were asked to answer all the questions on a Likert-scale of not at all - a little - a lot - very much, and not sure. The idea behind the analysis is that the bigger the share of "very much" and " a lot" answers, the more positive development takes place in the respondents. The answers were analysed in a frequency table. Mean or variance estimates were not calculated since the answer scale was less than five. The results are analysed including most of the respondents (N=254), with some missing answers

depending on the question. It is, however, explained in the text if differences by age or between places (Khata, Gadawa) or groups (CBAPOs and PHE peer groups) appear. To avoid a large amount of graphics, mostly only the summary tables and summary graphs are presented.

### 5.2.1 Competence

Competence refers to the competencies, such as better leadership and problem-solving skills, which are found in youth and help them to make positive choices, build positive social relations with peers, and succeed in life. Based on the results, the participants seem to possess a fairly good level of competence since most of the answers were given in the "a lot" part, following "a little" and "very much" depending on the questions (see Table 1). Strongest competence seemed to relate to making friends, making important decisions, and acting as a leader in a group (75-80 per cent of "very much" and "a lot" answers). Belief in one's own skills seemed to be rather low, having over 5 per cent of "not at all" and about 60 per cent of "a little " answers. This question was not too detailed so it might also have raised some confusion. When comparing the activity groups in Khata and Gadawa to one another, the biggest differences were related to one's own skills, since the respondents in Gadawa seemed to be more insecure about their own skills, and to some extent their leadership, than the respondents in Khata (see Figure 10.). In general, the PHE peer group members showed more competence in making friends (especially in Gadawa) and making important decisions when compared to the CBAPO groups. However, when the answers from all questions were summarised, the results between the groups were quite similar (see Figure 11).
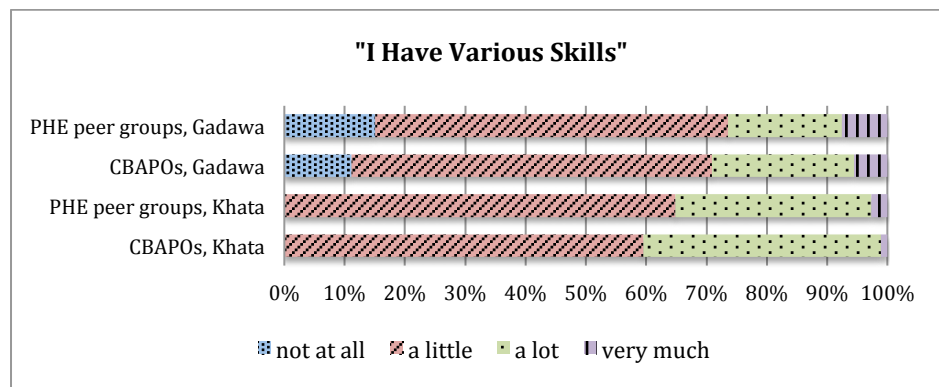


*Figure 10. Respondents' Views about their own Skills.*

53

*Table 1. Respondents' Views about their Life Skills. N= 251.*

**Competence**

| | I can help others with their problems | Solving problems that come my way is easy | I have various skills | I have confidence to act as a leader in a group | I can make important decisions on my own | I am good in making friends |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not at all | 3 | 3 | 16 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| A little | 79 | 113 | 151 | 59 | 51 | 48 |
| A lot | 118 | 109 | 74 | 105 | 116 | 125 |
| Very much | 43 | 22 | 10 | 84 | 82 | 75 |
| Not sure | 8 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

**Summary of the Elements of Competence**

*Figure 11. Views of Different Groups on the Elements of Competence when the Answers from the Six Individual Questions are Summarized.*

### 5.2.2 Confidence

Confidence refers to the improved self-esteem, courage, sense of purpose, and a positive view of one's own future. As with competence, most of the answers concerning confidence were given in the "a lot" section, followed by "a little", and with the first two questions, also in the "very much" section. The share of "very much" and "a lot" answers was biggest (over 80 per cent) in the questions where the respondents were evaluating their own confidence, as well as their courage to speak out their own opinions (see Table 2). More insecurity could be observed when the respondents analysed other people's views on them (the share of "very much" and "a lot" answers around 60 per cent). In these questions, including the one about the future, "not at all" and "not sure" answers were also given.

In general, when comparing the groups in Khata and Gadawa to one another, the differences between them were not too big (see Figure 12). The respondents from Gadawa appeared to feel a little bit more optimistic about their future and their role in their own community than the respondents from Khata (see Figure 13). This is interesting when relating it to the earlier comments that the social and environmental conditions are somewhat harder in Gadawa than in Khata. In Khata, on the other hand, the respondents seemed to feel a bit more confident about themselves in general than in Gadawa. The answers between the age groups did not differ to a great extent. The oldest age group had more of "a little" answers in all questions compared to the other groups, which indicates slightly less confidence in oneself than among the younger respondents. All in all, the age group of 25-28 seemed to show most confidence by having the biggest share of "very much" answers (Figure 14).

*Table 2. Respondents' Views about Confidence. N=251.*

**Confidence**

| | I feel optimistic about my future | I feel my parents/family are proud of me | I feel other people respect me | I feel that i have a purpose in my community | I'm not afraid to speak out my opinions | I have confidence in myself |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not at all | 3 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| A little | 94 | 87 | 106 | 82 | 34 | 28 |
| A lot | 104 | 111 | 104 | 119 | 133 | 121 |
| Very much | 44 | 44 | 26 | 49 | 83 | 100 |
| Not sure | 6 | 3 | 11 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

**Summary of the Elements of Confidence**

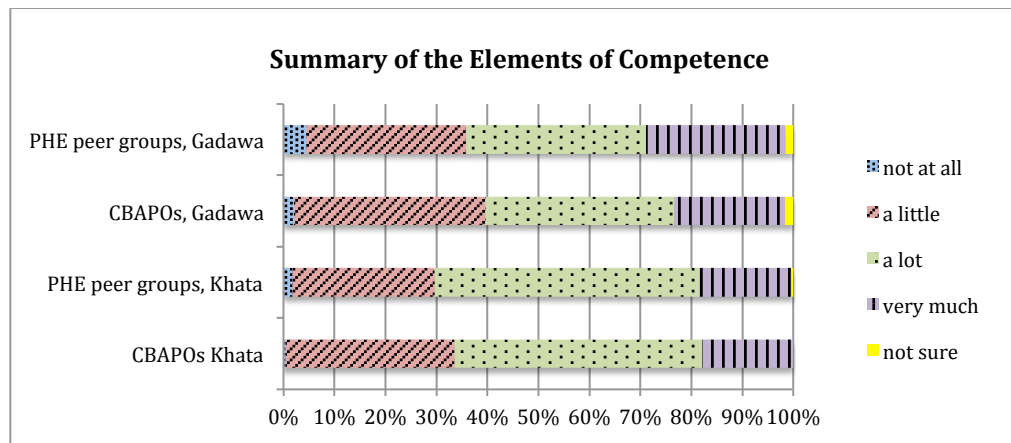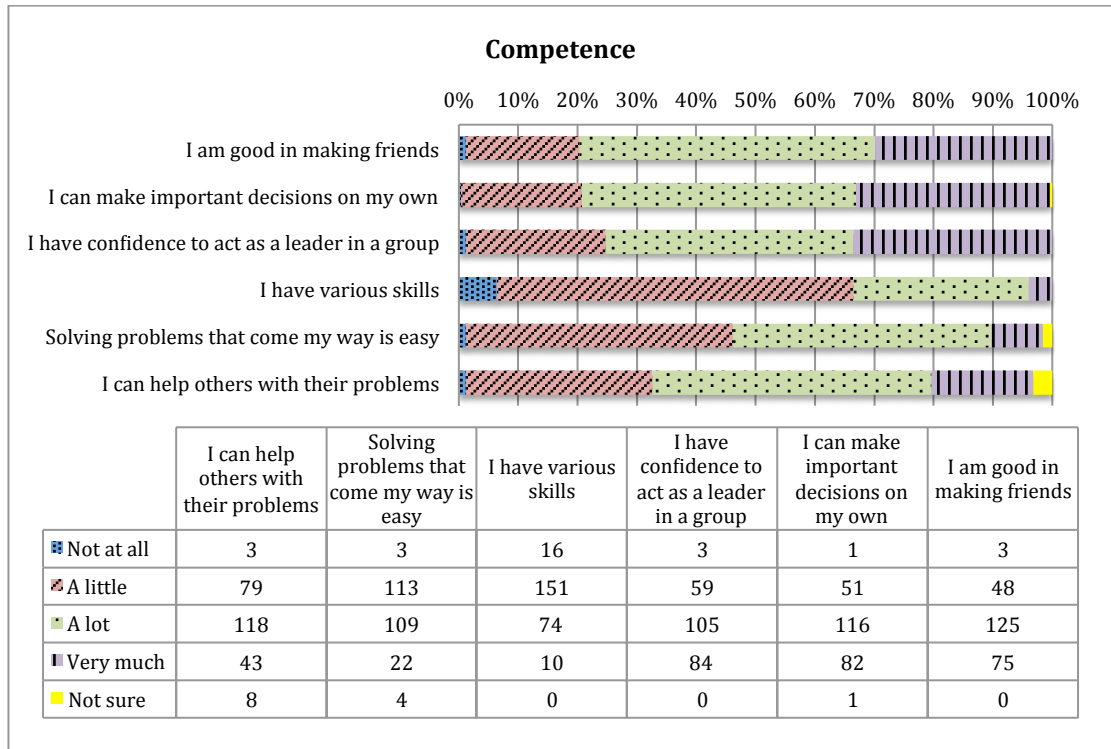*Figure 12. Summary of the Views of Different Groups on the Elements of Confidence when the Answers from the Six Individual Questions are Summarized.*
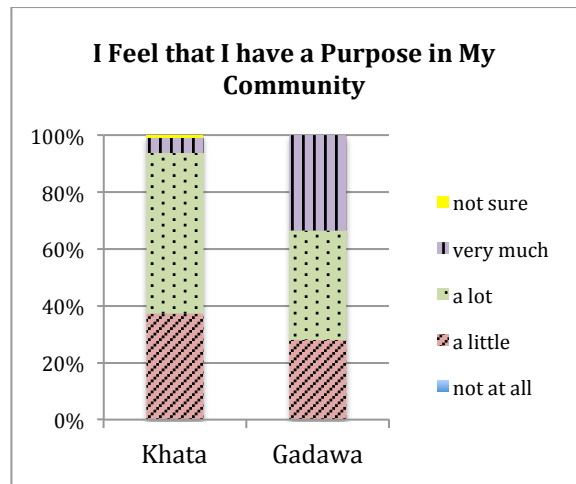
*Figure 13. Respondents' Views about the Role in Their own Community Presented by Place.*
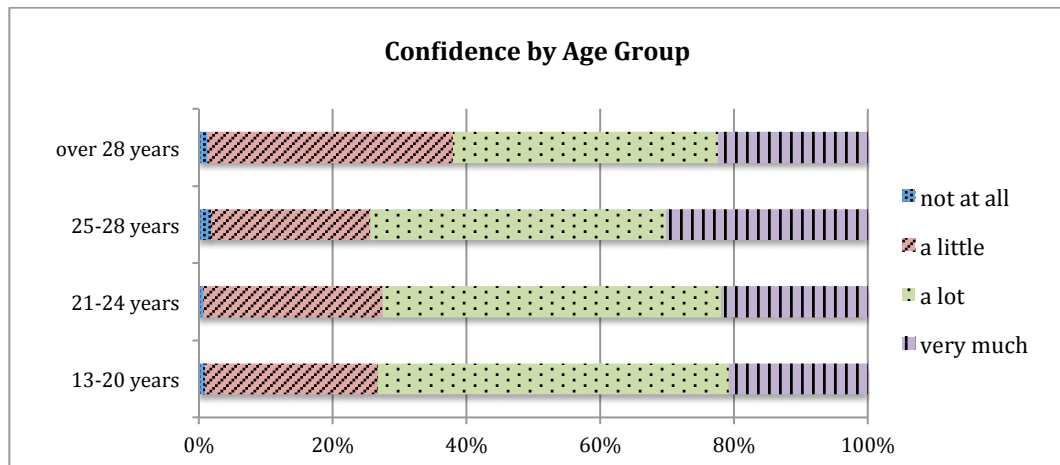


*Figure 1 Summary of the Views on the Elements of Confidence by Age Group.*

### 5.2.3 Connection

In order to have the courage to take action, young people need to have supportive connections and experience care, love, and guidance from their families and friends. In addition, they need to be positively recognised by their surrounding community and other adults.

This part had more questions (12) than others since it was divided into four parts, focusing on relationships with parents, siblings, friends, and other community adults. Here again, the most frequent answers were "a lot", followed by "a little" and "very much" (see Table 3 and Figure 15). It appears that the respondents have a fairly good relationship with their parents and feel they are loved and supported and can share their troubles and ideas with them. Some participants, however, did not feel that their parents

respect them or believe in their future. When comparing the activity groups to one another, the warmest relationship with parents, siblings, and friends appeared to be with the members in the PHE peer group in Gadawa. With the other groups, the view on the relationship with the family was alike. The PHE group in Gadawa and the CBAPO members from Khata seemed a bit more confident about discussing their own issues with friends. Then again, respondents from Khata trusted their friends to help them when in need, whereas the participants from Gadawa were not so confident about being helped by their friends.

The relationships with other community adults were good, although not so trusting as with one's own family (see Figure 16). Again, the members of the PHE peer group in Gadawa seemed to trust community adults the most. However, the participants from Khata appeared to be a bit more confident about receiving help and advice from their community adults when compared to Gadawa. When analysed by age, the youngest age groups had slightly less trust in the relationship with other community adults than the other age groups. The oldest age group from 28 years and older showed slightly weaker relationships in general when compared to the other age groups. However, no big differences were observed.

*Table 3. Distribution of Answers Regarding the Elements of Relationships.*

| Connection | Not at all | A little | A lot | Very much | Not sure |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PARENTS (N=245)** | | | | | |
| I can tell my parents if I have problems | 2 | 30 | 103 | 110 | 0 |
| I feel my parents love me | 0 | 40 | 118 | 87 | 0 |
| My parents listen to my ideas | 2 | 71 | 111 | 59 | 2 |
| My parents respect my wishes | 5 | 85 | 95 | 59 | 1 |
| My parents believe I will have a good future | 4 | 98 | 86 | 54 | 3 |
| **SISTERS/BROTHERS (N=251)** | | | | | |
| I can talk about anything with my sisters/brothers | 1 | 46 | 101 | 103 | 0 |
| My sisters/brothers help me if I have problems | 2 | 69 | 122 | 56 | 2 |
| **FRIENDS (N=251)** | | | | | |
| I can talk about anything to my friends | 2 | 70 | 92 | 87 | 0 |
| My friends help me if I have problems | 3 | 94 | 86 | 55 | 13 |
| **COMMUNITY ADULTS (N=252)** | | | | | |
| I feel adults in my community treat me well | 2 | 105 | 100 | 44 | 1 |
| I can talk to adults in my community if I have problems | 4 | 117 | 94 | 36 | 1 |
| I can get help and advice from adults in my community | 5 | 89 | 108 | 45 | 5 |
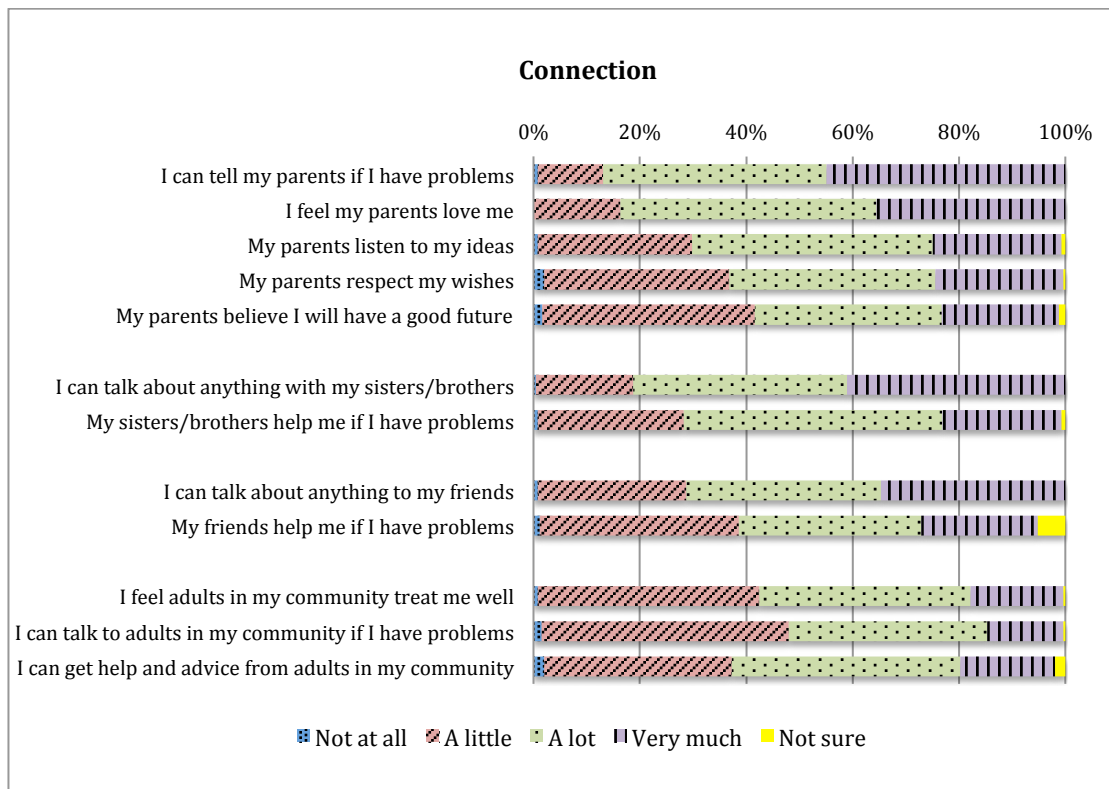


*Figure 15. Respondents' Answers Regarding the Elements of Relationships.*

59
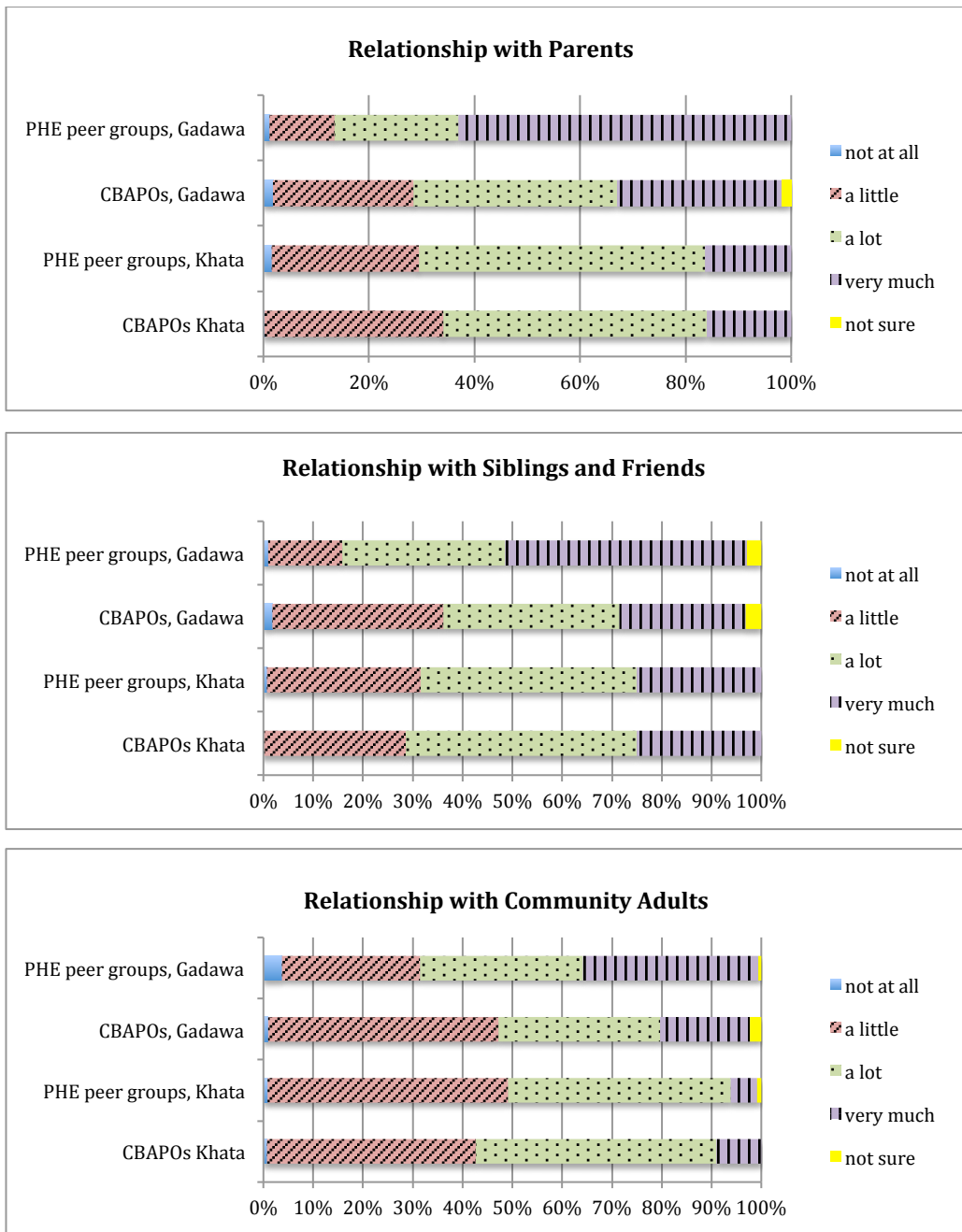
*Figure 16. The Summary of the Views of Different Groups on Relationships with Family, Friends, and Community Adults when the Answers of Individual Questions are Summarised.*

### 5.2.4 Character

Character refers to the courage of participants to defend themselves and others from such negative pressures as bad, discriminative, or illegal behaviour. Compared to the previous categories, "character" appears to be a bit stronger among the respondents since most of the answers in this part were "a lot" or "very much" (around 80 per cent of the answers, see Table 4). There were some differences between Khata and Gadawa

concerning the question of "*I can say no to activities that I think are wrong*", where respondents from Gadawa, who also represented the oldest age group, were more confident and had a clearly bigger share of "very much" answers compared to Khata and the younger age groups (see Figure 17). The youngest age group (13-20 years) showed a little less confidence especially with this same question regarding resistance skills when compared to the older age groups. What was notable was that when compared to the other groups, the CBAPO group members from Khata appeared to be less confident about intervening in and resisting negative behaviour (see Figure 18).

*Table 4. Respondents' Answers Regarding the Elements of Character. N=249.*



|  | Laughing at other people is wrong | I can be friends with people regardless of their race, culture or religion | If I see someone bullied, I go and stop that | I can say no to activities that I think are wrong |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not at all | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| A little | 46 | 44 | 61 | 36 |
| A lot | 118 | 103 | 142 | 96 |
| Very much | 82 | 100 | 46 | 118 |
| Not sure | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
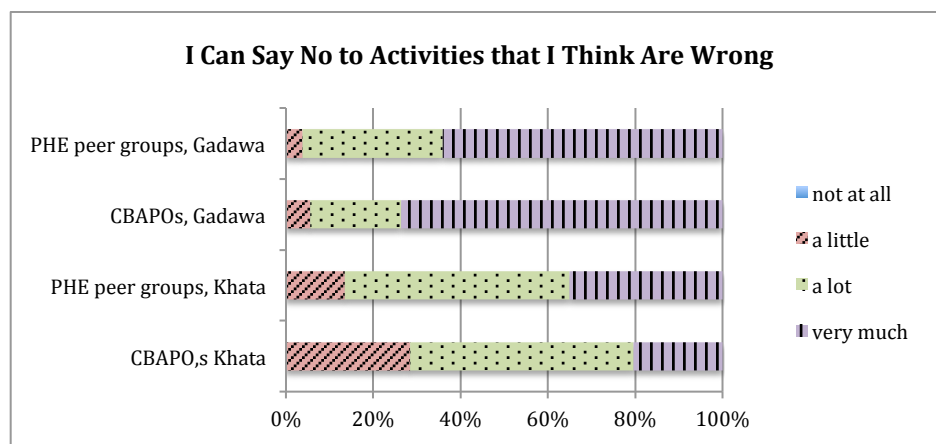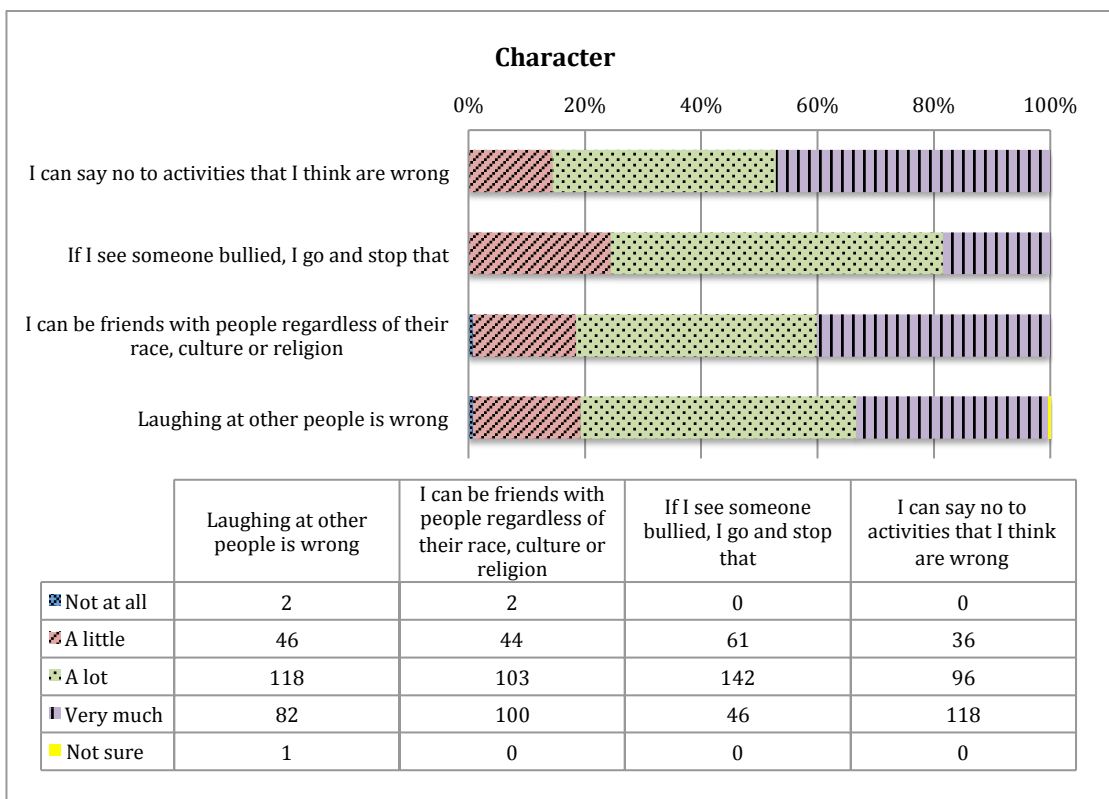


*Figure 17. Views of the Groups on the Ability to Resist Negative Activities.*

**Summary of the Elements of Character**
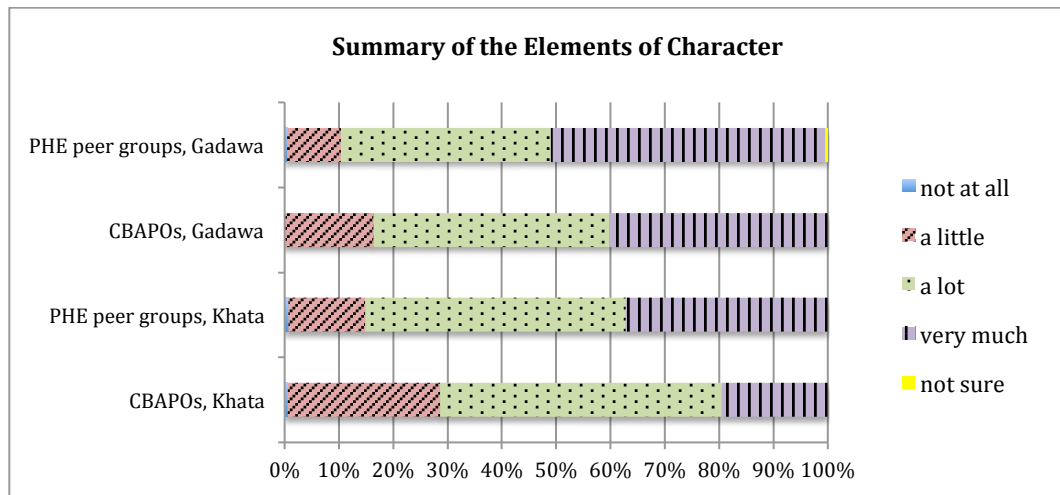
Figure 18. Summary of the Views of Different Groups on the Elements of Character.

### 5.2.5 Caring

Caring refers to the sense of responsibility and care for others and the environment. Being sensitive to the feelings and experiences of others and acting in a caring way toward others are considered important aspects when managing social relationships.

This part had nine questions related to empathy toward other people, nature and wildlife. When compared to the earlier categories, the level of caring was higher since most of the answers were "very much", followed by "a lot" and "a little" (see Table 5 and Figure 20). Over 70 per cent of the answers in all questions were "very much" or "a lot", indicating a strong sense of caring and empathy among the respondents. Regarding empathy with other people, the respondents from Gadawa showed somewhat stronger compassion and caring compared to Khata by having a clearly bigger share of "very much" answers (around 60 per cent in Gadawa and 25-40 per cent in Khata, see Figure 19a.). The one exception was the question about feeling bad if someone gets hurt, where especially the PHE group from Khata showed stronger compassion than the other groups. With the answers from the CBAPO group members in Khata, it was observed that caring for other people was not as strong as with the other groups (see Figure 19a).

Respect for nature and wild animals seemed very high among the respondents (around 90 per cent of "very much" and "a lot" answers) and stronger than the empathy toward

people (from 75 to 85 per cent of "very much" and "a lot" answers). Again, the participants from Gadawa had more "very much" answers than the participants from Khata. It was noted again that the CBAPO group from Khata showed a little less empathy toward nature and wild animals than the other groups (see Figure 19b). However, all groups seemed to show strong empathy toward the environment in general. This seems logical since the respondents are voluntarily taking action on behalf of their surrounding environment and nature. It was also noted that the youngest group (13-20 years) showed slightly less and the oldest group (+ 28 years) slightly more caring in general (both people and nature) than the other age groups (figure not presented).

*Table 5. Respondents' Answers Regarding the Elements of Caring. N=250-252.*



|  | I respect fish and want to protect rivers and streams | I believe that no one should throw rubbish in the nature | I respect wild animals and I think people should not kill them | I think forests are important and should be protected | I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt | I care about the feelings of other people | I help the poor and disabled members of my community | I help people who are lonely | I make sure that everyone in a group is treated fairly |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not at all | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| A little | 27 | 25 | 22 | 20 | 50 | 65 | 46 | 41 | 61 |
| A lot | 77 | 75 | 85 | 73 | 91 | 99 | 101 | 108 | 107 |
| Very much | 143 | 150 | 144 | 158 | 107 | 86 | 104 | 103 | 82 |
| Not sure | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

*Figure 19a. Summary of the Views on the Care for People when the Answers from the Individual Questions are Summarised.*
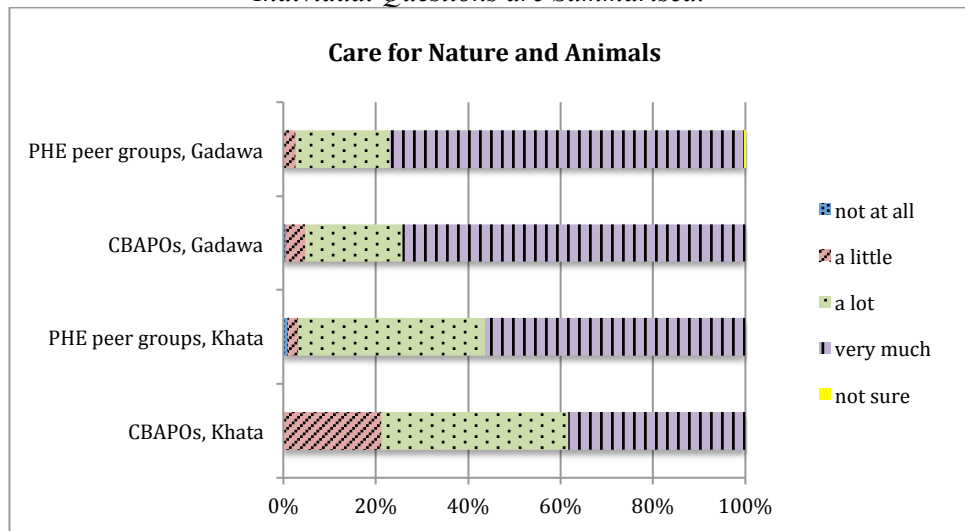


*Figure 19b. Summary of the Views on the Care for the Environment when the Answers from the Individual Questions are Summarised.*
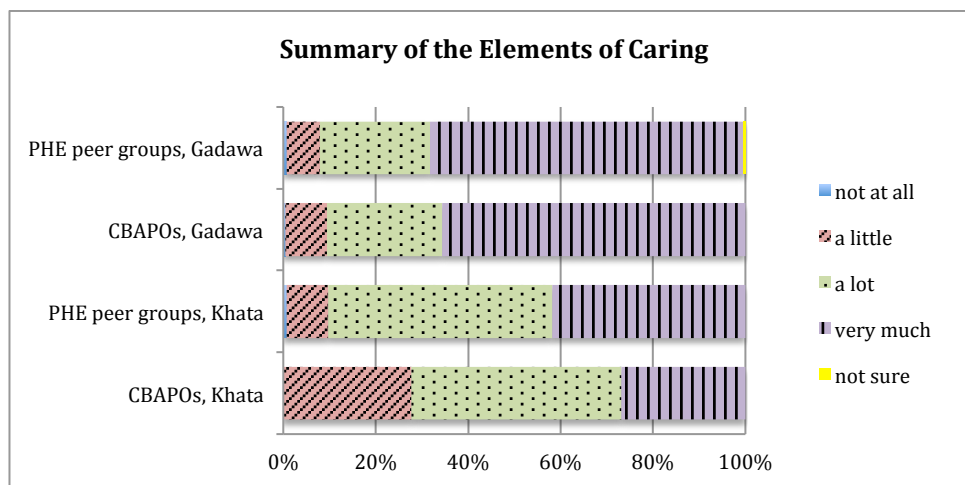


*Figure 20. Summary of the Views of Different Groups on the Elements of Caring.*

### 5.2.6 Contribution

When the five positive elements, the "five Cs" take place, it is likely that the sixth positive feature, contribution, will occur in youth (Lerner et al. 2005a). This refers to the urge that evolves in the participants to take self-imposed positive action to make a change for the better in their own community or society. The results in this question group show that contribution is very strong among the participants since the majority of the answers were given in the "very much" section. Together, the "a lot" and "very much" answers comprise over 90 per cent of the answers in each question (see Table 6). Respondents from both Khata and Gadawa seem to feel almost equally eager to contribute to the good of their community (see Figure 21); however, the CBAPO group from Khata showed slightly more will to contribute than the other groups. The only exception in the will to contribute between the groups was the CBAPO group from Gadawa that expressed a smaller will to participate in other activities than the one they were presently involved with. No differences in the elements of contribution were noticeable between the different age groups.
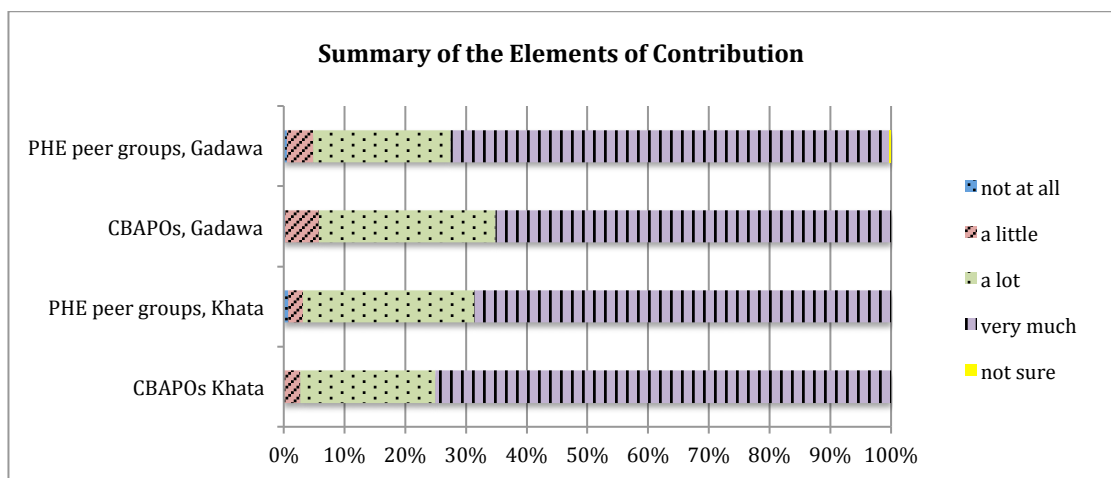


*Figure 21. Summary of the Views of Groups on the Elements of Contribution when the Answers from Seven Individual Questions are Summarised.*

*Table 6. Respondents' Answers Regarding the Elements of Contribution. N=249-250.*

**Contribution**

|  | I want to work more to make my community a better place | I am more proud of my community than before | I want to participate in other community activities besides the one I'm now involved in | I want to activate adults to do good for the community | I want to activate other youth to do good for the community | I want to volunteer to take care of the forests and animals around my community | I want to volunteer on a regular basis to help other people in my community |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not at all | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| A little | 9 | 11 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 10 | 7 |
| A lot | 33 | 73 | 66 | 91 | 82 | 44 | 52 |
| Very much | 206 | 166 | 175 | 146 | 156 | 195 | 191 |
| Not sure | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

*Summary of the Six Cs*

Finally, when all the five Cs and the sixth C are analysed based on the frequencies of the different answer categories in all question patterns (not at all…very much), the results show that the share of the "very much" and "a lot" answers is biggest in the Contribution section (over 90 per cent), followed by the Caring and Character sections (both over 80 per cent). The Confidence, Connection, and Competence sections all have almost the same share of "very much" and "a lot" answers (around 65 - 70 per cent) (see Figure 22).
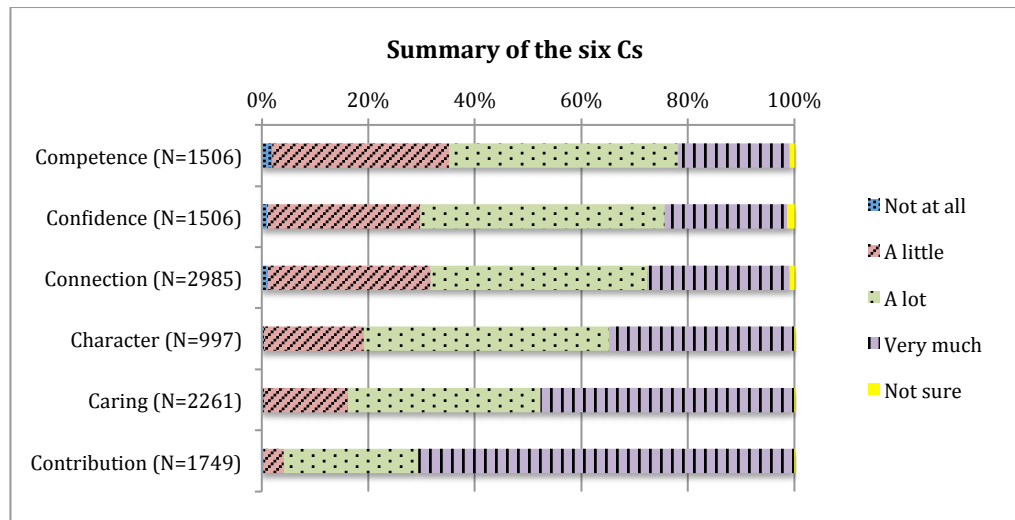
*Figure 22. Summary of the "Six Cs". N refers to the total number of answers.*

## 5.3 Youth Views on the Voluntary Activities

The following chapters present the views of the survey participants on the positive experiences they have gained and challenges they have faced during their voluntary activities, as well as their preferences in relation to extra-curricular activities, vocational training possibilities, and employment options. The results are based both on open-ended questions and structured questions.

### 5.3.1 Learning New Things

The structured questions show that around 80 per cent of the participants stated that they now had more information about forest conservation, anti-poaching, wildlife, and improved hygiene than before they had joined the activities. Around 50-60 per cent of the respondents did not feel that they had learnt about improved agriculture, climate change and adaptation, or human-wildlife conflict. In general, the respondents from Khata appeared to had received more information than the respondents from Gadawa, with the exception of forest fire prevention, climate change and adaptation, and one's own culture and traditions, which were topics that the respondents from Gadawa had learnt more about (Figure 24).

"Since Being Part of the Activity, How Much Information Do You Have Regarding the Following Topics?"

*Sexual and reproductive health
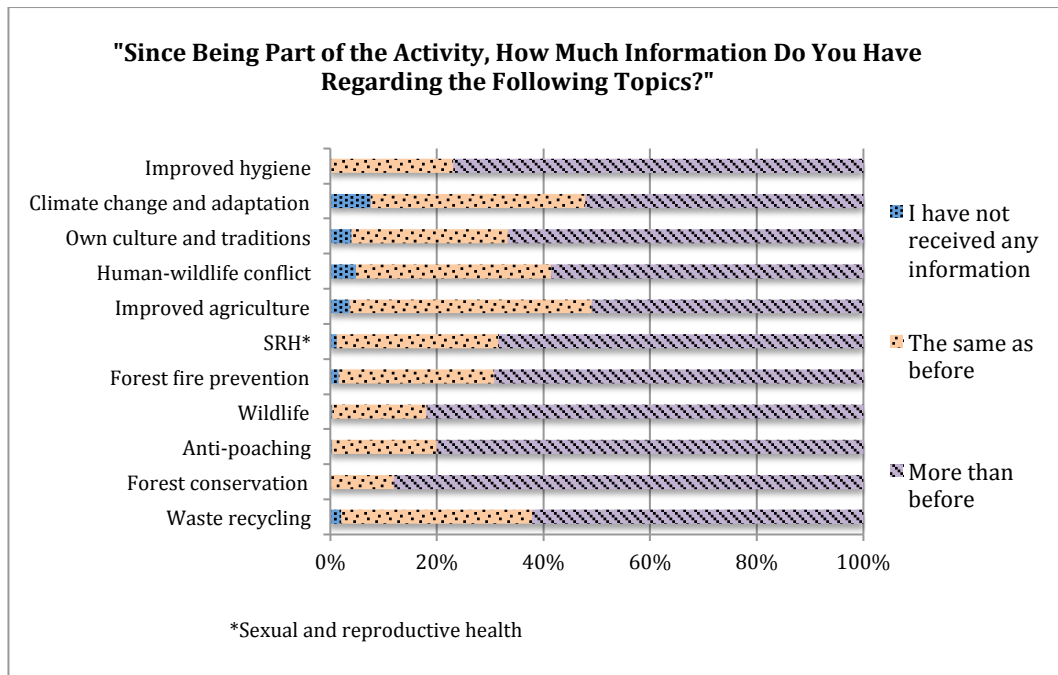
*Figure 23. Respondents' Views on Information Learnt about the Listed Topics during the Activities.*

### 5.3.2 Positive Experiences

The respondents were asked to answer in their own words what the three best things were that they had gained while being part of the voluntary activities. The answers were grouped under similar themes related to conservation knowledge, social and personal change, and health knowledge.

*Conservation Knowledge*

The most common topics the respondents listed were learning about forest and wildlife conservation, and anti-poaching. These were the main answers especially within both of the CBAPO groups. In addition, more specific answers were given particularly by the respondents from Gadawa, who mentioned, for example: controlling fuel wood collection, preservation of birds, importance of knowing and protecting poisonous snakes and insects, conserving water sources, rivers and streams, and controlling smuggling. The answers in Khata were more general, including tree planting, controlling deforestation and forest fires, and preventing soil erosion and other

degradation of the environment. In Gadawa, learning about climate change was mentioned many times, while in Khata, it was not mentioned at all.

One common answer related to conservation knowledge was understanding the importance of harmony between people and the environment, as well as prevention of human-wildlife conflicts. This was described for example with a phrase "*live and let live*". Many respondents in Gadawa also pointed out the knowledge about poisonous creatures and the importance of not killing them. One respondent described wildlife as the "*ornaments of forests*". Also, the importance of forests in people's lives was emphasised in many answers. Related to the anti-poaching theme, some respondents from Gadawa stated that the best thing they had gained was the opportunity to help the investigation team. This is a reference to the national park authorities who are combating poaching and wildlife trade and helped by the village anti-poaching groups patrolling in the forests.

*Social and Personal Change*

Answers referring to social and personal change were common especially within both groups in Khata and the PHE peer group in Gadawa. Many respondents were happy about the opportunity to learn new things and also to teach others. Some PHE peer group members from Gadawa mentioned PHE classes and health camps that are platforms for teaching other peers as the best experiences they had gained. Moreover, many CBAPO members in Khata mentioned learning and teaching as best things: "*ability to teach others*" and "*get a chance to understand others*". Only the CBAPO members in Gadawa did not mention teaching at all.

Quite a few respondents mentioned the changes in oneself as the best experience they had gained. This was described in various ways, including: "*being able to express openly*", "*courage to speak in front of a mass*", "*self-motivation*", "*courage to speak for own rights*", "*to be able to avoid bad things in society*", "*changes in own behaviour*", and "*increased self-awareness and self-confidence*".

There were respondents in all groups who felt that social changes in their community had taken place, phrasing it for example as "*changed community and society*", "*all are*

*activated towards conservation"*, and *"village development"*. In addition, the realisation of how important it is to protect the environment, forests and wildlife for future generations was also mentioned several times by the respondents as a positive thing. Many respondents felt that the increased awareness of the young people's issues and concerns in the community was the best thing that had resulted from the voluntary activities, which can be seen in the following quotes: *"development of youth", "involving youth in conservation", "change in youth"*, and *"solutions to youth and adolescents' problems"*.

Making new friends, cooperating for a good cause, and experiencing team spirit were seen as the best things by many respondents in all groups: *"feeling of co-operation", "to do good in group", "warm relationship with friends"*, and *"respect to all"*.

*Health Knowledge*

Finding out about such health-related topics as family planning, sexual health, controlling population pressure, puberty, contraception, and sanitation were common answers among the PHE peer group members in both Khata and Gadawa. However, the CBAPO group members did likewise mention health topics a few times, especially the ones related to hygiene and waste management as affecting human health and the environment. Moreover, the understanding of the linkages between the environment, population, and health came up in the PHE peer groups in both places. Being informed about how to prevent gender violence and discrimination was also mentioned several times in Gadawa but not in Khata. In addition, knowledge of how to decrease child mortality and help in maternity and childcare were often mentioned in Gadawa but not in Khata.

Other topics that the respondents saw as useful learning experiences included knowledge of how to save money (PHE peer groups in Gadawa), the ability to deal with sensitive issues confidentially (all groups), how to be safe and secure in forest for instance by avoiding use of perfume and wearing appropriate clothing (both CBAPO groups), knowledge of cooperatives and other forms of income-generating activities, such as the potential for tourism or fruit tree cultivation, and the ability to differentiate between truth and untruth.

### 5.3.3  Challenges

The respondents were also inquired about the negative or uncomfortable aspects of the voluntary activities they were involved with. About half of the respondents in all groups did not answer anything or informed that there were no challenges. Some respondents gave explicit answers to what they felt was not good, such as lack of shoes, while others suggested what was needed in order to make their work more comfortable, for instance *"stronger policies are needed"*. Here the answers are analysed based on the views of the two different groups, first the CBAPOs and then the PHE peer groups.

*Views of CBAPO members on Challenges in their Work*

The biggest challenges affecting the work of the CBAPO groups differed between Khata and Gadawa. In Khata, the main problems were related to the lack of proper equipment such as uniform, torchlight, shoes and snacks, as well as identity cards and certificates to prove their competence in various situations. In Gadawa, the problems affecting the work of the groups seemed to be related to the lack of public awareness about conservation of forests and wildlife. According to the respondents in Gadawa, people are not interested in conservation, encroachment in the forests by settlements and cattle grazing are severe, and there is not enough control of firewood cutting in the forests. Moreover, poaching seemed to be a very serious problem in Gadawa, as indicated in such answers as *"more effort should be given to capture poachers"*, and *"there is not enough punishment for poachers"*.

Problems related to training and education were also mentioned in both places. In Gadawa, more training on human-wildlife-conflict management, climate change and the environment was desired. In addition, more public awareness campaigns and educating youth and children about the importance of wildlife were mentioned. In Gadawa, the lack of youth and women participants also seemed to worry many of the respondents, as the following comments show: *"more youth should be involved"*, *"there's not enough active youth"*, *"there's lack of youth empowerment training"*, and *"lack of women empowerment training"*.

In Khata, it was suggested that anti-poaching education should also be given in schools and campuses, instead of leaving it only to the volunteers. Furthermore, the need for

regular and constant training of the groups was mentioned. In Gadawa, there were several mentions of "*there is a lack of equal participation opportunities for all*", which indicates there would be more people willing to join the activities than is currently possible.

In both places, the dangers of patrolling were mentioned several times as negative aspects of the activities, described in the following comments as: "*feel of fear*", "*need for weapons to protect myself*", and "*too much risk and no guarantee of own life*". Also, lack of security equipment and insurance was mentioned especially in Khata, as was the challenge of not having a fixed schedule for the patrolling: "*all of a sudden you have to leave*", "*you have to leave no matter what*", and "*not nice to have meeting at night*".

Some respondents felt that there was not enough support from the government and other outside organisations, and that the group members were not heard properly. This could be observed in such comments as: "*there's not support from all*", "*programs are only implemented according to the desire of donor*", "*government should monitor the work more regularly*", and "*participants are not heard*". Furthermore, both groups mentioned the lack of supportive policies.

*Views of PHE Peer Group Members on Challenges in their Work*

The problems affecting the work of the PHE peer groups in Khata and Gadawa also varied to some extent. In Gadawa, the biggest challenges seemed to be the lack of public awareness about the issues confronted, such as health, family planning, conservation, and poaching: "*only few people have knowledge of fertility health*", "*there's lack of knowledge about conservation, forests and wildlife*", and "*there's too much deforestation and forest fires*". Moreover, the lack of awareness among youth was pointed out: "*youth forget good habits due to the modern temptations*".

In Khata, the biggest challenge was the lack of material such as books, pens, copies, pamphlets, and snacks: "*I can't distribute pens and copies to all participants*". They also mentioned a wish to have certificates and identity cards. One respondent mentioned that there is a need for more contraceptives, referring to the services in the youth clinics.

In Gadawa, there seemed to be more need for snacks than other material, but they did also mention a need for stationery.

Both PHE peer groups mentioned challenges in the training and the programme implementation. For some, the training was too general, while others wished it to be simpler. In Gadawa, several respondents emphasised the need for conservation, sanitation, and climate change and skill-oriented training. More time for training and specifically education and training focusing only on youth and their needs was needed. In Gadawa, the respondents hoped for more participants in the PHE peer group trainings. There also seemed to be some discontent with the management of the programme: "*incomplete learning*", "*trainings are not completed*", "*participants are not heard*", and "*program is not well managed*". Also, in Khata some disappointment was observed: "*there's need for better monitoring and help from organization*" and "*need for government's help and support*".

Other issues that were mentioned were associated with employment, peer support, funding, and inclusion of wider community: "*no guarantee for job*", "*lack of post related to the subject*" (Khata), "*no chance for youth to share their feelings*" (Khata), "*no friend to talk to when needed*" (Gadawa), and "*no funds for students*" (Gadawa).

### 5.3.4   Views on Participation

The respondents were also asked about their perspectives on how youth are included in the planning, decision-making, and implementation of ideas in their communities, and whether they feel that the community adults consider and pay attention to youth in these processes. This refers to the meaningful participation (Checkoway and Gutiérrez 2006), where youth should not be seen as a separate group but rather as working together with adults in intergenerational partnerships and having real influence on institutions and decisions in communities.

In general, over half of the respondents from all groups had a very positive view on the role of youth in the decision-making processes in their community. However, the results show differences between Khata and Gadawa. In Khata, almost all of the respondents in both groups felt that the adults in their community listened to their ideas whereas in

Gadawa about one fourth of the participants were not very confident about this issue (see Figure 24.). Moreover, when asked whether adults invite young people in decision-making, the participants from Khata had a more positive view (especially the CBAPO group) than the respondents from Gadawa (see Figure 25). All groups were more hesitant on the issue of adults implementing ideas from youth. Again, members from Khata were a bit more confident on the matter whereas about 40 per cent of the members from Gadawa did not see the ideas of youth being implemented (see Figure 26).
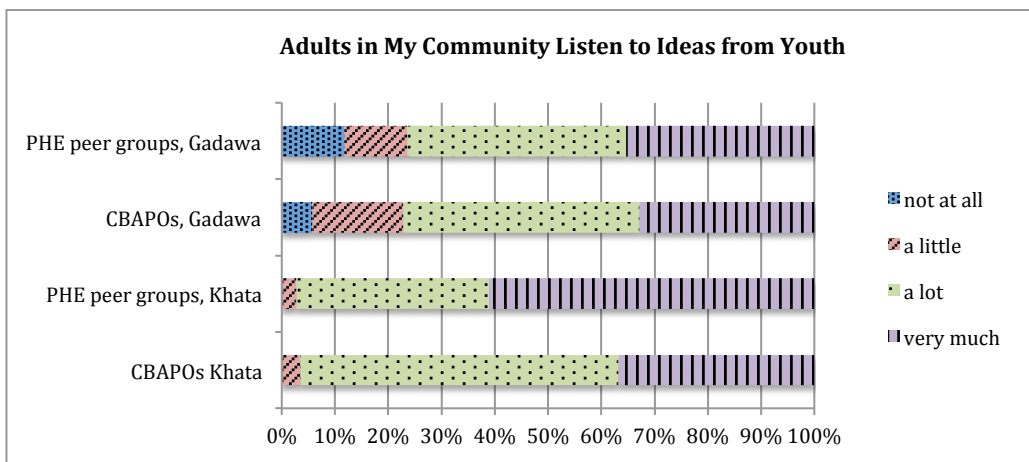


*Figure 24. Respondents' Views on Whether Adults Listen to Ideas from Youth.*
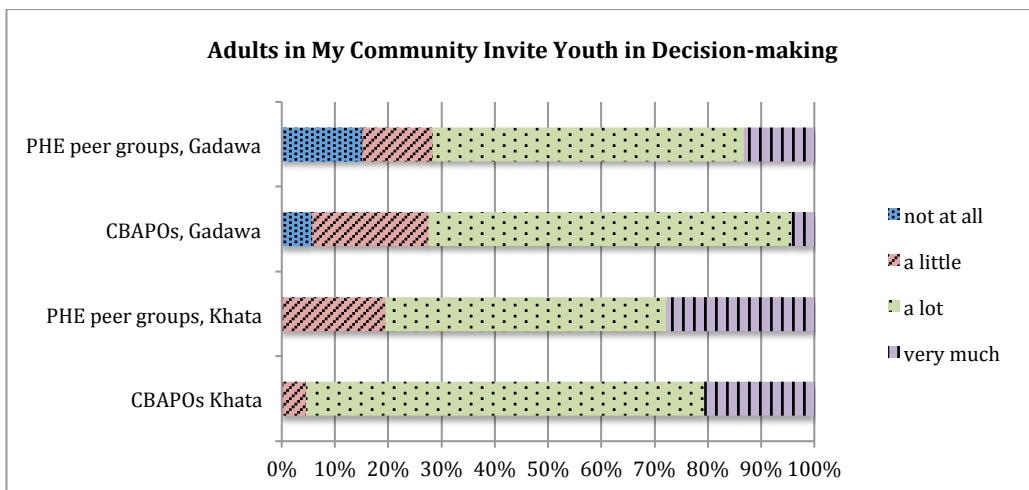


*Figure 25. Respondents' Views on the Role of Youth in Decision Making.*

**Adults in My Community Implement Ideas from Youth**
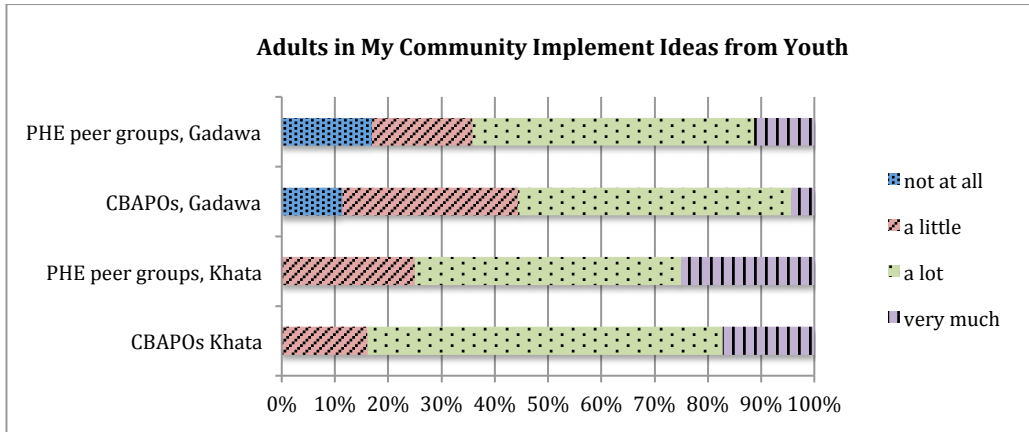
*Figure 26. Respondents' Views on the Adoption of Ideas from Youth.*

There were not any relevant differences between the age groups in these questions, which shows that both the youngest and the oldest respondents felt that young people have a role in community decision-making and that way experience meaningful participation.

In addition, the respondents were asked whether they felt that the community adults wished young people would stay and live in their home villages when older. There was a good deal of variation in answers and opposite opinions within all groups, which is why it is difficult to make any conclusions on the views of different groups. For instance, the PHE peer group members had the biggest share of "very much" answers but also the biggest share of "not at all" answers (see Figure 27).

**Adults in My Community Wish Youth Would Stay and Live in the Community**
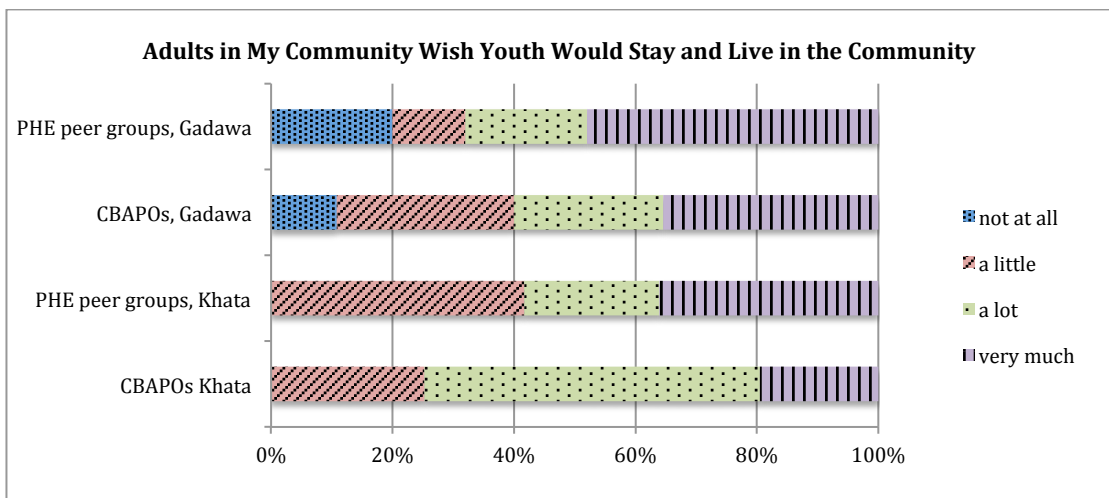
*Figure 27. Respondents' Views on Whether Adults Wish the Youth to Stay in Communities.*

Only small differences were found between the different age groups. The oldest respondents seemed to have more a positive view of adults wishing the youth to stay (about 75 per cent of "very much" and "a lot" answers), whereas the younger respondents were slightly less confident (around 60-70 per cent of "very much" and "a lot" answers).

### 5.3.5 Views on Meaningful Action and Employment Options

To find out what the respondents thought about the forms of meaningful participation they would wish to have in their communities, they were asked to choose the three most popular extra-curricular activities, as well as the three most popular vocational training opportunities. The results indicate that the needs and wishes among the respondents in Khata and Gadawa vary to some, although not to a great, extent. This is logical, since the two places differ in terms of their location, environment, and social conditions.

*Preferences for Extra-Curricular Activities*

In Khata, the three most popular extra-curricular activities among the PHE peer group were computer and IT classes, followed by sports, and traditional dance and music. The views of the CBAPO group members in Khata were almost identical: sports and computer classes received almost the same number of votes, followed by traditional music and dance. Nature club received clearly a smaller share of votes but was, however, mentioned several times by both of the groups in Khata (Figure 28).

In Gadawa, the opinions of the two groups differed from each other. The PHE peer group also named computer and IT classes as their first favourite, with sports and nature club coming as second options with almost the same number of votes. The CBAPO group in Gadawa, on the other hand, chose nature club as their first option, followed by computer classes and sewing group. Traditional dance classes and music were also mentioned several times by both of the groups in Gadawa (Figure 29).

On the basis of the results, it appears that computer classes and sports, as well as traditional music and dance classes, are popular in both places, whereas there is more variation in the popularity of the other options.
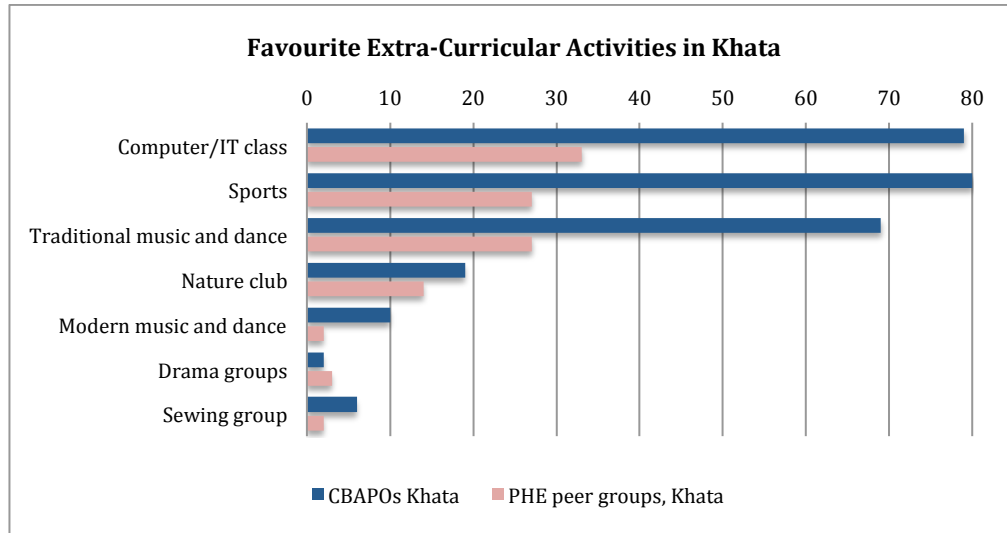


*Figure 28. Respondents' Preferences for Extra-Curricular Activities in Khata.*
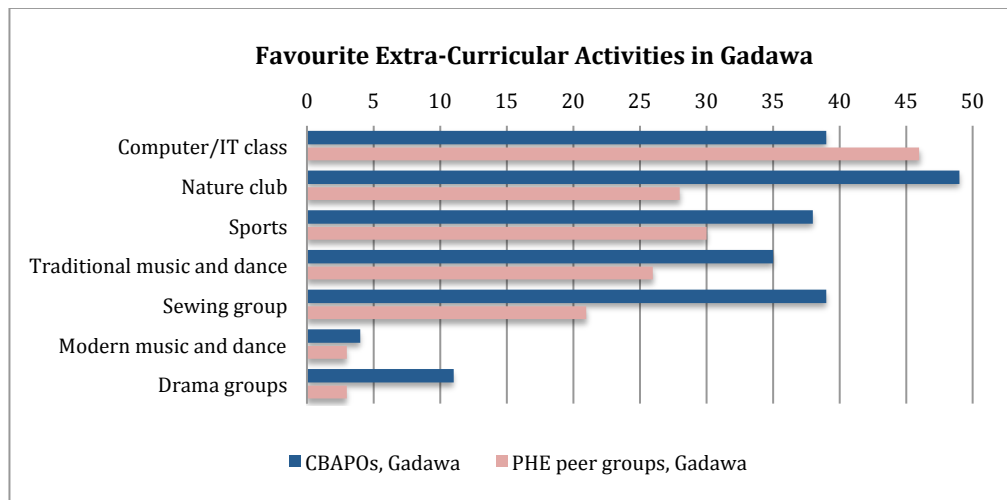


*Figure 29. Respondents' Preferences for Extra-Curricular Activities in Gadawa.*

*Preferences for Vocational Training*

In Khata, by far the most popular vocational training option in the PHE peer group was health and social care. It was followed by wildlife management, nature guide training, and organisational skills. The CBAPO groups in Khata favoured wildlife management

as the most popular option, followed by health and social care, ecotourism, and nature guide training (see Figure 30).

In Gadawa, improving financial skills was chosen as the favourite option by far among the PHE peer group members, followed by organisational skills, wildlife management, and improved agriculture. Among the CBAPO members, on the other hand, improved agriculture was the most popular option, finance management coming in the second place with almost the same number of votes. Wildlife management and organisational skills were voted third and fourth with the same number of votes (see Figure 31). In the context of vocational training, it seems that the favourite options differed between the two places with the exception of wildlife management, which was popular among all participants.
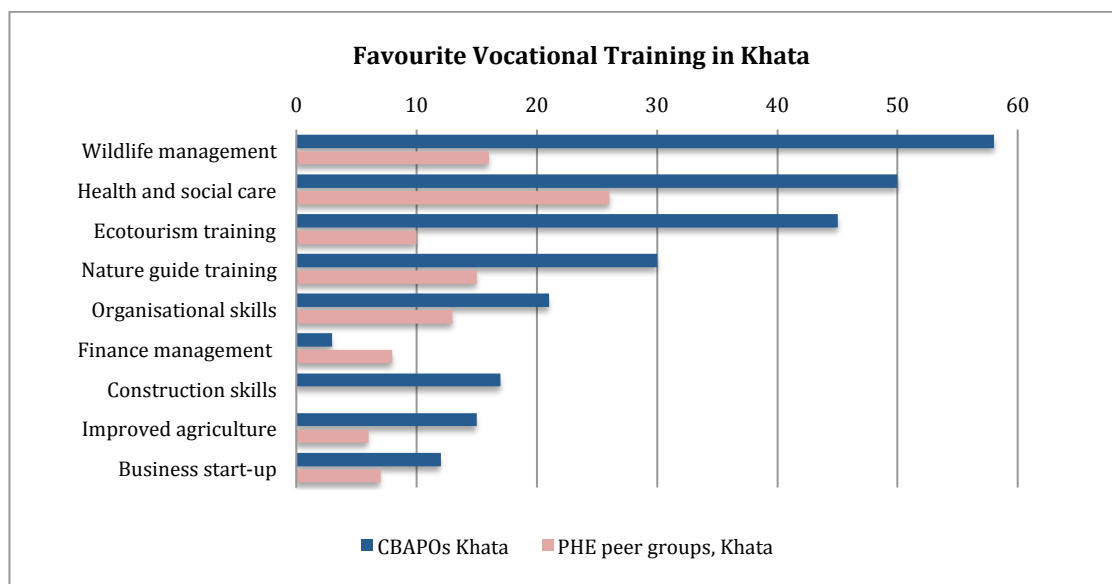


*Figure 30. Respondents' Favourite Options for Vocational Training in Khata.*

**Favourite Vocational Training in Gadawa**
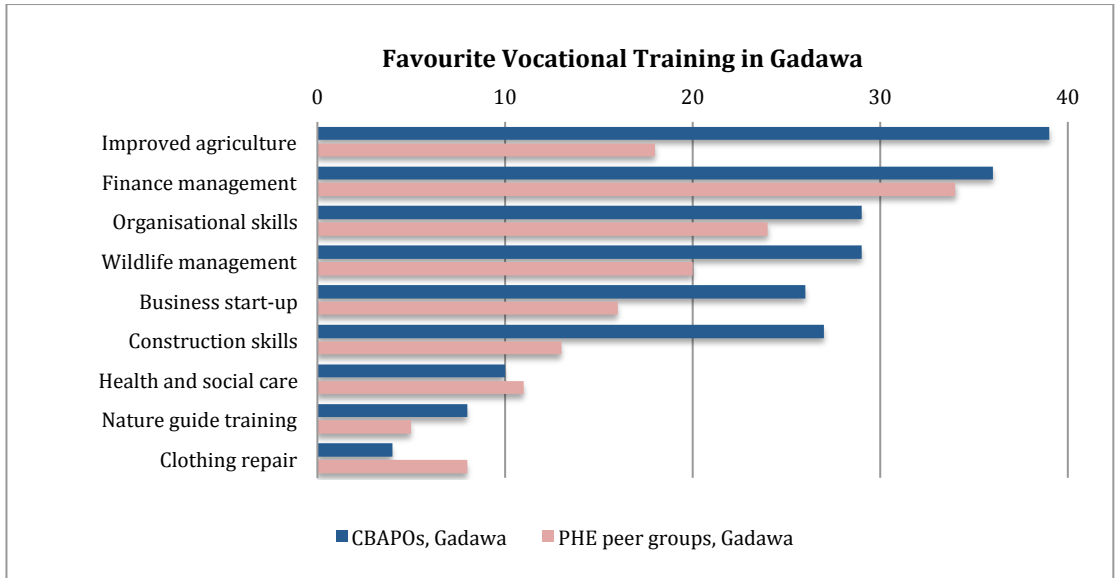
*Figure 31. Respondents' Favourite Options for Vocational Training in Gadawa.*

*Preferences for Employment*

The respondents were also asked to pick two favourite employment options for the future. The options were presented in relatively broad categories ranging from conservation to business and tourism. Within the two groups in Khata, conservation and community development were the two most favourite employment options (Figure 32). However, whereas the CBAPO group gave most of the votes to these two, the PHE peer group also favoured health and social care and teaching as next options. In Gadawa, conservation was also the first option for the CBAPO members, followed by community development and farming with almost equal votes. An exception was the PHE group in Gadawa, which instead chose having one's own enterprise or working with health and social care as favourite employment options, followed by teaching and community development (Figure 33).
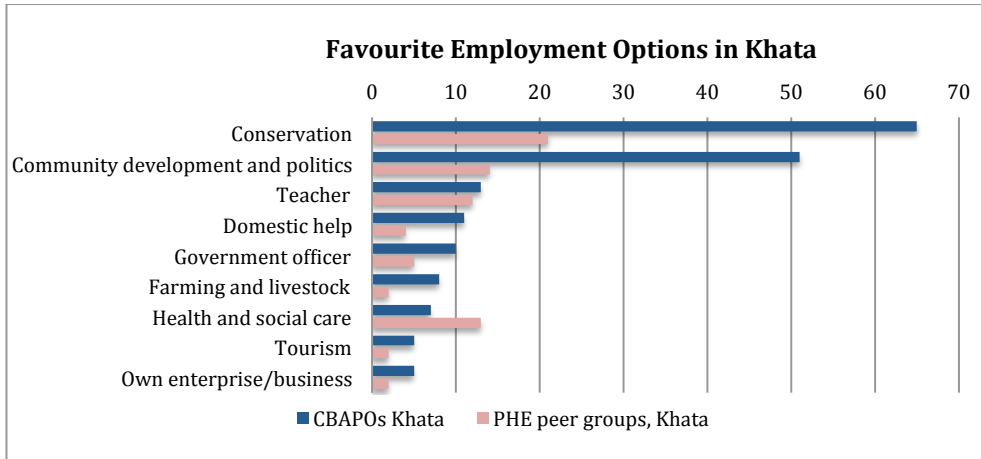
*Figure 32. Respondents' Favourite Employment Options in Khata.*
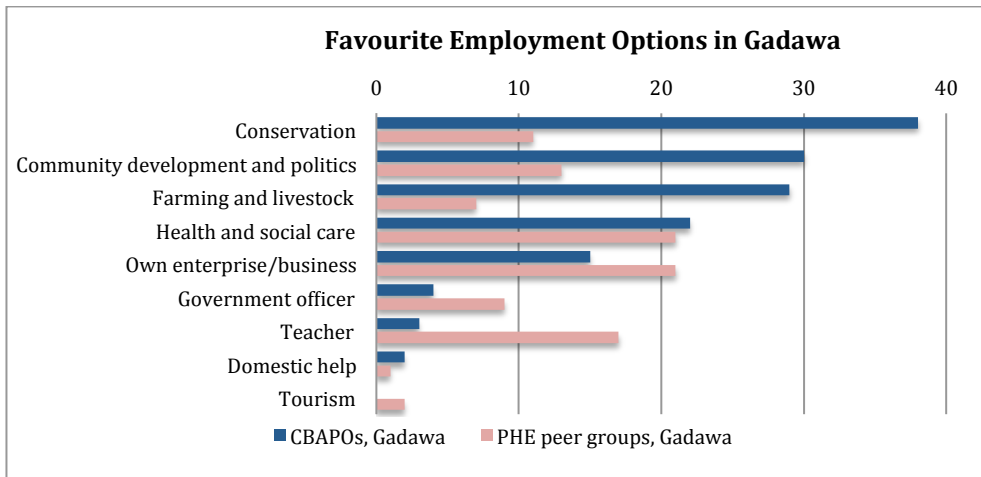


*Figure 33. Respondents' Favourite Employment Options in Gadawa.*

### 5.3.6 *Future Plans*

Most of the participants, especially in Gadawa (over 80 per cent of the CBAPOs and over 90 per cent of the PHE peer groups), and those representing older respondents seemed to be currently satisfied with being active in the groups and planned to continue in the future. However, in Khata there were participants in both the CBAPOs (about 40 per cent) and the PHE peer group (about 30 per cent) that said they might not continue the activity in the future (see Figure 34). The share of these views was also bigger among younger participants. When analysed on the basis of the years spent with the activity, it was noticed that those who had spent less than one year and more than four years with the activity were less likely to plan to continue the activity in the future.
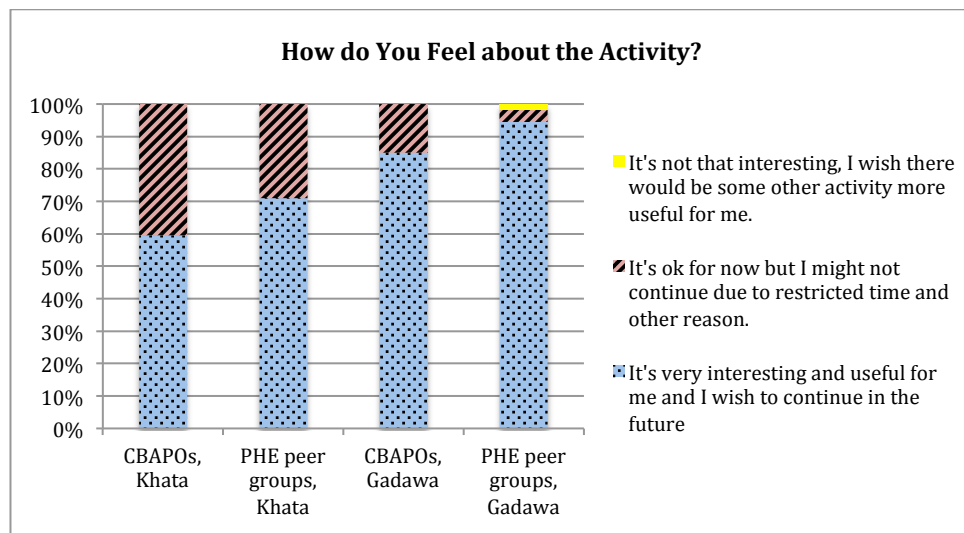


*Figure 34. Respondents' Views on Continuing with the Activity in the Future.*

When asked about plans for the next three years (see Figure 35), most of the participants were planning to continue studies in Nepal (58 per cent). This was the most common answer in all activity groups, all age groups, and both with boys and girls. This seems, however, a bit peculiar since in the older age groups the percentage of students is very low (10 per cent of the 25-28 years old and only one per cent of the over 28 years old). It is possible that the question was misunderstood. About one fourth of the participants were planning to marry and stay in their home village, and almost 20 per cent of the respondents were planning to leave their home village either to work elsewhere in Nepal or abroad. This share was bigger in Khata than in Gadawa, and the biggest in the group of 25-28 years old. Given the vicinity of the Indian border, it is common for young people in Terai to go to India to find permanent or seasonal work,

for instance. This question also lacks an option for those who are already married and do not study but plan to continue working in farming or other activities in their home village, or working in their home village without getting married in the near future. Therefore, the results from this question are only indicative and cannot be interpreted as reality.
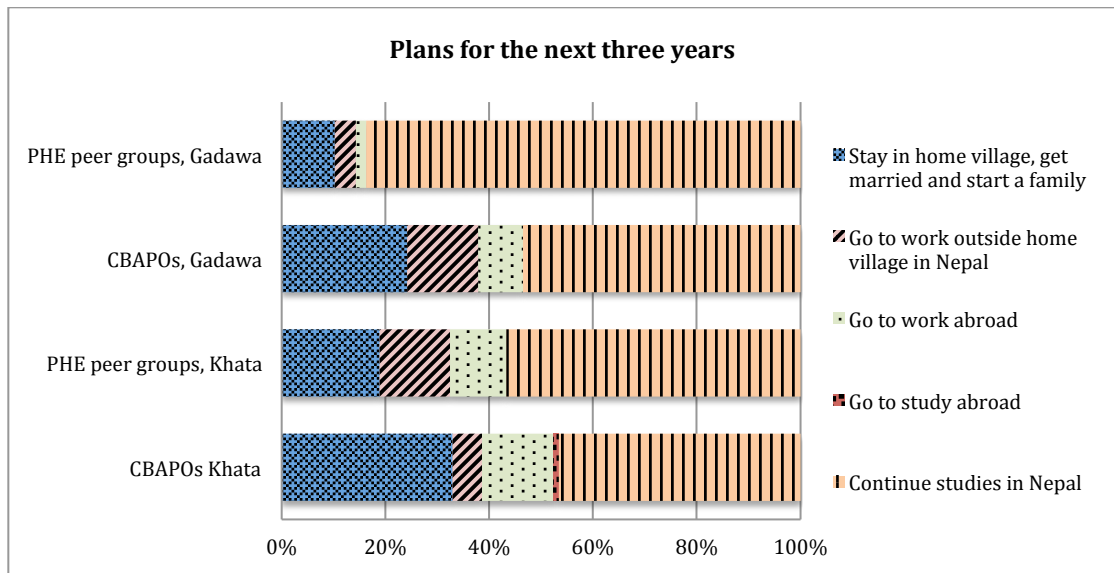


*Figure 35. Respondents' Plans for the Next Three Years.*

# 6 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to analyse how youth contribute to the integrated conservation and development initiatives in Nepal and examine the objectives of WWF Nepal with regard to youth engagement. In addition, the aim was to study the experiences and views of youth volunteers and analyse whether participating in conservation activities has supported the development of personal features in the youth. In chapter 6.1, I will analyse the results from the interviews with WWF Nepal staff and consider those in view of the earlier research as well as the results from the survey.

Chapter 6.2 analyses the evolvement of the six personal features in the survey participants and differences between the members in the two activity groups. Furthermore, the relevance of these features for WWF Nepal is also discussed. Chapters 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5, focus on the analysis of the issues that affect the motivations of the youth to contribute to conservation and development, the complexities of participation, as well as the expectations of the youth.

## 6.1 Conservation Today - Targeting the Future Generations

Children and youth are an important part of WWF Nepal's conservation strategies. Not only are youth engaged in more traditional conservation education programmes and campaigns but they are also activated to conduct real hands-on conservation work. The four different strategies that could be separated in WWF Nepal's conservation work regarding children and youth were: 1) bringing up responsible citizens; 2) influencing parents and wider community; 3) supporting youth to be active agents in conservation; and 4) ensuring the sustainability of conservation by targeting youth. They indicate that children and youth are not only seen as recipients of conservation information but rather as key stakeholders in implementing conservation work, as well as achieving long-term conservation and sustainable development goals.

### 6.1.1 *Youth as Key Stakeholders in Integrated Conservation Approaches*

WWF Nepal believes that it is necessary and worthwhile to invest in children and youth

today since they will become the key decision makers of the future. To achieve the objective of having conservation-minded people in the key positions in all social sectors in the future, it is cost-effective and necessary to influence the young generations of today. Furthermore, WWF Nepal believes that pushing for the positive behaviour change is easier with children who are "open-minded" rather than adults whose minds are already fixed. The key idea seems to be a positive behaviour change, which in this case means a change from a person who is not conservation-minded and does not consider the environment when making choices to a person who makes environmentally friendly choices and perhaps also takes action for conservation. When WWF Nepal approaches children and youth, it relies on strategies that are not only educational or conservation-based but also relate closely to psychology and human ethology. Similar strategies can also be found in the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya (McDuff & Jacobson, 2000), the Jane Goodall Institute's Roots & Shoots (R&S) in Tanzania, and Wildlife Clubs of Uganda (WCU) (Johnson-Pynn & Johnson, 2005). In addition, McDuff and Jacobson (2000) explain that environmental attitudes are first formed during childhood, and Chawla (2007) as well as Alwin and McCammon (2003) write that exposure to conservation at an early age can have a significant influence on environmental thinking as youth and potentially later as adults. Furthermore, using national celebrities and youth icons as conservation ambassadors seems like an important strategy for WWF Nepal since the influence of these role models can be significant in the rural areas of Nepal where the entertainment opportunities for the youth are very few. Regarding the perspectives of young environmental leaders on their formative influences, Arnold et al. (2009) also discovered that the youth interviewed saw role models as one of the underlying factors that had motivated them to participate in environmental action.

This first strategy is closely connected to the idea of youth development; the objective of creating positive behaviour change in the youth is in line with the "thriving" or the development of positive personal features in the youth, which as the Positive Youth Development theory maintains, can result when young people participate in voluntary youth activities. As the analysis of the survey results later in this study shows, it appears that the youth who have volunteered in the conservation activities supported by WWF Nepal have not only gained conservation knowledge but also experienced development of their personal features, such as increase in self-confidence, skills, character, and relationships. This indicates that the approach that WWF Nepal is implementing with its

partners seems to work, even though it is difficult to predict how volunteering impacts the youth in the long term. Since WWF Nepal has implemented its conservation education programmes for some decades already, it would therefore be worthwhile for it to evaluate in some way whether this strategy is successful and whether it has actually been able to influence the mindset of children and youth in the long term.

Influencing the wider community and parents through children and youth is an essential strategy for WWF Nepal although the interviews did not reveal how effective such an approach is. Being able to influence the community would mean that the youth voices were heard and taken seriously by adults in the communities. The survey results indicated that the youth volunteers had good and close relationships with their parents but less so with other community adults. Many of the youth felt that they had influence but also that their ideas were unlikely to be much adopted by adults (see Chapters 6.3.4 and 6.4.2). Furthermore, the theory on Positive Youth Development believes that the youth who experience development in their personal features are likely to contribute positively to their communities and create social change. Therefore, the approach that WWF Nepal is applying could be successful in influencing the wider community through children. Some indications of a similar approach with successful results were found in the study of Johnson-Pynn & Johnson (2005). The students in East African nature clubs learnt about improved agroforestry practices and presented the new techniques to their parents, which had resulted in the adoption of new, more sustainable cultivation methods in the majority of the families.

The third strategy, which includes engaging youth in conservation work as active agents and as additional help, is more action-oriented, whereas the first two strategies are more close connected to environmental education and awareness-raising. After years of implementing community-based conservation, involving the young people is a relatively recent phenomenon. For instance, through anti-poaching activities, the strengths of youth, such as their eagerness to learn and desire to experience new things, are harnessed for the benefit of the environment and community. In addition, providing local youth with various skills is considered important by WWF Nepal in order to strengthen the local expertise both at present and in the future, instead of depending for instance on expensive outside consultants. The WWF Nepal's approach to youth engagement where young people are seen as assets and viewed through their positive

qualities is well in line with the theory of Positive Youth Development that emphasises the positive approach to youth engagement. However, as the interviews with the youth revealed (see later chapters), volunteering can be harsh and even dangerous at times, which might in turn raise negative attitudes toward conservation, NGOs, and volunteering. This could further decrease the will and eagerness of the youth to volunteer. To avoid this, WWF Nepal should ensure that the youth volunteers gain positive and beneficial experiences and are not only used as a free of charge work force.

The fourth strategy of ensuring the sustainability and continuity of conservation by targeting youth relates to the challenges of youth unemployment, migration, and lack of meaningful activities that are common in many rural communities in Nepal. According to WWF Nepal, without youth there are no volunteers for conservation work and, on the other hand, the troubled youth are at risk of resorting to illegal behaviour such as poaching. Therefore, WWF Nepal aims at strategically developing programmes and activities for youth in order to build up their confidence and develop their skills for instance through activities that generate income. Ultimately, it is hoped that the youth, or at least part of them, become stewards of their environment. Similar objectives in conservation work were again found in the nature clubs in East Africa, where the mission was "*to educate youth about the environment, animals, and people in their communities and to prompt them to act as stewards of their natural heritage*" (Johnson-Pynn & Johnson 2005). This fourth strategy is also connected to the theory of Positive Youth Development. While WWF Nepal acknowledges the challenges facing youth and the risks for conservation, in the long run it seems to tackle the problems with a positive approach, focusing on the strengths of youth and developing activities around those strengths. This approach is also well in line with the PYD practitioners' views, where instead of trying to prevent undesirable problem behaviour of the youth, adults should focus on promoting desired and positive outcomes that will happen if they approach the youth with respect, belief and an open mind (Lerner et al. 2005a.) However, in the absence of local employment opportunities, it is very challenging to try to ensure long-term commitment to conservation activities from the youth. For WWF Nepal, it might be too risky to rely too much on young people as resources, particularly if it is unable to provide the youth with financial incentives. In addition, the paradox of "brain drain", which means investing in youth who might end up elsewhere instead of contributing to their communities and environments, should be kept in mind when trying to achieve the

long-term conservation goals. Then again, investing in youth can hardly ever be useless even if conservation benefits might not always ensue from it.

### 6.1.2 The Various Forms of Present-Day Conservation

This study addressed only the work that WWF Nepal is doing in regard to children and youth. It was, however, revealed that integrated approaches to conservation, such as combining health education or skill development with conservation activities, are a fundamental part of the organisation's strategies. Furthermore, WWF Nepal is not only implementing these integrated approaches on its own but is working with such relevant partners as the Family Planning Association of Nepal and Youth Alliance for Environment, as well as other partners with knowledge and experience on themes less familiar to WWF Nepal.

Although some criticise that conservationists today are forced to focus on other than the core conservation topics, for example reducing poverty and improving livelihoods or promoting social justice and cultural integrity (see, for instance, Robinson 2010), it should be noted that conservation today is not only about strict natural science but also about a wide range of other issues. As the interviews with the WWF experts revealed, applying theories and practices from the fields of behaviourism, psychology, or economics, for instance, are just as important in achieving the conservation and development targets as the more traditional conservation knowledge. Whereas conservation some decades ago took place in isolated protected areas with the aim of preserving wildlife, the integrated conservation practices of today also take place in corridors and bottlenecks in wider conservation landscapes or even in computer class rooms and health posts where rural youth come to learn about and share various issues with their peers. For instance, the initiatives and activities that WWF Nepal is supporting, such as skill development or strengthening the cultural identity by supporting traditional dance classes, are important strategies in engaging rural youth in the village development and conservation work.

WWF Nepal has come a long way from the early steps of conservation, yet some of the main challenges in integrating conservation and development still prevail. The interviews revealed that engaging rural youth in conservation activities is not always

easy and simple, given, for instance, the challenges with unemployment that can result in the migration of youth. As earlier research also points out, it is difficult and time-consuming – or sometimes impossible – to create economic benefits from conservation, especially since the establishment of functional economic activities requires time and resource inputs, which the local people, in this case the local youth, might find it impossible to commit to in their normal daily lives (McShane et al. 2011). Furthermore, the needs and aspirations of rural youth, such as employment and education, might not be compatible with the conservation needs. However, it seems that WWF Nepal has tried to tackle this challenge by combining conservation themes with sexual and health education, which is considered a more relevant issue to young people. In addition, providing computer classes as incentives to motivate youth to join anti-poaching classes can be seen as a strategy to meet the needs of the youth.

The different conservation and non-conservation activities and campaigns that WWF Nepal is promoting together with its partners indicate that the organisations have an interest in addressing the needs and aspirations of the local youth, which is the fundamental idea in a participatory approach. However, as discussed in more detail in the later chapters, issues including the lack of influence or problems with equal participation remain present even in these integrated concepts that aim to consolidate different interests.

Other questions that could be raised are whether the young people themselves have a say in the decisions and activities that concern them and whether they can plan and implement activities of their own choosing or are only given ready-made concepts. Furthermore, it should be considered whether the approaches that WWF Nepal and its partners are implementing are able to ensure equity among the youth, for instance by providing opportunities for participation to everyone, regardless of their educational level, caste background, or social status in their communities.

## 6.2    Developing Personal Features of Youth through Voluntary Activities

It was discovered that youth volunteers who participated in the survey and were members of two different voluntary conservation groups expressed the "five Cs", namely competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring, which are,

according to the theory of Positive Youth Development, considered to result from voluntary youth activities. Furthermore, the youth showed strong presence of the sixth C, contribution, which is believed to ensue when the five Cs are present in a person. The level of competence, confidence, and connection were more or less the same, whereas character and caring seemed to be stronger among the respondents. Moreover, the elements of contribution were by far the strongest. In addition, evidence of the presence of the six Cs in the youth was also found in the open-ended questions, which further strengthens the results of the structured questions. In general, there were not many differences between the groups from Khata and Gadawa especially in terms of competence, confidence, and connection. However, it was observed that the PHE group in Gadawa showed more confidence about all of the five Cs except competence in comparison with the other groups. Then again, all of the groups showed almost the same level of contribution, even the CBAPO group in Khata, which had expressed less confidence about the other five Cs and particularly less caring for people and nature than the other groups. This result is interesting since it indicates that although the respondents come from different social and environmental backgrounds, this does not seem to affect their personal features that much. One could assume that respondents from Gadawa, which faces various social and environmental problems when compared to Khata, would show for instance less resistance skills and perhaps less empathy toward nature, but this was not the case. On the contrary, the respondents from Gadawa seemed to show slightly stronger confidence regarding the elements of character and caring. In addition, age did not seem to be a relevant factor affecting the results; however, it was observed that the age groups in the middle, those between the age of 20-28, seemed to show most confidence in terms of all of six Cs, whereas the views of the youngest and oldest groups varied between and within questions.

Considering the strategies in WWF Nepal's conservation work, *caring* which refers to the empathy toward nature and people, *character* which refers to resisting negative behaviour and defending others, and *contribution* which refers to the will to do good for the environment and people are the most essential out of the six Cs. They are directly linked to the WWF Nepal's objectives of bringing up responsible citizens and supporting youth to act as stewards of their natural environment, which further contributes to the sustainability of conservation. From the point of view of WWF Nepal, it is thus quite promising that these qualities appeared to be very strong among the

respondents. However, expressing self-confidence, competence, and warm relationships with others are also key features for the emergence of the other elements. Therefore, all the six features are important both for the youth themselves and WWF Nepal. In the following, the relevance of the six Cs is analysed in more detail.

### 6.2.1 "I'm Able to Express my Feelings Openly" – Increase in Self-Confidence

Having a strong self-confidence and sense of purpose is an important aspect in a young person's life. It enables one to have dreams and courage to pursue positive things in life. Although the views of the youth in Khata and Gadawa were somewhat similar on the elements of self-confidence, it was noted that the youth from Gadawa were a bit more confident about having a purpose in their own community as well as about the views on their own future. This is intriguing since the social environment in Gadawa is more challenging compared to Khata, and one might assume this would affect the self-confidence of the respondents in a negative way. However, the background did not seem to affect the respondents' views about their self-confidence. Also, being older did not increase the level of confidence; on the contrary, the oldest respondents showed a little less confidence than the younger respondents. Although building confidence in youth was not listed as a particular aim of WWF Nepal, one interviewee did emphasise that engaging youth in conservation fieldwork is a way to support youth in developing their skills and confidence. Apparently, this approach is successful since additional evidence of the elements of increased self-confidence were found when youth listed the best experiences they had gained from the voluntary activities. Personal changes, such as the ability to express one-self openly and the courage to speak in front of other people, indicate increase in self-confidence in the youth.

### 6.2.2 "I'm Able to Teach Others" – Increase in Competence

It appears that the youth in the survey are fairly confident in their ability to make decisions, solve problems, and take leadership, as well as create friendships. While youth in Khata seemed to be a bit more confident in acting as leaders, the PHE youth in Gadawa were clearly the most confident in making friends. Although the structured questions indicated that the youth seemed less confident about having skills and even

less in Gadawa than in Khata, the open-ended questions revealed that the youth had gained various learning experiences and new skills during the activities. For instance, the opportunity to "teach others" and "learn from others", as well as knowledge of how to save money or how to be safe in the forest, were experiences that the youth emphasised and which refer to strengthening of competence and skills in the youth. Since the youth in Gadawa were a bit more insecure about their skills, it is possible that opportunities for skill development are fewer in Gadawa. Indication of this was also observed in the feedback quotes from Gadawa that stressed the need for skill-development training. Evidence of competence was also discovered when the respondents named "the ability to learn new things fast" and "having modern skills" as the most important strengths of youth. The evolvement of competence in the youth indicates that they are quite prepared to take over responsibilities and act independently even with challenging tasks. This is relevant from WWF Nepal's point of view especially for the objective of facilitating youth in the hands-on conservation work.

### 6.2.3 *"I Developed Warm relationships with Friends" – Evidence of Connection*

Having warm relationships with family members and receiving attention and encouragement from others contributes to the building of confidence in the youth. In the study by Arnold et al. (2009), which examines the motives of youth in becoming environmental leaders, it was discovered that parents were formative for all participants as supporters, role models, and encouragers. The youth in this survey seemed to communicate with their parents in a positive and constructive way and felt loved by their parents. Good relationships with family are not only good for the youth but also contribute to WWF Nepal's objectives of influencing parents through their children and youth. However, young people were less optimistic about whether their parents respected their wishes and believed in their future. This indicates that in these rural villages the future perspectives for youth are uncertain. In addition, in traditional societies parents might have a strong impact on the livelihood strategies of young people, and therefore some of the youth felt their wishes were not respected. Regarding friendships, the young people seemed to feel satisfied. In addition, experiences of *"making new friends"*, *"belonging to a group"* and *"cooperating for a good cause together"* that were mentioned in the open-ended questions, indicate that the youth have

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developed new relationships and the element of connection has evolved during the voluntary activities. Interestingly, there were notable differences between Gadawa and Khata, and the PHE group in Gadawa expressed clearly warmer relationships than the other groups. Again, this is intriguing because it was mentioned that there are many disputes between people in Gadawa. Luckily, it appears that this has not affected the relationships of the youth participants from Gadawa.

From the perspective of the youth who take part in the voluntary activities, it is crucial that the community adults recognise and support them in their work. In the survey, it was noted that while the trust in community adults was clearly lower than the trust in one's own parents, it still remained quite high. According to Lerner et al. (2003), the basis for successful positive youth development is the interaction with supportive adults and community. However, it appears that many of the participants in the CBAPO groups and the PHE peer groups felt that they have not necessarily received enough support from the community, government, and facilitating organisations, such as WWF Nepal or FPAN. This was observed in comments such as *"there's need for better monitoring and help from organization"*, and *"need for government's help and support"*. Some respondents mentioned that they lacked support from their surrounding community and that ignorance about youth issues prevailed.

### 6.2.4   *"I'm Able to Avoid Bad Things in Society" – Increase in Character*

The youth showed a fairly strong character, which refers to the ability to defend oneself and others from negative pressures such as bad, discriminative, or illegal behaviour. This is promising since in both Khata and Gadawa, youth unemployment, youth migration, lack of educational opportunities and extra-curricular activities were named as serious challenges facing the youth. In such environments, it is important that the young people possess strong resistance skills and ability to say no to suspicious "fast-cash" opportunities. In Gadawa in particular, where substance abuse and especially poaching and wood smuggling are serious social and environmental problems, having youth with strong resistance skills is also advantageous for WWF Nepal. The elements of strong character were also found in the open-ended questions as some of the youth

described that they had for instance learnt how to *"avoid bad things in society",* how to *"protect self and others"*, and how to prevent gender violence and discrimination.

### 6.2.5   *"Live and Let Live" - Empathy toward People and Nature*

Being sensitive to the feelings and experiences of others and feeling empathy with people who face challenges, as well as respecting nature and wildlife, are important aspects and help the youth manage social relationships. When comparing the element of caring to the goals of WWF Nepal, it seems that the youth in this study already possessed fairly strong conservation-mindedness. Elements of caring were evident in the open-ended questions when the youth highlighted the importance of harmony between people and the environment with phrases, such as *"live and let live"*, and described wildlife as the *"ornaments of forests"*. In addition, the youth emphasised the importance of forests and animals and even poisonous creatures in people's lives and how those should be protected. The will of the youth to "protect environment, forests and wildlife for future generations" also demonstrates they care strongly for others. In addition, the youth both in Khata and Gadawa saw the ability to care for the environment as an important strength of the youth, which shows that the youth in this survey already considered themselves conservation-oriented. It should be noted that the CBAPO group in Khata showed clearly less care for both people and nature and animals than the other groups. Perhaps the young age of the participants in that group (about 40 per cent were less than 20 years old) and their short participation time (most had been active for less than one year) affected their views. Then again, this could indicate that the participation in the activities and the longer one stays active increase the care for others and the environment.

### 6.2.6   *The Will to Contribute*

According to the PYD theory, when the five Cs are present in a person, the sixth C, contribution, emerges (Lerner et al. 2005a). In this survey, it was also noted that the level of contribution among the respondents was by far the highest out of the six features, even though it is likely that many of the respondents already possessed high will to contribute when they first joined the activities, as was noted when the

motivations to join the activities were analysed. From WWF Nepal's point of view, this result is promising because it indicates that the youth who take part in different voluntary activities develop personal features such as increased self-confidence and skills, as well as a desire to do good for their community. It seems that engaging youth as active agents in conservation and health activities not only results in improved resources in these fields, as was one of the strategies of WWF Nepal, but also in increased motivation of the participants to continue and do more for the good of their environment and communities. Therefore, for WWF Nepal it might be useful to consider developing various youth-based activities, not only for the purpose of conservation but also for the purpose of developing positive features in youth, and ultimately to increase their will to further contribute positively to self, others and the environment. This also supports directly the objective of WWF Nepal to ensure the sustainability of conservation by targeting youth.

### 6.2.7 *Relevance of Voluntary Activities*

It is not possible to say whether the evolvement of the positive personal features in the youth who participated in the survey increased exclusively because of the activities or whether they were the same prior to joining the groups. Nevertheless, according to the PYD theory (Lerner et al. 2005a) and earlier research (for instance Schusler & Krasny 2010 and Schusler et al. 2009), it is the voluntary activities specifically that provide a suitable framework where the positive changes and development in youth can take place. In their study on educators' practices regarding facilitating youth environmental action, Schusler and Krasny (2010) also discovered strong resemblances between environmental action and positive youth development. They learnt that environmental action and education targeted to youth contributed not only to environmental learning but also to the development of several personal benefits in the youth. They also state that environmental action is a valuable context for positive youth development and describe environmental action as a "*process of co-creating environmental and social change that builds individuals' capabilities for further participation contributing to personal and community transformation.*" (Schusler et al. 2009; Schusler & Krasny 2010). Therefore, considering similar results from earlier research, it is likely that

conservation-related voluntary activities can be good platforms for the evolvement of positive environmental attitudes and other positive personal features in youth.

## 6.3  Motivation to Volunteer – Issues and Incentives

The reasons why the youth wanted to be part of the voluntary groups, namely the will to do good for the environment and community and to learn new things, indicate what many of the WWF Nepal interviewees pointed out: the youth are eager to learn, and at least some of them had already expressed the will to contribute when joining the activities. Young people also believed that volunteering would be helpful for their future, which would be interesting to follow up later and see if this actually happened. Taking part just for fun or because friends were also involved were not main motivations for the youth, or they did not see those as appropriate answers. Apparently, young people in Khata are slightly more self-imposed and eager to volunteer because the majority of them had joined the voluntary groups on their own or as invited by friends, whereas in Gadawa, young people joined the activities mostly under the encouragement of another community member. Evidence of weaker youth participation was also discovered in the open questions, as many respondents from Gadawa emphasised the need for more youth to volunteer in the anti-poaching and other conservation activities, and the need for specifically youth-focused programmes. Also, the role of an outside organisation in attracting youth to join was recognised in Gadawa but less so in Khata. Since the activity groups were established more recently in Gadawa, it might be that the influence of WWF or FPAN is still stronger there. Then again, since the two places differ in size and population, it is possible that in Khata, which is a smaller community, the word about the activities might spread more easily whereas in the larger Gadawa, more effort might be needed to spread information and awareness about the activities. It is also possible that young people are more open to new ideas when persuaded by a friend or another person of the same age. That could explain why more youth are willing to volunteer in Khata compared to Gadawa. From the point of view of WWF and FPAN, it would be useful to analyse how to best reach the youth and examine whether in Gadawa a youth-to-youth approach were needed. For instance, in the study by Arnold et al. (2009), the role of friends and peers was discovered as an important factor inspiring the youth to take environmental action.

Although the majority of the youth found the activity groups useful for them and planned to stay involved in them in the future, it was noted in Khata that almost two thirds of the youth and especially the youngest participants did not plan to continue in the group in the future. The reasons for this can be various but the most likely reason is that they plan to start or continue studies. This was their number one option when asked about future plans. In addition, those who had spent less than one year or more than four years with the activities had more replies of not planning to continue in the future. This indicates that one to three years is the average period the participants stay motivated. From the point of view of sustainability, it would be important for WWF Nepal to analyse why these youth are not planning to continue. If the reasons relate to for instance weaknesses and faults in the activities, maybe something could be done to make them more appealing.

### 6.3.1 *"I've Learned Many Things"*

It was discovered that the youth's expectations regarding learning new things were realised once they participated in the voluntary activities. Quite logically, forest and wildlife conservation and anti-poaching were the most common environmentally related topics that the youth had learnt. Also, more specific issues, such as the importance of controlling fuel wood collection, prevention of forest fires, preservation of birds, and protection of poisonous snakes and insects, were mentioned. The youth in Gadawa also emphasised learning about climate change, which was not mentioned in Khata, indicating that the issue is either not that relevant there or they have not received any information about it.

Health-related topics that the youth had learnt also reflect the differences in the social challenges between the two places. The most common topics were family planning, sexual health, controlling population pressure, puberty, contraception, and sanitation. What is more, in Gadawa, preventing gender violence and discrimination, as well as knowledge of how to decrease child mortality and help in maternity and childcare were also mentioned several times, unlike in Khata. In Gadawa, gender violence was pointed out by the youth as a serious problem in the community whereas the social challenges in

Khata were linked to traditional norms and values that cause discrimination and reluctance to accept for instance birth control methods.

The structured questions were not necessarily the best options to measure the learning of new things since most of the youth informed that they had just a little bit more or the same amount of information about the topics as before. It is, however, justified to assume that the youth did not have much previous information for instance about sexual health because issues related to sexuality are often considered taboos in the rural communities of Nepal. Nevertheless, the open-ended questions showed that the youth had learnt about a good deal of issues while being part of the voluntary activities. This confirms that structured questions might miss some information, which is why it would be important to ensure that the respondents were also given the opportunity to explain their views in their own words.

### 6.3.2   The Importance of Proper Equipment and Training

While in Khata in particular, it seemed that the youth were very satisfied with the activities and did not list too many shortages, it was nevertheless discovered that there were certain issues that caused frustration in the youth and could possibly affect their motivation. Lack of proper equipment and material, such as uniforms, torchlights, shoes, and security gear for the CBAPO groups, and books, pens, papers, and pamphlets for the PHE peer groups, as well as snacks to keep the youth energised, were mentioned as drawbacks related to the activities. Many participants also emphasised the need for certificates and identity cards that help them to prove their competencies in different situations. Lack of proper equipment might influence the participants' self-confidence in a negative manner and in some cases even cause feelings of insecurity. On the other hand, having the necessary material and gear might result in increase in self-confidence and the feeling of competence in the youth. This would again improve the motivation of the youth. They also wished for improvements in the training and the overall implementation of the activity programmes. For instance, the CBAPO groups lacked regular recap training to keep their skills fresh, whereas the PHE peer groups felt that there was not enough time and that their training was often not completed properly. More support from organisations such as FPAN and WWF and especially the

government line agencies was needed. The CBAPO groups also expressed feelings of fear and worry over their own life while patrolling. Without regular training, the CBAPO youth might expose themselves to accidents more often, which again could increase the feeling of fear and insecurity in them. In the long run, this could result in a higher risk of having traumas and negative or at least reserved attitudes toward wildlife protection, especially if there is no proper processing of the frightening experiences.

### 6.3.3 "I Hope this Program Listens to Us"

One disappointment for some of the youth was the feeling that they were not heard in the planning and implementation of the activity, and that "*the programs are only implemented according to the desire of donor*". It was observed that the youth wished they had a stronger say in the development of the activities: "*programs should be implemented according to will of volunteers*". Moreover, genuine participation in the natural resource management would mean having real power to influence the institutions and decisions that the participants are involved with, instead of just being passive service recipients (Checkoway & Gutiérrez 2006). If the youth do not have a real possibility to influence the planning, decision-making and implementation of activities, it is possible that their motivation and commitment toward the work will decrease. Although the original idea of establishing the CBAPO and PHE peer education groups does not come from the youth themselves but rather from an outside NGO, the youth appear to be very motivated. However, it seems that in addition to being involved in ready-made concepts, the youth want to generate new ideas and plan concepts for meaningful activities themselves: "*it would be better to have youth inspiration program than this*". Having an opportunity to influence the activities while the programmes are running could increase their commitment even further. This could be done for instance through regular feedback and discussion sessions between the youth participants and the adults who represent the organisations.

## 6.4 Challenges in Achieving Genuine Participation

Participation can be seen either as a means to project implementation, where change from people's passive voice to active voice will take place, or as an end result of the

intervention process where long-term engagement by those involved will occur at the end of the project (Campbell & Vainio-Mattila 2003). In addition, Agarwal (2001) describes that at its narrowest participation is measured by its potential to improve effectiveness of activities and at its broadest by its ability to enhance equity, efficiency, empowerment, and environmental sustainability (Agarwal, 2001). These different objectives regarding participation can also be seen in the concept of participatory natural resource management that WWF Nepal is targeting to youth. Participation is clearly a means for WWF in the conservation work but also the end goal. For instance, the ultimate objective for WWF Nepal is having the rural youth to act independently as stewards of natural resources, which, in terms of Agarwal's views, is participation at its broadest. The path toward this goal is, however, long, and in the meanwhile, lower levels of participatory approaches are implemented. For instance, utilising youth as additional manpower in the conservation work through CBAPO groups resembles a relatively narrow form of participation, since others than the members themselves decide on the aim of the activities. Then again, youth-to-youth peer education workshops represent a somewhat deeper level of participation since the youth themselves often decide on the contents of the classes and ways of teaching. However, the original framework of the PHE peer classes is again developed by other than the young people. It appears that the broadest or deepest level of participation is difficult to reach. Perhaps it is not even necessary to try to hand over all the responsibilities to the youth, since at least according to the PYD theory, the presence of adults as support and guidance is essential for the youth.

### 6.4.1   *Participation from the Youth Point of View*

Challenges that are typical of participatory natural resource management practices, such as incomplete participation of important groups and virtual participation without power to influence, also appear to be present in the case groups. Especially in Gadawa, there seems to be discontent with the selection of members in the CBAPO groups: "*there's not equal participation opportunity for all*". It was also pointed out that there is a lack of youth and women participants in the groups. The young people in both places felt that they had little influence on the programmes, which indicates that effective, genuine

participation is not fully accomplished in the groups: "*I wish for a possibility of active participation*" and "*programs should implement according to will of volunteers*".

In terms of the levels of participation identified by Agarwal (2001), the voluntary groups studied here mostly resemble the *activity-specific participation* where a person is asked (or can volunteer) to undertake specific actions and the *active participation* where a person can express opinions (also without special inquiry) or take initiatives of other sorts. The "highest" level would be the interactive (empowering) participation where a person has a genuine voice and influence in the group's decisions (Agarwal 2001). Despite many young people expressing their concern over the absence of genuine power to influence, some others informed feeling satisfied with their present opportunities to influence. Therefore, it is likely that some of the group participants achieved the highest, or the empowering and interactive level of participation that Agarwal refers to.

The feedback from the survey participants, such as "*I'm feeling happy by getting the chance to express my own matters*", and "*I'm very happy to get a chance to fill this questionnaire*", and finally "*It is very interesting because nobody asked that type of questions before*", indicates that for the youth it is important that they are given an opportunity to share their feelings and views.

### 6.4.2 *Participation in Community Decision-Making*

In terms of the social challenges in the two communities, such as discrimination and disputes between people, it was interesting to observe that the majority of the youth in both places had quite positive views on how the community adults listen to their ideas and include them in decision-making in the community. However, it appears that the community adults in Khata are a bit more open to listening to young people's ideas and inviting them to community decision-making than the adults in Gadawa. It is possible that the long and systematic efforts in Khata to build democratic village governance (WWF Nepal 2011) have also resulted in the improved opportunities for youth to have their voices heard. However, even in Khata, the process is not complete, since many of the survey participants did not see that the ideas from youth would be implemented. From the perspective of WWF Nepal, it is promising that the majority of the youth felt

that they had influence on their communities; after all, one of the strategies of WWF Nepal is to spread the conservation issues to the communities with the help from the youth. Nonetheless, it should be kept in mind that in Gadawa, which suffers especially from wood smuggling and poaching, the youth were more insecure about their possibilities to influence the community adults.

## 6.5 Glance to the Future

### 6.5.1 Sports and Skill Development – Youth's Wishes for Meaningful Action

As the interviews with the WWF Nepal staff members as well as the project documents reveal (WWF Nepal 2011), the creation of other than conservation-related activities for youth are needed in order to improve their engagement in conservation strategies:

> "*We can't generate employment, but we could engage them in activities, monitoring, patrolling etc. Give them skills, small tasks in information centre or as tourist guides, introduce them with modern-type of business and entrepreneurship. Can we engage them for long time? Can we provide them with roles and skills - economic skills? We need to meet their needs!*" (Interview 11 April 2012).

In doing so, it is important to understand what kind of activities the youth themselves wish to have in their communities, and what would allow them to stay in their villages.

*From Ecotourism Training to Financial Skill Development*

Both in Khata and Gadawa, the need for skill development is high, which was observed in the following comments from youth: "*skill oriented training is necessary for youth*", "*programs engaging unemployed youth are needed in all community*", and "*help to unemployed youth by adopting useful program is needed*". These comments are expected since youth unemployment was the number one challenge facing youth in both communities. In addition, the analysis regarding the competencies of the volunteers revealed that the youth are not very confident about their skills. In terms of their wishes, the young people in Khata, which is surrounded by a lush community forest that habits

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wildlife, showed interest especially in health and social care, wildlife management, and nature guide and ecotourism training. In Gadawa, on the other hand, the most popular options for skill development were related to financial and organisational skills, and followed by wildlife management and improved agriculture. Considering the different environments in the two communities, it is not surprising that the youth in Khata were more interested in nature-based skills while youth in Gadawa preferred more universal skill development. Interestingly, health and social care did not appeal to the youth in Gadawa, although according to the respondents, the community was clearly facing more social challenges than Khata. If WWF Nepal or other organisations plan to support skill development opportunities for youth in these two places, they should consider the differences in the youth's wishes and ensure that the target groups for the activities are included in the planning process.

*Increasing Motivation through Computer Classes and Football Games*

Despite the strong presence of the six Cs in the youth volunteers from Gadawa, the challenge of motivating youth to volunteer in the first place was pointed out. For instance, the CBAPO groups lacked participants, as indicated in such comments as: "*more youth should be involved* ", "*there's not enough active youth*", "*there's lack of youth empowerment training*", and "*lack of women empowerment training*". In addition, lack of extra-curricular activities was ranked as a serious social issue facing youth in Gadawa, which can result in frustration that can further cause them to resort to bad behaviour. Although this study did not examine the reasons for young people's low motivation levels to volunteer in Gadawa, solutions that have been used in Khata to motivate youth could be also repeated in Gadawa. In Khata, for instance, youth in the anti-poaching groups are provided with computer classes with the aim of developing skills and motivating them to continue in the anti-poaching operations. Also, the PHE peer educators have a chance to practise traditional dances and present them to village visitors. (WWF Nepal 2011). Replicating these concepts in Gadawa might increase youth motivation. Based on the preferences of the survey participants, linking conservation activities for instance with computer classes, nature clubs, sports, sewing groups, and traditional dance classes could tempt more youth to join the activities and stay committed and motivated in Gadawa. Moreover, in Khata such sports as football or cricket could be adopted as part of the conservation activities.

### 6.5.2 The Challenge of Employment

One of the biggest challenges for sustainability of conservation as well as for social development in Khata and Gadawa is the youth unemployment, which forces many young people to move away either elsewhere in Nepal or abroad. According to one of the WWF Nepal interviewees, most young people wish that they could stay in their home villages but are forced to leave because there is no work. Based on their own future plans, only a small share of the respondents had plans to leave abroad or elsewhere in Nepal to find a job, and clearly a bigger share had direct plans to settle in their home villages. However, most of the participants were planning to continue their studies, and it is not known what they plan to do after they finish their studies. The answers regarding preferred employment options indicate that the youth wish to find a job that would somehow be linked to their community. In Khata, for instance, all the youth respondents wished to work with conservation and community development, and furthermore, the PHE peer group youth planned to have a job related to health and social care, and teaching. In Gadawa, the PHE youth wished to have their own enterprise or work with health and social care, teaching, or community development. The CBAPO members in Gadawa, on the other hand, were interested in having a job in conservation, community development, or farming. Although it seems that these employment preferences are quite moderate and pursuing a job for instance as a health worker would be relatively easy, in reality, the employment opportunities of any kind are very limited in rural villages. It appears that the youth realise that being active in the voluntary groups does not automatically provide them with jobs, which can be observed in the comment by a PHE volunteer: *"there's no guarantee of a job"*. The respondents' present occupations indicate that becoming a farmer, housewife, or domestic servant is more likely than being employed for instance in the conservation sector.

However, even if WWF Nepal were not able to create employment, it could support skill development for youth, as was mentioned earlier by one of the WWF interviewees. As a result of gaining new skills for instance in financial management, combined with increased self-confidence, some of the youth might start their own enterprises and further employ others. From the point of view of WWF Nepal, it is promising that so many of the respondents wished to work in conservation and community development in the future. This again indicates a will to contribute to the community and the

environment. Nevertheless, if these youth eager to take action are not provided support, their enthusiasm may fade out. Then again, if the WWF Nepal's objective of bringing up responsible citizens is reached, these youth could become teachers, social workers, businessmen and women, or community leaders who promote conservation and sustainability issues through their positions. On the other hand, it is also possible that rural youth who have developed positive features such as self-confidence and competence would also pursue higher education and employment for which they would have to move to bigger cities in Nepal or even abroad, and they might not return to their home villages anymore. This would mean that the efforts to bring up responsible village members who would continue conservation practices in their rural villages would not directly benefit these villages. Then again, these youth can become for instance politicians or conservationists who can contribute to the well-being of their home villages in some other way.

Nevertheless, this study shows that the majority of the survey participants possess positive personal features such as good self-confidence, various life skills, strong character, and warm relationships with family. In addition, it shows that these youth are conservation-minded and express care and empathy for the environment. As a result of this combination, it is likely that these youth become (or already are) "responsible citizens", which is a result that WWF Nepal is aiming at.

# 7  Conclusion

The aim of this study was to find out how rural youth in Nepal contribute to conservation and village development activities. It has done so by examining the role of youth in the participatory natural resources management and conservation work of WWF Nepal, and why WWF Nepal engages youth in its integrated conservation and development initiatives. Furthermore, I have analysed to what extent youth volunteers in two different conservation and development groups, namely the anti-poaching operation and the PHE peer-to peer education groups have developed the six personal features - competence, confidence, character, connection, caring and contribution -, which, according to the theory of Positive Youth Development, evolve during voluntary youth activities. In addition, I have examined what motivates the youth to take action and what other experiences the youth volunteers have gained while participating in the voluntary conservation and development activities.

This study discovered that young people are an important part of the integrated conservation and development strategies that WWF Nepal is implementing together with its partners. Four different strategies could be separated in WWF Nepal's conservation work regarding children and youth, namely: 1) bringing up responsible citizens: 2) influencing parents and wider community: 3) supporting youth to be active agents in conservation: and 4) ensuring the sustainability of conservation by targeting youth. These strategies indicate that children and youth are not only seen as recipients of conservation information but rather as key stakeholders in implementing conservation work, as well as achieving long-term conservation and sustainable development goals. Not only are youth engaged in conservation education programmes and campaigns such as the Generation Green campaign but they are also activated to conduct real hands-on conservation and development work for instance through anti-poaching and peer-to-peer health education groups. It was also discovered that the way WWF Nepal approaches the youth, mainly by considering them as assets in conservation and development and emphasising their positive features such as eagerness to learn new skills, passion and open-mindedness, resembles the theory of Positive Youth Development, which states that youth should be approached with positive attitudes. Although not necessarily intentionally, the youth-based voluntary activities

that WWF Nepal is supporting seem to work as platforms for the personal development in the youth: when the young are given meaningful activities and opportunities to develop new roles and responsibilities, they develop different personal features such as various competencies, self-confidence, problem-solving and resistance skills, ability to take leadership, and warm relationships with peers, family, and adults. In addition, they develop elements of empathy toward nature and people and will to contribute positively to self, others, and the environment. This again takes us back to the ultimate objective of WWF Nepal which is positive behaviour change; by targeting children and youth with a positive approach, they can be brought up to become responsible citizens that have a will to contribute positively to the surrounding environment and society. Therefore, it was also argued that linking voluntary environmental youth activities in the integrated conservation and development initiatives could result in increased conservation awareness, personal skills, and confidence in the youth. These together with the will to further contribute positively to one's surroundings could again benefit the effectiveness and sustainability of the ICD initiatives, as well as general social development.

However, various challenges and shortages were also discovered regarding the participatory approach that WWF Nepal is implementing with rural youth. These issues include lack of opportunities for the youth to influence the planning and organisation of activities, lack of proper equipment, lack of support from the surrounding community and the responsible organisations, problems regarding the management of the activities, feelings of fear and insecurity, and lack of guarantee for further employment. Furthermore, the need for more support and help from the government was raised by the youth as a challenge. However, this is an issue that WWF Nepal is not directly able to address although it can help in developing linkages between government line agencies and rural communities. In addition, it was found that although the youth appreciate the voluntary activities that WWF is currently supporting with its partners, there are other needs, such as the need for skill development and creation of employment which according to the youth, should be prioritised. Such social challenges as unemployment that can cause frustration, substance abuse, or pressure to migrate abroad in the hope for better employment opportunities are issues that negatively influence not only the young people but also the social structures in the communities, and the conservation and development efforts. This study also showed that the common challenges that often

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occur with participatory approaches, including the inability to provide true power to influence and genuine participation opportunities for all, were also present in the youth activities examined and were seen as negative issues by the youth volunteers. This indicates that the participatory approach that WWF is implementing with its partners is still incomplete and needs some improvement.

Although the youth came from two communities that differ from each other in terms of social, cultural, and environmental circumstances, those differences did not seem to affect the evolvement of the six personal features, the six Cs (competence, confidence, connection, character, caring, and contribution) among the youth. A little surprisingly, it was discovered that coming from a community that faces various social and environmental challenges did not seem to influence the development of personal features in the youth in a negative way. On the contrary, the youth expressed all the five elements of positive youth development, as well as the sixth element, the desire to contribute to their community. Even more surprisingly, the sixth element, that is contribution, seemed to be the strongest among all the participants. This suggests that even in a particularly challenging environment, it is worthwhile to invest in youth by providing them with opportunities to participate in meaningful activities. Nevertheless, to sustain the motivation of the youth and activate more of them to volunteer, the activities should be developed according to their own desires. By giving them an opportunity to create, plan, and implement their own ideas with the support from adults, their motivation and commitment to the activities could be increased. These ideas, even if they included sport clubs or computer classes, could then be further developed to have linkages to conservation and community livelihood development. Furthermore, the desire of the youth to contribute to their community and environment should be recognised and capitalised in order to support the sustainability of conservation and livelihood programmes.

### *Suggestions for Further Research*

This research argues that most of the survey participants have developed conservation-mindedness and have a desire to contribute to their society, and they can therefore be considered potential "responsible citizens" of the future. A follow-up study after approximately five years with some of the survey participants could provide interesting

information about how being part of these voluntary activities and developing positive personal features have influenced their lives. It would be intriguing to find out for instance whether conservation education and voluntary activities have resulted in a permanent behaviour change in these youth and whether they have in any way executed the desire to do good for the community. In addition, to find out to what extent the involvement in the voluntary activities actually causes positive changes in the youth volunteers, a more comprehensive study could be conducted. It could include baselines on youth views, attitudes, and experiences when they first join the activities, as well as a comparison group of youth who are not involved in any voluntary activities in order to see whether any differences between the youth would occur.

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# Appendix 1

**Survey questionnaire in youth views on volunteer community activities and Positive Youth Development**

## Part 1. Background I

1. Where do you live at the moment?

>   Name:
>   District:
>   Village Dev. Committee:
>   Community Forest Co-ordination committee:
>   Survey Date:

2. How old are you at the moment?
    (2.1) 13-16          (2.2) 17-20          (2.3) 21-24          (2.4) 25-28          (2.5) over

3. Gender
    (3.1) Female          (3.2) Male

4. What is the latest level of school you have attended
 (if you are still studying, put the one where you are at the moment)
    (4.1) Primary level (grades 1-5)
    (4.2) Lower secondary level (grades 6-8)
    (4.3) Secondary level (grades 9-10)
    (4.4) Higher secondary level +2 or above
    (4.5) I have not attended school
    (4.6) I have attended non-formal education (16 years above)

5. Have you ever been a member of an eco club?     (5.1)   Yes          (5.2)     No

## Part 2. The activity and youth views

6. Which of the following activities are you involved in at the moment?     (6.1 ) Community anti-poaching group (CBAPO)

    (6.2 ) Peer group (PHE)
    (6.3 ) Something else, specify____

7. How long have you been involved in this activity?
    (7.1) Less than 1 year
    (7.2) 1-2 years
    (7.3) 2-4 years
    (7.4) Over 4 years

8. How did you first join the activity (please pick only one that best suits your situation)

    ( 8.1) I heard about the activity and wanted to join myself because it sounded interesting
    (8.2) My friends asked me to join the activity
    (8.3) My parents told me to join the activity
    (8.4) My teacher encouraged me to join the activity
    (8.5) A community member encouraged me to join the activity
    (8.6) An outside organisation invited me to join the activity
    (8.7) Some other reason, please specify:

9. What are the main reasons why you want to be part of the activity? (please pick max. 3 options)

    (9.1) I want to help my community
    (9.2) I want to learn new things
    (9.3) I want to help nature and animals
    (9.4) I want to help other youth
    (9.5) I think it's helpful for my future
    (9.6) I have nothing else to do
    (9.7) It's fun and exciting

(9.8) All my friends are also
(9.9) Something else, specify____

10. What are the 3 best things that you have gained from being part of this activity (Please explain shortly with own words): (10.1)
(10.2)
(10.3)

11. What are the 3 most uncomfortable things regarding this activity
(11.1)
(11.2)
(11.3)

12. How often do you spend your time with the activity?
(12.1 ) Every day
(12.2) 4-6 times a week
(12.3) 1-3 times a week
(12.4) 1-3 times per month
(12.5) Less than 1 time a month

13. Please pick the answer that best suits your own thinking about the activity.
(13.1) This activity is very interesting and useful for me and I wish to continue it in the future.
(13.2) This activity is ok for now but I might not continue due to restricted time and other reason.
(13.3) This activity is not very interesting for me and I wish there would be some other activity that was more useful for me.

## Part 3: Environmental and social knowledge

14. What do you think are the 3 most serious environmental problems in your own community?
(14.1)
(14.2)
(14.3)

15. What do you think are the 3 most serious social problems in your community?
(15.1)
(15.2)
(15.3)

16. Since being part of the activity,do you feel that you have more, the same or less information on the next issue :

5.A lot more, 4.A little bit more, 3.The same as before, 2.I have not received any information
(16.1) Waste recycling
(16.2 Forest conservation and importance of forest
(16.3) Improved hygiene (toilets, biogas,washing hands etc.
(16.4) Anti-poaching
(16.5) Importance of wildlife
(16.6) Forest fire prevention
(16.7) SRH (family planning, prevention of sexual disease etc.)
(16.8) Improved agriculture
(16.9) Human-wildlife conflct prevention
(16.10) Importance of own culture and traditions
(16.11) Climate change impact and adaptation

17. Have you learned something else that is not mentioned here, please specify shortly with own words?
(17.1)
(17.2)
(17.3)

## Part 4: Positive Youth Development

**(18.) Confidence/Sence of self**
Please pick the option that suits your own thinking and feelings best:

5 : Very much, 4 : A lot, 3 : A little, 2 : Not at all, 1 : Not sure
(18.1) I have confidence in myself
(18.2) I'm not afraid to speak out my opinions
(18.3) I feel that I have a purpose in my community
(18.4) I feel other people respect me
(18.5) I feel my parents/family are proud of me
(18.6) I feel optimistic about my futute

**(19.) Competence/Life skills**

Please pick the option that suits your own thinking and feelings best:

5 : Very much,    4 : A lot,  3 : A little,  2 : Not at all,       1 : Not sure
   (19.1) I am good at making friends
   (19.2) I can make important decisions on my own
   (19.3) I am confident to act as a leader in a group
   (19.4) I have various skills
   (19.5) Solving problems that come my way is easy
   (19.6) I can help others with their problems

**20. Connection/Relationships.**
Please pick the option that suits your own thinking and feelings best:

5 : Very much,    4 : A lot,  3 : A little,  2 : Not at all,       1 : Not sure

   Parents

   (20.1) I can tell my parents if I have problems
   (20.2) I feel my parents love me
   (20.3) My parents listen to my ideas
   (20.4) My parents respect my wishes
   (20.5) My parents believe I will have a good future

   Siblings and Friends

   (20.6) I can talk about anything with my sisters/brothers
   (20.7) My sisters/brothers help me if I have problems
   (20.8) I can talk about anything to my friends
   (20.9) My friends help me if I have problems

   Other Community Members

   (20.10) I feel adults in my community treat me well
   (20.11) I can talk to adults in my community if I have problems
   (20.12) I can get help and advice from adults in my community

**(21.) Caring    and Compassion**

Please pick the option that suits your own thinking and feelings best:

5 : Very much,  4 : A lot,  3 : A little,  2 : Not at all,       1 : Not sure
Caring for the People

   (21.1) I make sure that everyone in a group is treated fairly
   (21.2) I help people who are lonely
   (21.3)  I help the poor and disabled members of my community
   (21.4)  I care about the feelings of other people
   (21.5) I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt

   Caring for the Environment

   (21.6) I think forests are important and should be protected
   (21.7)  I respect wild animals and I think people should not kill them
   (21.8) I believe that no one should throw rubbish in the nature
   (21.9)  I respect fish and want to protect rivers and streams

**(22.)  Character**

Please pick the option that suits your own thinking and feelings best:

5 : Very much,    4 : A lot,  3 : A little,  2 : Not at all,       1 : Not sure

   (22.1)  I can say no to activities that I think are wrong
   (22.2)  If i see someone bullied, I go and stop that
   (22.3)  I can be friends with people regardless of their race, culture or religion.
   (22.4)  Laughing at other people is wrong

**23. Contribution**

Please pick the option that suits your own thinking and feelings best

5 : Very much,    4 : A lot,   3 : A little, 2 : Not at all,      1 : Not sure

    (23.1)  I want to volunteer on a regular basis to help other people in my community
     (23.2)  I want to volunteer to take care of the forests and animals around my community
     (23.3) I want to activate other youth to do good for the community
     (23.4) I want to activate adults to do good for the community
     (23.5) I want to participate in other community activities besides the one I am now involved in
     (23.6) I am more proud of my community than before
     (23.7) I want to work more to make my community a better place

## Part 5: Experiences and views

24. What do you think are the strengths with youth in your community (pick 3 most important)

     (24.1) Ability to learn new things fast
     (24.2 ) Mobility (able to move from place to place fast)
     (24.3 ) Modern skills (such as knowledge about computers and cell phones)
     (24.4 ) Open-mindness and lack of prejudice (easy to work together with anyone
     (24.5 ) Care about the environment
     (24.6 ) Able to gather a lot of youth together to act as a group
     (24.7 ) Get people to listen to youth message
     (24.8 )  Ability to work with other youth from other communities
     (24.9 ) Connections to markets and cities
     (24.10 ) something else, please specify: …………………………..

25. How serious you think the next issues are for youth in your community:

5: Very serious            4. Quite serious        3: Not very serious  2: Not at all serious  1: Not sure

     (25.1) Youth unemployment
      (25.2) Poor studying opportunities
     (25.3) Drugs, tobacco and alcohol problems
     (25.4) Early marriage and children at young age
     (25.5) Lack of extra-curriculum activities for youth
     (25.6) Youth moving abroad/migration
     (25.7) Human trafficking
     (25.8) Something else, please specify: ………………..

26. How do you feel about the next sentences?

5 : Very much true    4: A little bit true   3: Not true        2: Not true at all        1: Not sure

     (26.1) Adults in my community listen to ideas from youth
     (26.2) Adults in my community invite youth in decision-making
     (26.3) Adults in my  community implements ideas from youth
     (26.4) Adults in my community wish the youth to stay and live in the community

27. What are your plans for the next 3 years, please pick the most likely option (only one)?

     (27.1 ) Get married and start own family and stay in my home village
     (27.2 ) Go to work outside home village in Nepal
     (27.3 ) Go to work abroad (e.g. in Gulf/India/Korea/Malaysia), please specify where___
     (27.4 ) Go to study abroad, please specify where__(Gulf country, India, Malaysia etc.)
     (27.5 ) Continue studies in Nepal

28. What kind of job would you like to do? Please pick 2 favourite options

     (28.1 ) Farming and livestock
     (28.2 ) Community development/ politics
     (28.3 ) Conservation
     (28.4 ) Tourism
     (28.5) Own enterprise/business
     (28.6 ) Health and social care
     (28.7 ) Teacher
     (28.8) Domestic help

(28.9 ) Government officer
(28.10 ) Something else, please specify:


29. What kind of extra-curricular youth voluntary activities you would like to have in your community?
Please pick 3 favourites

(29.1 ) Sports
(29.2 ) Music and dance traditional
(29.3 ) Music and dance western
(29.4 ) Drama groups
(29.5 ) Sewing group
(29.6 ) Writing and poetry class
(29.7 ) Nature club
(29.8 ) Computer/ IT class
(29.9) Something else, please suggest: _____


30. What kind of vocational training opportunities would you like to have in your community?

Please pick 3 options

(30.1 ) Organisational skills
(30.2 ) Improved agriculture
(30.3 ) Micro credits, finance, calculation, savings (how to wisely use money)
(30.4 ) Bicycle repair
(30.5 ) Hairdressing
(30.6 ) Clothing repair
(30.7 ) Construction skills
(30.8 ) Health and social care
(30.9 ) Animal health care
(30.10 ) Food storage and processing
(30.11 ) How to start a business
(30.12 ) Wildlife management
(30.13 ) Training for nature guide
(30.14 ) Training for ecotourism
(30.15 ) Something else, give us suggestions: ………………………

## Part 6: Background II

31. Marital status
Are you married?        (31.1) Yes (31.2) No



32. Do you have children?
            (32.1 )             Yes (32.2) No

 (32.a)  How many __?          32.(a. 1)   Son       32.(a. 2)            Daughter

33. Living
            (33.1 ) I live with my own parents
            (33.2 ) I live with my spouse's parents
            (33.3 ) I live in my own/rented  house
            (33.4 ) I live in school hostel

34. What is your main occupation at the moment  Please pick options that suit your situation at the moment best.

(34.1 ) Student
(34.2 ) Housewife
(34.3 ) Livestock farmer
(34.4 ) Causal labourer
(34.5 ) Domestic worker
(34.6 ) Work in community organisation
(34.7 ) Work in public office
(34.8 ) Work in private office
(34.9 ) Work in small business/enterprise
(34.10 ) Domestic servant
(34.11 ) Agricultural farmer
(34.12 ) Work in construction
(34.13 ) Other
(34.14 ) Nothing specific at the moment

35. Paid employment

(Are you working in a paid job at the moment)
     (35.1)       Yes  (35.2)       No

36. Do you have any income generating activities at the moment?
     (36.1)       Yes
     (36.2)       No

36. a .   If yes, can you specify what:
     (36.1.1) Agricultural based
     (36.1.2) Forest based
     (36.1.3) Skill & Business based
     (36.1.4) Something else based

Thank you.

37. Note-