

## Conservation and Utilisation of Potato Yam (*Dioscorea bulbifera* L.): Livelihood Strategy Adopted by Tribal Communities (Chepang and Bhujel) in Western Nepal

Shrestha, A.<sup>1</sup>, Thapa, P.B.<sup>2</sup>, Bhat, B.R.<sup>3</sup> and Chepang, J.<sup>4</sup>

Key words: Potato yam, food security, staple food, conservation and utilization, community biodiversity documentation and registration

### Abstract

*This study was undertaken through approaching households of Chepang and Bhujel, the marginalized and vulnerable tribal communities inhabiting in Gorkha and Tanahun districts of western Nepal. Cultivated crop species, such as, maize, paddy, millet, buckwheat and other vegetable crops constitute the major portion of securing the food needs of these tribal communities. A study carried out by the NPG shows that approximately 45% of the people from these communities hardly produce food grains sufficient to feed their family for up to nine months, i.e., mid June to mid March. In consequence, the majority of them in the rest of the year have to depend on wild edible plants. During this period, the community people collect potato yams (*Dioscorea bulbifera*) to overcome the scarce period. The time of potato yam collection coincides with the end of stock of available cultivated food stuffs. Again, when this wild edible plant is almost harvested after around three months, maize sown by people in the beginning of the period has nearly reached consumable stage. This is the coping strategy being commonly adopted by these tribal communities in the areas to overcome the scarce food period. This practice, if could be conserved and promoted considering these farming communities as conservation custodians, would assist to promote their food, health and economic security*

---

<sup>1</sup> Masters student, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Uppsala, Sweden, Email: sthalok@gmail.com, alsh0001@stud.slu.se

<sup>2</sup> General Member, Nepal Permaculture Group, Kathmandu, Nepal, Email: premkathmandu@yahoo.com

<sup>3</sup> Executive Director, Ecological Services Centre, Chitwan, Nepal, Email: ecoscentre@wlink.com.np

<sup>4</sup> Social Mobilizer, SFS, Gorkha (NPG / LIBIRD)