

FINAL REPORT

BY – TIGER RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION TRUST

**PROJECT : COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FOR TIGER CONSERVATION
(CLTC) –TADOBA ANDHARI TIGER RESERVE – 2005-2006.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) is one of the prime tiger reserves in central India, which falls under the level – III of the Tiger Conservation Unit (TCU) – 44. Community Leadership for Tiger Conservation – Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve is a pilot project to build a long-term intensive field conservation program to conserve tigers and their prey base.

This project was carried out to build a long-term intensive field conservation program. Its main aim was to conserve tigers and their prey base through the following activities

- Long-term consolidation of the park through facilitating resettlement of villages lying within the tiger reserve.
- Improve protection system through motivation and training of the field staff of the state forest department.
- Monitoring and ‘Watch Dog’ activities and
- Community awareness programs to reduce human pressures like NTFP collection, poaching, fire and cattle grazing.

RESEARCHERS: Poonam Dhanwatey and Harshawardhan Dhanwatey

STAFF: Temporary field staff –

Vinod Jambhule

Manoj Bhandakkar.

Mukesh Bhandakkar

Devidas.

COLLABORATORS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATIONS:

Wildlife Conservation Society, India Program

Centre for Wildlife Studies, Bangalore

Wildlife First, Bangalore

Maharashtra State Forest Department

PROJECT DURATION: 1st July 2005 – 30th June 2006

REPORTING PERIOD: 1st July 2005 – 31st December 2005.

APPROVED BUDGET: UK pounds Sterling 9,820

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES:

Long Term consolidation of the Reserve -

During the reporting period the project leaders and the field staff of TRACT worked on the relocation project 2 villages of the 6 villages lying within the Tiger Reserve.

A total of 10 meetings were held with villagers from the 3 villages due for rehabilitation. These meetings were held to assist the villagers in ensuring that they receive the promised resettlement package as per the new Rehabilitation Act. As member of the Relocation Monitoring Committee, formal and informal meetings were held with officials from government agencies, elected representatives and community leaders to co-ordinate the implementation of the rehabilitation project and also to build community support for the project.

In the biweekly visits of the field staff to the relocation site and the concerned officials, the following progress of the Relocation project has been recorded. TRACT has actively participated in all activities mentioned herein.

Progress of relocation of 2 villages from Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve - Botezari & Kolsa

A survey was conducted by the government with the help of NGO's in January 2005 to measure the residential area of the villagers in the two villages.

A letter of consent was signed on the 9th Jan 2005 by each villager wherein he agreed to the package he would receive from the government. This consent is mandatory for the distribution and allotment of land to the villagers. The project leaders were present for this and signed as witness.

January - On site – Uprooting and levelling done.

Another survey was conducted in June 2005 to decide on the location of the residential, agricultural land and water bodies.

June - On Site – Work held up due to rain. Fresh foliage seen all over the site.

A meeting was held on the 2nd September 2005 by the Collector, to review the progress of the work. All concerned officials from the revenue and forest department were present along with the project leaders.

September - On site – Construction of lake complete. Residential plots demarcated and road decided on.

October – On site – Internal roads getting laid. Levelling of agricultural land being done.

November – On site – Residential plot details decided for the landless and landlords. Cost and details of house construction worked on. One model house constructed near the relocation site. Villagers and NGO's were invited to approve of it.

December – On site - Villagers objected to the Bamboo and cement roof and demand the house to have a roof with teak poles and baked mud tiles.

January 2006 – The foundation for the new houses was laid by the Forest Minister of State. Plot numbers were given to the villagers. This was done in the presence of the officials of the revenue and forest department, the project leaders, staff of TRACT and all villagers concerned. Construction of the houses commenced on the same day.

February – On site – Site visit by villagers on every Tuesday. TRACT staff have a meeting with all villagers on the site every Tuesday. Tender for the construction work given to a local construction company. Levelling of agricultural land and one village water body almost complete. Main electrical line laid.

April – On site – Bricks for houses has been made of cement and ash. House brickwork close to completion. Tenders for tendu collection from site have been called for. This is being done to encourage villagers to occupy the new houses. Electric supply is available.

May – Tribal Development Minister laid the foundation stone of the official buildings required in the village, as per the package promised. Plotting for agricultural land still undone.

June – The villagers have still not moved out of the tiger reserve into this new site. Agricultural plots still not handed over to the villagers. Lake for agricultural fields is still incomplete. Construction work is disrupted due to heavy rains. Two houses were damaged by some miscreants to prove low quality of construction and to discourage villagers from occupying them. This was spayed in the media. But the damage has been undone.

Improve protection -

A number of formal and informal meetings were held with the senior officials regarding the discrepancies in the Tiger Reserve. The project leaders were invited by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) to the Tiger reserve and a meeting held in the field wherein in the presence of all concerned Park officials, all observations about illegal activities detrimental to the Reserve, made by the project leaders and the field staff of TRACT during the CLTC project period were discussed and taken note of. The PCCF promised to take appropriate measures and directed the Field Director to take action at the earliest.

Consolidation - A proposal for increasing the area of the Tiger reserve by consolidating on the peripheral forested tiger habitat into the Tiger reserve has been given to the Chief Minister and the Minister of State by the project leader (in his capacity as a member of the State Board for Wildlife) during the meeting of the State Board for Wildlife.

For this proposal, data has been collected from the peripheral areas of the tiger reserve over a period of three months, using predetermined routes, on foot, and making observations of scat and sign encounters. The analysis for this proposal is close to completion. The report will be submitted to the Chief Minister in the next Board meeting.

The inclusion of these peripheral areas, which has good tiger habitat, into the Tiger Reserve will result in increased protection to these areas and a stop to the logging from here. This area could be home to the spill over population of tigers from the Tiger Reserve and also ensure protection for the wildlife living and habitat here.

GPS mapping - For the GPS mapping of the entire boundary of the Tiger Reserve, data collection was done for 3 months, in which the field staff of TRACT covered almost 40% of the area, after which, the Field director of Tadoba Andhari stated that this data was not required by the management. He withdrew permission of the field staff to move in and cross the Tiger Reserve on the bike for this data collection. This has led to incomplete data for this component.

This complete map will assist the management get a clear picture of the encroachments done by the peripheral villagers into the Tiger Reserve.

Monitoring and ‘watch dog’ activities -

The field staff of TRACT is in the field on a daily basis, and their tracking skills have also been put to use by the authorities to patrol problem areas.

Due to lack of permission for the field staff to move in the Tiger Reserve on foot, intense patrolling and monitoring has been done on a daily basis in the immediate adjoining peripheral forested areas of the Tiger Reserve. All irregularities observed in these areas have been recorded and the concerned forest officials have also been informed about these.

As the permission to monitor the tiger reserve has been withdrawn by the field director, crucial information about the irregularities inside the Reserve could not be collected. But the staff of TRACT obtained information about a jaw trap found in a fire line in Tadoba. This was discovered when a forest guard's foot got caught in the trap. Three more traps were found close to this area.

Two tigers were found dead in February on the outskirts of TATR. One bear and two tigers were found dead inside the reserve in January, April and June 2006 respectively.

Community Awareness -

The project leaders attended 5 public functions where they spoke about the need for conservation.

Project leader Poonam was invited to give a presentation on Eco Tourism and conservation in the district by a local body in the presence of the Minister of Forests and Minister of Tourism.

Harshawardhan was invited by the Bombay Natural History Society to give a talk on the conservation work being done by TRACT in Tadoba. 8 Meetings were held with other local non – governmental organizations to build community support for the reserve.

The project leaders organized 'RUN FOR WILDLIFE', a 3.3 kilometres run in Nagpur for school children with an aim to create awareness amongst school children about the need to conserve forest and water. 723 children participated in the RUN from 40 schools. The Commissioner of Police flagged off the Run and the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests was the guest of honour.

A 'Slogan writing competition and a fancy dress competition were also held simultaneously with conservation of wildlife as the theme. The winners were awarded prizes by the Trust. This event attracted a lot of media coverage.

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The project team wishes to thank all the local NGO's and individuals who assisted in the Marathon.

GOALS / ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT YEAR -

1. Continue conservation monitoring on the periphery of the Tiger Reserve.
2. Pursue the voluntary rehabilitation project, do a relocation workshop and help maintain the decide time frame for the project.
3. Continue the GPS mapping of the boundary of the Tiger Reserve.
4. Conduct wildlife educational activities in the peripheral villages and those inside the reserves.
5. Conduct field training camps for the staff of TATR.
6. Organise intelligence network in more peripheral areas of TATR.
7. Work towards getting peripheral areas under the Tiger reserve.