

Preparing for Indian Rhino Vision 2.0

Following the translocation of two Greater one-horned rhinos from Kaziranga National Park to Manas National Park in April 2021, the Indian Rhino Vision 2020 (IRV2020) programme came to a close. The programme, which launched in 2005, taught us many lessons. Now, we're using this knowledge to develop a new programme: **Indian Rhino Vision 2.0**.

Bibhab Talukdar | Senior Advisor, Asian Rhinos, International Rhino Foundation

When IRV2020 began, its aim was to increase the rhino population within India's State of Assam to 3,000 by establishing populations in seven protected areas. By the time the programme ended last year, we had successfully increased the total population across the State to more than 3,000, with rhinos now found in four protected areas: Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, Orang National Park, Kaziranga National Park, and Manas National Park.



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A recent survey (completed in March 2022) of Greater one-horned rhinos shared that the total population (across India and Nepal) of the species has increased to 4,014 animals from approximately 3,500 in 2015. Whilst poaching remains a threat, it is – thankfully – a much smaller risk for Greater one-horned rhinos compared to their African



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cousins: approximately 11 were poached between 2019 and 2021.

During the last 18 months, those involved with IRV2020 have been developing goals for the coming years, planning to build upon our previous successes. Meetings to approve the plan, affectionately called IRV 2.0, were unfortunately delayed due to the global pandemic, but the hope is that IRV 2.0 will kick off in late 2022 or early 2023, under the leadership of the Assam Forest Department and supporting partners. Excitingly, translocations could commence again by the end of the year!

Instead, one of the most significant threats to the species is the prevalence of invasive species, which choke out native rhino food plants and limit the amount of habitat available. With a growing population of rhinos across Assam and more translocations planned with IRV 2.0, a healthy habitat full of diverse rhino food plants, is key.

IRV 2.0 has five core areas, including: habitat management, incorporating local communities, rhino-range expansion, rhino crime monitoring and direct support.



At the International Rhino Foundation, we're collaborating with our partner, Aaranyak, and community members, to pilot the removal of invasive plant species in Manas National Park.

The Park totals around 50,000 hectares and is currently home to approximately 48 rhinos. Yet around one-third of the rhinos' grassland habitat has already been taken over by invasive

species. So far, community members have successfully restored 50 hectares of prime rhino habitat.

As IRV 2.0 takes shape, the programme in Manas will help us to learn more about working alongside communities to restore and protect rhino habitats, serving as a model to reintroduce rhinos into more of India's national parks.

