

## Final Evaluation Report

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Your Details	
<b>Full Name</b>	Vasavi Prakash
<b>Project Title</b>	To understand the socio-ecological drivers and their interactions using participatory modeling within individual villages to create and compare mental models
<b>Application ID</b>	35969-1
<b>Date of this Report</b>	March 31 <sup>st</sup> . 2023

**1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.**

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
To conduct participatory mental modelling in villages (10) surrounding Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, India				The proposal submitted aimed for conducting mental modelling workshops in 10 villages around Pilibhit Tiger Reserve. This objective was achieved successfully.
To conduct interviews with 100 people (10 people per village)				The goal was to interview total 100 people who had suffered losses due to human-tiger conflicts. 10 people per village who fulfilled the criteria were not available. Because of funding constraints to go to other villages to interview people, 64 were interviewed.

**2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.**

- a).** Mental modelling exercises conducted in villages around the tiger reserve, which has never been done before.
- b).** The results demonstrate and identify unique drivers of human-tiger conflicts which have not been documented.
- c).** This research has direct policy and management implications locally, nationally, and internationally while dealing with human-wildlife conflicts, especially carnivores.

The most significant achievement of this work is successful implementation of community-based research to identify drivers and solutions from stakeholders.

**3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.**

Some difficulties that arose during the project:

- Participation fatigue – Many villagers/villages had been involved in participatory discussions with previous researchers with no tangible outcomes for the stakeholders leading to a resistance attitude. This situation was not the case in all the villages, but it took a lot of convincing and talking to get participants for the workshop.

- Participation incentives – Since there were insufficient funds to support a lunch for community members, snacks and tea were provided which may have been less than ideal.
- The idea was to interview 10 people per village where a participatory modelling workshop was being conducted. Interviewing this number was difficult as some villages did not have 10 participants. Furthermore, in villages which had 10 participants, not all were ready for the workshop. Hence, achieving 10 workshops was prioritised. Due to funding limitations, I was unable to conduct additional workshops that would have been needed to achieve the proposed 100 participants.

#### **4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefited from the project.**

The local community was enthusiastic about participating and developing a mental model which was novel and unique. Emotions varied from anger, sadness, and helplessness to hope and positivity affecting attitudes. Since the model does not identify individuals, it gave freedom to participants to speak freely, discuss and debate amongst themselves. This project helped community members think about problems and solutions, placing responsibility on them and not just on forest departments in the short run. The project aims to share and publish results with the local forest department and the government to influence policy formation.

#### **5. Are there any plans to continue this work?**

Given the interesting results, it would be great to continue this work with other tiger reserves in India and other tiger range countries. Furthermore, it would be a great idea to repeat the project in these areas to monitor and evaluate management interventions implemented based on this work.

#### **6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?**

The results of the project are being prepared for publication as peer reviewed scientific articles, a report to the forest department and government agencies, posters/talks at scientific conferences, and as a doctoral dissertation at Auburn University.

#### **7. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?**

The next important steps are:

- Completing the analysis and sharing the results.
- Writing a grant to continue this work in other tiger reserves of India.

**8. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?**

The work has not been shared yet. The plan is to use the logo for posters and talks at the conference and acknowledge Rufford Grants in all scientific publications/products.

**9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.**

**Dr. Christopher Lepczyk, and Dr. Robert Gitzen, were supervising the research process through online zoom meetings with me.**

Uttar Pradesh Forest Department's Chief Wildlife Warden for approvals and Deputy Director, Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, **Mr. Naveen Khandelwal** provided onsite support and resources.

**Mr. Narendra Kumar**, a local Pilibhit resident was a part of the enumeration process.

**Dr. Steven Gray**, at Michigan State University, will be providing inputs for data analysis and interpreting results.

**Dr. Kelly Dunning** at Auburn University worked with me on survey development, IRB approval and training me for facilitation processes.

**10. Any other comments?**

The whole research experience has been extremely fulfilling and I hope to continue the collaboration and partnership with The Rufford Foundation for future projects.



Figure 1: Focus group discussion in a village near Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, Uttar Pradesh. Figure 2: Drawing a mental model using flip chart and marker. Figure 3: At the Chukha Ecotourism Site, Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, Uttar Pradesh, India.