

# SLTP | Satpuda Landscape Tiger Programme

## Sustaining the Lives of Tigers and People

### Executive Summary

The wild tiger is an iconic species, revered and feared in equal measure. Yet man's fascination with the tiger has not protected it from a mounting raft of threats that have left less than 3,500 of these magnificent cats clinging poignantly to survival. The Satpuda Highlands of Central India represent one of the best chances wild tigers have for survival. It is here that the partners of the Satpuda Landscape Tiger Programme (SLTP), funded by the Born Free Foundation, are working tirelessly on the front line to stem the tiger's decline and aid its recovery. Throughout last year the SLTP has maintained that dedication with a range of activities, including legal representation; landscape monitoring and lobbying; research; mitigation of human-tiger conflict; health care provision; environmental education; and sustainable livelihood initiatives. The activities of the SLTP partners persistently deliver benefits for tigers and people alike with remarkable cost-efficiency. However, in order to sustain their efforts and dedication additional funding is urgently needed.

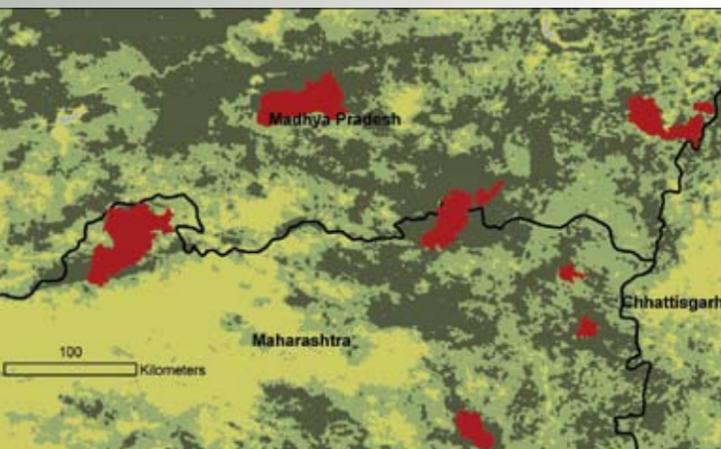
### THE TIGER CRISIS

With as few as 3,500 wild tigers left in the world, and numbers rapidly decreasing, the future for this iconic species in its natural habitat is precarious indeed. In India, home to more wild tigers than any other Range State, only 11% of the original forest habitat remains in an increasingly fragmented and often degraded state. Whilst there are encouraging signs that tigers might be on the rise in some areas, India's 1,700 remaining tigers need urgent protection to ensure any recovery can be sustained.

As a conservation dependent species, tigers require large contiguous forests with access to water and undisturbed core areas in which to breed. Against a backdrop of a burgeoning human population desperate to overcome poverty, habitat is encroached upon for livestock grazing and agricultural cultivation, and tiger prey is poached by hungry villagers. They are targeted by criminal poachers driven by the illegal, and seemingly unquenchable, market for tiger skins and body parts, particularly in China. Add to this the direct conflicts with the rural communities competing for the same forest resources, often resulting in fatalities on both sides and it is clear that the threats to tigers are greater now than they ever have been.



► Photo: Michael Vickers



► The Satpuda landscape is a Tiger Conservation Unit (TCU) and considered by the Indian government as a Priority-1 tiger conservation area. Protected areas total over 7,000 km<sup>2</sup>, which include about 2,000 km<sup>2</sup> of tiger habitat that is devoid of human presence.

### SLTP MODEL

The 25,000km<sup>2</sup> of contiguous forests in the Satpuda highlands of central India are amongst the world's most important tiger habitats and the focus of SLTP's efforts. Rich in biodiversity, this forest landscape is key to the water security of millions of Indians, delivering essential ecosystem services to the surrounding communities.

To combat the threats facing wild tigers in this region, the SLTP was established in 2004 by the Born Free Foundation and the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU) at the University of Oxford. As tigers roam widely and do not

recognize political or land-use boundaries the SLTP operates a holistic landscape-wide set of conservation approaches, implemented by a network of Indian NGOs active in and around six Tiger Reserves in Central India: Kanha, Melghat, Pench MP, Pench MS, Satpuda-Bori and Tadoba-Andhari.

Previously limited in their capacity to act because of woefully inadequate funding and support, SLTP support now allows partners to make full use of their expertise, passion and contacts to deliver tangible benefits for tigers in their hour of need.

## PARTNER ORGANISATIONS



Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)  
www.bnhs.org.



Born Free Foundation  
www.bornfree.org.uk



Conservation Action Trust (CAT)  
www.cat.org.in



LifeForce  
www.lifeforceindia.com



Nature Conservation Society Amravati (NCSA)  
www.ncsaindia.org



Satpuda Foundation  
www.satpuda.org



Tiger Research and Conservation Trust (TRACT)  
http://tractindia.org/



Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU)  
www.wildcru.org

## CONSERVATION EMPOWERMENT FELLOWS

Sanjay Karkare - MEU

Debi Goenka

Vishal Bansod - MHU

Nishikant Kale - Melghat TR

Ashfaq Aarbi - Satpuda TR

Giri Venkatesan – Pench TRs

Anoop Awasth – Pench TRs

Kishor Rithe - LMU

Poonam Dhanwatey - TATR



Founded on principles of transparent, egalitarian collaboration, the SLTP programme is unique in four significant ways:

- SLTP promotes a close working relationship between small NGO's, local people and Tiger Reserve directors, and encourages the sharing of experiences and best practice between these stakeholders.
- SLTP addresses all of the primary threats to tigers, allowing a holistic approach to how best to tackle them.
- SLTP funding flows directly to field level activities, ensuring that a little really does go a long way.
- SLTP Partners set themselves clear objectives against which their performance can be measured.

## ACTIVITY UPDATE

April 2010 – March 2011

### Community Health

The Mobile Health Unit (MHU), operated by NCSA's team of volunteer doctors, delivers a unique service to people in over 150 remote villages across five TRs who would otherwise receive no such medical care. The villages are selected in consultation with the management of each TR, targeting those that the Forest Department feels require outside assistance to support rural people and encourage their support for tiger conservation.

During last year the MHU has treated over 10,000 patients; almost 90,000 people having benefitted from the MHU's services since its inception in 2005. Supported by other SLTP partner outreach efforts, the MHU is at the forefront of establishing and developing relationships with communities who share their land and resources with wildlife, and continues to be considered an integral part of the Forest Department's strategies to encourage people's support for, and participation in protecting the tiger.

### Education & Conservation

During its sixth year of operation, the BNHS Mobile Education Unit (MEU) visited 342 schools around TATR and Pench TRs, reaching over 15,000 students and 600 teachers. The small but expert team, which featured on the BBC Radio "Saving Species" series, promotes the importance of biodiversity and sound environmental management, encouraging children and adults to participate in lectures, nature trails, bird watching, art competitions, tree planting, film shows, group discussion, quizzes, songs and dramatic productions.

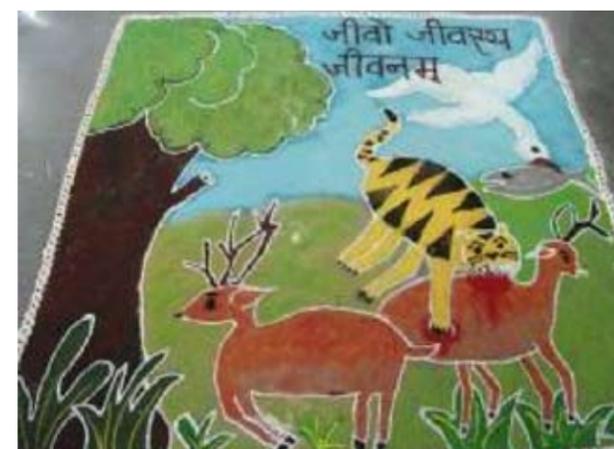
It also arranged a photo exhibition 'Land of Tiger' in Kolhapur and Pune, exposing dramatic images of the region's bio-diversity to urban audiences, and participated, along with many school pupils, in a Nagpur Tiger Rally to mark Wildlife Week. The Satpuda Foundation has been raising awareness of – and directly tackling - the dangers of forest fires, whilst also facilitating the planting of several thousand



► MHU in action © NCSA



► MEU: Face painting and poster competitions © BNHS



saplings across the landscape, particularly around Satpuda and Pench TRs.



► BBC Radio recording of traditional song © BNHS



► Tiger Rally, Nagpur © BNHS



► Camera traps provide evidence of predators returning to feast on livestock kills © TRACT

NCSA's Muthawa Community Resource Centre in Melghat TR has proven a focal point for field conservation workshops, and a model for buffer zone settlement development, showcasing active examples of sustainable agriculture, reforestation, medicinal plant cropping, and energy consumption. This has led to a conservation manual being developed and distributed to all conservation officers in the Satpuda Landscape.

### Employment & Livelihoods

Along with raising awareness, people's access to sustainable livelihood opportunities must also be improved. SLTP partners employ local people wherever possible, ploughing tangible benefits back into the communities on whose support tiger conservation depends. Aside from remuneration, employees have a rare opportunity to develop their skills within the SLTP – be it in environmental education, health care, management, livelihoods outreach, lobbying or research.

TRACT has employed 6 new staff, who have been trained in the use of camera traps, digital cameras, navigation using compass, GPS and GMRS units, and wildlife tracking techniques.

Aside from people it employs directly, the SF's livelihoods programme has helped 79 unemployed youths to find permanent work, building relations with communities and reducing their potential involvement in illegal activities that impact wildlife. Training is also key to this effort, providing opportunities for people to develop new revenue generating skills such as tailoring, IT, and craft-making.

These activities have been complemented by BNHS continuing to help villagers maintain Gobar gas units and distributing an additional 25, significantly reducing people's dependence on, and consumption of, wood from tiger habitat.

### Human-Tiger Conflict

In the human dominated landscape of Central India, tigers compete with people for their habitat, prey and water, giving rise to often fatal conflict, often most evidently where people infiltrate dense, isolated forests to collect minor forest produce.

During last year TRACT has implemented mitigation measures to tackle this ongoing problem by camera trapping

tigers on livestock kills, assisting in conducting surveys to monitor indirect signs of problem carnivores, and raising awareness to engender wider community tolerance.

The potential for intolerance of tiger presence has been further mitigated wherever possible, by facilitating early payment of government compensatory awards for livestock losses to predation. Similarly, TRACT has interviewed the victims of such attacks, gathering valuable data on conflict patterns.

TRACT has worked with Forest Officers to collect field data on the presence of large carnivores and the threats they face beyond protected areas, acting as a deterrent to poachers in the process. Recommendations have subsequently been shared with the managing authorities, leading to the installation of permanently manned gates at either end of the approach road to the TR, restricting vehicle speed and after-dark traffic to improve wildlife protection.

### Habitat protection

The SLTP Landscape Monitoring Unit (LMU) has conducted rapid assessment of several projects' potential impact on tiger habitat (especially corridors connecting TRs), and advocated against environmental damage. NCSA assisted Maharashtra State government to delineate the boundary of the buffer of Melghat TR.

NCSA, CAT and SF assisted the district administration in expediting the resettlement of three villages near Chikhaldara, and SF has been asked to assist in the coming months with the planned resettlement of four villages from inside the core area of TATR. Areas where villages have already been resettled from core tiger breeding areas have already shown prey numbers to be recovering. The government openly acknowledged the importance of NGOs' involvement in this work, due to the excellent trustful relations they share with indigenous communities.

A 2km air strip, previously refused planning permission near Kanha TR, is being proposed only 12km from Pench TR (MP) to serve increasing tourist numbers. Its proximity to wildlife (only 6km from the buffer zone) poses a threat to wildlife: there are several cautionary examples of deer and boar causing near misses at Nagpur's Sonegaon airport, which adjoins a forest. The LMU has taken the matter up with MOEF and continues to



► Camera traps provide evidence of predators returning to feast on livestock kills © TRACT



► Canal networks disrupt the movement of dispersing wild animals © SF

make its opposition known. SF has also written to MOEF listing the irrigation canals whose construction in tiger corridors is limiting dispersal of wildlife throughout the region, suggesting appropriate mitigation measures.



*A major boost to the SLTP in 2010 was the appointment of SF as a standing committee member in the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL), the supreme body authorising all projects directly or indirectly related to wildlife conservation and development. The NBWL rejected the proposal to convert 85 hectares of forest to expand the NH7 highway, following survey work undertaken by the SLTP LMU. SF was also invited to contribute, on behalf of the National Tiger Conservation Authority, to the EIA of a proposed thermal plant in the vicinity of Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary, which the LMU has officially proposed to be upgraded to a Tiger Reserve.*

### Capacity Building

The NCSA conservation team has assisted in compiling a conservation manual to be distributed to all conservation officers in the Satpuda Landscape to standardise and disseminate best practice. To ensure tourists receive accurate information about wildlife and conservation messages, SLTP partners have trained over 150 field guides responsible for accompanying tourists through TRs.

### Legal Action

SLTP partners are committed to ensuring the equitable and strict implementation of Indian wildlife law. At the national level, they have been opposing the Forest Rights Act in the Supreme Court. Although devised to empower the most disenfranchised rural Indians, it contains serious loopholes that threaten to undermine not only India's natural heritage, but also the welfare of the people it was designed to benefit. CAT's legal experts have coordinated litigations brought by BNHS, NCSA and TRACT, ensuring continuity for a variety of ongoing cases that have come up for hearing seven times in the Supreme Court of India only to be adjourned. The next date of hearing is scheduled for 7th July 2011.

CAT's lobbying for the protection of the areas around TRs has led to the notification of buffer zones around TATR, Melghat and Pench TRs. One of the remarkable fall outs of the Melghat notification has been that the 500km<sup>2</sup> area that had been denotified by the Maharashtra Government, and CAT had challenged in the Bombay High Court at Nagpur, has been included in the buffer zone of the Melghat TR. This effectively means that the SLTP has achieved the objective of its Petition, still pending for final hearing in the Bombay High Court at Nagpur.

At the grass-roots level, SLTP partners continue to share information on illegal encroachments, grazing, poaching and extraction on TR peripheries to facilitate prompt and appropriate action to protect these vulnerable habitat areas.

### WHAT NEXT?

Since 2004, Born Free has funded the SLTP to the tune of over £300,000, whilst Partners have received substantial contributions from other donors to support their additional independent activities. The current running cost of the SLTP is £65,000 per year, but additional funds are needed to sustain and, wherever possible, expand the activities of the Partners in the next 5-year phase.

We have published a Donor Pack to help us fund raise to support the SLTP for years to come. Check it out for additional information on the conservation strategy of SLTP and ways in which you could support the Network.



Contact [claudio@bornfree.org.uk](mailto:claudio@bornfree.org.uk) for a copy of booklet and DVD. Or download [here](#)

To watch the film: [vimeo.com/12429914](http://vimeo.com/12429914)

### How can you Support SLTP?

Sponsors have many opportunities for supporting any of the specific SLTP projects outlined in the Activities Update section of this report. You can make a real contribution to saving wild tigers, by:

- Pledging long-term financial support for SLTP work
- Supporting Born Free's fundraising events
- Enrolling the support of UK and Indian companies as sponsors of this Programme
- Building partnerships, by assisting SLTP to develop stronger in-country relationships at the national and local levels
- Spreading the news about SLTP's work and influence

### Why Support SLTP?

SLTP is cost-effective and achieves real value for money, as it:

- Lays the foundation for a nationally and internationally significant conservation initiative
- Invests in long lasting, high impact, locally relevant resources to educate and build capacity amongst the enthusiastic and committed youth
- 100% funding goes to the Partners (no overheads)
- Supports grass-root activities that strengthen social and environmental capital, and are indispensable for sustainable practical conservation

Direct reporting from SLTP Partners will ensure feedback on progress and there would be opportunities to get involved by visiting the region and seeing our work first hand. Corporate sponsors may develop PR opportunities including local and federal media coverage in association with SLTP Partners and Born Free. Born Free stages a number of events throughout the year and donors would be most welcome to join in and meet others with a passion for conservation.

### Contact Us:

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Report prepared by Chris Wright, Claudio Sillero and SLTP partners, April 2010

► Photo: Michael Vickers

