

# **SATPUDA**



# **FOUNDATION**

## **Annual Report 2019-20**

**Report of our activities during 2019-20 (April-March)  
in Pench Tiger Reserve, Tadoba-Andhari Tiger  
Reserve, Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve and  
Priyadarshini Pench Tiger Reserve**

**Our activities are supported by Born Free Foundation, LifeForce Charitable  
Trust, Tata Trusts, DeFries Bajpai Foundation, Both Ends and individual  
donors.**

### Highlights of our activities in 2019-2020

- Focus on mitigating human-wildlife conflict in Pench and Tadoba landscapes
- Formed 7 Primary Response teams in Pench to act as first responders in human-wildlife conflict incidents
- Helped 29 villagers file claims for livestock/crop damage inflicted by wildlife
- 14 check dams built in our area of operations to boost water conservation
- 35 waterholes cleaned, de-silted and deepened where required
- 1 new waterhole prepared
- Organised 93 foot patrols with villagers to thwart illegal felling of trees, illegal grazing and poaching
- 8 soak pits dug in villages in our area of operations to promote water conservation
- 269 environment education programmes in village schools attended by 9,694 students
- 19 film shows on nature and wildlife conservation attended by 728 people
- Organised 78 medical camps at which 2,674 villagers got free medical treatment and medicines
- Promoting alternative livelihood options to reduce dependence on forests – mentored women's self-help groups, assisted them in setting up small businesses; organised skill-development programmes for unemployed youths and assisted youths in getting jobs in hospitality industry and as security guards in urban areas
- 42 youths from villages in Melghat Tiger Reserve trained in driving four-wheelers, 7 from Navegaon-Nagzira
- 14 youths sent for training for jobs in hospitality industry
- At policy level, addressed threats to wildlife habitats in Satpuda landscape by suggesting mitigation measures to ongoing development projects including linear projects
- Suggested modifications in mitigation structures on proposed Mumbai-Nagpur expressway
- Worked to divert proposed broad gauge railway line passing through core area of Melghat Tiger Reserve
- Finalised several mitigation structures on roads passing through Tadoba landscape, Tuljapur Highway passing through tiger corridors of Tipeshwar Wildlife Sanctuary, Gosikhurd canals, multimodal corridor project, high-speed railway project in Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary and Samruddhi expressway passing through Eco-Sensitive Areas of three Protected Areas and tiger corridors



Site inspection of Hindu Hruday Samrat Balasaheb Thakre Samruddhi Expressway

## MISSION

Satpuda Foundation consists of dedicated conservationists working to save the forests and wildlife of the central Indian highlands while promoting sustainable development among village communities living in some of the best tiger habitats in the world.

Satpuda Foundation was established in 2001 by Kishor Rithe and a group of dedicated conservationists. While this group had already been individually and jointly engaged in nature conservation activities since the early 1990s, it was felt that a formal organisation with a professional set-up would serve the cause better.

This led to the birth of Satpuda Foundation. While the Foundation is registered in Amravati, its administrative headquarters is located in Nagpur. The Foundation works in 94 villages located around 4 major Tiger Reserves in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh and in two wildlife corridors: Pench-Bor and Yawal-Melghat. The total population of the villages in our area of operations is around 77,000.

In Maharashtra, the areas covered are Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve (15 villages) Pench Tiger Reserve (24 villages), Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (22 villages), Pench-Bor corridor (6 villages) and Yawal-Melghat corridor (3 villages).

In Madhya Pradesh, we operate in 24 villages around Priyadarshini Pench Tiger Reserve.

These Tiger Reserves, along with adjoining forests and corridors currently support an estimated population of around 400 tigers. Wildlife experts estimate that this landscape has the potential to support a population of at least 600 tigers.

Satpuda Foundation believes that a piecemeal approach has less likelihood of success and has crafted a comprehensive, holistic approach to conservation. As livelihood is a major issue in the largely tribal villages where the Foundation works, one of the major thrust areas of its operations is livelihood training programmes and providing assistance to villagers in getting employment. The Foundation's strategy includes

- Grassroots conservation activities including soil and water conservation, organising of community anti-poaching patrols, assistance in fighting fires in the forests
- Addressing human-wildlife conflict by promoting awareness among villagers about the main issues, explaining the reasons for conflict and outlining preventive measures
- Education as a tool to promote conservation by conducting programmes targeted at both village children and adults
- Assisting communities in basic public hygiene and village cleanliness
- Providing free medical treatment and medicines to villagers
- Organising of skill-development programmes to enable unemployed villagers and women's self-help groups set up small businesses/trades to reduce dependence on forests for livelihood
- Liaising with employers such as local resorts and hotels and trade and industrial groups in urban centres to get jobs for unemployed villagers
- Prepare blueprints for eco-sustainable development of villages

## POLICY MAKING

### LANDSCAPE MONITORING UNIT (LMU)

Satpuda Foundation and its founder-President, Kishor Rithe, are members of several government policy-making bodies which take decisions on development projects and wildlife habitats.

As part of LMU activities, Kishor Rithe regularly attends meetings of state-level bodies and holds discussions with Field Directors of various Tiger Reserves, the Chief Wildlife Warden of Maharashtra, Government of Maharashtra and liaises with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and The Ministry of Environment and Forests & Climate Change (MOEF&CC).

As a result, it has been possible for us to guide policy decisions in a conservation-friendly direction while ensuring that development does not suffer and remains sustainable and eco-friendly.

- Attended 16 meetings, organised/participated in a workshop, conference, a symposium and conducted six site visits
- The Central Empowered Committee (CEC) of Supreme Court of India intervened on planned upgradation of existing roads through the core area of Melghat Tiger Reserve (MTR) and made a site visit during 11th to 14th February 2020. We submitted specific recommendations to CEC to minimise impact of roads on wildlife habitat of MTR
- Conducted an assessment of cumulative impact of proposed Navghar to Chirnar multi-modal Corridor (MMC) project, Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) project, proposed high speed rail (HSR) project and existing Diva-Panvel railway line and made recommendations
- The work of constructing 31 overpasses on Gosikhurd canal was expedited
- Recommendations given to Government on policy issues in Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukherjee Jan Van Vikas Yojana like increasing administrative cost, allocation of equal funds in proportion to village population, etc .
- Standard operating procedure (SOP) designed through an expert committee on human-carnivore interaction and submitted to Government of Maharashtra
- Specific guidance were given to Field Directors on following issues to reduce anthropogenic pressure on tiger habitat in buffer of 6 Tiger Reserves. This will lead to refining of the existing Tiger Conservation Plans
  - a) Focus on livestock management to address overgrazing issue
  - b) Supply of cooking gas units to reduce fuel wood extraction by villagers
- A conference on "Science and Technology for rural development" was organised at Nagpur on 27, 28 November. Satpuda Foundation assisted organisers in arranging a key note address by eminent scientist Dr. C.R. Babu on impact of invasive species and its eradication. This session, which included academic staff and students, resulted in expediting a plan for removal of invasive species from protected areas in the Satpuda Landscape
- Issues in regional planning of Satpuda Landscape were raised and discussed through two workshops in Mumbai and Bhopal and video conference meetings with TNC/WCT network. Following issues were discussed - Conservation vision concept and defining its boundaries; Institutional overviews; Draft conservation analysis review and inputs; Inputs on

conservation gaps and analysis; Database creation and mapping of thematic and geographic conservation efforts; Map of conservation priorities/assets; Scenario maps of future land use conversion pressures

- Field Director, Melghat Tiger Reserve, requested our technical support in assessing the spread of *prosopis juliflora* in Lonar Crater. LMU team completed the assessment of spread and prepared a removal plan. SF is monitoring the *prosopis juliflora* removal work.
- LMU team assisted Tiger Reserve officers in mapping agricultural encroachments in tiger corridors using GIS
- Satpuda Foundation collaborated with Veterinary Practitioners' Welfare Association VPWA to organise a 3-day symposium on Agroecology at Bombay Veterinary College on 9th and 10th November 2019.



- The LMU also used print media as a tool to promote awareness about conservation among the public and in government departments.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Human-wildlife conflict has emerged as a major factor affecting conservation and we, at Satpuda Foundation, have been making sustained efforts to mitigate such conflict in our area of operations. In the Pench landscape, we have used our free medical camps, funded by Born Free Foundation, to promote awareness of human-wildlife conflict, explain the causes for the same and suggest measures to reduce conflict. Our team has been active in conducting surveys on incidence of human-wildlife conflict, identifying potential sources of conflict and immediately tackling the same in association with the Forest Department and village eco-development committees (VEDCs). We have also formed 7 Primary Response Teams (PRTs) of local villages who are first responders to incidents of human-wildlife conflict. During the year, we organised training for 32 village youths of the PRTs to

equip them with the skills needed to tackle volatile situations with minimum harm to wildlife conservation. Delayed compensation from the Government for people and livestock killed by wildlife and for crops damaged by wildlife sometimes leads to retaliatory action by villagers against wildlife. To address this issue, we helped 29 villagers file compensation claims in the proper format with relevant supporting documents.

In the Tadoba landscape, in a programme funded by Tata Trusts, we used education as a tool to promote awareness among villagers about human-wildlife conflict – causes for conflict, how it may be avoided and best practices to be adopted by villagers when predators are sighted in the vicinity of villages.



*Pench (Maharashtra), Sillari - Villagers who attended workshop organised by us on Primary Response Teams*

**Water conservation** – A total of 14 check dams were built during the year, using locally available materials. The dams, mostly built on streams, help retain water and recharge the water table. They also provide drinking water to both domestic and wild animals. The dams were built by volunteers comprising adult villagers, members of SHGs that we had mentored and children from village schools.

In other water conservation work, we dug 5 soak pits across the landscape. The soak pits, dug next to wells/hand pumps in villages, collect spill over and run-off water and help recharge the water table.

To ensure that wildlife got proper access to water, we cleaned and de-silted a total of 35 waterholes located inside jungles across the landscape. These waterholes were clogged with organic litter and, in some cases; the water was barely visible beneath the scum. We also dug one new waterhole.



*Pench (Maharashtra), Wagholi- Check dam constructed on a stream near Shiv Kund in presence of Range Forest Officer Modwan*



*Tadoba, Kudesawli – Our Conservation Officer Ajay talks to villagers about human-wildlife conflict*



*Nagzira - Volunteers clean waterhole in Compartment No. 110 in programme organised by us*

## **CONSERVATION**

### *Community patrols*

One of our more significant achievements has been the involvement of village communities in patrolling jungles to thwart poaching, illegal felling and grazing. Thanks to our network and the assistance that we give to village communities, we are able to get villagers to participate voluntarily in this crucial activity to protect wildlife and forests.

During 2019-20, we organised and participated in a total of 93 such patrols in Pench Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra , Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve and Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve.



*Nagzira – Our Conservation Officer Mukund Dhurve leads members of Special Tiger Protection Force on patrol in jungle*



*Pench Tiger Reserve (Maharashtra) – Our field assistant Dilip Lanjewar and members of the village eco-development committee (VEDC) from Khapa carry out patrol in jungle*

## **CONSERVATION**

### *Village cleanliness and hygiene*

One of our key activities is to focus on village cleanliness and public hygiene. Our teams organise programmes to promote awareness about the need for cleanliness and the importance of disposing of litter properly. Little importance is given to litter in villagers who do not realise that the availability of food leftovers is often a reason why some wild animals are attracted to villages. Our programme also emphasise the impact of plastic /polythene on the environment and the need to reduce usage of the same.

During the year, we organised a total of 94 anti-plastic programmes and village cleanliness programmes.



*Pench (Maharashtra), Bachhera - Villagers with plastic litter collected in public cleanliness programme organised by us*



*Tadoba, Kudesawli – Ilagers participate in cleanliness drive organised by us*

Other conservation activities include :

- fighting fires in the forest
- planting saplings
- setting up of seed banks/nurseries in schools. While in some schools, students are encouraged to collect seeds which can be planted in the monsoon season, in other schools, we have set up nurseries to nurture saplings which are planted during the monsoon season
- encouraging villagers to put up small containers with water for birds and small animals



*Nagzira, Koilari - Students of Ashram School plant saplings in programme organised by us*



*Pench (M P), Turiya - Children prepare saplings using seeds of local plants collected by them*



*Pench (M P), Khamba - Children pour water into a water bath in activity organised by us*

## EDUCATION

Education is one of the key tools used by Satpuda Foundation to promote the conservation agenda. Our target audience is school-going children in villages adjoining 6 major Tiger Reserves in central India. The children are sensitised to the conservation message through a mix of classroom lectures, games with a conservation message, nature trails, bird-spotting trails and nature camps. Visits to the Nature Interpretation Centres at the Tiger Reserves and safaris are also organised with the support of the managements of the Tiger Reserves. In addition, the children are periodically led on rallies through their villages so that the conservation message is conveyed to adult villagers also.

All the key days in the “eco-calendar” such as World Environment Day, World Forestry Day, Wildlife Week, etc are also celebrated and a range of programmes is organised including quiz, drawing, painting and essay contests.

During the year, our teams made a total of 269 visits to various classrooms, which were attended by a total of 9,694 students.

The major festivals are also used as occasions to promote our conservation message.

The Foundation has a utility vehicle fitted with a projection screen, LCD projector, speaker and a bank of movies on nature and wildlife conservation besides films with a social message. There are

also movies on topics like rainwater harvesting and organic farming. This vehicle visits all the villages where we work and movies are shown through the year.

A total of 19 film shows were organised during the year which were attended by 728 people.



*Pench-Bor corridor, Umari - Students of Sarvoday High School at environment education programme organised by us*



*Pench (Maharashtra), Dhawlapur - Students take part in drawing contest organised by us*



*Tadoba, Karanji – Film on wildlife being shown by us in village school*



*Nagzira, Kuradi - Face-painting competition organised as part of Wildlife Week celebration*

## **LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT TO VILLAGERS**

Livelihood options for villagers are a major focus area for Satpuda Foundation as most villagers in our area of operations are very poor. The Foundation's experience has shown that communities with stable, sustainable livelihoods are more likely to be consistent partners in conservation. As part of our strategy, we assist unemployed villagers in getting jobs with both local businesses such as resorts and with businesses in nearby urban centres.

We also organise skill-development programmes where villagers pick up skills which will help them get jobs or start their own businesses or trades. These training programmes are organised jointly with the Forest Department in some case, with Village Eco-Development Committees in others and some programmes are organised by us individually.

Some of these programmes last year included

- Tailoring and embroidery
- Driving four-wheelers
- Poultry farming
- Making products from lantana

Thanks to our efforts, a total of 41 unemployed villagers got jobs and 135 people benefited from our various skill-development programmes during 2019-20.



*Pench-Bor corridor, Umari - Members of SHG Durga Mahila Bachat Gat preparing pickles*



*Melghat Tiger Reserve, Harisal – Youths at opening session of month-long driving training programme organised by us*



*Tadoba, Dewada – Members of women's SHG learn to make scented candles in programme organised by us*



*Tadoba, Katwal – Villagers learn how to prepare bags with chopped straws and mushroom spawn*

## MEDICAL CAMPS

One of our major achievements is providing basic medical assistance to villagers living in remote areas on the fringes of Tiger Reserves. Our ambulances ferry doctors to villages, some of which do not even have electricity, let alone medical facilities. The villages where we conduct medical camps are selected in conjunction with the managements of the respective Tiger Reserve.

Trained doctors from Nagpur/Amravati diagnose the patients and prescribe medicines which are then provided free of cost.

Our local field staff use the camps to build goodwill and convey our conservation message.

We also treat staff of the Forest Department and have distributed first-aid kits to some of the more remote outposts.

During 2019-20, we conducted a total of 78 camps at which 2,674 patients got free treatment.



*Tadoba, Khutwanda - Dr. Rhode treats an elderly villager*



*Tadoba – Patient collects her case record before proceeding for treatment*