

SUPPORTING LOCAL ADVOCACY FOR TIGER CONSERVATION (SLAT)

Description of activities:

Project period: 1st January 2006 – 31st December 2006

I. Motivating forest dwelling communities from Nagarahole National Park to relocate outside the National Park under government sponsored relocation program.

A. Field officer P.M.Muthanna coordinated the activities of Wildlife Conservation Society-India Program supported project titled Tribal Livelihood Support and Empowerment for Tiger Conservation in Nagarahole National Park. The field activities of five forest dwelling community leaders, working under Tribal Livelihood Support and Empowerment for Tiger Conservation project was coordinated by the field officer.

The field officer and the forest dwelling community leaders actively involved themselves in motivating forest-dwelling communities living inside the national park to relocate outside under the government sponsored relocation program. The field officer held 89 interactions with these forest dwelling community leaders for this purpose. Five forest dwelling community leaders held 43 meetings with forest-dwelling communities living in Siddapura, Gonigaddhe, Gaddehadi, Madenor, Balle, Sunkadakatte, Machur and Kerehadi settlements. The field officer arranged eight meetings between the Karnataka State Forest Department officials and these community leaders to discuss about the speedy implementation of the relocation program and to assist them in implementing the relocation program in a fair and sensitive manner.

B. Due to the efforts of the field officer and forest dwelling community leaders, the attitude of the forest-dwelling communities living in the core areas of the national park towards relocation program has remarkably changed. More number of tribal families living in settlements such as Sunkadakatte, Balle, Kerehadi, Siddapura, Gonigaddhe and Gaddehadi expressed their interest in the relocation program. Earlier, forest dwelling communities from these settlements were opposing the proposal of relocation program.

During this period, project team was able to collect data regarding socio-economic status, photographs and signature from 154 forest-dwelling community families, expressing their willingness to relocate. The details were submitted to the Karnataka State Forest Department.

C. During the last week of June 2006 the project team coordinated with the Karnataka State Forest Department officials and arranged a meeting with forest dwelling communities at Madenor tribal settlement, Anechowkur range. Forest dwelling community leaders and the field officer explained to the community members regarding the facilities available under relocation program. Thirty families expressed their willingness and enrolled their names with forest department officials for relocation.

D. Based on the request of the field officer, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Hunsur Wildlife Division agreed to visit and interact with the forest-dwelling communities of Madenor settlement. A meeting was arranged on the 17th July 2006 which was also attended by the elected representatives of local bodies (*Jilla* and *taluk panchayath* members) of the area and some prominent social activists based on the request of the field officer. The meeting was intended to educate local elected representatives about fair relocation projects and the benefits of such initiatives to forest-dwelling communities.

The Deputy Conservator of Forests explained about the facilities available with the relocation program. The Field officer motivated the forest-dwelling communities to express the problems they are facing inside the forest and to demand the relocation package to counter the claims of human right groups. Due to the strong demand by the beneficiaries for immediate relocation, the officers gathered agreed for relocation of the identified thirty families.

E. The field officer convinced the Deputy Conservator of Forests to provide all civic facilities in the relocation area before moving forest-dwelling communities to the designated relocation site. Accordingly, Karnataka State Forest Department officials developed roads, public water distribution system and other amenities in the relocation site.

F. A household survey of the identified families for relocation was carried out through the forest dwelling community leaders to identify school going children, availability of public distribution food cards and health status.

G. By the end of July, thirty families from Madenor tribal settlement were relocated to the relocation site at Nagapura. The field officer assisted the Anechowkur Range forest officer in final stages of relocation and personally participated in this program. Assistance was also provided to the forest department in shifting the household goods of the relocating families.

H. A total of an additional nineteen families have been motivated and identified who are willing to be relocated outside the national park. A list of these families has been submitted to the forest department for further processing.

I. During the reporting period the field officer held 112 meetings with Karnataka State Forest Department officials (19 with Foresters, 47 with Range Forest Officers, 23 with Assistant Conservator of Forests, 18 with Deputy Conservator of Forests and 5 with Field Director Project Tiger) regarding the relocation project.

J. Field officer held eight meetings with Deputy Conservator of Forests, Assistant Conservator of Forests and Range Forest Officers regarding identification and relocation of forest-dwelling communities for seventy-five houses being constructed in Sollepura tribal relocation center. Due to the intervention of the field officer, Karnataka State Forest Department agreed to relocate forest-dwelling communities from Balle and Sunkadakatte settlement instead of Dammanakatte tribal settlement. The field officer convinced the authorities about the long-term benefits of relocating forest-dwelling communities living in the forest interiors compared to relocating communities living on the edges of the national park.

The authorities are planning to relocate seventy-five families in March and April 2007. Assistance has been provided under the project to the Karnataka State Forest Department in the process of land development, identification of tube well points and demarcation of land for community use.

H. During September 2006 the field officer organized a meeting at Balle tribal settlement. Twenty forest-dwelling communities participated in this meeting who were explained about the benefits they are entitled to get under the relocation program. As a follow-up the field officer arranged a meeting between Range Forest Officer of D.B Kuppe range and the Balle

forest-dwelling communities. Fifteen forest-dwelling communities who participated in this meeting enrolled their names with Range Forest Officer and expressed their willingness to relocate.

To create awareness and to make the forest-dwelling communities understand the process of relocation, a field trip for the willing families was organized to the proposed relocation site. The field officer also arranged an informal meeting between forest department officials and these forest-dwelling communities where thirty forest-dwelling communities from Balle and Sunkadakatte participated in the meeting.

II. Education and awareness building

The field officer assisted in carrying out education and awareness building activities conducted under Community Leadership for Tiger Conservation (CLTC) project implemented through the Nagarahole Wildlife Conservation Education Project (NAWICOED) funded by Save The Tiger Fund.

A. During January - February 2006, 26 forest fire campaigns were organized at different towns and villages of Kodagu district (around Nagarahole National Park and other forests in Western Ghats). A total of 33760 pamphlets, explaining the damage caused by the man-made forest fires were distributed. The project team coordinated with thirty education institutions of the district and involved 3171 students, 123 teachers and 109 publics in these campaigns. Twenty one schools situated around Bramhagiri Wildlife Sanctuary were also covered under the education project and 2883 pamphlets were distributed to the students regarding the impacts of forest fires on tiger and other wildlife.

B. The field officer organized three public awareness programs regarding forest fires in the western side of the Nagarahole National Park involving three educational institutions reaching to over 8300 people living around the national park.

C. Education and awareness building activities of Nagarahole Wildlife Conservation Education Project (NAWICOED) were extended to Bandipura National Park. The field officer visited 10 schools along the border of Bandipura National Park and addressed them about the impacts of manmade forest fires. A total of 3684 pamphlets in the local language

(Kannada) explaining the impacts of forest fires were distributed to students. The field officer also interacted with 34 teaching staff of these schools during this campaign.

D. The field officer arranged two nature camps of two days duration at Nagarahole National Park for the students of two schools situated near the national park. Seventy-five students residing in the surrounding areas of the park participated in these programs.

E. Assistance was also provided in organizing two nature camps for the members of Kodagu District Journalists Association and a group of conservationists from Bangalore. Nineteen journalists and twenty one conservationists participated in these programs.

III. Establishing an independent information network to support the states wildlife protection efforts.

The field officer assisted in establishing an independent information network involving reliable forest-dwelling communities, school teachers and coffee planters living in the surrounding areas of the Nagarahole National Park. Eleven such reliable informers were identified and field officer maintained regular contact and interacted with them to collect information regarding poaching, smuggling and encroachment activities in and around Nagarahole National Park. The field officer established close contact with field staff of forest department to have a better understanding of the efforts of the department in the field. Information gathered by the network with Karnataka Forest Department. The following are the few examples.

A. During January/February and December 2006, the field officer collected information regarding organized collection of minor forest produce in Veerannahosahally range. Some forest-dwelling communities supported by powerful business interests started collecting *Phyllanthus emblica* in huge quantities. The field officer collected the exact information about business persons involved in the activity which was shared with Karnataka State Forest Department. Based on the information and increased protection has minimized the collection of minor forest produce in this area.

B. In January/February, the field officer collected information regarding coffee planters pumping water, using pump sets from a tank situated inside national park in Kallalla Range

of Nagarahole National Park for irrigation. The field officer coordinated with the villagers who opposed this and made several representations were made to the concerned authorities. Based on the information and documents provided by the field officer some villagers approached court of law, which has granted temporary stay.

C. The field officer gathered information regarding staff of forest department allowing illegal tourism activity within the core areas of the national park which was stopped after intervention from senior forest department officials.

D. In April 2006 the field officer collected information regarding large-scale timber felling incidents in CPT No.4 of Veeranahosahally Range. Information was shared with the forest department and effective patrolling by the department reduced the incidences of smuggling.

E. One of the officials from Karnataka Forest Department shared information regarding the attempts of a people's representative to dig a tube well near a small temple situated inside the national park. The field officer held a meeting with the representative and explained the problems created by these kinds of interventions. Convinced by this the representative dropped the move.

F. During July 2006 the field officer, gathered information regarding the theft of ivory from the carcass of a naturally dead elephant in Veeranahosally range. This information was shared with forest and police departments. The authorities are in search for the absconding suspects.

G. The field officer collected information regarding a tree-felling incidence involving a forest guard and an employee of government owned resort in the D.B.Kuppe range during August 2006. Information was shared with senior forest department officers who have initiated legal action

H. During September 2006, the field officer gathered information regarding forest department staff shielding an accused in a deer hunting case, by avoiding filing of First Information Report (FIR). This was brought to the notice of the senior officers after which the FIR was filed.

I. During the month of October 2006, the field officer coordinated with the forest department staff of D.B Kuppe range, in seizing a person from Kerala who used to supply illegal firearms to the poachers. The Culprit was arrested along with two of his local contacts and two country made muzzle load guns. Although information about the supply of firearms in the surroundings areas of Bandipura Tiger Reserve by the same person was shared with forest department officials of Bandipura Tiger Reserve, the authorities did not act on this.

IV. Supporting tribal families who have relocated under government sponsored relocation program.

Field officer coordinated the activities of Wildlife Conservation Society funded project titled Tribal livelihood Support and Empowerment for Tiger Conservation for the socio-economic upliftment of 280 forest-dwelling community families who have relocated under government sponsored relocation program. Field officer coordinated the day-to-day activities of seven development workers, working under Tribal Livelihood Support and Empowerment for Tiger Conservation project.

A. The field officer convinced the Deputy Conservator of Forests to take up agriculture activities for the thirty families relocated in July 2006. The field officer facilitated expert opinion on land development, soil conservation and cropping pattern. Assistance was also provided in procuring seeds and fertilizers for this purpose.

B. Private donations worth US\$ 622 was raised for developing land of three relocated families who were not supported under the forest department due to shortage of funds.

C. Health care activities were coordinated under Tribal Livelihood Support and Empowerment for Tiger Conservation through health workers. During these six months, field officer facilitated the treatment of 198 forest-dwelling communities from tribal relocation centre at Government Hospital, Hunsur. Forty nine forest-dwellers were supported to avail treatment at Krishna Rajendra Hospital, Mysore. The field officer also facilitated the treatment of 29 forest-dwellers in Government Hospital, Hunsur and Krishna Rajendra Hospital, Mysore as inpatients

D. Guidance and support was provided for the smooth functioning of five women self help groups in Nagapura tribal relocation site. The field officer facilitated in sanctioning and repayment of loan Rs.10,000 (222 USD) to one of the self-help groups from State Bank of Mysore, Gurupura Branch. Exposure trips were organised to these self-help groups. Four women self-help groups are holding a total amount of Rs.24,000.00 (533 USD) as their saving.

E. The field officer coordinated the agricultural support activities to the relocated families with three field supervisors under Tribal Livelihood Support and Empowerment for Tiger Conservation Project. In consultation with the forest-dwelling communities of Nagapura relocation centre, 80 families were selected as beneficiaries for the agricultural support this year. Co-ordination of agricultural activities such as ploughing and sowing, and training were provided. Cultivation of horticultural products was also encouraged at the relocation site.

F. Field officer arranged two vaccination camps for the livestock of forest-dwelling communities from Nagapura tribal relocation centre. 281 cattle and goats were vaccinated against foot and mouth disease.

G. Due to the intervention of the field officer and the project team the government tribal development department has sanctioned developmental work worth Rs.69,00,000.00 (US\$ 15,333)

H. Field officer has facilitated the admission of 15 students from relocation site to continue their education in different education institutions. Out of this, one student is undergoing teachers training program and another nurse training program.

V. Extending welfare activities to the forest-dwelling communities living inside the national park.

The field officer extended the activities of health and educational support to the forest-dwelling communities living inside the national park with the aim of creating awareness about the welfare activities of the project.

A. Field officer supported the admission of 35 students from tribal settlement such as Siddapura, Gonigaddhe, Gaddehadi, Murkal and Kolengere to the different schools in Kutta town. These costs were covered the under Tribal Livelihood Support and Empowerment for Tiger Conservation Project.

B. Health care activities were extended to the forest-dwelling communities inside the national park through the forest dwelling community leaders and arranged the visit of a health coordinator to the settlements at Murkal, Kolengere, Gaddehadi and Gonigaddhe. The health coordinator facilitated the treatment for 148 forest-dwelling communities through three visits. In southern part of the park, health care activities were extended to the forest-dwelling communities staying in settlements such as Balle, Sunkadakatte and Machur.

VI. Habitat Consolidation in Nagarahole National Park.

The field officer negotiated to purchase land from a family holding around six acres of land inside the Anechowkuru Range of Nagarahole National Park. The land purchase project will be supported by Wildlife Conservation Society and currently the legal formalities are being fulfilled.

VII. Interaction with the media.

A. Field officers interaction with the media generated 24 stories about voluntary relocation.



Field office, P.M.Muthanna (fourth from right) in an education material distribution ceremony for children of relocated families ©P.M.Muthanna



Field officer (first from right) distributing fertilizers as agricultural support for the relocated families ©P.M.Muthanna