

**Threat Reduction to Tigers Through Empowerment and Livelihood  
Support in Malenad-Mysore Tiger Landscape (MRTL), Southern India**

*An Interim Report for 21st Century Tiger*

**Grant Period:** July 1, 2007 - June 30, 2008

**Period covered by this report:** July 1, 2007 – 31<sup>st</sup> Dec, 2007

**PROJECT LEADERS:**

P.M.Muthanna, Living Inspiration for Tribals (LIFT)

K.M.Chinnappa and T.S.Gopal, Nagarahole Wildlife Conservation Education Project  
(NAWICOED)

**OTHER COLLABORATORS AND INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

Wildlife Conservation Society-India Program (WCS-India Program)

Centre for Wildlife Studies (CWS)

Bhadra Wildlife Conservation Trust (BWCT)

Kudremukh Wildlife Foundation (KWF)

Sahyadri Wildlife and Forest Conservation Trust (SWIFT)

Tropical Research and Development Centre (TRDC)

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## **Threat Reduction to Tigers Through Empowerment and Livelihood Support in Malenad-Mysore Tiger Landscape (MRTL), Southern India**

### **SUMMARY**

During the project reporting period of July 1, 2007 – 31st December 2007 a total of 41 families living within the interiors of the park were motivated to accept the Government implemented resettlement project and were resettled outside Nagarahole National Park. Hence, till date a total of 340 families have voluntarily resettled outside the park. Post resettlement support for agriculture, education, health, animal husbandry and other welfare measures were provided under the project. Health care was provided to a total of 1336 individuals for various ailments, 44 students were provided with educational support under the project. From the resettled families 18 youth were supported to undergo training in masonry and incense stick making that would provide them employment opportunities.

The Government has taken initiative to start a high school and a day care centre in response to the interventions made under the project. The families were also supported to avail Government benefits including old age pension, vaccination for livestock and compensation for crop damage by wildlife. The project team has held 26 meetings with forest/wildlife department officials, local elected representatives to build support for the voluntary resettlement project.

A wildlife conservation educational camp was conducted for 14 teachers. The project leaders were also involved in supporting a habitat consolidation project carried out by Wildlife Conservation Society.

## INTRODUCTION

Nagarahole National Park (formally known as Rajiv Gandhi National Park) has one of the highest recorded tiger densities in India supporting 50-60 tigers, with about 100 additional tigers in adjacent reserves. Nagarahole is also home to around 1,700 forest-dwelling families living in 55 sporadic settlements (~900 in the interior of the park, and another ~650 on land that is technically inside the park, but along the boundary line, and thus adjacent to legal agricultural lands that are outside the park). However, following the declaration of Nagarahole as a National Park, strict application of wildlife laws curtailed agriculture, wildlife hunting, sale of forest products, expansion of settlements and even official logging. Consequently, most forest-dwelling communities inside the park find work in coffee plantations five to 20 kilometers outside the park. In addition, traders from outside the Park sometimes induce these communities to poach wildlife and illegally exploit forest products.

Furthermore, strict but necessary wildlife laws hinder provision of even basic social amenities such as education, healthcare, transportation and communication infrastructure to forest-dwelling communities living deep inside Nagarahole. While conservation measures have seriously affected the livelihood and development opportunities for forest-dwelling communities, long-term research carried out by Wildlife Conservation Society-India Program (WCS-India Program) in Nagarahole has clearly recorded the dramatic recovery of tigers, prey and habitat due to such conservation measures.

Although the Karnataka State Forest Department provides overall protection to the park and its wildlife, threats, such as grazing, poaching, fire, and timber smuggling, still emanate from the settlements of about 900 families that occupy its interior. In response to repeated demands from the forest-dwelling communities for fair, well-implemented relocation since 1991, WCS and its partners have initiated a pro-active scheme of voluntary resettlement of forest-dwelling communities as a long-term, win-win solution to the problem of human pressure on tiger populations in and around Nagarahole.

After the official voluntary resettlement program began, a total of 316 families willingly resettled outside the Park, under a scheme sponsored by the government. Fifty families relocated in 1999, 155 families in 2000, 45 families in 2001, 30 families in 2006 and 41 families in 2007. The key catalytic role played by Living Inspiration for Tribals (LIFT) a partner organization of WCS-India Program providing moral and long-term livelihood support to forest-dwelling communities here has been central to the success of these relocation initiatives. LIFT and other partner organizations motivates and educates families about the Government implemented voluntary resettlement project and provides livelihood support and social empowerment to the families expected to move out during the project period, thus reducing pressure in the interior of the park. The project also extends post-resettlement support to families who resettle from the interior of the parks to establish in the new site. This project directly engages local communities under existing Indian law.

## **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES/PROGRESS**

### ***1. Motivating forest dwelling communities from Nagarhole National Park to relocate outside the National Park under government sponsored relocation program.***

1. During the reporting period a total of 41 families inhabiting within Nagarhole National Park were identified and motivated by the project leader Muthanna and his team to be relocated outside the reserve in Sollepura resettlement site. These families are from Gonigaddhe, Sunkadakatte and Balle hamlets within the reserve. Logistical support was provided during the shifting process of the families and post relocation support was provided under the project for the families to settle in the new site, to repair of houses, to carry out agriculture, education for school children and for other activities.
2. Logistics assistance was provided to the forest department during the shifting of families to the resettlement site. Transportation to the resettlement site, allocation

of housing and agricultural land, provision of grocery, distribution of cash incentive and other support were provided under the project.

3. The project leader (P. M. Muthanna) and staff continued their efforts to motivate inhabitants within Nagarahole to accept the Government's voluntary resettlement project. The project staff made 15 field visits to hamlets within the reserve to carry out this activity educating 162 forest dwelling families. A total of 105 families from Balle, Kere haadi, Maaladha haadi, Gonigaddhe hamlets have been motivated under the project and are currently willing to be relocated. The project team is working with these families to build confidence regarding the facilities provided by the Government and the post resettlement support that would be provided under the project.
4. The project leaders held 26 meetings with forest department officials and the local member of the parliament, local elected representatives and tribal leaders to discuss various aspects of resettlement.
5. Meetings with local elected representatives, member of the parliament and a senior minister of the district were held to garner support for the resettlement project and also to educate the representatives about the need for speedy implementation of the project for families willing to relocate. The families living within the reserve interacted with the minister and the elected representatives and explained them about their problems living within the reserve. The member of the parliament who visited the resettlement site has shown interest that Government should resettle 150 families in the next phase and he has proposed that a committee to monitor the progress of resettlement to be formed.
6. Site visits to the resettlement area were facilitated for 70 families currently living within the reserve to provide them an opportunity to interact with the relocated families and also to educate them of the benefits provided under the resettlement

project by the Government. These families were also educated about the post resettlement support provided under this project.

***11. Supporting forest dwelling communities who have relocated under Government sponsored resettlement program.***

1. Post resettlement support for 316 families resettled from Nagarahole National Park was continued during the reporting period. Support was provided for agriculture, health, education, and animal husbandry to avail benefits under various Government schemes and for other activities under the project.
2. Agricultural support was provided through the forest/wildlife department to the 60 families that were resettled outside the reserve during the previous year. Support and guidance was also provided to procure seeds, fertilisers and other farm inputs from Government departments at subsidized prices. Two youth from the resettled families have been employed under the project to monitor the progress of the agricultural activity.
3. Muthanna, the project leader facilitated provision of 1500 saplings to the resettled families to be planted in the fuel wood lot at the resettlement site. 150 saplings of coconut trees were also provided as horticultural support. One person from the resettled families has been employed under the project to monitor the progress of the agro-forestry support provided.
4. The project health co-ordinator made 51 visits to the existing resettlement site and provided health care to 1305 individuals for minor ailments. Further, 55 individuals requiring specialised treatment were facilitated to avail care at various government hospitals in towns near the reserve and 102 visits were carried out to follow up on the medical problems.

5. The project supported and monitored the academic progress of 44 students admitted to various schools. School tuition fee was provided to the students of the resettled families.
6. Teaching aids and stationery were also provided to schools to assist in imparting better education to students. A total of 25 students were provided with school uniforms, 165 students were provided with school stationery and two students were provided with bus transportation support.
7. Examination fees and documentation support were provided to seven students pursuing high school and pre-university education.
8. Based on requests and interventions made under the project, the Government has started a high school in the resettlement site at Nagapura and required building infrastructure has also been approved by the Government.
9. A day care centre for children has been approved and started by the Government based on the interventions made under the project.
10. Further post resettlement support was provided under the project including support to avail ration cards from the Government agencies which provides them subsidized food grains and other provisions through Government sponsored schemes. Support was also provided under the project to avail old age pensions under Government sponsored schemes. Documentation support was supported to a total of 23 individuals to avail these facilities.
11. Vaccination against diseases was provided for cattle belonging to the resettled families under the project. One vaccination camp was held by the veterinarian at the resettlement site to carry out this activity.

12. Support was provided to avail low interest credit from local financial institutions to buy draught cattle. Further, support was also provided for women to form self-help groups (SHGs) for availing micro-credit from local financial institutions at subsidised interest rates. A total of 62 meetings were held in the women's SHGs to provide guidance regarding maintenance of accounts, functioning of the SHGs, etc. One training and orientation program was conducted under the project for the SHG members to train them on SHG management, income generation programs and facilities available under various Government projects in support of SHGs. A total of eleven SHGs are functioning and have collectively saved about US\$ 926 to carry out their activities.
13. To inculcate and encourage the families to save money two families were assisted to open bank accounts during the reporting period.
14. The project helped families in the resettlement site to apply for government compensation for crop damage from wildlife.
15. To provide better employment opportunities for youths of resettled families, 18 youths were provided training in construction and incense stick making.

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

1. Health care is also provided to forest dwelling families inside the reserve to build confidence among the communities. The project health co-ordinator made one visits to the settlements inside the reserve and provided health care to 31 individuals for minor ailments through distribution of medicines.
2. The project provided books to 36 children of forest dwelling communities currently living within the reserve.



#### ***IV. Awareness building***

1. Muthanna and his team actively educated the inhabitants within Nagarahole about the wrong interpretations of the recently passed Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. This act provides new procedures for recognition of rights of forest dwelling communities over land tenure and harvesting of non-timber forest produce. However communities were misled about the potential scope of such rights due to misinterpretation of the act by some local NGOs. Therefore, an awareness campaign about the actual facts was carried out through distribution of pamphlets and publication of newspaper articles in Kannada language.

#### ***V. Habitat Consolidation in Nagarahole National Park (the activities described in section VI were not funded by the grant from 21 Century Tiger, but were part of the larger efforts to conserve Nagarahole National Park)***

1. The project leader Muthanna has also supported the WCS-India Program habitat consolidation project at Nagarahole National Park. Identification of critical land enclaves, discussions and negotiation with families willing to surrender land has been handled under the project. Finding alternative agricultural land outside the reserve for the relocating families has also been carried out under the project.
2. A land parcel of 5.03 acres of important wildlife habitat occupied without appropriate land titles by one family within the Nagarahole National Park was identified under the WCS-India Program habitat consolidation project. As the family evinced keen interest to relocate, the enclaved land was acquired and the family was assisted to find new agricultural land and housing outside the reserve. Presentation of the compensation check and formal handing over of the land was carried out in presence of senior forest/wildlife department officials, project leaders K. M. Chinnappa, P.M.Muthanna and other staff of WCS-India Program.

This land is adjacent to earlier acquired enclave in Nagarahole National Park during the previous reporting year.

### ***VII. Building conservation awareness around the reserves***

1. During the reporting period project leaders K.M.Chinnappa and T.S.Gopal organized one nature camp for teachers describing the importance of wildlife conservation and human impacts on wildlife for educational institutions around Nagarahole National Park, Bandipur Tiger Reserve and Bramhagiri Wildlife Sanctuary. A total of 14 teachers participated in this program.

### ***VIII. Interaction with the media***

1. The project leader and other members of the project team were involved in educating the media about various conservation topics such as the benefits of the resettlement project, conservation problems of the reserve. A total of 26 news reports were generated regarding various issues concerning the reserve.

### ***IX. Support to other organizations***

1. The project team interacted and provided inputs to 15 students currently pursuing postgraduate program in Wildlife Biology and Conservation during their study tour to understand resettlement and social dynamics of this conservation issue.
2. Interactions were held with representatives of international conservation NGOs visiting Nagarahole National Park about resettlement issues.



Project leader, P.M.Muthanna (first from right) in a book distribution function for children of forest dwelling communities.



Fertilizers and other agricultural inputs provided under the project as part of the post resettlement support to families relocated outside Nagarhole National Park.



Tribal families from the interior of the park visiting the agricultural land that would be provided by the Government under the resettlement project.



Families willing to relocate outside Nagarahole National Park during their visit to the new relocation site to understand the resettlement package.



Children carrying out campaigns against forest fires around Bramhagiri Wildlife Sanctuary.



Project Leader, K.M.Chinnappa (centre) educating school teachers in a conservation awareness camp.