

# A Report about Rhino Poaching in Chitwan National Park, Nepal.

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Prepared by

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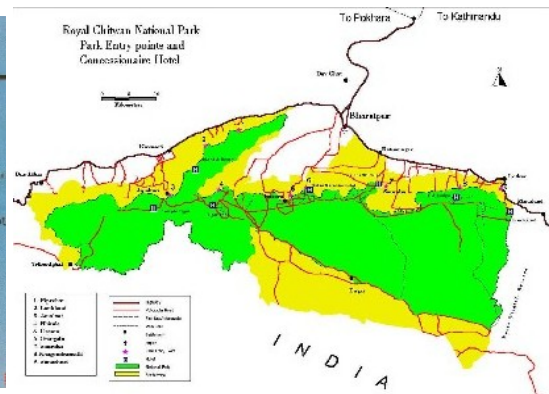
## Chitwan National Park

**A Brief Introduction:**

**Established: 1973**

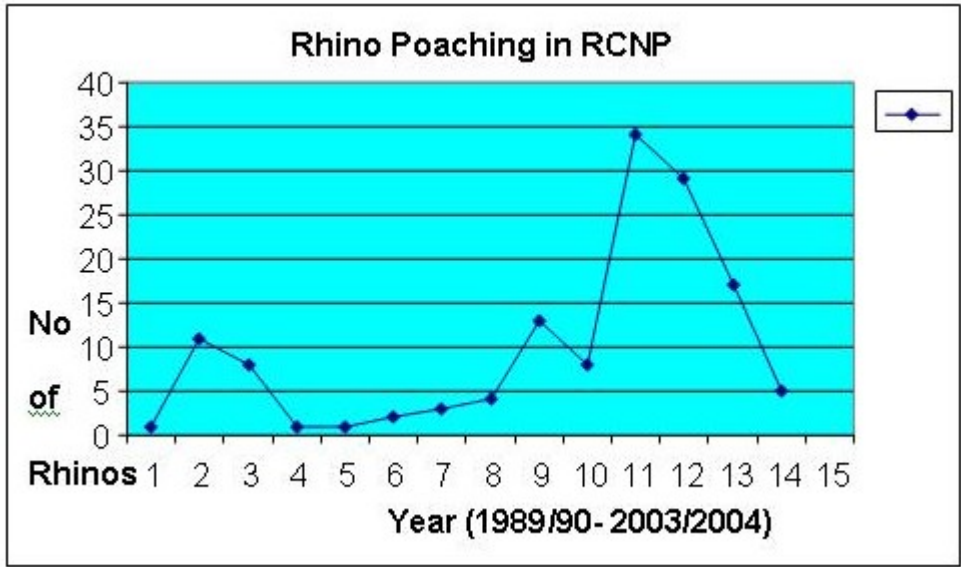
**World Heritage Site Declaration: 1984**

**Buffer Zone Area Established: 1996**



Some attractive animals of the park.



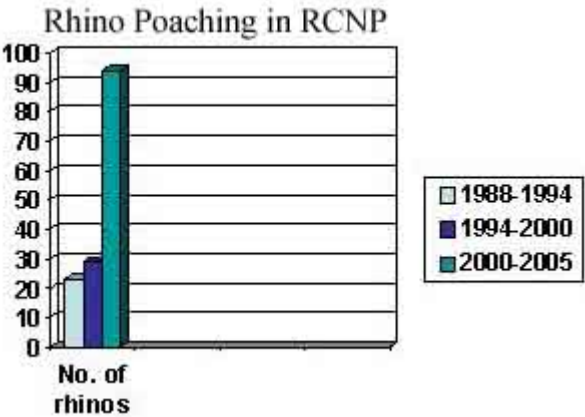


Rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) is one of the 26 protected mammals of Nepal. Chitwan national park started protection of this endangered species from 100 last remaining individuals. The population of rhinos increased over a period of time and two additional populations were created in Bardia National Park and Sukla Phanta Wildlife Reserve. Poaching of rhinoceros has been a big problem for protected areas. The trend of poaching has been fluctuating over last 3 decade. The economic incentive derived by increase in

price of rhino horn in the international market has accelerated the problem of poaching. Insurgency further intensified the problem.

Poaching is one of the major threats in conservation. Specially poaching of rhino has been a big problem in Chitwan National Park. Poaching activities has risen simultaneously along with the conservation process. Previously only the main poacher involved in poaching activities. But now traders or main poachers do not involve directly in killing the rhinos. They use community people in poaching.

During the implementation conservation policy, the issues of the rights of the people living near park area raised. Some NGOs/INGOs focused on human rights rather than importance of wild animal. Only few donor agencies and NGOs focused on conservation and rights together. It helps to strengthen the park people conflict. After the establishment of buffer zone area also, the carelessness towards wild animals have not decreased. Buffer zone committee focused mainly on the physical infrastructure rather than awareness in conservation. Different cases have been registered in court regarding the harm of wild animals and natural disasters caused due to the park. Many INGOs, NGOs advocate towards people's right rather than conservation. In these conditions also the buffer zone council seems poor. These increase park people conflict. These factors also help local people to involve in the poaching activities.





Poaching of rhino horn is one of the serious threats in conservation with reference to CNP. Our study indicates following reasons which justify poaching is major threat.

### **1. Strong network of poacher**

The numbers of poacher have been increased. The networks of poachers are also become strong. Poaching is not limited to subsistence but has been organized crime.

### **2. Use of sophisticated weapons**

Now more sophisticated weapons are using in poaching activities. Our study indicates that poachers buy gun from India or some other places in Nepal. But they make bullets and other accessories locally.



### **3. Loose government policy and security system**

The government policy is not based on local realities. Due to which poaching activities are increasing. Similarly the security system has also been weak. The army security posts have been merged from 34 to 11. As well as park sector office has been decreased due to the effect of insurgency.

### **4. Protection of poachers from political leaders**

The network and approach of poachers have reached to the political leaders. Our study indicates that only poor and low status poachers are arrested and kept in jail. There are evidences that high level poachers have been released after arrest due to the protection of some known leaders.

## **Causes of poaching**

### **1. Poverty**

During our study most of the poachers told that poverty is the main cause that motivates them towards poaching. Due to poverty especially backward communities like Chepang, Tharu, Kumal, Tamang and other ethnic group were found involved in poaching. The data of CNP shows that most of the poachers jailed are from these ethnic groups which are very poor. The middle man search the local people that are suffering in poverty. They provide cereals and other necessary help when they are in scarcity and motivates towards poaching.

### **2. Unemployment**

Unemployment is another major factor that causes poaching activities. The middle man searches the unemployed poor people in poaching. Once the people involve in poaching, it is very difficult for them to change their profession. Poachers and ex poachers told us that if they are provided some income generating activities, they are ready to change their profession.

### **3. More demand of rhino horn**

The rise in price of rhino horn, tiger bone, and skin and musk pod in the international market intensified poaching. So, poachers are found attracted in CNP where there is loose security than India.

### **4. Lack of knowledge about conservation**

Among the people of buffer zone area, there is lack of knowledge in conservation. There is lack of conservation awareness programmes to the people of buffer zone area. Especially the low level people are not aware about the importance of conservation.

### 5. Unaware about punishment system

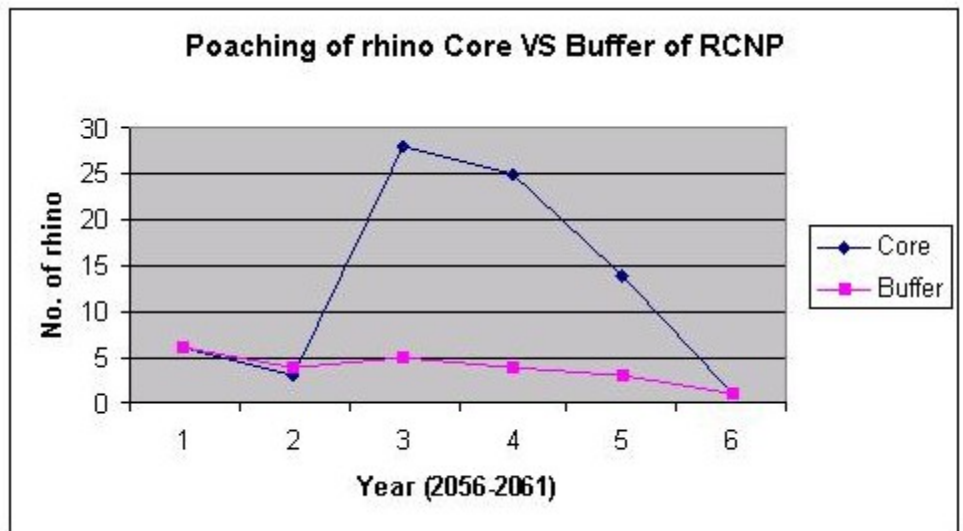
Poaching network involve three level of poacher – high level poacher traders, middle man and low level poachers. Low level poachers are generally from buffer zone area and they are involved in killing of rhinos. Our study indicate that low level poacher do not know about punishments system. They are uneducated people and feel that killing of rhino is just like killing of domestic animals. Middle men and high level poachers are aware about punishment system but local people that are involved in poaching unaware about poaching.

### 6. Destruction of habitat

Due to destruction and poor management of habitat, rhino occasionally come in the buffer zone area. We found that rhino are attracted towards crops and especially sugarcane fields in Nawalparasi district. In the buffer zone area rhino can be easily trapped than in core area.

### 7. Poor role of buffer zone

There is lack of seriousness of buffer zone council towards the control of poaching. The budget planning of buffer zone council is not systematic. They allocate more budget in infrastructure development where as they allocate only less amount in anti-poaching activities. Due to which low level poachers are not motivate towards anti-poaching.



### 8. Easy access in core area

After the insurgency the post of army and park have been decreased from 34 to 10. The park staffs are not able to reach the core area. The data of last 6 years poaching of rhino indicate that killing of rhinoceros are found more in core area. In the core area like Seri, Gaiindakasha, Laukhani, Dumeria the movement of park staff is very low. Hence more poaching was occurred in that area.

## Styles of poaching

Nowadays killing of rhinos is done through four types. Usually they are:

1. Shooting from gun
2. Electric ambush
3. Pit fall
4. Poisoning



**Different tools used to kill rhino.**

At the initial stage pitfall was common. But nowadays shooting from gun, electric ambushes are more common. Causes of electrocution are accidents caused by electric current set by farmers to protect their crop and scare wild animals. The data of 2048-2061 shows that 147 killings of rhinos, 110 rhinos were killed in gun shot, 8 were from electric ambush, 7 from poisoning and 11 from pitfall.

## Types of people involve in poaching

Three types of people are found involve in poaching activities. Our study indicates that three types as high class poachers also known as traders, Mediator (middle man) and low class poacher.

High class poachers are top level poachers. They are the main persons that control the mechanism of poaching activities. Usually they do not expose to other level. Only some high level mediators contact them. They are the



persons who are more benefited from poaching activities but almost being escaped from being punished.

Middle man poachers have linkage between low classes to high level poacher. They motivate the low class poacher to kill the rhinos. Usually they provide gun and other weapons to low level poachers. They are also benefited much from poaching. They are rarely arrested.

Low level poachers are the people who involve directly in killings of rhinos. Low level people are always from the local level. Being local they know

habitat area more easily. High class poachers and middle man live mostly outside the buffer zone area. Outside people do not much about the habitat area of rhino as well as the way to search the rhino. Because they are aware about the fact that poaching is serious crime they do not directly involve in killing process. They use local people in that work. On the other hand, local people do not know much about the importance of rhino.



They are not aware about the crime also. They can easily go to habitat area where they locate rhino. They feel rhino as domesticated animal and do not hesitate to kill rhino. In some cases the knowledge of *maute* (elephant care taker) and guide are misused by poacher knowingly and unknowingly. Specially *maute* have also found involved in killing of rhino. Few *mautes* have been arrested and jailed also.

## What we found

In our study we found that poachers have interrelation with park staff, staff of inside hotels and guides. This type of relationship exists since long time. Poachers have used the hotel staffs in killing the rhino. CNP administration is aware about this type of relation. But CNP have not strengthened the strategies.

Poachers have strengthened the style of keeping relation. The activities of the agencies that work inside the park also sometime reflect that they are protecting the poachers. Many habitat area of CNP are near the hotel area. Comparatively more poaching is found in that area.

Especially *maute* knows all the activities of rhino. They use two- three elephants and show the rhino to tourists trapping between the elephants. Due to that activity also rhinos are habituated to the human. Therefore it is easy for poachers to trap rhino. People of buffer zone enter the park to cut the grasses when park permit them annually. Similarly indigenous people enter the park area for fishing. They spend few days inside the park during that period. They do not understand the importance of rhino. It will become easy for poachers to use them.



Guide knows the details about park and its activities. They may have direct relation with poachers. People involve in tourism also act as pool between poachers and park. Hotel entrepreneurs know that their income source is rhino but they are not sensitive toward the rhino. Park staffs also feel threat from poachers. Due to that reasons they are not sensitive towards anti-poaching activities.

Poachers are aware that conservation policy of government is weak. The arrested poachers use advocates in order to save them. Advocates try to simplify the crime and provide less punishment. Once the case started, the courage of poachers have found increased.

High class poachers do not enter the park. They enter the community and tell people that they want to buy large scale land for business purpose. Nowadays they enter the community saying that they need land for poultry purpose. Before, they used to say that they want to buy land for banana farming, pharmaceutical company and herbal industry. They attract local community by saying they will provide jobs. During that period they make relationship with middleman. They provide responsibility to middleman for the weapons, bullets and other accessories. Middleman knows that where they can get gun, how they can make bullet from the iron rod. High class poachers do not keep relation with low class poachers. After the total management middleman insists low level poacher to enter the park.

Low class poachers make group of close relation persons. Some of them carry food, some carry weapons and some of them have the knowledge of habitat. In this crime they usually get NRs2000 to 10000 per person. They feel risky to carry gun and wire. So, they fix the gun and wire previously their arrival. They wrap the gun with plastics and keep inside the land, hole of tree or covering by dry grasses. They enter the jungle in the way

as they are searching for food. But all the poor people that enter inside the park are not poacher. So it is difficult to trace out the poachers. If they meet other persons, they use their own mother language. So, it is difficult to have enquiry with them.

After killing the rhino, they cut rhino horn and handover to the middleman. Middle men carry the rhino horn and give to the high-class poacher in town, and high class poacher handover it to the international network.

In some cases, after having habituation in this crime, low class poacher themselves and sell it to the middleman. Middleman knows the value of rhino horn. In between the groups of middleman there is competition to earn money and to make high network. Sometimes they inform park authorities about the person that carry rhino horn and where he is going.

Comparatively the anti poaching policy is loose. Poachers know the style of operations. There is not systematic procedure to keep the informants. Some time the informants help the poachers and possess the double role.

## Case Study

We have interacted about hundred persons for this case study.

### 1. 1) Harda Khola Case Study

Latest poaching of rhino was occurred in Machan hotel area. Around Harda Khola, Machan area, Chitwan Jungle Lodge area, Khagendramalli post area mostly rhino are found. In Harda Khola area last poaching of rhino was occurred. Near that area before three years three rhinos including one calf was killed by poachers. On Poush 13<sup>th</sup> of this year when park was opened for cutting grass, one gun was found west to Khagendramalli Machan. That gun was found in pitfall covering from dry grass.



#### Case Study conducting on the spot of Harda Khola

On 28th Ashoj, 2062 a rhino was shot in Machan area at 3.30 pm. This spot was 11 km far from Security post Khagendramalli, 2.5km far from Mahendra highway and 1400 m far from Machan Hotel. This spot is near to one of entrance of Sunachuri area. Near that place there is tradition of worshipping goddess Bandevi. So, there is high public movement also.

According to hotel staffs rhino was killed from near tree when rhino was wallowing in pond. Hotel guide have seen the rhino before its death. One *maute* told that when he reached that place along with tourist, the rhino was still alive and struggling for death. But the horn was cut. At 3.45 hotel staffs and others have reached to the spot. They said they have heard the firing sound at 3.30 pm. In a mysterious way a rhino was killed.

### 2. Poachers interrelation



Man Bahadur Ghale of, Manahari, Chitwan was a teacher of primary school in Korak two years ago. On 2058 B.S, he was president of community forest of that area. Due to maoist problem he left teaching profession and involved in rhino poaching on 2059 B.S.

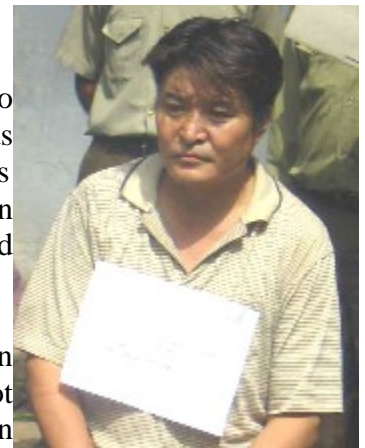
His brother was already involved in poaching profession as a porter. They knew the professional poacher Sikari Kami and Sher Bahadur Tamang. Along with them he involved in poaching on 2059 B.S. Together with Man Bahadur Gopal Praja (25 yrs) of Padampur was also involved. Gopal's brother Rajan Praja was already involved and is in jail. According to Man Bahadur, Sikari Kami made bullet himself from iron rod. They shot rhino in Churiya range. This was not new from them. They was involved with tharu community of Madi Area and made arrangements for poaching.

"After selling horn, Sikari Kami gave less money to other persons of the group. He had sold the rhino horn in NRS. four hundred and fifty thousand. When we knew this fact, there was fraction in group. And some of our group was arrested", Man Bahadur said.

Similarly 18 years old Raj Kumar Kumal was involved in poaching following his father's path. After his father's arrest, his father's friends motivate him towards poaching. According to him poachers cross the security post by placing gun in the heap of broom stick.

### 3. Yakche's case study

According to park authorities, Yakche is a high class poacher and he used to trade rhino horn from Nepal to international market. He entered Nepal from Tibet as refugee before 20 years. He had citizenship from Manag district. Now he has property around 250-300 millions. He had a pajero and two santro car. His shown business is import of Sheep from Tibet to Kathmandu. He had accepted that he had sold 20 rhino horns. CNP administration has blamed him for selling more than 50 horns. He was arrested on Ashar 5, 2061 B.S. with one toyato car, one rhino horn, 4 hundred and forty six thousand Nepali rupees in cash , rhino horn weighing machine and a mobile phone set. We met him he pretended that he did not understand Nepali Language. At present he has appointed advocate. He was kept in Bharatpur Jail. But nowadays he was taken to Kathmandu for treatment.



## Versions of the different people

### 1. Prem Nepali (Guide, Sauraha)

Most of the guide knows the poaching spot and poaching style. Security forces cannot reach to the poacher's shelter. We can easily reach to the poaching shelter after a day walk. But security forces should not know about the visit. If security forces know when we go there, we will be not secured from poacher's side. If we go there in our own way, they will behave like friends. One of the shelter areas is *Parnseshowr Khola*.. In that place there is a hut made by poachers. They bring local wine in gallons. They have dry food also. Usually they kill deer and make *sekuwa* in order to have along the wine. Sometimes they stay for a week in that place also. They use gun in order to shoot the rhino. They cut rhino horn and give it to the mediator. I am ready to take with you in that spot. But you should bear risk.

### 2. Sukram Kumal (Guide, Tigertops)



At present it is not easy to take you to the poacher's shelter. Nowadays security movement can take place at any time. If securities watch us, it will be risk.

**3. Krishna Bahadur Basnet (Office Holder, Tigertops)**

It is not easy to meet with poachers. Mostly community members involve in poaching. Usually gun and pitfall are used in killing the rhino. It is not easy to find poacher's shelter near the hotel area. Community people involve in poaching because they feel it as easy business.

**4. Deuman Kumal (*Maute*)**

It is not easy to identify poachers. Usually people near park area enter inside the park. We behave them friendly. Some asked details about rhino. But we do not know whether they are poachers or not.

**5. Lok Bahadur Chhetri (Manager Machan Wildlife Resort)**

Poachers roam around the park. Recently they killed rhino 1400 meters far from our hotel. One of our guides found the rhino before death. Poachers had cut the rhino horn but rhino was still alive. I had heard the firing around at 3 pm.

At that time after 20 minutes our elephant had gone to that area with tourists.

**6. Tikaram Mardaniya (Ex poacher Koluwa VDC Nawalparasi)**

I do not want to brief everything with you. I have given some money as bribe to the staff of CNP. I was caught when I was in the process of selling rhino horn in Nawalparasi. One of my friends had given information to the park authorities some persons that involved in poaching gave me wheat and other grains, money when I was in scarcity and told me to bring rhino horn. I spend three years in custody. I was not involved in killing of rhino.

**7. Santa Kumal ( Wife of poacher Rajkumar Kumal)**

My husband is in custody. I did not know he was involved in poaching. When he was arrested, then only I knew the fact. I do not know that he had earned from poaching. He did not give money to home also. My father in law was involved in poaching and he is in custody. He have not earned from it. We are in very poor state. After the arrest of my husband I am living in my brother's home. I have small children. When my husband released from the jail I do not involve him in poaching at any cost.

**8. Ratan Choudhary (Running poacher Nawalparasi)**

You should commit that you should not expose. In poaching we involve our relatives and known persons of community. We can get the old guns from the village also Bullet is made from iron rod. We get gun from India also. Gun can be crossed by placing in four wheel cart (*Gada*). Gun was not used before. Mostly rhino were killed in pitfall. The rhino was trapped by injecting nail in leg. Gun was kept inside jungle before entering for attack. We worship goddess Bandevi in order to get success in killing rhino. I can earn NRs 25000-50000 by participating in this activity. But other helpers get NRs 5000-10000. I do not tell you from when I was involved. I do not kill rhino in my community area. It makes me safe.

**9. Bishnu Adhikari (President, Ant poaching Youth Awareness Campaign Nawalparasi)**

Park administration is not strong to control the anti-poaching. We have found poachers playing cards with park staffs. We have caught those poachers with the help of other park staff. Therefore anti-poaching control style is controversial. The role of buffer zone is almost zero. They have not mobilized community in anti poaching movement. There is possibility to enter inside park from any place. We are involving in anti-poaching campaign. Sometimes park administration harassed us. They feel us as their rival. So, I think whole anti-poaching strategy should be changed.

**10. Hukum Gautam (Manager Island Jungle Resort)**

From our hotel, two staffs had arrested after involving in poaching. One is *maute* and another is kitchen staff. I know many people involved in poaching. But they said they had been tortured from security person and

park staff. It takes times for you to meet them. There is also risk from security forces of the park. In buffer zone area rhino can be easily trapped. They entered the buffer zone area to eat vegetables and crops.

**11. Gajendra Osti (Advocate of high class poacher Yakche)**

We have to win the case of Yakche. We should focus to provide minimum punishment to him.

**12. Munna Bikram Khati( Advocate of low class poacher)**

My client was involved in killing of rhino. But I am in the process to give him minimum punishment by stating he was only involved as porter. In this way he can get less punishment.

**13. Pramod Kumar Yadav (Ranger Sunachari)**

Usually poacher kept gun earlier in the places where rhino can be found easily. Next day shooter will kill the rhino. After all the management done by his friends only shooter enters inside park. Usually rhino was killed from nearby tree when rhino was wallowing in pond. After rhino fall down, horn was cut with the help of khukuri, axe etc.

**14. Bishnu Thapaliya (Ranger Kasara)**

In poaching process there is always community support. Poachers change their voice when they were shifted to prison. Their advocate tries to safe them. But slowly we will try to find out their network. Main poachers smuggled the rhino horn in safe way.

**15. Kamaljung Kunwar (Assistant Warden/Chief- Anti Poaching Unit, CNP Kasara)**

There is threat in controlling poaching. There is threat to expose the poaching style also. In international market the demand of rhino horn is very high.

Previously poachers enter in community in easy way. Nowadays they are entering in secret way. Usually the low class poacher and some middle class poacher also do not know the main trader. Therefore it has become difficult to arrest the main trader. The network of poacher is very high and active. Usually traders run the poaching as family business. In other level poachers also they involve own relatives and well known people in order to maintain secrecy. The middle level poachers are using ethnic groups like Kumal, Tamang, and Chepang in poaching, because they are in poor condition.

**16. 16. Ajit Thapa (Lt. Colonel, Chief - Purano Gorak Gana, Kasara)**

Community mobilization is essential to control the poaching. In order to control the poaching, regular patrolling, regular monitoring and regular interaction, meeting is essential. For this purpose we should make conservation event calendar. There is not lack of resources for the anti-poaching movement. But we should manage it more systematically. The conservation policy should be revised in order to control poaching activities effectively. The role of buffer zone council is not effective in anti poaching movement. Nowadays poachers are using sophisticated weapons. We have arrested the poachers who have used SLR bullets. In every aspects of conservation, security part involvement is essential.

**17. Krishna Prasad Bhurtel (President Buffer Zone Council)**

Buffer zone council provides compensation to the victim and family of victims. For anti poaching movement we are doing few programs.

**18. Shiva Raj Bhatta (Former Chief Warden, CNP)**

There is threat from poachers to our junior staffs. There is one event in 2045 B.S. that poachers had killed two game scouts in Bardiya. Poachers hide their gun and other weapons very secretly. One example when we have arrested the poachers, we had taken him to the poaching spot. We had asked about his gun. We could not found the gun in the place where he mentioned. But he found the gun very easily. Awareness advocacy is main tool for controlling the poaching activities. The policy of government is not so strong. We need more resources to control the poaching.



## 19. Tikaram Adhikari (Chief Warden, CNP)

Wildlife trade is one of the most profitable businesses in world. Poaching increases as the demand of rhino horn increases in international market especially in China. In poaching higher level people also involved. From low level to high level, poaching has been taken as easy business. Poachers are more clever than us. Effective punishment system is needed for the poachers Separate crime investigation branch is essential in order to control the poaching. We have become weak after working with community but youth mobilization in buffer zone area is also important. Actually Media advocacy can help to control the poaching. It generate positive attitude of people towards conservation.

Tourism should kept in second priority. Tourism management plan is essential to reduce over exploitation in national park.

## Government's Effort in Anti poaching

The efforts of the government in conservation are not weak. The role of government in anti poaching is effective too. But due to destruction of habitat and increased in poaching, the practices of government seem poor. Due to increase in political conflict and insurgency the numbers of poachers have been increased. If the government have not taken actions in conservation, the situation would be more dangerous. The government has done participatory work with different INGOs, NGOs and other stakeholders. Awareness advocacy and conservation education are being done in some extent.

Among the works government have done anti poaching unit, regular interactions with communities, regular patrolling, effective implementation of law and order seems more effective.



## Role of INGOs



INGOs have major role in park conservation and anti-poaching movement. At present, INGOs are providing support to the formation of anti poaching unit, control in wildlife trade and creating awareness. Similarly they organize different campaigns, meetings, provide trainings as well as perform researches for the sustainable conservation.

The resources provided by INGOs for conservation have been very useful. Communication tools provided by INGOs have been used effectively. Different programs done by INGOs have created remarkable awareness. These types of activities helped a lot in conservation efforts.

## Recommendations

### 1. Policy must be revised.

The present law and policy are not suitable according to present period. Law and policy should be revised according to the time. Present laws have given full authority to Warden. Due to which the decision may be one sided. In buffer zone policy, the contribution to anti poaching movement must be fixed. The punishment strategy to poachers must be revised. The equal participation of conservation partner must be included in policy.

## **2. Identification of partner's role**

The role of GOs, NGOs, INGOs and other related sectors must be identified. Mainly the role of buffer zone council and local community should be focused. The contribution of hotels inside park, hotel associations, guide association need to be cleared. At present most of them are working in their own way and their contributions in anti-poaching movement are less. Since their role and duties are not cleared, their working style is not effective.

## **3. Sustainable use of tourism**

The sustainable way of establish tourism in conservation must be cleared. At present there is impact in conservation due to tourism activities also. Especially rhinos have been habituated to human. There are not afraid with human and enter the villages. From conservation point of views it is great loss. The core habitat area and tourist movement area must be fixed. The way of showing rhino by covering with the help of elephants must be stopped. The tourism activity area of inside hotel also must be fixed. The unusual movement of people inside the park must be checked.

## **4. Community involvement**

There is not direct community involvement in anti-poaching movement. It is essential for their direct involvement in controlling the poaching. The role and participation of local people should be included in priority. Programs should conduct having mutual participation with community.

## **5. Anti Poaching Network**

To control poaching, anti poaching network must be revised and developed. In the network government, non government organizations like guide association, hotel association, buffer zone council and local people should be involved. This type of network should be purely social and to run this network limited amount should be allocated from buffer zone council. It may be named as Anti poaching network.

## **6. Anit-poaching event calendar**

To activate the entire related stakeholder in anti poaching activities, event calendar must be developed. According to the calendar there must be regular interaction meeting with inside hotels, hotel association, guide association, buffer zone council, VDCs etc.

## **7. Monitoring and evaluation**

The monitoring and evaluation of every program must be done. All the activities of the related stakeholders in anti-poaching movement must be monitored and evaluate. The system of punishment and reward must be changed to make it more effective.

## **8. Advocacy Campaign**

Anti-poaching movement must be conducted as a campaign. For it, advocacy plays vital role. Community based awareness should be make effective and enlarged. Media should be used fully for this purpose. In media advocacy documentary, magazine, newspaper, radio program, TV program can be launched. Field based advocacy can also be done. Street drama, folk music, youth campaign program, school program can be used.

## **9. Income generating program**

To control poaching, in community level income generation programs need to be launched. This sort of program must benefit ex-poachers.

## **10. Use of ex poacher**

Ex poacher can be used as care taker (*Ban Heralu*) of the park. They should be allowed to go their own area. Certain training should be given. Their responsibility must be fixed and some incentives should give.

## **Conclusion**



The efforts and activities being done in anti-poaching are not sufficient to control the poaching. To solve the present crisis all related stakeholder must widen the activities. To prepare anti-poaching report is not easy. To make it totally perfect, it takes more time as well as more resources. This report is one of the initiatives.

**Please feel free to send comments, suggestion or feedback.**

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**Thank You!**