ANNUAL REPORT

TIGER AMBASSADORS

NAWEGAON – NAGZHIRA TIGER RESERVE

SATPUDA LANDSCAPE TIGER PARTNERSHIP

2017-2018

Supported By

SAVE WILD TIGERS

BORN FREE FOUNDATION

TIGER RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION TRUST (TRACT)

Tigers beyond Boundaries

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Summary:

A program to create local leadership within communities situated in fringes of Nawegaon Nagzhira Tiger Reserve, Gondia, to minimize the attacks by sloth bears, tigers and leopards on people.

Our study done in the adjoining landscape has indicated that most of the attacks and threats to people are when they are in the forest. The stressed employment situation is the main cause for the people's high dependence on the forest, and unless this is addressed, it has been difficult to keep them from their intrusion in the forest habitat.

Hence it was imperative to address their vulnerability to these threats while in the forest. Their understanding about this and the code of conduct was addressed in this program. This was done by creating leadership within their communities to create awareness.

This program was commenced in 2014 with 25 villages; the program has been expanded to 10 more villages, covering 35 villages and 245 local leaders by year 2017-2018. Creating awareness and sensitizing these locals about the reasons of conflict, their role in reducing their vulnerability by their appropriate code of conduct for individuals and the community to ensure the same.

The Tiger Ambassadors have also been trained in handling emergency conflict situations to ensure safety of the community and the animal. They have also been sensitized about the threats of a mob to all stakeholders. Some of these individuals have also assisted the local forest staff in patrols and controlling forest fires.

Methodology:

The project has expanded from involvement in fifteen villages (2014) to twenty-five (2015) to now 35 in 2016. Local leadership has been created in each of these 35 villages by TRACT team. 7 Tiger Ambassadors chosen in each of these villages, with presence of wildlife, have been trained over day long workshops conducted repeatedly by the TRACT team to understand the threats of conflict and management of the same.

The work also documented the various challenges faced in this task of managing co-habitation between people and large carnivores.

SURVEY FOR BENCH MARK ON PRESENT CONFLICT
After the identification and meetings with village authorities of the 35 villages, the TRACT Team conducted the conflict survey. 30 families per village were surveyed with a Questionnaire. Through the survey, the TRACT team faced the wrath of the villagers which was directed towards the forest staff. This was mainly due to the lack of dialogue between the community and the forest management. No information was shared between the two, and the marginal farmers were agitated about the crop damage by the wild herbivores. The purpose and the significance of this program was made clear to the village Communities.

S*ELECTION OF POTENTIAL TIGER AMBASSADORS*
The protocol of Team selection was followed. Surveys done, informal discussion with the senior members of the community and the forest staff. Village awareness meetings and then finalization of the Tiger Ambassadors based on their interest in the Program, their agreeing to the concept, keenness to work in a team, knowledge about the area, agreement towards the need for wildlife conservation and their ability to communicate with their own people.
Responsibilities were discussed, and they were informed about their role in mitigating conflict.

TIGER AMBASSADOR WORKSHOPS
The first round of workshops for each Tiger Ambassador team was conducted in their respective village over half a day. Each participant was given wages for the day. The local guard and forest officer participated in these meetings to commence a dialogue between them and for addressing issues that involved both stake holders.

FINDINGS PRIOR TO WORKSHOPS:

1. No information about presence of tigers or leopards near their area
2. No dialogue between the community and forest staff
3. Were clueless about reason for conflict
4. Sloth bear presence near village very high
5. Villagers could not identify signs of wild animal presence
6. They had no information about reasons for conflict
7. Wildlife & management blamed for all losses, without any ownership to the same
6. No idea about code of conduct
7. Marginal farmers were harassed by immense crop damage by wild herbivores. They complained about the need for solutions and timely compensation for the same.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Do's-

- Collect minor forest produce in a group
- Be alert about wildlife presence near villages
- Grazers should be on alert about carnivore presence in forest.
- Sharing of information about cattle kill immediately with the forest guard and Tiger Ambassador team of the village.
- Give information regarding large carnivore movement to forest guard and Tiger Ambassadors

Don'ts-

- Don't trespass or venture alone in the forest
- Avoid being in the forest before dawn or after dark
- Avoid defecating in the open near bushes
- Don't take livestock for grazing inside dense forest or in area with carnivores
- Avoid going to the water bodies in the forest

Community Codes-

- Reduce garbage near village precincts that lure leopards, sloth bears and wild boars
- Proper disposal of carcass of livestock
- Secure livestock and stray animals

CONSERVATION OUTCOME:

Awareness to the community - Awareness to the community through their own people (Tiger Ambassadors) has been the most effective way to take this forward.

Reduction of conflict between people and large carnivores – Pre-emptive actions, sharing of information about wildlife presence to the community has often averted conflict.

Protection: The TRACT team visited each village 7-10 times excluding the surveys, meetings. This was done for gathering information about threats, intelligence gathering, addressing cattle kill and gather information about wildlife presence.

Dialogue: Through the meetings and communication with the villagers, the interaction with forest department played a key role

Leadership – The program has created 245 young leaders in the community who understand the conflict and their role in its mitigation. During a conflict situation, they are on the same page as the forest guard in understanding the need of the hour.
Ownership to Mitigation – Participation of locals in conflict mitigation has resulted in their ownership to the problem and the solution.
Wildlife monitoring – Continuous monitoring of wildlife presence in these buffer areas which are shared by people, livestock and wildlife is obtained. This helps in monitoring threats to both people and wild animals. The local shepherds who are a part of this team often have maximum knowledge of wildlife presence which is shared with the community.
Crop predation -
Crop damage by the wild herbivores and the issues with registering cases about the same for claiming compensation has been addressed. The TRACT team has advocated the use of natural fences and offered to get seeds for the same for those interested.
Trained Individuals - This would help to institutionalize the system and ensure the exit strategy of the hand holding.

Participation of community in conservation - The Tiger Ambassadors have participated in various other activities with the TRACT team, removal of plastic and cleaning of water sources in the forest area. Most of the teams have assisted in dousing forest fires, participated in monitoring cattle kills and shared information about threat and wildlife presence.

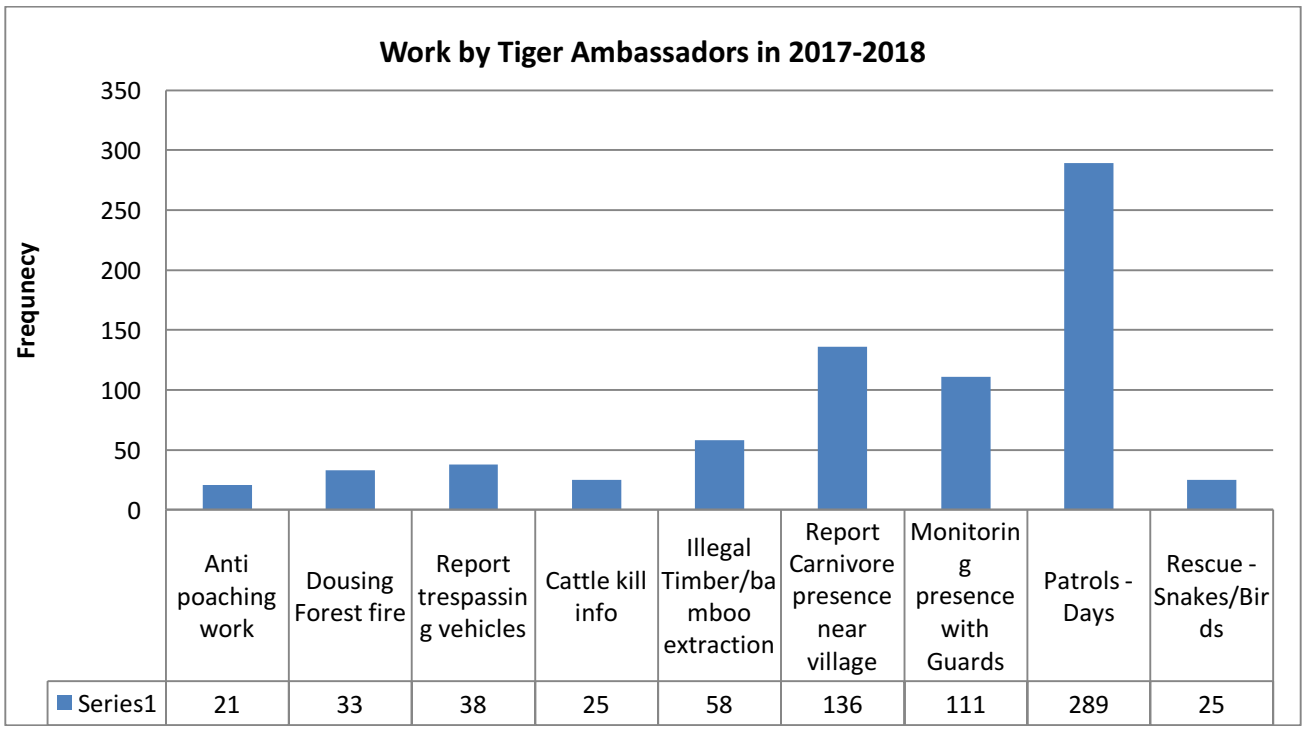
Usgaon village - 2 women were attacked by adult leopard in their house compound. The women entered the barn in the dark to check when they heard some noises. A leopard had entered the barn to prey on the goats. Both the women were injured by the leopard who escaped soon after.
Two of the Tiger Ambassadors of this village reached the spot, alerted the forest personnel and immediately called for the ambulance for the women. Both the women were treated at the government facility and out of danger.

Asalpani village - The Tiger Ambassadors has raised the issue of the deficit work done by the forest officials to build check dams for the wildlife, leading to increased presence of wild animals near the village water sources, causing threats to crop and people. Collection of Plastic from village has been done regularly by this team.
Sarpewada village – Frequent patrols by this team to address tiger and sloth bear presence near the villages and fields

Thatejhari village - Patrolling around their respective areas and all information about the wildlife presence around their village precincts is shared

Jambdhi village – The Team assisted in caging of a leopard that had entered the village and was hiding in a barn. The leopard was later safely released in the forest by the managers.

Kanharpayli village –This team has been clearing garbage and plastic from their village temple and its periphery.



Conflict data for Reporting period (2017-2018)		
1.	Cattle kills in 35 villages	0
2.	Loss of livestock - Goat	3
3.	Human – large Carnivore conflict - fatal	0
4.	Human – Large Carnivore conflict – Injuries / Leopard	2
5.	Caging of large carnivores	0
6.	Injuries to large carnivore for conflict	0
7.	Road kill (on highway) - Leopard	2

Work done by the TRACT team:

The team has been working for addressing other conservation issues in this landscape as well.

- Facilitate patrols
- Deploy camera traps to monitor wildlife presence
- Check area for threats to wildlife
- Monitor water sources for poisoning, water availability for wild animals
- Share intelligence with forest management
- Monitor presence of wolves near the villages, conflict with wolves and livestock
- Conduct surveys in these villages for bench mark data and follow ups
- Conduct awareness workshops in the villages for conservation, hygiene, conflict
- Conduct workshops for school children in these villages
- Work on Saras Crane conservation in this landscape
- Monitor and conserve Black buck population in the fringes and farm

TRACT/01/17-18/TA – Gathering information about wildlife presence

TRACT/02/17-18/TA – Conflict mitigation workshop for Tiger Ambassadors

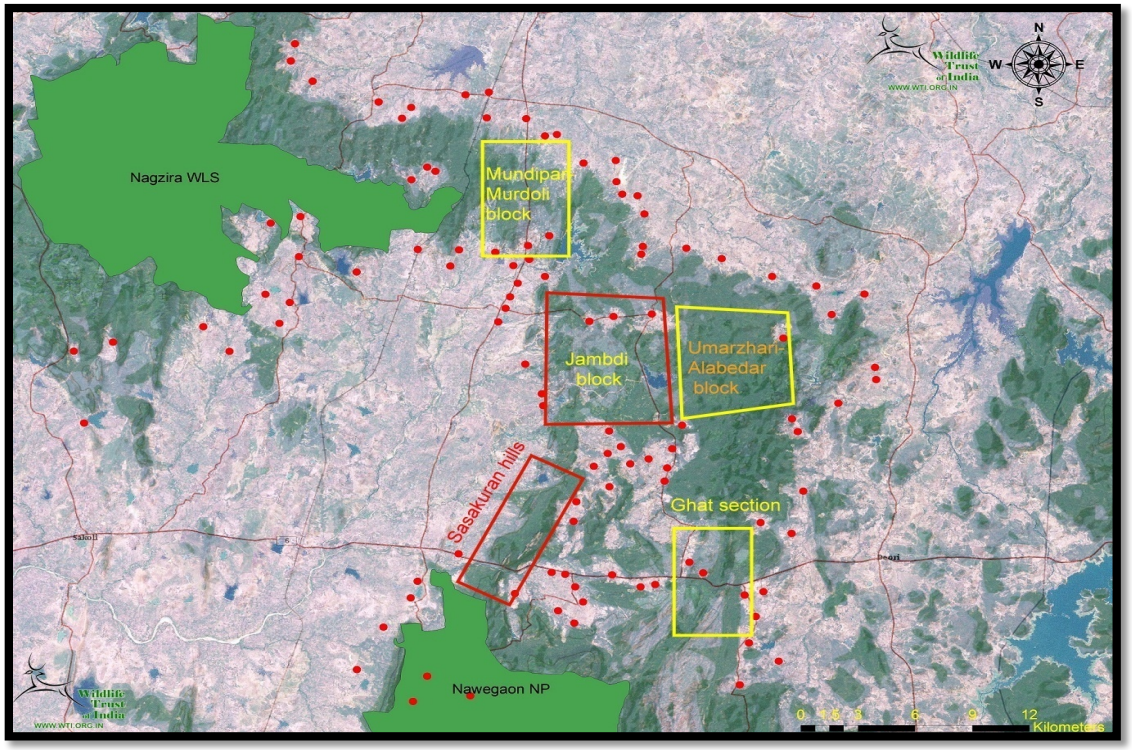
TRACT/03/17-18/TA – Natural Fence to secure crops

TRACT/04/17-18/TA – Monitoring Black buck in fringes and farms

TRACT/05/17-18/TA – Monitoring Saras Crane in Fringes and fields

TRACT/06/17-18/TA – Tree Plantation

TRACT/07/17-18/TA – Awareness through movies – School & Community



TRACT/08/17-18/TA – Area of work of TA – Villages and zones indicated in the buffer area between the Naweagon National Park and Nagzhira Wildlife Sanctuary

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