

Marketing Information System

FOR NATURAL PRODUCTS

OTHER ANSAB RURAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKITS IN THIS SERIES (2010)



BUSINESS PLANNING FOR COMMUNITY BASED NATURAL PRODUCT ENTERPRISES

This Toolkit offers skills, methods and tools with which the field facilitators can support rural people to prepare and implement the business plan for their enterprises. The purpose is to build the capacity of facilitators and enterprise leaders on how they can support a rigorous process of planning and successful operation of sustainable community-based natural product enterprises.



PARTICIPATORY BIODIVERSITY MONITORING IN COMMUNITY MANAGED FORESTS

This Toolkit provides methods and tools needed to generate useful data to periodically assess the biodiversity status and to track the impact of community based forest management on biodiversity. The purpose is to derive important lessons for improving management that promotes the conservation of biodiversity while maximizing the value of forest products and services.



ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES DEPENDENT COMMUNITIES

This Toolkit focuses on developing entrepreneurial skills and capacities of local communities, especially the poorest among them, to promote the development of sustainable community based natural product enterprises. The purpose is to provide guidance in developing and implementing programs on developing entrepreneurship skills and culture at the community level



DEVELOPMENT AND MOBILIZATION OF LOCAL RESOURCE PERSONS

This Toolkit focuses on the process and methods of recruiting, training and mobilizing local resource persons (LRPs) so that development services could be more effectively delivered in rural settings through locally available human resource even beyond the termination of a development project.



PARTICIPATORY INVENTORY OF NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS

This Toolkit provides practical methods and tools to determine total stock and harvestable amount of the selected NTFPs and derive specific recommendations for forest management interventions. The objective is to provide participatory inventory method that provides a basis for sustainable forest management.



CERTIFICATION OF COMMUNITY MANAGED FORESTS

This Toolkit focuses on group forest management certification. The major objective of the toolkit is to provide important methods and tools for developing and implementing the Forest Stewardship Council's (FSC) group forest management certification so that the communities achieve a position of getting recognition and rewards for their good practices, while conserving the forest and biodiversity.



CHAIN OF CUSTODY CERTIFICATION FOR COMMUNITY FOREST ENTERPRISES

This Toolkit provides field practitioners and program managers with up to date methods, tools and techniques for obtaining and implementing the Forest Stewardship Council's (FSC) Group Chain of Custody certification. The purpose is to enable small companies and cooperatives promote their certified products in national and international markets and get rewarded.

Marketing Information System

FOR NATURAL PRODUCTS

ASIA NETWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE
AGRICULTURE AND BIORESOURCES (ANSAB)
2010

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Preface

Rural development presents an immense challenge both to theorists and practitioners in the field. Many rural development and conservation projects end up in utter frustration because they are not equipped with effective methods and tools. ANSAB itself has tried various approaches since its establishment in 1992. We have developed a practical combination of environmental, social and economic interventions that conserve biodiversity, create jobs and provide income for the rural poor in remote but resource-rich areas of Nepal. The encouraging outcomes of these interventions have led us to pursue the successful approaches over the past several years.

By 2009, we were able to organize and develop 393 enterprise-oriented community forest user groups and 1,166 economic entities, which generated US \$6.82 million in annual total monetary benefits to 78,828 individuals and, at the same time, brought over 100,000 hectares of forests and meadows in Nepal Himalaya under improved community management. When applied properly under an enabling policy environment, this approach can transform rural poor women and men into well governed, organized entrepreneurs that are capable of accessing the market as well as essential business development services. By creating economic incentives to local stewards, the approach helps to reverse deforestation and enhance the stock of natural wealth for improved and sustained flow of ecosystem services and for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Building on these insights, we have been producing a number of manuals, toolkits,

and guidelines. This Rural Development Toolkit Series represents the continuation of our attempt to present our learning to a wide range of development practitioners. This Series consists of eight separate but interrelated toolkits. These toolkits offer practical guidance on the key methods and tools that were developed, tested and refined over the years by working with local communities, development partners and government agencies. These capture the experiential knowledge of dozens of people working for ANSAB and are published after a thorough field testing and peer review. These toolkits are primarily designed for field facilitators and managers of development and conservation programs who have some basic facilitation skills and experience of working with rural people. We are hopeful that the toolkits will prove useful to other rural development and conservation programs, and consequently, to a wider application of our fruitful approach. It is expected that users will adapt the methods and tools presented here to work in different social contexts.

This Toolkit “Marketing Information System for Natural Products” focuses on the process of setting up a marketing information system (MIS) program and the methods of collection, processing and dissemination of information on markets and marketing of natural products. The objective is to provide guidance in developing and implementing the MIS for natural products in order to enhance market transparency and good value chain governance. This toolkit is divided into 4 stages. A number of steps are suggested for each stage and a number of activities are recommended for each step. Practical tools

and considerations are provided along with activities when required.

We are thankful to the blue moon fund (bmf) for providing the grant that allowed us to develop the Series and for encouraging us to translate ANSAB expertise into simple-to-use toolkits. The main contributors of the toolkit are Bhishma Subedi, Puspa Ghimire, Sushil Gyawali. Surya B. Binayee through his work in ANSAB program contributed to the evolution and development of the methodology. A number of ANSAB staff (especially Ram Hari Subedi, Bhuwan

Dhakai, Kabir Ratna Sthapit, Prakash Katwal, Ram P. Acharya and Nabin Subedi), donors (SDC, ICCO, SNV), partners (FECOFUN, FNCCI), NGOs and local communities contributed to this methodology through their involvement in ANSAB programs. Hari Dhungana, an experienced ANSAB technical expert, edited the Series.

We welcome suggestions and feedback from readers and users as we are very much keen on periodically updating the toolkits to make it more productive and useful.

Bhishma P. Subedi, Ph.D.
Executive Director, ANSAB



Acronyms

Marketing
Information System
for Natural
Products

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ANSAB	Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources
BMO	Business membership organization
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FECOFUN	Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal
FGD	Focus group discussion
GO	Government organization
ICCO	Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation
INGO	International non-governmental organization
MIS	Marketing information system
MoU	Memorandum of understanding
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NNN	Nepal NTFP Network
NTFP	Non-timber forest product
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SNV	The Netherlands Development Organization
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science



Glossary

Beneficiaries: Individuals or institutions who receive MIS services; these include producers, traders, exporters, government or non-government organizations and researchers

Facilitator: A person who facilitates the process of MIS design for a particular place

Information Provider: An organization or individual who provides the marketing information to MIS center; the buyers are the major information providers

Marketing Services: Services required by client entities and beneficiaries (e.g., enterprises) to market their natural products efficiently

MIS center: An entity that collects, process and disseminates marketing information

MIS site: A place where beneficiaries or clients of MIS are located

Natural Product: Substance produced by a living organism - found in nature. In this toolkit, natural product refers to the products derived from forest or agricultural land for commercial purpose

Stakeholders: Persons or groups having an interest in, or directly or indirectly affected by, a project, initiative or activity

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About the Toolkit

This toolkit on Marketing Information System for Natural Products presents methods, procedure and tools about how to establish and operate a marketing information system (MIS) for natural products. An MIS may be established by government organizations; non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private firms, natural product enterprises or individuals to cater to their own needs or to those of clients and beneficiaries. This toolkit is based on the experience of Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources (ANSAB) as it implemented an MIS program for non-timber forest products (NTFPs) for over a decade (see Box 1). This toolkit guides the facilitator through how to set up an MIS program and subsequently to collect, analyze and disseminate the information on markets and marketing for natural products. With MIS in place, organizations can support clients and beneficiaries tackle important marketing challenges.

Thus, an MIS can offer critical services for the success of small and big entrepreneurs engaged in the collection, production, processing and trade of natural products. The MIS promotes market transparency and good value chain governance and allows local communities benefit from natural products enterprises. The MIS can offer valuable information on product quality, price, legal procedures, market requirements and demand and supply situation. The MIS information allows local producers and collectors maintain the consistency of quality expected in the market and enhance their bargaining power as they sell their natural products.

OBJECTIVES OF THE TOOLKIT

This toolkit aims to provide guidance to facilitators and development program managers in developing an MIS for natural products and successfully managing the MIS

BOX 1: MIS program of ANSAB

The Nepal NTFP Network (NNN), which is coordinated by ANSAB and represented by over 50 organizations and 300 individual members, discussed in a meeting in 1999 about the constraints of NTFP marketing and enterprise development in Nepal. The NNN members realized that inadequate access to marketing information was one of the major constraints. They advised ANSAB to develop an MIS program, targeting at two levels. First, community level MIS was considered useful for communities of specific areas to improve their access to marketing information so that they could market their products in profitable terms. Second, central level MIS was considered essential to help wide range of stakeholders on a broad scope of marketing information for developing enterprise development plans, assessing marketing options, and developing marketing plans. Thus the central level MIS complemented the community level MIS. An NNN task force formed in early 1999 discussed community level MIS for NTFPs. In May 1999, another task force studied and recommended a framework for central level MIS for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of marketing information required for different stakeholders in NTFP sub-sector. The central level MIS provided service to a greater range of NTFP stakeholders, by providing marketing information to and through governmental and non-governmental organizations. Based on the task force report and the suggestions from the NNN members, ANSAB implemented the MIS project in 2001. The project was able to improve marketing information system of NTFPs in Nepal and to enable local collectors and traders to receive equitable benefits.

for equitable and transparent value chain governance of these products. More specific objectives of this toolkit are to provide methods, tools and techniques to:

- set up an MIS for natural products in a rigorous manner; and
- manage the MIS through the collection, analysis and dissemination of marketing information in an effective and efficient way.

WHO IS THIS TOOLKIT FOR?

This toolkit is mainly targeted for field facilitators and program managers of development organizations who wish to develop MIS of natural products in a systematic way. The toolkit is also useful to community groups, researchers and students and others interested in natural product value chains.

This toolkit contains four stages, each with a number of steps (see Figure 1). Stage one describes how the facilitator – i.e., the person involved in the design of MIS – starts the work on setting up the MIS. Stage two provides step-wise guidelines for carrying out detailed assessment on the products, markets, service providers and beneficiaries. In the stage three, the complete design of MIS is finalized through the stakeholders' workshop. The stage four guides through how the MIS design is put into action, including the periodic impact assessment and improvement of the MIS. The reader is also advised to refer the other toolkits in the ANSAB Rural Development Toolkit series to get a broader understanding of how the MIS establishment and operation fit into a broader range of tools on rural development.

WHAT DOES THIS TOOLKIT CONTAIN?

FIGURE 1: Framework of the toolkit

GET PREPARED

- Review MIS works in different places
- Consult with stakeholders
- Identify potential sites, marketing services and beneficiaries for assessment
- Plan for detailed assessment

CARRY OUT DETAILED ASSESSMENT

- Understand the availability of marketing information and gaps
- Prioritize products and sources of information
- Prepare assessment report
- Prepare for MIS design workshop

DESIGN THE MARKETING INFORMATION SYSTEM THROUGH WORKSHOP

- Share findings of detailed assessment with stakeholders
- Define the objectives of MIS
- Finalize MIS center and other responsible organizations
- Determine scope in terms of products, types and sources of information
- Define methods of information collection
- Set compilation, analysis and verification procedures
- Develop MIS framework and dissemination plan
- Write MIS plan

IMPLEMENT THE MARKETING INFORMATION SYSTEM

- Assign staffs and build their capacity
- Collect the information
- Process the information
- Disseminate the information
- Review and improve the MIS

The stage one of this toolkit guides the facilitator through how to be prepared yourself for setting up an MIS. It has four steps (see Figure 2). It guides you to be familiar with existing MIS activities, implementing sites, facilitating organizations, marketing services, information providers and commercially important natural products and to plan for a detailed assessment to be carried out in the next stage.

By the end of this stage the facilitator:

- develops an understanding of existing MIS activities, if any;
- identifies the potential implementation sites where MIS is to target for; and
- becomes ready for detailed assessment.

The following are the steps to be followed by the facilitator to get prepared for setting up an MIS program.

STEP 1: REVIEW MIS IN DIFFERENT PLACES

At the first step, the facilitator should review what MIS activities, if any, are being carried out in different places and then determine the sites and products that the MIS program should target. The following activities should be carried out.

Review the relevant publications from existing MIS centers

The facilitator should identify the existing MIS centers (i.e., the organizations that operate an MIS) and review their publications focusing on (a) what products they are dealing with, (b) which sites they have covered, and (c) how they collect, analyze and process the marketing information. The following publications will be useful.

FIGURE 2: Steps of how to get prepared



- Previous MIS reports
- Newsletters
- Trade Bulletins
- General information of proposed sites

Select the potential MIS implementation sites

The facilitator should then select the potential MIS implementation sites. A site can be a reasonably defined area, usually a district or geographic region or some convenient administrative jurisdiction. The number of sites to be selected depends upon the resources available and the needs of the target clients and beneficiaries. Usually five to ten most important sites can be selected for MIS implementation.

Rapid visit to the shortlisted MIS implementation sites

The facilitator should visit all or a sample of the sites short-listed above. If the organization has field offices in these sites, the facilitator may collect the following information without actually visiting the sites. The information should respond the following questions:

- What is the existing marketing information on the site selected?
- Is there any need of marketing information?
- Who could be the target clients and beneficiaries of MIS?
- What are the products that require marketing information?
- How accessible are markets and marketing information sources?
- What are the district/regional level marketing information centers?

Based on the above, the facilitator:

- gets knowledge on existing MIS;
- determines which products require MIS; and
- identifies the broader ways in which MIS for natural products could be developed

STEP 2: CONSULT WITH STAKEHOLDERS

At the second step, the facilitator needs to hold consultation with natural products stakeholders in order to solicit their views on the selected MIS implementation sites, potential products and market. The facilitator may host a consultation meeting by inviting such stakeholders as natural products producers, traders, experts, trade chambers, cooperatives, development organizations and related local and national government bodies. Alternatively, consultation can be carried out through visit to these stakeholders individually. In these consultation meetings or visits, the facilitator should gather information as per the checklist (see Box 2).

BOX 2: Checklist for stakeholders' consultation

1. General

- What is the organizational experience in marketing sector?
- Who is the responsible person for MIS activities in the organization?
- Who are the beneficiaries of MIS (farmers, traders, exporters, etc.) and in which area? And why?
- What are the important and potential markets?

2. Present Status

- What are the major products in trade?
- Why are those products important (quantity, significance on livelihoods, comparative advantages, getting low prices, etc.)?
- What activities do you perform regarding product marketing?
- From where and how do you collect market information?
- What is the most effective way of information collection?
- How do you process, disseminate and use the available information?
- What are the effective means of marketing information dissemination?
- How do you assess the impact of information dissemination?
- What are the challenges in product marketing and problem faced for information collection, processing and dissemination?

3. Suggestion for further development

- What is the information needed to uplift the sector?
- What information should be included in an MIS?
- What are the best means to disseminate marketing information to users?
- How can you ensure the sustainability of MIS?
- Which is the best organization to set up as a MIS center?
- What are the possible MIS centers/organizations at local level?
- Who could provide reliable and timely marketing information?

STEP 3: IDENTIFY POTENTIAL SITES, MARKETING SERVICES AND BENEFICIARIES

At the third step, the facilitator should identify the MIS implementation sites; identify marketing information needs and the beneficiaries of MIS. The following activities should be carried out.

Information triangulation

The information gathered above is cross-checked from multiple sources and, when some information is inconsistent, it is verified from one or more sources. The information is organized into a draft report, which will be shared in a meeting of facilitator and personnel of MIS implementer.

Meeting between facilitator and personnel of MIS implementer

The facilitator should hold a meeting with the personnel of MIS center and share the information gathered and triangulated (see above). The meeting proposes the MIS implementation sites, products, information needs (see Box 3), marketing services and beneficiaries for detailed assessment.

BOX 3: Marketing information needs

- Price of products
- Market centers and buyers
- Quality and quantity requirements of market
- Required technology to make the product marketable
- Means of market information collection and dissemination
- Legal and policy provision to market the products
- Market actors and marketing channels
- Distribution channel and transportation
- Warehouse and storage facilities
- Positioning the products and ways of promotion
- Best practices of cultivation, harvesting, post harvesting, processing and marketing

STEP 4: PLAN FOR DETAILED ASSESSMENT

Once the MIS implementation site is identified, the meeting should also agree on a plan for the detailed assessment of the selected sites, products, marketing services and beneficiaries. For this, they should discuss the main activities of detailed assessment (see stage two), individual roles, time frame, and how to carry out those activities.

Stage Two

Carry Out Detailed Assessment

The stage two of this toolkit guides the facilitator through making a detailed assessment on the availability of marketing information and existing gaps, prioritizing the sources of information and natural products to be covered in the MIS. These will lead to preparation of an assessment report, which will be shared and used in the course of the workshop for designing of the MIS (in stage three).

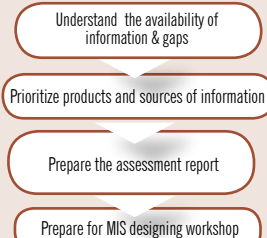
The stage two has four steps (see Figure 3). At the end of this stage, you will be able to:

- prioritize MIS services and service providers;
- identify market centers;
- identify MIS implementation organization (MIS center); and
- identify list of commercially important products

STEP 1: UNDERSTAND THE AVAILABILITY OF MARKET INFORMATION AND GAPS

At the first step, the facilitator collects all the information related to existing MIS in and around the implementation site.

FIGURE 3: Steps of Detailed Assessment



The information should be detailed and be gathered from multiple sources. Doing so allows prioritizing the MIS services and their service providers. The facilitator should also ascertain whether the traders are ready to provide information and what expectations they have regarding the provision of information. The following activities should be carried out for the above.

Focus group discussion

The facilitator carries out the beneficiary survey through focus group discussion (FGD) amongst the clients and beneficiaries identified earlier (see also Box 4). During the FGD, the MIS service requirements and the current practices of MIS are discussed in detail. Box 5 provides the checklist for FGD.

Key informant interview

The facilitator visits the implementation site and the relevant market. During the visit, the facilitator observes and carries out interaction with suppliers and buyers and collects detailed information on current MIS practice. The facilitator also interviews with lead farmers, local leaders, teachers and experts. The checklist for these interviews is given in Box 5.

BOX 4: Focus group and Key informants

- Focus group: Representatives from groups, cooperatives, etc.
- Key Informants: Lead farmers, representative of political parties, teachers and traders

[illegible]

STEP 3: PREPARE AN ASSESSMENT REPORT

At the third step, the facilitator should prepare an assessment report based on the data gathered above. The report serves as a basis of evidence and information for the design workshop to be held in the stage three. The content of the report is provided in Box 6.

STEP 4: PREPARE FOR MIS DESIGN WORKSHOP

At the fourth step, the facilitator should prepare for arranging a workshop of

important stakeholders to design the MIS program (see stage three). For this, the facilitator should:

- prepare workshop agendas;
- fix date, time and venue;
- make participants list (see Box 7) and invite each of them via telephone and/or email;
- prepare presentation sheets based on the assessment report; and
- arrange logistics (accommodation, stationery, and transport as necessary).

BOX 6: Contents of assessment report

- Background of the assessment
- Objective and rationale
- Methodology adopted for the study
- Study sites
- Outcomes of the assessment
 - Prioritized products
 - Types of information services to be included
 - Potential sources of MIS
 - MIS center/s
- Conclusion and Recommendation

BOX 7: Potential workshop participants

- Producers' group and cooperatives
- Traders, processors and exporters
- Experts of the sector
- Business membership organizations
- Concerned government agencies
- NGOs working in the sector

The stage three of this toolkit guides the facilitator through the steps to be followed in the workshop organized for designing the MIS. The workshop is held as per the previous preparation and builds upon the assessment report produced in the stage two of this toolkit. There are eight steps (see Figure 4) in which activities are organized in a one-day or two-day workshop. The workshop agrees on a plan for the MIS program that will be implemented by the MIS center.

The role of the facilitator in the workshop will be:

- To share information contained in the assessment report and the facilitator's previous experiences
- To ascertain that all participants actively participate in the discussions and thus own the MIS design
- To facilitate to forge the consensus amongst the participants by offering possible alternatives

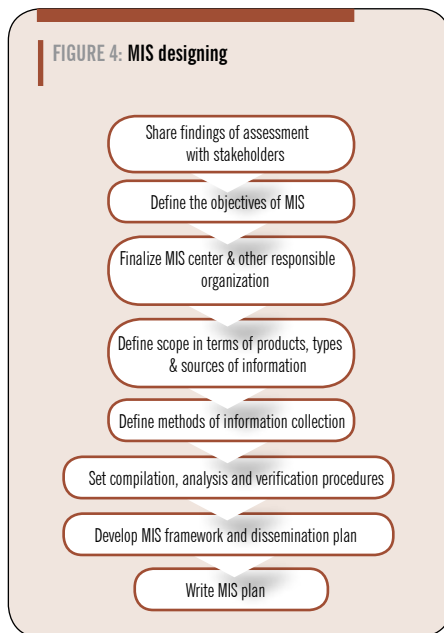
At the end of this Stage, the facilitator should be able to:

- develop MIS framework and write MIS plan for implementation; and
- finalize the different roles, actors and methods for implementation of the MIS.

STEP 1: SHARE FINDINGS OF DETAILED ASSESSMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS

At the first step, the facilitator shares the important findings of the assessment report in MIS design workshop. This will provide information to the participants of the whole process conducted so far and encourage them offer suggestions for designing the MIS. Just before this presentation, the facilitator should:

FIGURE 4: MIS designing



- clarify the participants about the objective and scope of workshop;
- outline the expected role of workshop participants; and
- propose and select a chairperson of workshop so that discussions become focused and complete in time.

STEP 2: DEFINE THE OBJECTIVES OF MIS

At the second step, the facilitator encourages workshop participants agree on the objectives of the MIS program. While the broad aim of MIS is to increase market transparency and good value chain governance of natural products, the particular objectives have to be clarified through discussions in the workshop.

The objectives should cover the following elements (or dimensions) of MIS:

- Specific natural products (or product categories)
- Target beneficiary and clients
- Scope and type of marketing information
- Statement about how the beneficiary and clients benefit from MIS.

STEP 3: FINALIZE MIS CENTER AND OTHER RESPONSIBLE ORGANIZATIONS

At the third step, the workshop participants agree on which organization is most suitable and prepared to implement the MIS program. Based on the assessment report, the facilitator should provide a list of potential organizations to the workshop participants. Generally, the third and

fourth steps of this Stage are conducted simultaneously because the scope of marketing services should be matched with the competencies of MIS center.

In addition, depending upon the needs of clients and availability of resources, local level MIS centers can be developed. All the available information at MIS center may not be useful for the clients of certain region. The local level MIS center can customize the information by adding some locally relevant information and disseminate amongst the beneficiaries.

STEP 4: DETERMINE THE SCOPE IN TERMS OF PRODUCTS, TYPES AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

At the fourth step, the workshop participants should be encouraged to set the scope of MIS in terms of products and types and sources of market information. This step is very crucial for ownership, and participation of stakeholders in order to have long term sustainability of the MIS. An MIS incorporates a huge array of services, all of which may not be possible or sometimes unnecessary. During the discussion, human and financial resources, information reliability, management and sustainability issues should be considered as they are important factors for the success of MIS.

BOX 8: Tips for sustainability of MIS

Sustainability of MIS depends primarily upon financing prospects, local enthusiasm and institutionalization of the system itself. In Nepal the costs of the MIS activities are primarily shared by development projects and organizations. Recovering the costs from the beneficiaries and clients (collectors and entrepreneurs) seems still difficult. It is often not desirable to charge the grassroots communities for MIS services. Many believe that the marketing information to grassroots communities should be seen as public goods. If MIS services are made solely a private good, those who can afford can derive exclusive benefits, compromising the interests of local producers and communities.

The list of product/product types presented in the assessment report should be validated through workshop. The facilitator should explain the criteria (see Table 1) adopted for selecting the products. The workshop participants can add important products if not listed and can drop less important products from the list.

The facilitator also presents the types and sources of information needed by the beneficiaries and clients, and asks the workshop participants to prioritize the important ones. The participants also check the resource and expertise availability of MIS center and finalize the list of services.

Similarly, the workshop participants prioritize the sources of market information in reference to the products and market centers. Source of information might be primary or secondary. It is always advisable to collect the information from primary source. If secondary sources are being considered, customization is necessary. The participants ascertain whether an information source matches with the information required.

STEP 5: DEFINE METHODS OF INFORMATION COLLECTION

At the fifth step, the workshop participants identify and prioritize the methods of collecting the marketing information. The methods depend upon the nature of data to be collected, sources of information, and resources available to the MIS center. There are various means of information collection. Some of them are personal visits, telephone calls, mobile phone text message, internet surfing, email, or the use of secondary sources – already prepared MIS data, directory, newsletter, or price list. The workshop participants should decide the appropriate means of collection by looking into MIS center's capacity and resource availability.

FIGURE 5: MIS framework

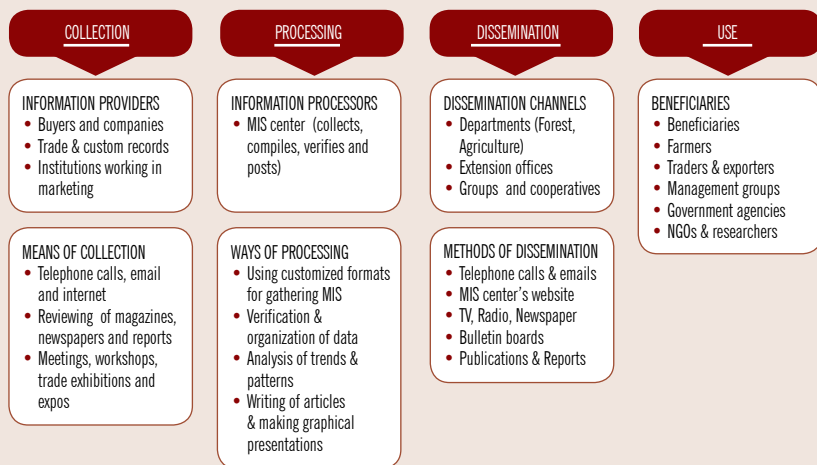


TABLE 2: Benefits and limitations of various means of dissemination

MEANS	BENEFITS	LIMITATIONS
Radio	- large coverage - useful to illiterate clients also - freely available to users - can be broadcasted in local language	- should be within range of radio signal - users require radio set and power supply - users need to tune in at fixed time - cost to MIS provider
Television	- large coverage - provides both audio and visual - useful to illiterate clients also - freely available to users	- should be within range of TV signal - users require TV set & power - users need to tune in at fixed time - mostly incur high cost of dissemination
Email, Internet	- covers wherever internet facility exists - can be made freely available or charge subscription fee to users - user can store the information	- should have access to internet, computer/mobile and power supply - accessible to only computer literate people - incur cost to both users and provider
Newspaper	- Coverage depends upon the circulation - printed form and users can access at any time	- limited availability, mostly available in and around market place - accessible to only literate people - incur cost to both users and provider
Newsletter/ other publications	- authentic official paper - contains other relevant information - especially targeted to users only - printed form and can be accessed at any time	- less coverage and limited availability due to circulation within a certain network only - accessible to only literate people - incur bigger cost to provider - provider requires technical expertise
Bulletin board	- cost effective means for small area - no technical complexity - freely available for users	- very limited coverage - accessible to literate people
SMS	- can be made freely available or charge subscription fee to users - printed form and users can access at any time	- limited coverage and short information - users require mobile set and facility - accessible to only literate people - incur cost to provider and users
Call centers	- accessible from anywhere with telecommunication facility - available to anyone	- limited coverage - require telecommunication facility - needs to be attentive while taking information - incur cost to users and provider
Word of Mouth	- easy means where other technical/printing complexities are not available - cost effective to provider	- limited coverage and accessible to people within certain network only - issue of reliability as the information can be manipulated

STEP 6: SET COMPILATION, ANALYSIS AND VERIFICATION PROCEDURES

At the sixth step, the workshop participants discuss the compilation, analysis and verification of MIS data. The discussion should outline when, how, and to whom the collected data should be analyzed, verified and presented.

Analysis can be carried out in one or many aspects, such as providing information on trade volume, prices, trends in demand and supply, main suppliers and buyers, technology required and legal issues in marketing. Similarly, there are various ways of presentation such as simple table, bar diagram, pie chart, or trend chart. The participants choose suitable methods and forms on the basis of usage, resource availability, and type of users.

Before dissemination of information a thorough verification is a must. The information is cross-verified with the information from alternative sources (primary and secondary) and by consulting the experts. In workshop, a roster of experts for information verification can be developed.

STEP 7: DEVELOP MIS FRAMEWORK AND DISSEMINATION PLAN

At the seventh step, a complete framework of MIS is developed. Collection, processing, dissemination and use of information are four stages of MIS and each stage has specific actors, means and activities. An example of the framework for MIS designing is presented in Figure 5. The framework used by ANSAB for MIS design is presented in Annex 1.

Depending upon the user's requirements and their location, various methods of dissemination can be adopted. Every method has its own benefits and constraints (see Table 2). The workshop participants should discuss and decide on method(s) that cover the highest percentage of beneficiaries and clients at the most affordable cost.

STEP 8: WRITE MIS PLAN

After completion of workshop, the facilitator should write the MIS plan or assign a person as decided by workshop participants. The plan of activities should be written in such a way that the MIS center can easily refer it during implementation.

Stage Four

Implement the Marketing Information System

The stage four of this toolkit guides the facilitator for how to implement the marketing information system (MIS) as it was designed through a stakeholder workshop in the previous stage. It has five steps (see Figure 6) and activities for each of them are described below. Even though the implementation follows the MIS plan prepared earlier, some changes may become inevitable as new experience and circumstances require so. It is the MIS center, chosen in the design workshop, which implements the MIS program. The steps and activities of these stages are therefore the ones which are carried out by personnel at the MIS center with the help of the facilitator.

At the end of this stage, facilitator will be able to understand how to:

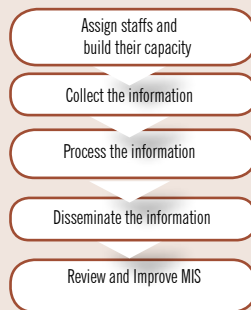
- collect information from reliable sources;
- Process information with appropriate methods of analysis;
- Disseminate information to its users; and
- Review and improve the MIS

STEP 1: ASSIGN STAFFS AND BUILD THEIR CAPACITY

At the first step, the MIS center should assign one or more staff members (depending upon the scale and size of the MIS) with clear responsibilities about information collection, analysis, and dissemination. The MIS staffs can be selected from existing ones within the organization or be freshly hired.

It is also essential to provide MIS training to the staff. They should visit to market centers, organizations and information providers so as to build relationship and trust.

FIGURE 6: MIS designing



STEP 2: COLLECT THE INFORMATION

At the second step, MIS center staffs collect marketing information from the buyers at the targeted markets. Information should be collected from more than one source so that it can be cross-checked for greater reliability. Telephone calls and correspondence by email are the foremost means for collecting information on such items as natural product price, products in trade, products specifications and quality. Furthermore, reviewing magazines, newspapers, market reports and participating in meetings, workshops and trade exhibitions are other potential sources of market information. Following activities are essential for data collection.

Initial communication

The MIS staff should make initial communication with information providers and establish a basis for relationship over a long term. The staffs should be prepared with the clear objective of information

collection, use and outputs, the products and supply potential from a specific area. Normally, traders as information providers are interested with product quantity and quality. Initial communication can be established through telephone and email and through networks.

Relationship building visit

The MIS staff should make visits to the information provider for building and maintaining relationship on a periodic basis. During the visit, the staff should:

- bring with the organization's (MIS center) brochure and gift items;
- provide supply potential and list of suppliers to the information providers; and
- prepare MoU and sign with information providers.

Collection of information

Required information can be collected from primary and secondary sources. It is always advisable to use more than one source market information so that error can be minimized. Formats can be used for various types of information. The table 3 depicts the format used for collection of price information. In the

table, three sources of information are advised for each market.

STEP 3: PROCESS THE INFORMATION

At the third step, the information should be processed by using customized formats and triangulated with alternative sources. Following activities should be considered, though actual work may vary with the scope of MIS program.

Develop database analysis system

It is essential to convert the collected information into useable form. Depending upon the resource and complexity of data, following database system can be developed.

Manual system: The manual database system is used when the data are simple and the bulk of data is small. The information collected from various sources needs to be organized in simple formats. Highly deviated and confusing data should be eliminated from the list. The quantitative data can be presented by using statistical measures like arithmetic mean and range. If there is low variation in data collected from various sources, arithmetic mean is suggested; otherwise range is used.

TABLE 3: Price information collection format

[illegible]

BOX 9: ANSAB's experience in MIS Implementation

ANSAB as the MIS center for NTFP products in Nepal implemented the MIS in the following way.

Information collection

To build rapport and linkages, the MIS staff visited traders and organizations in Western Nepal and selected metropolis of India (Delhi, Lucknow, Kolkata, and Mumbai) in the beginning. With the meetings, the MIS team identified reliable sources (traders and organizations) for NTFP price and other market related information. These contacts are now consulted for collection of demand, price, quality, and news on 32 select NTFPs on a regular basis. Regular market visits are made for obtaining information on products availability and marketing channels. Interviews and interactions with the key stakeholders are held to get deeper insights into the marketing of NTFPs. Stakeholders such as District Forest Office officials, executive members of District Chamber of Commerce, NTFP collectors and traders are contacted during the visits. MIS center keeps on adding or adjusting market places and NTFPs for regular supply of price information.

Regular information about market and prices are collected through telephone calls, and e-mails from the selected companies/organizations on a monthly basis. Most of the companies prefer direct calls over emails, and many of them do not have e-mails or do not frequently use it. But traders of Kolkata and Mumbai are using e-mails and hence they are contacted via e-mails also. Various websites

are visited for the purpose of obtaining information on international markets and prices trends of NTFPs.

Processing

The MIS center stores price information in database system. Price lists of the products for different markets are generated in Nepali and English languages for circulation to the concerned stakeholders, and for publication in newsletters and posting on the bulletin boards. Statistical analyses, such as average and range, price trend, seasonal variation, comparative prices and margins for market places and quantity demand for different markets are generated. The information is produced in the following forms for dissemination.

- Price trend analysis for different products in different markets
- Demand analysis of different products in different markets
- Quality requirement of products
- Technological information: production, harvesting, post-harvesting, processing, and manufacturing
- Address of major NTFP buyers

Sharing and dissemination

The MIS centre disseminates information in various ways.

- Organizing interactions and discussion forums, it brings together buyers, sellers, and other relevant stakeholders. Such interaction programs are organized from the village to the national level.
- The MIS disseminates marketing information, such as prices for select products at a regular interval through various communication channels. The price information

BOX 9: ANSAB's experience in MIS Implementation (Contd...)

- is circulated to 80 recipients comprising of local NGOs, INGOs, GOs, bilateral organizations, traders, manufacturers, educational institutions, and journalists. Both the price lists and marketing information articles are published in national daily and national Radio and local FMs.
- The MIS team collects reports on NTFP marketing. It participates in trade exhibitions and undertakes focused marketing survey and research. It also publishes articles on NTFP harvesting, drying, storage, and issues on NTFP species. These reports, articles, and documents are disseminated through various channels, such as working with partner NGOs and organizing or participating meetings and workshops.
 - The MIS provides information to directly visitors and to those who make inquiries through telephone. The visitors can look for the resource books, market research reports and other documents at the MIS office in Kathmandu as well as at the partner NGOs and participating FECOFUN district offices.
 - MIS can be accessed from ANSAB's website <http://www.ansab.org/market-information/>. The website consist price information, buyers and market centres, MIS publications and trade directories.

Use of software: If the data is complex or of greater scope and bulk, computer software like excel or SPSS can be used to process it. If the resources allow the MIS staff may use customized software—developing new database software or modifying the existing database system to fit the current requirement. The query based database system can generate reports on product wise trade, location wise trade, year wise trade, etc. Information on traders, their trade volume, and other relevant information can be added every month, and reports on various trade statistics can be generated.

Triangulate and verify the collected information

Triangulation of the collected data is very important to check the reliability of the information. There are various means of verification. Some methods are as follows:

- Compare the information with

alternative sources like reports, magazines, or websites

- Use existing knowledge and network of the organization
- Analyze the trend: in this method, the high or unnatural fluctuation can alert the imperfection in data collected
- Consult the experts: consultation with the experts can help to detect if any error happens. Usually, a final draft of the MIS information is sent to the experts for review prior to dissemination.

Finalizing the information

After verification of the information, updates are made according to suggestions received. The final document is prepared and made ready for dissemination. The finalized form of MIS includes price list, supply and demand status, product quality, market trend, buyers' list, technology and legal and regulatory framework for marketing.

STEP 4: DISSEMINATE THE INFORMATION

At the fourth step, the MIS center should disseminate the processed information in a timely and reliable manner for beneficiaries and clients. The information can be disseminated via website, email, telephone, SMS, displaying in bulletin boards, radio and television broadcasting, and through government and private sector networks. Analytical and descriptive information (best practices, production and processing techniques, buyers' requirements and their contacts, etc) is published in newsletters or as a brochure. Such published materials are disseminated through networks of the government organizations, business membership organizations (BMOs) and development organizations. The following are specific activities:

Develop a subscribers list: For dissemination, MIS centre should develop a list of individuals or institutions with detailed contact address.

Select the appropriate means: Selecting the appropriate means of dissemination from the many (identified above) is crucial. For institutions and exporters, email and website is the best means of dissemination, while for farmers, telephone, SMS, bulletin board are effective. To reach a larger audience radio and television broadcasting is efficient means of MIS dissemination.

Make formal contract with clients and media outlets: If the information dissemination is fee based, formal contract with agreed terms and conditions is required. This applies mostly for traders/

exporters or institutions working in the sector. Similarly, if dissemination is planned from media outlets, formal contracts with their management will be essential.

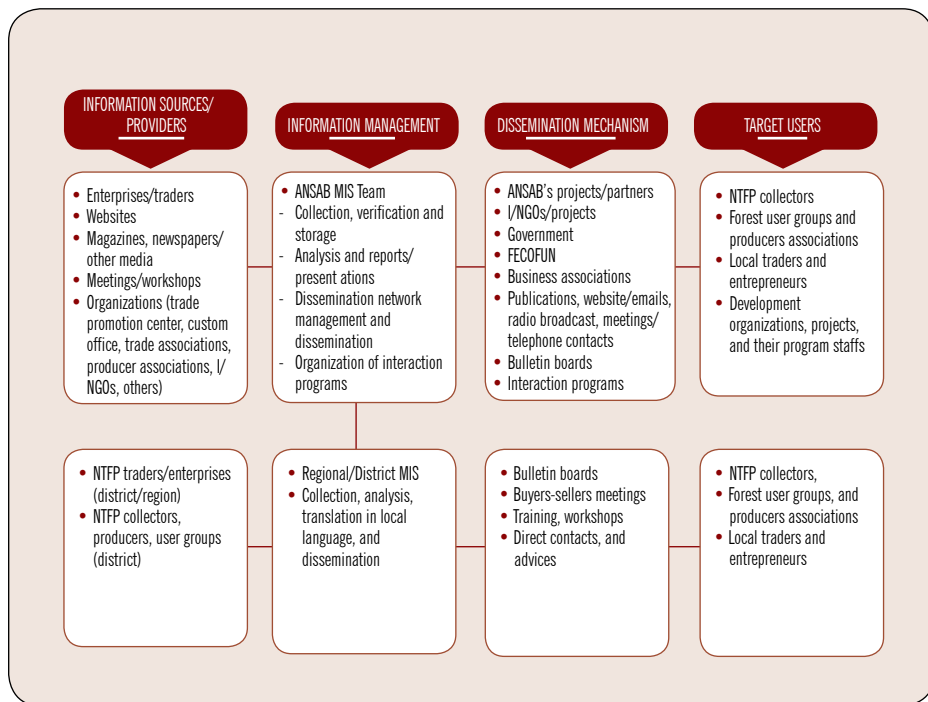
Put the information in appropriate means:

The MIS operator should now disseminate the information through the identified means on a periodic basis. The MIS centre should deliver the information either directly or through media houses.

STEP 5: REVIEW AND IMPROVE THE MIS

At the final, fifth step the MIS center should carry out periodic review of the impact of MIS so as to determine how efficiently the system is working and what activities are required to improve it. The review serves as a basis for improving the MIS operation. The MIS center can internally review the MIS impact through creation of review team and setting the elements to be reviewed, methods, and frequency. It can also commission the review work to independent researchers or consultants. Or the MIS center can combine the two approaches and develop recommendations for the improvement of MIS. Either way, the MIS work can be reviewed with the following activities:

- Visits/interactions with entrepreneurs, user groups, associations, partner organizations
- Review meetings and workshops among MIS staff
- District/province level workshops among the key stakeholders
- Annual MIS review and planning workshops.



Price list developed by ANSAB

Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources (ANSAB)

Market Information Service/ Price list of selected NTFP in Nepali and Indian Markets

August 2010 (All prices are in NRs/Kg)

SN	NEPALI NAME	ENGLISH NAME	BOTANICAL NAME	KATHIMANDU	NEPALGUNJ	DELHI	TANAKPUR	LUCKNOW	KOLKATA
1	Aduwa	Fresh Ginger	<i>Zingiber officinale</i>	60	50	***	***	***	***
2	Alaichi	Cardamom	<i>Amomum subulatum</i>	***	***	1280	***	1320	1264
3	Amala	Indian gooseberry	<i>Phyllanthus emblica</i>	70	70	80	***	80	80
4	Amalbed	Himalayan rhubarb	<i>Rheum australe</i>	***	120	184	144	200	224
5	Atis	Aconite	<i>Delphinium himalayai</i>	650	750	880	800	880	880
6	Barro(W/O Seed)	Belericmyrabolan	<i>Terminalia bellirica</i>	35	***	16	16	16	16
7	Bhutkesh	Rugwort	<i>Selinum wallichianum</i>	***	145	***	***	***	***
8	Bikhjara	Nepali aconite	<i>Aconitum spicatum</i>	150	***	***	***	***	***
9	Bojho	Sweetflag	<i>Acorus calamus</i>	40	42	64	59	64	64
10	Chiraito	Chiretta	<i>Swertha chirayita</i>	365	375	496	464	520	480
11	Dalchini	Cinnamon	<i>Cinnamomum zeylanicum</i>	***	65	120	80	112	120
12	Guchhichyau	Morel mushroom	<i>Morchella conica</i>	***	10500	12000	10880	11520	12800
13	Harro(W/O Seed)	Chebolicmyrabolan	<i>Terminalia chebula</i>	40	***	24	19	24	24
14	Jatamansi*	Spikenard	<i>Nardostachys grandiflora</i>	300	300	560	520	560	640
15	Jhyau*	Lichen	<i>Parmelia nepalensis</i>	105	105	216	184	200	208
16	Kakarsinghi	Indian mastiche	<i>Pistacia chinensis</i>	150	105	400	360	400	440
17	Majitho(red)	Madder	<i>Rubia manjith</i>	65	60	120	104	120	120
18	Nirmansi (Jadwar)	Larkspur	<i>Delphinium denudatum</i>	1100-1400	1300	720	***	***	***
19	Padamchal(rhizome)	Himalayan rhubarb	<i>Rheum australe</i>	60	35	75	67	75	80
20	Pakhanbed	Rock foil	<i>Bergenia ciliata</i>	40	45	72	67	80	80
21	Pipla(long)	Long piper	<i>Piper longum</i>	350	300	480	***	480	480
22	Pipla (round)	Round piper	<i>Piper pedicellatum</i>	225	270	240	***	***	240
23	Ritha	Soap nut	<i>Sapindus mukorossi</i>	24	18	38	32	40	45
24	Satawari	Wild asparagus	<i>Asparagus racemosus</i>	500	550	800	720	800	880
25	Satuwa	Love apple	<i>Paris polyphylla</i>	1800	1800	1200	1120	***	***
26	Sikakai	Soap pod	<i>Acacia rugata</i>	22	13	29	24	29	29
27	Silajit*	Rock exudates		225	***	384	360	400	400
28	Sugandwal*	Indian valerian	<i>Valeriana jatamansii</i>	155	175	240	216	240	256
29	Sugandhakokila*		<i>Cinnamomum glaucescens</i>	140	100	***	***	***	***
30	Suntho	Dried ginger	<i>Zingiber officinale</i>	280	260	320	288	320	336
31	Tejpat	Cinnamon	<i>Cinnamomum tamala</i>	40	45	51	45	51	48
32	Timur(with seed)	Prickly ash	<i>Zanthoxylum armatum</i>	90	100	128	112	128	136

You can also subscribe to us through our website (Email or RSS) or send your/organization name and email address to mis@ansab.org.

1. Prices indicated above are for dried parts offered by the buyers of particular market.

2. *Ban on export in crude form.

3. Prices for Delhi are from commission agent, a 6.5% to 7.5 % commission is deducted from supplier in the quoted price.

4. Above prices are indicative which need to be confirmed with the traders before making actual business transaction.

5. *** Not available

TABLE 3: Price information collection format

S N	NAME OF INSTITUTION / COMPANY	ADDRESS	CONTACT PERSON	TELEPHONE	EMAIL	WEBSITE
1						
2						
3						
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Some Relevant Publications from ANSAB

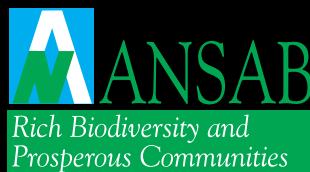
- ANSAB and FAO. 2009. Challenges and Opportunities for Nepal's Small and Medium Forest Enterprises.
- Subedi, B. P. 2006. Linking Plant-Based Enterprises and Local Communities to Biodiversity Conservation in Nepal Himalaya. ANSAB. Adroit Publishers, New Delhi.
- ANSAB and FECOFUN. 2005. Forest Certification in Nepal (In Nepali). Kathmandu
- ANSAB and SNV/Nepal. 2003. Commercially Important Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) of Nepal (In Nepali). Kathmandu.
- ANSAB. 2003. Forest Products Based Enterprise Development. Field Manual (In Nepali). Kathmandu.
- Subedi, B. P., Binayee, S.B., Ojha, H.R. and Nicholson, K. 2002. Community Based Enterprises in Nepal: Case Studies, Lessons and Implications. ANSAB and SNV/Nepal, Kathmandu.
- ANSAB, EWW and IRG. 2006. Role of Natural Products in Resource Management, Poverty Alleviation, and Good Governance: A Case Study of Jatamansi and Wintergreen Value Chains in Nepal.
- ANSAB. 1999. Monitoring the Effects of Community Based Conservation and Commercial Utilization of Natural Products in Humla, Nepal.
- ANSAB. 1999. Socio-Economic and Institutional Impacts of Community Based Ecosystem Management Project in Humla, Nepal.
- Video Documentaries on
 - Forest Certification - Steps Towards Sustainability (English and Nepali)- 30 Minutes
 - In Search of Yarshagumba (English and Nepali)- 29 Minutes
 - Community Enterprises (In Nepali)- 29 Minutes

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The Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources (ANSAB) is a civil society organization that has been conserving biodiversity and improving livelihoods across South Asia for almost twenty years. It places community empowerment and economic incentives at the heart of its approach, believing that as people benefit from natural resources they become more motivated to conserve them – and vice-versa. ANSAB implements a variety of innovative solutions in line with this core conviction, such as the creation of enterprises based on the sustainable use of natural resources, especially Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs), and the establishment of payment-schemes for environmental services, especially for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) plus. It has notably pioneered the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification in Nepal and introduced the concept of subgroup in community forestry to ensure that ultra-poor and marginalized people benefit from the natural resources of their communities. ANSAB is also deeply involved in climate change mitigation and adaptation as the issue continues to threaten the environmental and economic progresses achieved so far – in Nepal as in the rest of the world.

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