

O - CONSERVATION RHINO IN THE EYE OF JOURNALIST**Mr. Prabhakar Ghimire and
Mr. Subodh Gautam**

Due to the Maoist insurgency, conservation in Nepal suffered heavy loss. Maximum numbers of rhinos were killed by the poachers manipulating the political situation in Nepal during these insurgencies. Now that the political situation is stable in Nepal, poaching still remains a threat, explained Mr. Prabhakar Ghimire. In 5 months, about 12 rhinos were killed by the poachers and three died from natural causes.

Mr. Prabhakar also informed that the poachers and traders often receive the political protection. Some wardens are also seen misusing their powers, and lack of proper investigation, commitment from the Government bodies and negligence of conservation staff are some of the reasons why the rhinos end up in the hands of wildlife traders and poachers. However, if provisions are made for punishing those officials misusing their powers, including severe penalties and punishments for those involved in trading rhino horns, with proper investigation, the poaching rate could certainly be less than at present. Mr. Prabhakar further added that the cooperation of local people living in the buffer zone and adjacent to protected areas will also be the key to achieving success in combating poaching.

One of the major roles played by media in the field of conservation is creating awareness to the people by giving conservation related news and programs that discourage poaching. Two senior conservation officer were suspended as a result of strong media reports. Despite that, there are various problems faced by the media, including obtaining proper information because the knowledgeable sources prefer to stay away from the journalists, difficulty of access to the concerned officials, lack of specialized knowledge among journalists, lack of coordination between local reporters and people, and that conservation issues are not the main concern among the people and the local level media is not influential enough. If we prevail over these limitations, then the poaching threats in Chitwan will indeed drop off.

P RHINO ACTION PLAN IN NEPAL**Mr. Puran B. Shrestha**

The main goal for the rhino action plan is to preserve the Rhinoceros unicornis and strengthen the recovery of rhino population in Nepal. It aims to build and maintain the population of rhino in Nepal through translocation, to develop the local guardianship, to continue scientific studies and monitoring, to develop human resources in wildlife management and most importantly to stop the illegal trade of rhino horn and products.

The main objectives are:

- Study biology and habitat and establish a database with a monitoring system by conducting essential research on rhino.
- Habitat expansion through rehabilitation, restoration of identified priority rhino habitats by maintaining forest corridor, and developing tourism plans for protected areas.
- Create viable population by translocating more rhinos and monitoring translocated rhinos.
- Improve rhino human relation through buffer zone development and conservation by implementing awareness programs, community development programs, trainings, and a community relief fund.
- Strengthen anti-poaching capabilities by establishing and equipping anti-poaching units, and supporting national legislation as well as CITIES..
- Build up institutional capacities by providing specific trainings, and strengthening infrastructure, including building orphanage centers in each protected area. Improve storage for rhino horn stock piles.
- Strengthen national transboundary, regional and international collaboration through organized periodic meetings which aim to develop an information-sharing mechanism.
- Continuous transfer of rhino for ex situ conservation from wild populations by preparing rhino transfer criteria, and a translocation schedule.

Five years Action Plan Program for the Asian one-horned rhino for Nepal.

The total Budget to implement a 5-year action plan is estimated at US\$2.90 million. Of this, US\$1.47 million has been set aside for Chitwan National Park, US\$833,000 for Bardia National Park and US\$507,000 for Suklaphata Wildlife Reserve.. The major portion of the total budget is allocated for anti-poaching operations.

1) Chitwan National Park

Activities	Budget in US \$
Population estimate/ Research and Monitoring/ Database	255,000
Habitat Management	75,000
Anti Poaching	130,000
Conservation Education	524,000
Rhino orphanage/ Medicine/ Stockpile storage	40,000
Hattisar Management	115,000
Tourism code of conduct	100,000
Relief Funds	25,000
Trainings/workshop/seminars	100,000
Other unseen costs	100,000
Sub Total	1504,000

2) Bardia National Park

Activities	Budget in US \$
Population estimate/ Research and Monitoring/ Database	195,000
Habitat Management	105,000
Anti Poaching	248,000
Conservation Education	25,000
Rhino orphanage/ Medicine/ Stockpile storage	80,000
Hattisar Management	25,000
Tourism code of conduct	25,000
Relief Funds	50,000
Trainings/workshop/seminars	30,000
Other unseen costs	50,000
Sub Total	833,000

3) Suklaphata Wildlife Reserve

Activities	Budget in US \$
Population estimate/ Research and Monitoring/ Database	100,000
Habitat Management	75,000
Anti Poaching	232,000
Conservation Education	15,000
Rhino orphanage/ Medicine/ Stockpile storage	35,000
Hattisar Management	25,000
Tourism code of conduct	25,000
Sub Total	507,000

WORKING GROUP AND CONCLUSIONS

A. WESTERN TERAI

Population of 200 rhinos maintained as a metapopulation in four protected areas in the Western Terai Landscape.

Existing situation

- Four patches (protected areas) and matrix (forest outside of protected areas, agricultural land and settlement)
- Patches are not big enough to maintain viable population of large mammals
- Human disturbance is a major challenge for conservation
- If not managed, the population may become extinct because of its small number (lack of dispersal and Inbreeding)

Current population

Population	Rhinoceros (Reintroduced)
Bardia Population	30-40
Sukla population	6
Dudhwa population	21
Katarnia Population	4

- Individual protected areas alone can not hold viable population
- Ever-increasing human population and their needs make conservation work more difficult
- Managed as a metapopulation

Potentiality

- Remnant forest outside the protected areas of the Western Terai still connects these protected areas.
- Movement of rhinoceros from one park to another and occasional records of elephant and tiger in these forests indicates potential for managing these mammals in a metapopulation approach.
- Genetic Variability of Western Terai large mammals is high* .
- High genetic variability in rhinoceros in the Chitwan population (Dinerstein 1991).

**No DNA study results yet to substantiate genetic variability.*