

Activity Report on Farmer Group Interaction At Jagatpur

1. Activity: Interaction with farmer group on rhino conservation

2 Date: 20th September 2007

3. Venue: Jagatpur VDC-7, Dhruba, Chitwan/ Rapti riverine area CNP

4. Background:

Agriculture is the main occupation of the Nepalese people. About 80% people depend on agricultural product for the living. Most of the bufferzone people also eke out living by agricultural products. Jagatpur is one of the EPRC covering VDC which is around 25 KM far from district headquarter Bharatpur. Rapti river separates Jagatpur with Chitwan National Park. The large population of this VDC comes from Dalit community which is oppressed, poor and deprived of opportunities.

Being contiguous with Chitwan National Park, rhinos and other wildlife of park enters into human settlements and agricultural lands. This phenomenon is creating trouble for the bufferzone farmer primarily with the loss of standing crops. Chitwan National Park and Bufferzone Council has made provision for the compensation of the crop loss but farmers are dissatisfied over its amount and procedures.



5. Objectives :

The majority of the bufferzone people are farmers. Hence, farmers participation for the conservation is mandatory. Hence, the objectives of the program were:

- a) to know the farmers real experience and view towards rhinos induce circumstances.
- b) to apprise farmers on the ways to reconcile with contentious and dissatisfactory issues.
- c) to aware farmers on importance of rhino conservation.

6. Methodology and Contents:

The program has been conducted with the co-ordination of "Small Farmer Co-operative Institution" (SFCI), Sukranagar. SFCI has 800 households as its members and works for the economical enhancement, provide livestock insurance & food security of the farmers. With the support of SFCI, EPRC team members have informed the farmers of Jagatpur, Sukranagar VDC and riverine areas about the program. The program has been arranged in the hall of Rastriya Lower Secondary School, Jagatpur-7, Dhruba. The farmers from the areas which have to suffer more, not satisfied with the economic reimbursement and who have been victimized from wildlife attacks are especially encouraged to attend in the program.

The program was started from 7 AM morning. President of Kerunga Bufferzone Area committee, Mr. Chandra Kanta Bhattarai was invited as the chairman of the program, while president of SFCI Mr. Chhabi Sharma delivered welcome speech.

Mr. Deepak Acharya, project co-ordinator of EPRC has facilitated the program whereas Mr. Nirmal Aryal, program officer of EPRC took notes on the participant's voice. At the first session of the program, Mr. Acharya of EPRC highlighted on objectives of the program. Then participants were requested to deliver their experiences on real situation, response of authorities towards the circumstances and compensation practice being implemented by park officials and bufferzone council of Chitwan National Park.

Most of the farmers expressed dissatisfaction over compensation amount i.e. 25% of the claim. Similarly, they said complex and lengthy process of the compensation should be made swift and simple. Farmers have conceded they were forced to overvalue the loss since the compensation limitation is far less.

The farmers said they are living precariously. They have to endure both crop losses and physical damage. In the program, three farmers who were physically disabled by the rhino attack, urged for the assistance on livelihood. Participants have stressed on lifetime allowances for the victims unable to earn out living after attack.



Participant farmers have demanded fencing around the bufferzone area, erecting electric traps to distract the wild animals.

After the first session, a short tea break was arranged. In the second session, EPRC team members have apprised farmers that exaggeration and false claim on the crop or property or livestock loss will be counterproductive. They have been informed about the ways and procedures to cope with contentious issues, to demand the loss and the amicable steps to influence the policy.

Participants have expressed views to resolve the contentious issues. They said they are never against the conservation but the circumstances could not motivate them for conservation. Farmers said they have requested park officials for Machan (makeshift house made in the field to guard animals) to safeguard the crops in the field. Similarly, they have strongly stressed to provide bio gas plants in a subsidized amount so that their dependency on the park

resources can be reduced. Participants have also emphasized the policy of bufferzone council should comply with public voice. They said policy should be made to deliver prompt, appropriate compensation to the victims, criterias of compensation should be made broaden.

In the third session farmers were informed on how the rhino conservation could help for ecosystem, how it is important for the country and for the bufferzone people too.

Chairperson of the program, Mr. Chandra Kanta Bhattarai, president of Kerunga Bufferzone



Area Committee said bufferzone council has been cognizant of the public voices and aspirations. He informed that compensation amount has been increased to 50% of the loss which was earlier 25%. He has accepted pitfalls in compensation policy but assured it will be gradually rectified albeit with several limitations.

In the program, 76 farmers were participated among which 38 were from Dalit and ethnic community.

7. Significant Voices:

a) Chuda Lamichhane (Jagatpur VDC-7): Compensation policy needs to be changed. Displacement of the crop loss with seed is not justifiable. Farmers have to bear the loss of standing crops but seed compensation is not pragmatic as it renders farmers in food and economic crisis until next season starts. It would be meaningless to us if we have to wait year for compensation. Victims should be provided immediate help and support.

b) Bikram Ghimire (Jagatpur-7, Dhruba) : I am a banana farmer. Last year rhinos ravaged my 450 bananas trees. A small farmer like me cannot overcome this loss for years. I did not get a penny as compensation. People used to mislead the people of core bufferzone core area as anti-conservation group. But that's not true. We love rhino but we want prompt remedy of our problems induced by rhinos and other wildlife.

Rhinos severely hit on our livelihood, attack on our lives. Notwithstanding these realities, I support conservation because I am educated and know about it. But most of the farmers will be irritated when they are even converse about conservation. Had the compensation practice been prompt and appropriate, these circumstances would have never been existed.



c) Sansar Bahadur Kunwar (Jagatpur-7, Dhruba): Farmers are not against conservation. We want to ready for contribution. But we should get some facilities in return. I have never slept at night to guard if rhinos come and destroyed our crops.

If we humbly request to resolve our problems, our voices are turned into deaf ears. If we protest strongly against it, we are misled as 'anti-conservation elements'. Several times, we have informed about movement of suspected poachers. This also proves our adherence towards conservation.

We have requested for machan (makeshift house made in the field to guard animals). If so, we would guard and could drive off rhinos with torch lights, whistle tootering. But, our voices are not heeded upon. I used to stay in Machan 18 hours a day to save my crops and thus I have less loss than others.

d) I Bahadur Bishwokarma (Jagatpur-7, Dhruba): National Parks and rhinos are our properties. Rhinos infiltrate into our fields, houses for particular reasons such as unavailability of the food, water resources, wallowing spots and shrinkage in floodplain grasslands. Concerned officials should take immediate action to make available the needs of rhinos inside the park areas.

e) Prem Bahadur Chhetri (Jagatpur-7): Two years ago, I was injured by rhino attack. Bufferzone Council provided meager amount just NRs. Four thousand as compensation. After that incident, I was unable to work properly to help living of my family. In a case as mine, victims should be provided monthly allowance.

The policy of bufferzone council not to compensate on 'field crop depredation' is not justifiable. They said compensations are only provided when wildlife destroyed the agricultural products stored in the house but not to the field damage.



f) Tej Bahadur Jimba (Jagatpur-9) : The issue of consuming natural resources of the park is also one of the major factors that is spurring conflict between park and people. Hence the government policy should be induced to promote alternative of park resources. Promotion of Gober gas (Biogas) and subsidy to the people on establishment of its plant might be one of the strategies that could reduce park pressure for fire wood and cooking fuel. If park provides rhino-guards and machans, the crop loss will be significantly reduced.

g) Abhiman Biswokarma (Jagatpur-8) : We are never been able to consume agricultural products. This year rhinos trampled over my paddy field. Our main income source has been ruined. I have to look after 12 members of my family. We are starving for two square meal now. I know I could not get compensation because bufferzone policy did not allow compensation of field damage. Conservation has no meaning from me. I pray for god may the next generation be blessed to get rid of these sufferings.



h) Durga Nath Devkota (Jagatpur-8) : We are suffering from rhinos, tigers and elephants. Our livestocks are being killed. The policy of bufferzone council restricts us from reparation. Role of bufferzone members are not satisfactory. Either they are ignoring our aspirations or they have limitations. Bufferzone Council and Chitwan National Park remain in doldrums regarding this issue. I think people should be convinced by the authorities for their limitations or proceed ahead for people's demand.

I feel role of bufferzone committee members are not effective. They should carry and implement the voices of bufferzone people but they are unable.

i) Rana Bahadur B.K. (Sukranagar-8, Bayalghari): I am general member of the bufferzone committee. There are several ways to solace farmers for their crop loss. Bufferzone farmers could be appeased by inducing modern agricultural techniques, low interest loan facility for aspiring farmers. These initiations could also heal the wounds of wildlife harassed farmers.

k) Shyamlal Shrestha (Sukranagar-8): Four years earlier, I was seriously injured by the rhino when encountered with it. I was physically handicapped ever since the incident. I received NRs. 10,000/- . I could not work and earn as earlier. Government should help to educate my child and provide living allowance to me.

8) Output : Following outputs have been achieved from the interaction :

- a) Farmers view over compensation practice, crop decimation, livestock loss, physical attacks induced by rhinos have been collected.
- b) Farmers have given solution over the problems and issues.
- c) Farmers have been furnished with the knowledge and process to resolve dissatisfaction over compensation and other contentious issues.
- d) Farmers have been awarded about importance of rhino conservation and motivated towards it.

9) Conclusion : From the interaction program, it can be concluded that farmers possess feelings to conserve rhinos and other wildlife. But they are dissatisfied over prevailing practices. Most of the farmers said that they have to suffer from wildlife, live on jeopardy but their voices have never been heeded upon. They want prompt, easier and pragmatic compensation system, support for the livelihood and implementation of techniques that would decrease wildlife entry into the fields and settlements.

10) Recommendations :

- a) Interaction gap between authorities and the farmers should be healed in order to share the views of each other and to find out meeting point.
- b) The solution of the contentious issues should not be protracted rather it should be addressed at the earliest. Complying with people voice, policy should be revised.
- c) The role of buffer zone committee should be made more effective. Conservation related activities should be enhanced.
- d) Alternatives should be tried out to reduce the park-people conflict. For e.g. subsidy on biogas plant would decrease people pressure on park for cooking fuels, establishment of Machan could decrease the crop depredation, crop insurance, establishing wire fencing and electric traps around the major entry areas would be other solutions.
- e) Wildlife victims should be given special attention and facility such as subsidy on agricultural cost, support for livelihood programs etc.



11) List of Participants :

<i>S.N.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Address</i>
1.	Basanti Nepali	Jagatpur- 8
2.	Tara Gahatraj	Jagatpur- 8
3.	Balkumari Gahatraj	Jagatpur- 5
4.	Sirjana Subedi	Jagatpur- 7
5.	Namkala Nepali	Sukranagar- 8
6.	Sirjana Nepali	Jagatpur- 6
7.	Lalmati B.K.	Jagatpur- 8
8.	Shanti B.K.	Jagatpur- 8
9.	Bina Lama	Jagatpur- 7
10	Mina Magar	Jagatpur- 8
11	Durga B.K.	Jagatpur- 7
12	Sukmaya Pariyar	Jagatpur-8
13	Madhumaya Sarki	Jagatpur-7
14	Chudamadi Parajuli	Sukranagar- 7
15	Surya Prasad Tiwari	Sukranagar- 7
16	Bhagiram Thapamagar	Sukranagar- 8
17	Nilakantha Dumre	Jagatpur-9
18	Chudamadi Lamichhane	Jagatpur-7
19	Indra Prasad Subedi	Jagatpur-9
20	Gangadhar Neupane	Sukranagar- 7
21	Dek Prasad Khanal	Sukranagar- 8
22	Kul Chandra Subedi	Sukranagar- 8
23	Ramakanta Bhandari	Sukranagar- 7
24	Lal Bahadur Thapamagar	Sukranagar- 7
25	Indra Bahadur Nepali	Sukranagar- 8
26	Bikram Ghimire	Jagatpur-7
27	Shyamlal Shrestha	Sukranagar- 9
28	Min Bahadur Achhame	Jagatpur-9
29	Bir Bahadur Ghalan	Jagatpur-7
30	Bhabishor Sapkota	Sukranagar- 7
31	Kamal Bahadur B.K.	Sukranagar- 7
32	Haridatta Bashyal	Sukranagar- 7
33	Meghanath Bashyal	Sukranagar- 7
34	Namaraj Aryal	Jagatpur-7
35	Mohanilal Neupane	Sukranagar- 7
36	Ganesh Bhandari	Sukranagar- 7
37	Gaumaya B.K.	Sukranagar- 8
38	Maya B.K.	Sukranagar- 8
39	Rupa Nepali	Sukranagar- 8
40	Yam Kala Sapkota	Sukranagar- 8
41	Mina Poudel	Jagatpur-9
42	Padam Bahadur B.K.	Sukranagar-8
43	Krishna Pathak	Jagatpur-9
44	Kishor Tiwari	Sukranagar-7
45	James Thapamagar	Sukranagar- 7
46	Buddhi Bahadur Thapa	Sukranagar- 7
47	Tej Bahadur Jimma	Jagatpur-9
48	Jiwan Ghimire	Jagatpur-7
49	Bam Bahadur B.K.	Jagatpur-7
50	Narabahadur B.K.	Sukranagar- 8

51	Khagesor Poudel	Jagatpur-9
52	Aai Bahadur B.K.	Jagatpur-7
53	Ratna Bahadur B.K.	Sukranagar- 8
54	Krishna Bahadur Godar	Jagatpur-9
55	Dil Bahadur Adhikari	Jagatpur-1
56	Shamser Kunwar	Jagatpur-1
57	Naramadi Ghimire	Jagatpur-1
58	Thirtharaj Wagle	Jagatpur-1
59	Baburam Puri	Jagatpur-1
60	Jhak Bahadur B.K.	Jagatpur-1
61	Hira Bahadur B.K.	Sukranagar-8
62	Prem Bahadur Chhetri	Jagatpur-7
63	Abhiman B.K.	Sukranagar-8
64	Rishiram Sigdel	Jagatpur-9
65	Rudranath Devkota	Jagatpur-7
66	Tek Bahadur B.K.	Jagatpur-9
67	Mina Aryal	Jagatpur-9
68	Manbahadur Gahatraj	Sukranagar-8
69	Dambar Bahadur B.K.	Sukranagar-8
70	Tulashiram Chapagain	Sukranagar-7
71	Krishna Prasad Neupane	Sukranagar-7
72	Indira Bote	Patihani-1
73	Radha Chhetri	Sukranagar-3
74	Chhabilal Neupane	Sukranagar-3
75	Dilbahadur B.K.	Sukranagar-7
76	DalBahadur Pariyar	Jagatpur-7