

Project Update: January 2019

Background

A school awareness programme was conducted in four different schools. Schools were selected after consulting with park authorities. Selected four schools were:

- 1) Shiva Shakti Secondary School (Mahadevpuri-8, Banke).
- 2) Shree Ganesh Secondary School (Mahdevpuri-5, Banke) [N 28.15853°E81.76139°].
- 3) Shree Krishna Secondary School (Kausilyanagar, Banke) [N 28.22143°E81.68084°].
- 4) Shree Suryadaya Secondary School (Baijanath-1 Chisapani, Banke) [N 28.27445°E81.65400°].

The awareness programme was organised among the students of grade 9 and 10. Formal classes were taken to all the students of grade 9 and 10, but the poem, art and essay competition was held with interested students only. In 1 hour of formal class the project informed about the Banke National Park (BaNP) and Kamdi Corridor, animals found in BaNP and Kamdi corridor, essence of corridors, importance of protected areas, importance of tiger and leopard, and achievement of BaNP. They were also informed about the tiger population in country and in BaNP. Former research that I had performed in Kamdi corridor and its importance was also shared. Students were also familiarised with tiger and leopard identification through camera trap method. They were also made aware about the importance of habitat management and restoration for protecting the viable population of tiger and leopard in BaNP. Being the umbrella species, preservation of tiger and leopard helps to preserve other species too that exist in BaNP.



Left: School awareness program in Shiva Shakti Secondary School. Right: Formal classes taken to students of grade 9 and 10 in Shree Ganesh Secondary School.

A community awareness programme was conducted in the same school. All the students of the school were orally informed to call the parents through the school administration.

Despite of the busy schedule few of the parents were able to join the awareness program. Community people were familiarised with supporting organisation of this project, Nepal's endeavours in tiger conservation and their population, opportunities and challenges of BaNP.

After the 2 days of awareness programme, with the help of respective school teachers, top three students were chosen from each category (art, poem, and essay). Additionally, other three students were also chosen to visit the Dhakeri Botanical Garden, who are active members of eco-clubs.



Left: Community awareness program in Shree Suryadaya Secondary School. Right: Community awareness program in Balapur Village with Shivashakti community forest User groups.

Each selected school was visited individually on 2nd January 2019 for the information of programme. As per the date provided by them, school and community awareness programme were conducted. Detail time schedule of the community and school awareness programme is provided in Table 1. As the parents were not present in all the schools, we then contact the community forest users and arrange our programme. Final programme will be conducted in Kohalpur sector in February with chief guest (park warden) and prize distribution will be done after the selection of students among the four different schools.

One-day field visit

A 1-day field visit was arranged to all the students of four different schools. Dhakeri Botanical Garden was visited on 20th January 2019. All total 52 students including one teacher from each school had visited the Dhakeri Botanical Garden. The session was handled by park officer Mr. Ram Krishna Bhandari.

Media

Highway post, Mission Today and Nagarik Paschimeli were the media that covered work. I would like to thank Mr Krishna Chaudhary for this help who provide me link to those newspaper. Thank you Mr Keshav Rana (Nagarik Paschimeli), Mr Narayan Upadhyya (Highway Post) for providing this opportunity and supporting this project. And editor of Mission Today too.



Left: News report about one day field visit in Dhakeri Botanical Garden. Right: Different newspaper who has covered community and student awareness program.

Table 1: Time schedule and activity of school and community awareness program

S. N	Name of the school/ community	Program Date		Total Students who attained the formal class	Total Parents who attained the program	Students taken part in competition		
		Awareness program including competition	Visit to Dhakeri Botanical garden			Poem	Essay	Drawing
1	Shiva Shakti Secondary School	4, January 2019	20, January 2019	Around 100	0	6	4	5
2	Shree Ganesh Secondary School	7, January 2019	20, January 2019	Around 70	0	1	7	5
3	Shree Krishna Secondary School	8, January 2019	20, January 2019	Around 140	0	9	5	11
4	Shree Suryadaya Secondary School	9, January 2019	20, January 2019	Around 60	29	1	13	6
5	Shivashakti community forest, Balapur	14, January 2019	20, January 2019		36			

Questionnaire Survey

A questionnaire survey was done within the buffer-zone community. All told 160 questionnaires were completed. For the questionnaire survey, students of grade 12 from two different schools were made familiar with the question structure and sampling design. A community was selected randomly based on the conflict area as mentioned by park personnel. During the survey, first household was selected randomly, later at the equal interval of 10 household questionnaire survey was done. In order to ensure that students have filled the questionnaire as per the objectives of the project, I checked their work on the following days for first day. Game scout of Banke National Park Mr. Kal Bahadur Chaudary had also helped in questionnaire survey.



Game scout Kal Bahadur Chaudary performing questionnaire survey in Kusum

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

A focus group discussion (FGD) was held on 2nd January, 2019 in Banke National Park (BaNP), Western Sector Kohalpur Banke. FGD was conducted among the game scouts, rangers and officers of Zoological Society of London (ZSL). On 12 January, 2019 FDG was conducted with Balapur (Buffer Zone) community people.



Left: FDG with park personnel in Banke National Park (BaNP), western Sector Kohalpur Banke. Right: FDG with Balapur (Buffer Zone) community people.

FGD was based on conservation in terms of two felids (tiger and leopard). From the FGD, it came to know that Kamdi corridor is newly established corridor, which is under the supervision of Divisional Forest Office (DFO). Presence of tiger and leopard in BaNP highlights its potential to harbour such territorial species. However, the capacity of BaNP to know how much tiger could really hold, is still needed to be researched. Their natural prey base number, waterhole creation and grassland maintenance are challenging issues for BaNP to conserve tiger. With increase in the number of carnivores, maintaining harmony between carnivores and people will be difficult in terms of BaNP, where park is at the early stage and do not have enough trained staff, conservation education regarding park rules and regulation are still lacking.

Before 2010, BaNP was under the control of DFO, where species diversity, management strategies were not so effective. With initiation to extend the tiger habitat from Bardiya National Park (BNP), BaNP was established. Around 52% of BaNP consist of fragile land (Chure), which is susceptible to disaster if conservation is abandoned. Therefore, except saving the endangered species, BaNP has been playing role in safeguarding the fragile ecosystem of Chure.

In 2013, four tigers used to roam in BaNP. The recent National Tiger Survey in 2018 has proved BaNP as potential tiger recovery sites with 21 adult tigers roaming in the park. Now, there is a need of corridor that connect the suitable habitat. Kamdi corridor which connects the Suhelwa Wildlife Sanctuary (SWS), India and BaNP, Nepal might be the potential habitat to share the vision of landscape conservation. But there are problems with human encroachment and weak management (in terms of strict enforcement of law compared to park). As Kamdi corridor is under the supervisor of DFO, strict rules and regulations are lacking, people around the corridor are taking advantage over the resource availability. Forests are protected in terms to harvest the day to day needs of people rather than for conservation. Kamdi corridor has good potential to flourish the population of megafauna like tigers, leopards and elephants. But in-depth research is required to identify the potential habitat used by those megafauna. Community should be strengthened with certain alternatives and feeling of ownership for the conservation should be established.

Several NGOs/ INGOs (NTNC, WWF, and ZSL) has been collaborating with BaNP. This collaboration might be the reason to flourish BaNP in terms of conservation. Increase in tiger numbers has changed the views of researcher, especially the university students who rarely visit BaNP before because of less diversity of species as BaNP was famous for four horned antelope (*Tetra cerus quadricornis*) only. With increase in tiger numbers, as being one of the favourite and elusive species is always related with various dimension of research. Failure to collect reasonable remittance has been decreased compare to previous year. BaNP is still struggling to satisfy the needs of buffer zone community people. In some terms and condition, BaNP still need to work on dissemination of park rules and regulation, involve people in conservation policies and address the feeling of local communities for the long-term conservation.

Local people are willing for the conservation of tiger and leopard but alternatives for their livelihood like tourism is not addressed. Different alternatives for livelihoods promotion like tourism is not taking place. People claimed that park has created the pressure on local farmers and people. Wild boar are the main problems for the local farmers. Crops are raided by them and the compensation is not so satisfactory; even the process to claim for the compensation is not so fair and easy. Due to this reason some local farmers do not claim for the compensation. Fencing had been done but is not effective to control the wild boar. Among two felids leopard sometimes enter the village and killed the domestic livestock (goat and sheep). One of the members of FDG mentioned that the government is interested to rare tiger only but not the people. We are afraid that they are present in our forest. Our livelihoods depend on farming and have to depend on forest. The government is not providing any alternatives and not making conservation favorable to local communities.

