

ANNUAL REPORT SUBMITTED TO 21ST CENTURY TIGER
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FOR TIGER CONSERVATION
TADоба ANDHARI TIGER RESERVE

2003 – 2004

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. Field and logistical support was also provided to the Wildlife Conservation Society, India Program research team during their line transect and Sign Encounter surveys in Central India (Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve and Melghat Tiger reserve).

RESEARCHERS: Poonam and Harshawardhan Dhanwatey

STAFF: Two temporary field staff - Vinod Jambhule and Ashish Ghume.

COLLABORATORS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATIONS:
Wildlife Conservation Society, India Program

Center for Wildlife Studies, Bangalore

Wildlife First, Bangalore

Maharashtra State Forest Department

Tadoba Andhari Conservation Society (TACS)

PROJECT DURATION: 1st July 2003 – 30th June 2004

REPORTING PERIOD: 1st July 2003 – 30th July 2004

APPROVED BUDGET: \$ 10,000

ACTIVITIES / PROGRESS:

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES:

Long-term consolidation of reserve

In pursuance of the proposed voluntary resettlement project, the project leaders held 14 formal and informal meetings with the villagers to address their apprehensions about rehabilitation. Meetings have decreased in the 3rd and 4th quarter as the package for the villagers to be relocated is not clear and it has been decided that till the collector does this, the project leaders will not comment on this to the villagers.

One field staff has been having informal meetings with the villagers on a bi weekly basis through out.

The project leaders have visited the relocation site 6 times while the field staff have been there 29 times to keep track of the clear felling and the demarcation of the plots being done there.

10 formal meetings with senior officials and irrigation departments, State and district administration, electricity board and other governmental agencies were held in connection with the rehabilitation project to ensure formulation of a proper incentive driven resettlement plan. Posting of the right officer at the right place has facilitated the project. It is due to the 11 meetings of the project leaders with the Principle Secretary, 3 with the Deputy Secretary, Revenue & Forest, 4 with the Secretary to the Governor, and 2 with His Excellency, The Governor of Maharashtra, that the prevailing confusion at the collector level about the quantum of land to be given to the landless laborers and the landlords has been cleared and notified in a new **Government Resolution**.

The project leaders have been got the posting of the officer who had started the relocation project initially as the main **Project authority**. This has got momentum to the relocation project going, as this officer was instrumental in starting this project when he was Conservator Of Forest, Nagpur.

Monitoring activities

The project leaders continued their conversation monitoring activities and made 33 field visits to the reserve during the reporting period. A total of 35 meetings with the field staff, 30 with the Rangers and 106 meetings with the senior forest department officials at the District and the State level were held to discuss various conservation issues of the area.

The project leaders have also mobilized a group of local community volunteers to monitor illegal activities inside the reserve. Incidences of tree felling, Poaching, cattle kills and other illegal activities have been reported to the forest department for suitable action.

The project leaders and the field staff assisted the Ranger in an incident where a tigress with 3 cubs had moved to the periphery of the Tiger Reserve. This had resulted in a sudden rise in the number of monthly cattle kill cases from 2 to 23 in one village. The

field staff assisted the forest department in pacifying the villagers against poisoning these tigers and organizing beats to move the tigers back into the Reserve.

The field staff of TRACT has helped nab villagers indulging in illegal extraction of bamboo and timber, and cases have been registered against these villagers.

Improving Protection System –

The Conservator of Forest and Field Director, Tadoba Andhari was not keen on working in TATR as he wanted to be posted elsewhere. Due to this, his field visits were almost negligible, and this led to the villagers getting an open field for all illegal extractions. During his tenure, a number of jaw traps were found laid out in Tadoba range. The project leaders held 11 meetings with the Principal Secretary- Revenue and Forest, in Mumbai and finally succeeded in getting a new officer as the Field Director and Conservator of Forest, TATR.

4 articles were generated in the local media through other NGO's about the state of affairs in TATR while the last Conservator of Forest and Field Director, Tadoba Andhari was in office.

The project leaders are also responsible in getting the last Deputy Conservator of Forest, TATR, transferred from his present post in working plan to Melghat Tiger Reserve as the Conservator.

The project leaders held 5 meetings with the Superintendent of Police, Chandrapur, who is the head of the Tiger Cell, and gave information about poaching cases in TATR and the adjoining areas.

Dependency survey of 6 villages has been done, analysis of which is in progress.

Data for illegal extraction, traps, fire; trespassing etc is being collected by the project leaders and the field staff. A map showing all this will be made after the data collection is done.

Motivating the field staff –

Motivational rewards – 6 awards and 2 titles of 'Guardian of Tadoba – Andhari ' and 'Guardian of Pench' were given to the field staff of Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve, the Territorial division on the periphery of the Tiger Reserve and Pench Tiger Reserve for exemplary protection and intelligence work. This function was held in the presence of the His Excellency, the Governor of Maharashtra State, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) & Chief Wildlife Warden (Maharashtra State) and other senior officials of the Forest Department.

This function was done with media coverage.

40 mattresses, 40 mosquito nets were provided for the protection huts in the Tiger Reserve.

Personal Accident Claim Policies were provided for the 28 temporary workers of the forest department to boost their morale.

Mr. Nitin Kakodkar, the last Deputy Conservator of Forest, TATR, was felicitated for his work during his 4-year tenure here by the hands of the Governor.

Mobilizing community support

13 meetings were held with other local non – governmental organizations to build community support for the reserve.

The project leaders held 3 meetings with well-known Social workers (NGO) Prakash Amte and Vikas Amte. They have been working for the tribals and lepers. They have encroached the peripheral land of TATR for this project.

Biological monitoring

Field and logistical support was provided to the research team led by K. Ullas Karanth during their line transects and Sign Encounter surveys in Tadoba Andhari and Melghat Tiger Reserve.

PROBLEMS AND CONSTRAINTS

The last Conservator of Forest and Field Director, TATR, Anurag Choudhary realized that the project leaders had been complaining about him, so he created ample problems for the project leaders whereby he discontinued their occupancy of the two rooms called ‘Chital Shed’. He also issued orders that the rent for these two rooms should be paid as per the tourist rate and not as per the officials rate which had been allowed till date by the past officer. The project leaders had to get permission to pay as per officials rate from the Principal Secretary, Forest and Revenue, Mumbai.

Very soon a new Government Resolution will be passed with the reference of this project, whereby all researchers working in any sanctuary or tiger reserve in the State will be allowed to use accommodation in the Reserve or sanctuary at the official rate.

GOALS / ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT YEAR -

1. Continue conservation monitoring.
2. Pursue the voluntary rehabilitation project, do a workshop for the officials concerned and get a commitment from them for finishing of this project
3. Organize another four-day survey for the data collection of the dependency survey of 4 more peripheral villages.
4. Complete the GPS mapping of the physical features of TATR.
5. Do GPS mapping of the illegal extraction in TATR as per the data collected by the daily monitoring of our field staff.
6. Assist WCS – India research team in carrying out biological monitoring of tiger and prey populations.
7. Motivating the field staff by organizing the TRACT Awards ceremony, and by giving them incentives.
8. Conduct wildlife educational activities in the peripheral villages and those inside the reserves.