

**Six monthly progress report DI 16-009**

**“Crisis to Biological Management: Rhinoceros and Public Engagement – Nepal”**

**April – September 2009**

**Darwin Initiative**



**Submitted to:**

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**Zoological Society of London<sup>1</sup> and  
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Nepal**



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<b>Country(ies)</b>	Nepal
<b>UK Organisation</b>	Zoological Society of London
<b>Partners</b>	(1) Nepal Trust for Nature Conservation NTNC (2) Department of National Parks and Wildlife Nepal DNWPC (3) World Wide Fund For Nature WWF (4) International Union Conservation Nature and Natural Resources IUCN
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1. Progress against agreed milestones for the 1st and 2nd quarters year 2 April to end September 2009:

This reporting period was during the monsoon season and this restricts access and activities on the ground but in general some significant milestones were reached or approached. A number of the milestones listed under this period are pushed forward and will be reported in the second annual report. The remaining areas of activity include those brought forward from earlier periods and or according to the planned activities and milestones listed below. More details about each site are given in the annex.

- i) **ID Based Monitoring:** The monitoring is now in process in BNP and the reports are regular and thorough showing a stable population now and absence of poaching. Evidence of clean rhino suggests growth and this is a sign that BNP has turned the corner and with this number of animals should be able to recover in time. Reinforcement of the population through translocation from CNP would help but the continued decline in CNP of rhino from poaching precludes this action for the present.
- ii) **Anti-poaching:** In BNP there has not been a single poaching incident over the report period but ongoing problems in Chitwan National Park (CNP) (See annex) for details on progress BNP). The status reporting is now up and running in BNP and this shows a high level of monitoring and awareness. Restoration of disciplined army activities has helped and continued engagement of >100 youths from the community effectively policing the rhino that occupy land outside of the protected area in the corridor to India. 7 rhino of the remaining 22 occupy this zone. The agreements reached on the way forward through a newly constituted Antipoaching Task Force were tested. This force, comprising Army, DNPWC, NTNC and community elements discussed at earlier meetings in BNP are now being implemented with leveraged support from USFWS and the British Embassy who have donated a second hand Landrover defender for APU work. It is slow in execution as there were a number of hurdles

but with the appointment of new Director DNPWC and Army commander progress is being made. The sustainability of the zero poaching record will depend on this system being consolidated. In Chitwan the implementation finally of the monitoring programme with DNPWC and WWF support is making in-roads in CNP even if this has only increased the reporting frequency of poaching incidents. It is hoped if the BNP system takes off and proves effective this will soon lead to similar action in CNP. In Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve (SWR) trans-boundary collaboration has been one of the positive results so far through the new DG DNPWC negotiating powers. There seems to be an agreement for joint monitoring or at least Nepal team being able to go cross and monitor in the Lugga Bagga area. It is not clear how often this happens as there are no reports being generated. This needs to be formalized including joint monitoring programmes.

- iii) **Training:** Dog training has been deferred to 2010 but has finally been agreed by the various parties and is referred to under antipoaching outputs. A workshop is planned for early 2010 to provide training on elephant health to selected DNPWC, NTNC and private sector elephant care staff and veterinarians in collaboration with Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Guhawati Assam and ECI Further scene of the crime training activities are being implemented under a leveraged USFWS grant and will be started in ....An MSc student from Imperial college continued work on scat analysis in Bardia National Park (BNP) started the previous year and included training of the local staff and new NTNC project manager. Sufficient samples are now available and will enable publication. The post grad research on invasive species was completed and is reported in more detail below.
- iv) **Metapopulation management:** The principle of a sanctuary approach to rhino in Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve (SWR) has been accepted by the DNPWC but this will depend on fresh imports of rhino to be successful. Some progress has been made in persuading the International Zoo community to provide animals for this purpose in the short term through contact with EAZA and the Rhino Taxon Advisory Group. An initial set of questions about the proposal have been responded to and further communication is expected in due course.
- v) **Habitat restoration:** research activities on the impact and control of alien invasive species in CNP are now ongoing and community surveys of the drivers for invasion were completed and are reported in the annex. Awareness activities on alien invasives are being undertaken in collaboration with local NGOs (Save the Environment Foundation Nepal) and a video has been prepared and is being shown to audiences in Nepal and in UK. Preliminary assessment of findings from monitoring and socioeconomic surveys suggests that disturbance of the habitat is the main driver, with uncontrolled fire and grass cutting major factors in Mikania spread. See annex. This involves both management and community actions so it is not unrealistic to reverse this trend and restore some degree of ecosystem integrity and resilience. This is the objective of the next stage and preparation of a strategy which will be endorsed at all levels and implemented. The lantana invasion in BNP is being tackled to some extent, by a large project under the TAL of WWF and partners. Some pilot areas on the periphery of the National Park have been cleared but the success of these initiatives remains to be assessed and the wide distribution of the invasive plants is of concern.
- vi) **Community assistance & Public engagement:** The project community assistance and public engagement programme is now well established (For details of outputs to date see Annex).

**Theatre:** Earthbeat Nepal theatre has taken the conservation concerns initiated through the project into a new phase with a number of activities including abstract theatre in Kathmandu. Further funding is being explored currently to take the theatre once again to the field in a series of workshops (and celebrations in BNP for the success in antipoaching) and with a new orientation to more remote communities around Babai and on the West side of the Karnali. CNP will also become a focus. The success of the theatre product from the project on rhino conservation led to engagement of the theatre company on tiger conservation for an

international meeting just held in Kathmandu. This was highly acclaimed and has provided great motivation for the tiger movement at this critical time in tiger conservation globally. In BNP World Environment Day was celebrated by organizing a rally and street drama with the involvement of local school students and community members on June 5. Approximately 1200 participants were. Students of Shree Rastriya LS School played a drama on Human wildlife conflict mitigation and habitat loss.

**Education:** In BNP 26 conservation education sessions were conducted during this period at NTNC-BCP training hall in which 883 participants took part actively. The exciting development of an ecoart programme in the schools has continue with considerable enthusiasm and another session was held during wildlife week in April. Ecoteacher workshops continued on the same format as the previous workshop but this time participants were from across the Geruwa (part of Karnali) river. Four VDCs- Gola, Manau, Pashupatinagar and Pathabar lies at the buffer zone in the western part of the BNP adjacent to the Karnali River. Another TOT workshop was held for ecoteachers in May over 2 days. There is some progress on the BNP visitor centre upgrade as planned.

**Livelihoods:** The fence systems in Khati CNP were visited again and found to be working effectively with odd signs of fence damage requiring repair and NTNC are encouraging the community maintenance teams to keep on top of these minor problems. It is planned to implement solar back up as this damage is often due to failure of the electricity supply with load shedding and once in place should reduce this occurrence. There has been a failure to conclude agreements on lodge licencing for much of this period of the project and it is notable how much more tourism is coming in from Sauraha through community buffer zones e.g. Bagmara who are ill equipped to absorb this. Recent signing of 3 year contracts for the main lodges should ease this pressure but highlights the need for a comprehensive tourism plan for CNP and other areas in the Terai. The new fence in BNP has some problems from flooding but the community is active in resolving these difficulties. Assessment of the impact is ongoing but looks positive. The economic survey of the Mentha plant and its impacts are ongoing but the picture continues to look positive. It is attracting wide interest with already ten community visits from several districts inc. those beyond Bardia. Community is now processing crops from other communities. A section of the plant was taken to Lucknow for repairs by the community which is showing sustainability but a proper cost-benefit assessment needs to be done. Community made request for additional distiller as there is a large demand. It appears that the plant has the capacity for 2 distillers but this needs to be verified with the manufacturer. Community also wants to increase non-palatable crop production to 50 bigas from the current 25 bigas.

HWC strategy development is ongoing with assessment of existing deterrents (farm based deterrents, electric fencing etc) HWC data analysis – Logging of data in suitable format will be completed by 4th Nov 2009; data analysis to be undertaken in Nov 2009 by the education officer with support from ZSL. Report template to be produced by ZSL; working papers on deterrents needs to be completed (non-palatable crops, fencing) Socio-economic survey – draft plan with costs to be produced by 4th Nov by NTNC project manager and his team. Strategy should be ready by Jan / Feb 2010.

#### Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve

Community engagement in SWR is the least developed and various other projects (non-DI) are not proving to be successful including a 15 km fence which is not being maintained. The success of the BNP and CNP initiatives need to be replicated here. The buffer zones are also only in name as they get little benefit from the park. The low gate revenue means that each of the 9 VDCs/BZ communities get only ~25,000 NRs (£200). This seems unbelievable but was assured this was the case. Clearly there is a need to engage with the BZ communities more meaningfully else what is the future of the BZ strategy in Shukla. The community forests are also few, small and not well maintained. The DI project team will create a BZ sub-committee on the environment (similar to the AP) and under this scheme train and employ youth leaders

acting as role-models for the community (eco-warrior concept successfully being used in the South Africa). There would initially be one per BZ area so in total nine (cost 9 \* 5000 = 45,000 NRs per month ~ £400). They would support the school programmes (45 schools inc. eco-clubs and environment teachers – status of eco-clubs are similar to Bardia or even more limited), run community programmes and activities such as tree planting, recycling, sustainable use etc and liaise with the community scouts (enforcement and engagement programme hand in hand). The NTNC community officer can then coordinate and provide support which will make it much more effective.

- vii) **Support admin:** The Project Steering committee established earlier; is finally taking shape with engagement of the new DG DNPWC, Army Staff and NTNC actively involved. and this will inevitably become a National Rhino technical committee.
- viii) **Information gathering:** Background information gathering continues on all subjects and is made available to project members.
- ix) **Info-sharing:** Reports circulated. NTNC and partners DNPWC WWf IUCN AfRSG and ARSG
- x) **Network development:** Elephant Care International have joined a health consortium under the NTNC umbrella which will help implementation of the veterinary components of the project in the closing months.
- xi) **Media coverage:** ZSL website updated [www.zsl.org](http://www.zsl.org) conservation programmes. Press coverage in Nepal continues. A seminar to celebrate Nepal Year of Conservation 2009 is planned for November in ZSL meeting rooms London which will hopefully attract UK press.

**Milestones not yet reached:**

Basic guide lines on captive elephant healthcare, guidelines in newer translocation and veterinary practices; 2 week on-site training programme for DNPWC veterinary staff, scene of the crime training, feasibility on use of dogs in antipoaching, IAPS strategy, rhino conservation action plan and HWC rhino strategy are all planned to be executed this coming half year. These and other workshops are planned for the second half of the year and as concluding activities on the project. Notably

- Invasive species control plan developed and implementation plan agreed.
- Review of the 5-year national rhino action plan undertaken. 1 scientific paper submitted for publication
- Human-wildlife (rhino) conflict management/ resolution strategy developed and implementation agreed .

A number of working papers are in planning (Mentha, Fencing and HWC, theatre and education, Monitoring systems and AP) and at least 2 peer reviewed scientific paper to be submitted for publication. At least 2 DNPWC and NTNC staff are still to be trained in GIS database systems. Field assessment of training, data quality, entry and reporting procedures are still to be completed by Darwin Fellows; Third standardised annual status reports are still to be completed; with a meeting to be held with DNPWC officers and NTNC scientists to discuss findings.

**Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?**

N/A

**Discussed with the DI Secretariat:** N/A

**Changes to the project schedule/workplan:** N/A