

Inspiring India

It was an invitation I couldn't turn down. The email from my dear friend Susie Ellis, Executive Director of the International Rhino Foundation, asking whether I fancied travelling with her to Darjeeling and Kolkata, to help teach a pair of fundraising workshops, followed by a visit to Manas and Orang National Parks and Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, to check on the progress of Indian Rhino Vision 2020. Most of my expenses would be paid by a grant she had obtained from USFWS. It took me under a nanosecond to accept.

Cathy Dean | Director

The word of the trip was 'Yikes! Yikes!' when a passenger on the plane shouted in Hindi that he was going to blow it up. (We could have done without the well-meaning translator sitting next to me.)

particular fondness a discussion about how to budget for training elephants to catapult themselves across railway lines in a sling, thus avoiding elephant deaths and train

Each group reported back on their draft proposal and budget and others would critique it



Kolkata practice proposal

hill station of Darjeeling.

The good night's sleep later and there we were, in front of a group of 20 people working for local conservation NGOs. Susie's former Development Officer, Maggie Moore, had planned the whole workshop, with sessions covering prospect strategy and research, the basics of donor cultivation, the 'Direct Proposal', writing for different donors, budgeting, donor stewardship and reporting. We took it in turns to present, happily ad-libbing about good and bad examples we'd each come across.

cheering when one group came up with truly poetic descriptions of their project site that would have painted a vivid picture for any proposal review committee. On the last day, Kanchenjunga appeared through the mist, illustrating the words of their invented proposal!

Each two-and-a-half day course ended with a formal evaluation, and I'm delighted to say that we had great feedback from all participants. Those in Darjeeling, in particular, were so impressed that we had come all the way from Virginia and London to pass on our knowledge. But far from it being one-way traffic of knowledge from Save the Rhino and the IRF to West Bengal-based NGOs, we also learned new things: about our own skills as trainers, fundraising climate change and biodiversity in local environmental issues, and of course about the work being done by conservation organisations in the area. There was a plea for help to expand the Indian Rhino Vision 2020 project, which is currently based only in Assam, to cover West Bengal too, and I very much hope there will be some support for this.

After an initial shyness, by the time we'd got the trainees working in small groups on writing a practice proposal and budget, everyone was having a great time. We'd told them

The thing that makes me happiest in my job is being able

A group work up

the right guidelines to remember with



Sharma and Deba