

Empowering People For Rhino Conservation (EPRC)

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A Report on Cultural Program for Rhino Conservation Awareness at Kolhuwa, Nawalparasi

Background

Kolhuwa lies about 16 km south from the Danda Bazar along east west highway, Nawalparasi District. Most of the people in this area are from the ethnic community, the Tharu. Tharus are the indigenous community around the Chitwan national park and they have their unique tradition and culture. Jitiya, one of the greatest festivals in Tharu culture is celebrated for 3 days in a year. It is also ascribed as a festival of a "Tharus Women" in which they share the ideas to each other through the song and dance. Though, the festival only belongs to the Tharu, people from all the communities in the area used to gather to observe the cultural program. Hence, it is very popular not only among the Tharu, but also among other people in the area.

Being contiguous to the Chitwan national park, Kolhuwa is one of the wildlife suffering bufferzone area. Since the rhinos from the park frequently visit the area, it can be considered as a sensitive area from the conservation point of view. Empowering People for Rhino Conservation (EPRC) has been implementing awareness raising activities in Kolhuwa since last few months with the support from Asian Rhino Project. Since the Jitiya is very popular among the local community, this festival can be taken as an opportunity to deliver the message of conservation through the song and dance in cultural program. Taking note of these things, EPRC has supported **Nawapratiya Women Development Group** to organize a "Rhino



Awareness Cultural Program" in Kolhuwa.

Objectives

- ◆ Strengthening and sensitizing the local community towards conservation
- ◆ Joining conservation issues in traditional cultural program
- ◆ Promoting cultural programs as a way of delivering message of conservation

Activities within the program

Inauguration session

The program was held in the building of Nandabhauju Bufferzone User Committee and organized by Nawapratiya Women Development Group (NWDG) of Kolhuwa. It was hosted by Hareram Mahato, former VDC chairperson. Tulasi Thanet, president of NWDG chaired the program and chief guest was Narayan Prasad Mahato, president of Nanda Bhauju Buffer zone User Committee. Other guests were: Laxmi Dutta Panta, representative of Chitwan National Park; Man Bahadur Mahato, president of Federation of Nepal Ethnic and Indigenous Group Nawalparasi; Dil Bahadur Gurung, incharge of Kolhua army post; Bir Bahadur Gurung, incharge of Kolhuwa police post; Kamala Neupane, president of Kolhuwa Mothers Group, Kamala Bhandari, president of Santoshi User group; Narvada Pariyar, President of Paralegal committee; Chandrika Narayan Thanet, president Buddha Darshan User Committee; Kamal Raj Pathak, representative of Kumarwanti Higher Secondary School. Goma Kumari Thanet, member of NWDG delivered the welcome speech. Deepak Acharya, Coordinator of EPRC highlighted on the objectives of the program.

Singing and Dancing

The cultural program was started with the interesting song and dance by the cultural group. The song was full with the message of rhino and wildlife conservation (Box 1). Initially, the cultural group presented the song in their own language (Tharu). Some



audiences even joined the stage and subsequently began to sing on rhino conservation theme. Along others, working committee members of bufferzone user committee, local teachers and local government officials has also joined the stage (picture above). Audiences were seem mesmerized when the Laxmi Dutta Panta, representative of CNP led the singing group and Narayan Prasad Mahato, the chief guest led the dancing group.

Box 1 (English translation)

tourists visit the park specially to see the rhino
park collects the revenue from them
the income comes in buffer zone
we can spend the income for our village development
the rhino and other wildlife are living creatures like us
we should respect their right to live
therefore, we should also protect them from the poachers

Closing ceremony

The guests expressed their opinions regarding the program:

Laxmi Dutta Panta, CNP representative

Such types of cultural programs are very effective and in my experience single cultural program is more effective than the ten patrolling. Therefore, such program should be organized regularly with the active participation of people as more as possible.

Narayan Prasad Mahato, Chief Guest, President, NandaBhauju Bufferzone User Committee

Cultural programs like today's are very important from the conservation point of view. As far as I know, this is the first cultural program in this area that is focusing on conservation. I will always be ready to support such creative programs through buffer zone council and individually as well. I would like to thank the EPRC for supporting this program. We are always ready to support every activities of the EPRC in coming days too.

Man Bahadur Mahato, President, Federation of indigenous ethnic groups, Nawalparasi

I am very happy as this program is focused on the marginalized people which are considered fragile towards poaching . We will also be ready to support such program in coming days. I feel this program is organized in very suitable time and such program will have important imprint in local level for rhino conservation.

Tulasi Thanet, President, NWDG

First of all, I would like to thank EPRC for supporting us to organize this program. Today's program has proven that the cultural programs are important way of awareness campaign for conservation. I would like to commit that we will continue such program in coordination with other groups. At last, I would like to thank you all for your active participation in the program.

Deepak Acharya, Coordinator, EPRC

We should join our hands for the successful conservation. The park and the wildlife are our property; and being a citizen, we should contribute for their protection. We would like to request the park authority and buffer zone council to support for the community based organizations which are implementing their activities for conservation. Cultural program is an effective way to deliver message of conservation and I would like to request you all to allocate at least some fraction of your cultural program for conservation related issues.

Output

- ◆ Practice of delivering message of conservation through cultural program has been initiated.
- ◆ Local people have realized their responsibility for conservation

Conclusion

Cultural programs are mass mesmerizing activity and are effective ways to deliver message of conservation.

Recommendation

Park authority and buffer zone council should promote rhino and conservation awareness programs through the means which can lure the community people such as cultural programs. Local CBOs should be inspired and supported to organize cultural programs for conservation.