

# COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AT RANTHAMBHORE

## A Report by Ranthambhore Foundation

[Period: April 1998 to September 1999]

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Ranthambhore Foundation is a non governmental organisation that has been working around the Ranthambhore National Park, situated in the South-Eastern part of Rajasthan, since 1989. The main objective of the organisation is to help the people living around this Tiger Reserve to understand the importance of the National Park for their own future survival, as well as the survival of the Royal Bengal Tiger in its natural habitat and to help them to reduce the tremendous biotic pressure on the meagre natural resources of the protected forest, which is the home of the tiger.

The major problem faced by the people in the Ranthambhore area is one of rapid environment degradation due to the fast growth of human and livestock population. Demands are high on the meagre resources. The people living around Ranthambhore National Park have always depended on the forest for their day to day requirements of fuel and fodder. The decrease in rainfall year after year due to the diminishing forest cover and its effect on the surface/ ground water level and increasing soil erosion have already begun to show effects on the land productivity.

### 2. THE REPORT

#### 2.1 Project Objectives:

The overall objective of the project has been the preservation of the tiger and its habitat, Ranthambhore National Park, and its rich bio-diversity for the future generations, since this is the only way a quality of life can be sustained.

The project has been an attempt to achieve this goal through community conservation programmes like helping to control the rapidly increasing population through effective family planning programmes; reduce the biotic pressure on the forest by way of creating alternative bio mass outside the National Park, reducing the livestock pressure on the forest system and subsequently propagating alternative means to fulfill their basic needs for fuel, fodder, wood etc.

#### **The Project envisaged to achieve the following specific objectives:**

- (i) The project has been an attempt to reach out to all the 50 large villages that are inhabited in the immediate surroundings of the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve and provide easy access to the population to family planning and maternal and child health services by way of providing mobile health care facilities.
- (ii) Similarly, the second objective of the project is to encourage and promote many green satellites outside the park as possible so that the dependence on the forest by the local people for fuel and fodder could be less in future.

- (iii) The project also envisaged to strengthen the dairy development and livestock improvement programme in the area so that the existing large herd of unproductive livestock that roam freely in the forest could be reduced and replaced by better milk yielding and stall-fed animals. This in turn would encourage cow dung at one site and create the viability of bio-gas units for alternative energy and the slurry from them could be used as a natural fertiliser.

All these measures are ultimately aiming at giving a real chance for the tiger to survive and flourish in the Ranthambhore tiger reserve, and that also with the active cooperation and participation of the local communities.

## 2.2 Report on Project Activities

- (i) **Family Planning & Maternal and child health care:**  
(Implemented by PRAKRATIK SOCIETY)

### GENERAL OPD:

During the reporting period the project was able to provide medical treatment of minor ailments to 17,292 patients. The main ailments were diarrhoea, malaria, scabies, amoebiasis, boils, middle ear infections, URTI, UTI, skin disease (mainly ringworm infections) etc. Some people have been given treatment for Pulmonary Tuberculosis using the short course chemotherapy for six months.

These services were provided mainly at the Primary Health Centre in Sherpur village. Besides, health care is being provided to remote villages using two vehicles. The mobile service has been able to reach 33 villages most of which are situated in very remote forest areas that are not connected by road to the main townships or other settlements.

### SPECIALITY CLINICS

For the first time specialised health services were made available at our health centre situated in Sherpur village. It has two Operation Theatres and two Wards and enough space to house more than 200 patients during an eye camp. At this centre we have been able to provide highly specialised surgical care using state of the art equipments to patients suffering from a wide range of ailments ranging from Kidney Stones, Hernia, Hydrocele, Prostrate enlargement, perforated ear drums etc. For the first time Laproscopic Surgery is also being provided in the district with a population of 2 million people. In this manner 61 surgeries were provided in four surgical camps. Specialist microsurgical reconstruction and other ENT Surgeries have been done on 15 patients. Since last one year this centre is the only Ophthalmic hospital in the region that provides much needed Ophthalmic care to the hundreds of people living in the region. During the last one year 706 people have been served with ophthalmic surgery out of which 512 were Intra-ocular Lens surgeries for cataract.

### FAMILY PLANNING:

This has been an activity, which has been the main thrust of the prefect. Although we distribute condoms and Oral Pills supplied by the Government free of cost, we do not qualify the Condom distribution in terms of user benefit as it is extremely difficult to assess how much of it is actually used and how much of it is blown into balloons.

Therefore we have been trying for some years to introduce a scheme where condoms and oral pills are sold to the beneficiary at a subsidised rate. By this it can be said with certain conviction that the products were used for family planning only. For this we use the Ecroz/ Perl brand of oral pill and the Sawan /Masti brand of condoms.

During this period we have been able to sell 3779 packets of Sawan /Masti condoms to an average number of 97 beneficiaries per month. A total of 168 people used Masti during the year. Of those who used it, 22 were new couples added during the year while 125 were those carried over from previous years. In the same way 3449 cycles of oral pill Mala-N were given to an average of 303.5 EC Protected. 2052 cycles of Oral PIN Ecroz/Perl was sold to an average of 87.7 women protected, 128 women had CUT inserted and 272 got sterilised. With the availability of the Health centre for family planning camps we have been able to provide good quality sterilisation facilities which have resulted in a tremendous response from the people where we were able to organise seven female Sterilisation camps and the only male sterilisation camp in the District. Ten males were sterilised using the new micro surgery technique where no stitches are required.

#### VACCINATION:

During this period 1550 children were given BCG, 1629 children OPV & DPT 1<sup>st</sup> dose, 1487 children were given OPV & DPT 2nd dose, 1331 children were given OPV & DPT 3rd dose and another 1256 children were given Measles. Of the women seen for Ante-natal check-ups 946 were given TT I and another 574 were given TT II Dose.

#### IEC ACTIVITIES:

During this period a team of dedicated Health Workers supported by Village Health Worker's (VHWs) have regularly visited people's homes organisation small group meetings, mother's meetings etc. to explain to the people using flip charts about preventive health care and family planning. Our team visited more than 52983 homes and organised 896 mother's meetings and 939 group meetings.

#### SCHOOL HEALTH:

Our team of Field Educators regularly visits (afferent schools in the area to examine the children for signs of malnutrition, Vitamin-A deficiency, anemia etc. At the same time they talk to the children about preventive health care with emphasis on Malaria, Diarrhea, Nutrition, Vaccination, Hygiene, Sanitation, Tuberculosis etc. During this period 313 such school visits were made in the area.

#### TRAINING

Monthly training workshops are organised at our base office at our Health Centre in village Sherpur where all the VHWs and Field Educators come together and are taught about the various aspects of preventive health care and family planning methods by a Doctor. In this way 13 VHWs were given basic training in primary health care with special emphasis on child nutrition, pregnancy and delivery, Immunisation and first aid and family planning. These workers form the back bone of our outreach project.

We have sponsored and sent two persons to St. Joseph Eye Hospital, Thiruchirapally for 6 months training of Ophthalmic Assistants. After the training their services are being used for the Satellite Eye Clinic.

**(ii) Educational Awareness**

The non-formal education awareness programme linked to the environment, ecology, tree planting and reforestation has been in operation with a special focus on the children and younger generation. The major emphasis has been on generating awareness on the condition of the local environment and the need to plant trees in the villages and their surroundings. Under the initiative we have started organising village level nature clubs for the rural children and youth in order to explain the language of the forest and the vital necessity of saving the tiger's home. Slide-shows, films and lecture demonstration etc. were some of the tools used in this awareness activity. It is through such interventions that, we believe, a group of people will emerge that will ultimately fight the poachers who operate on the edges of a park.

One of the major activities of the programme has been Nature Camps. Children from far away villages have been brought to the Education Centre for a two day camps where they are taught on various aspects of living in harmony with the nature. A series of camps have been organised every month and each camp has 20 - 30 children as participants. These camps also attempt to inculcate a love and attachment in the hearts of the young generation towards nature, environment and wildlife. They are encouraged to do their bit to protect the rich biodiversity in their area and also to plant more trees and also to take care of them. Besides, through such camps encouragement is given to the children to be proud of their rich culture and tradition by way of conducting competitions in folk arts music etc. Ultimately all these activities are aimed at educating the young generation and motivating them to do all that is necessary to protect their heritage and nature and minimise damage to this tiger reserve. 35 such camps have been conducted during this period and a total of 1,237 children participated in all these camps.

**(iii) Nursery and tree planting**

Planting trees on agricultural land has been a major effort we undertook to create more wood and minimise pressures on the tiger reserve. More than 148,000 saplings have been raised during this period in our nursery out of which 136,095 saplings have been distributed to the farmers to plant in their agricultural land. Altogether 49 villages participated in this programme. To be more precise, nearly 565 farmers have been benefited through this activity.

**(iv) Dairy Development & Livestock Improvement**

The Livestock Breeding and Demonstration farm run by the Foundation has been of tremendous impact on the farmers of the area. It has succeeded in bringing about a change in the mindset of the local farmers with regard to the animal husbandry and dairy practices. Today every farmer in the region prefer to keep the livestock that is of good and better milk yielding progeny. To bring about such a change the demonstration farm played a very important role by way of supplying high breed cows to the farmers at a nominal price, providing bulls for natural service and above all educating the farmers on scientific animal husbandry methods and practices.

During the year 4 cows have been distributed to the farmers from the farm besides providing 41 natural service by the 3 bulls kept in the farm. Apart from that, 5 buffalo bulls have been made available to the villages for keeping in the village and utilising for the natural service needs. These 5 bulls have given 533 natural service in the villages and served 23 villages in a rotation basis.

The artificial insemination centre, being supported by the Foundation in Kundera village, managed to do 436 cases of artificial insemination for cows and another 189 A.I.s for buffaloes. As a result of the artificial insemination nearly 217 crossbred calves were born to the cows during the period and among them 121 were females. Similarly, buffaloes have given birth to 119 calves during the year, out of which males were 64 and females were 55, as a result of the artificial insemination.

**(v) Information Dissemination**

Though the preliminary work for bringing out a publication in both English and Hindi about "Saving Tigers through Community Conservation", which can be a useful tool to strengthen future strategies, has been started, we have still not been able to make much progress with it. We hope to bring out this publication that summarizes our work and this project by the end of 2000 and it will provide valuable insights into a vital area of conservation. It could also be an essential tool for other initiatives in different areas and assist the NGO sector in some of their strategies.

**3. CONCLUSION:**

This project is today the only programme in the region that provide comprehensive and cheap health care and dairy and livestock improvement services that have direct links to other environment and wildlife conservation programmes. Its impact is already being felt with more and more people taking an active part in taking care of their own health and subsequently the health of the livestock, wildlife in the nearby tiger reserve and finally the good health of the environment they live in. Although it is not possible to predict today whether these efforts will guarantee the survival of the Tiger in Ranthambhore tomorrow, yet one thing is certain that unless the rapid population growth is checked the Tiger doesn't have a chance. To do this and encourage other environmentally sound activities, a positive and harmonious relationship between the Park and the people of Ranthambhore is needed. It is to build such a positive relationship that the Ranthambhore Foundation is striving.

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