



The IRV 2020 veterinary team and tranquilized rhino. Photo by IRF

## Indian Rhino Vision 2020 Program Update

By the International Rhino Foundation

Two more female greater one-horned rhinos have been moved from Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary to Manas National Park by the IRV 2020 teams.

The rhinos have been closely watched by the highly-trained monitoring team as they adjust to their new home.

Each rhino was fitted with a radio collar that allows the teams to determine where they are, how they are moving, and with which other rhinos they may be associating. WWF-India will oversee long-term monitoring of the animals.

Together, India's Kaziranga National Park and Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary currently hold about 75% of the world's greater one-horned rhino population, and thus serve as a source of animals for repopulating other protected areas. Poachers killed the last remaining rhinos in Manas National Park in the 1990s and it wasn't until a few years ago that a return could be attempted. Recently Manas was restored as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and since 2008, ten rhinos have been released into the area - four male and six female rhinos. Four of those translocations were assisted with funding by ARP donors.

Ten more rhinos will be moved from Kaziranga

National Park before the end of the year to create a founder population of 20 animals. Translocating rhinos from the two sites will help create a viable population of this threatened species that has recovered from fewer than 200 animals in the early 1900s to more than 2,850 today, approximately 80% of which are found in India and 20% in Nepal.

In addition to Manas, greater one-horned rhinos from Kaziranga will eventually be sent to Laokhawa Wildlife Sanctuary and Dibru-Saikhowa National Park to increase and disperse the number of wild populations as insurance against extinction. For Indian Rhino Vision 2020 to meet its goal, Assam's rhino population will have to increase by about 800 animals over the next eight years, representing a growth rate of approximately 4% per year. This is certainly realistic if translocations and ongoing protection efforts continue to be successful.

Indian Rhino Vision 2020 is a long-term project of the government of Assam, IRF, WWF-India, the Bodo Territorial Council, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The aim is to build the Indian rhino population up from approximately 2,320 that survive today in Assam to 3,000 spread among seven of its protected areas by the year 2020.