

SIX MONTHLY REPORT SUBMITTED TO 21ST CENTURY TIGER

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FOR TIGER CONSERVATION TADOBA ANDHARI TIGER RESERVE

FY 2006 (2005 – 2006)

PROJECT TITLE: Community Leadership for Tiger Conservation – (CLTC)-
Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve.

SUMMARY LINE: 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 one-year pilot project to build a long-term intensive field conservation program to conserve tigers and their prey base.

During the reporting period the project leaders carried out field monitoring, long-term consolidation of the reserve, mobilizing community support and improving of protection system activities.

RESEARCHERS: Poonam Dhanwatey and Harshawardhan Dhanwatey

STAFF: Two temporary field staff - Vinod Jambhule and Manoj Bhandakkar.

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

ACTIVITIES / PROGRESS: DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES:

Long-term consolidation of reserve

In pursuance of the ongoing voluntary resettlement project, the project leaders held 4 formal meetings with the villagers to address their apprehensions about rehabilitation.

The TRACT field staff has been visiting the Relocation site regularly, having informal meetings with the villagers who are due for resettlement.

The Relocation of 2 villages has gained momentum. The land earlier allotted to 3 villages has now been planned for two villages as the quantum of land to be given in the package has increased. Residential and agricultural land has been distributed to the villagers of two villages in the presence of all concerned officials and the project leaders. The villagers claim that it is only due to the involvement of the project leaders that they have agreed to take this step.

Several formal meetings with the Collector were held in connection with the rehabilitation project.

The project leaders have held 14 meetings with the project authority of the relocation project to ensure that the promised package is delivered to the villagers. 12 meetings of the project leaders with the Minister of Forests, Maharashtra State, has ensured that the project be time bound. Due to the intervention of the project leaders, the package for this resettlement project is one the best being offered to the project affected persons in the country.

Monitoring activities

As a member of the State Board for wildlife, project leader Harshawardhan has made 12 field visits to the reserve during the first six months. Both the project leaders have made a total of 10 visits jointly. 10 meetings with the field staff, 6 with the Rangers and 31 meetings with the senior forest department officials at the District and the State level were held to discuss various conservation and relocation issues of the area.

The field staff has been monitoring the illegal activities on the periphery of the tiger reserve and have also mobilized a group of local community volunteers to assist them with the same.

Incidences of illegal extraction on the periphery have been brought to the notice of the officials.

Improving Protection System

A number of informal meetings were held with the senior officials regarding the discrepancies in the 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.

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 during the meeting of the State Board for Wildlife.

The project leaders have also forwarded a proposal for armed guards in the Tiger reserve to the Minister of Forests.

Mobilizing community support

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 kilometer 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 honor. The winners were awarded prizes by the Trust. This event attracted a lot of media coverage.

PROBLEMS AND CONSTRAINTS

The extraction maps for the illegal activities happening within the Reserve and other discrepancies made public by the project leaders have made the field director vary of the activities of the members of TRACT. He has disallowed the use of the bike within the Tiger Reserve by the field staff (as two wheelers are not allowed in any Tiger Reserve unless special permission is obtained for the same). A change in the monitoring pattern has been made where in the field staff are monitoring the peripheral areas of the Reserve. The field director is demanding a detailed final report of the 4 years of work done by TRACT in Tadoba. The project leaders are working on the analysis for this report.

GOALS / ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT 6 MONTHS

1. Continue conservation monitoring.
2. Pursue the voluntary rehabilitation project.
3. Dependency survey in 5 more peripheral villages.
4. Organize field and legal training camps for the field staff of TATR.
5. Continue the GPS mapping of the illegal extractions and activities in and around the Reserve.