

WCS Large Grant ‘Improving protected area effectiveness through enhanced civil society support and rigorous monitoring of wildlife populations and conservation threats’

Overview

This project seeks to geographically expand, add new innovative elements and involve wider sections of the society in implementing what is essentially a pre-existing set of activities of a long running research and conservation project focussed on tigers, their prey, other endangered large mammals notably Asian elephants and their habitats in the Western Ghats of Karnataka. As outlined in the proposal the key objectives of this project are:

- To improve the effectiveness of Protected Areas (PAs) in the Western Ghats of Karnataka through enhanced civil society support and participation in rigorous monitoring of wildlife populations and conservation threats. The work will focus in and especially in the matrix of habitats around several PAs including Bandipur, Nagarahole, Bhadra, Dandeli-Anshi, Someswara, BRT, Sharavathi, Mookambika, Talacauvery, Brahmagiri and Pushpagiri.
- Key activities will include - i. Capacity building ii. Establishing and strengthening partnerships iii. Monitoring of large mammal populations iv. Assessment of conservation threats v. Assessment of connectivity of corridors vi. Providing science-based inputs to wildlife management.

Response and Comments on the Indigenous Peoples Safeguard Policy (OP/BP 4.10)

The project will be implemented in several districts of Karnataka and in these districts several groups of Indigenous People are living. The estimated population of different tribal groups in the districts of Kodagu, Mysore and Chamarajnar is as follows.

In Chamrajnagar District the *Soligas* are the predominant tribal group. Their population is about 23,000. Two other groups *Jenu Kuruba* and *Betta Kuruba* are also living in this district and their populations are estimated to be 2,000 and 1,000 people respectively.

In Mysore District three major tribal groups are living. *Jenu Kuruba* are estimated to number 35,000, *Betta Kurubas* are estimated to be 10,000 and *Yeravas* are about 3,000 people. There are two sub-groups of *Yeravas*; *Pani Yerava* 2,000 people and *Panjari Yerava* 1,000 people. *Soligas* are also living in this district and their population is estimated to be 1,000.

In Kodagu district there are five groups of Indigenous People. *Jenu Kuruba* number about 35,000, *Yerava* about 10,000, *Betta Kuruba* about 4,000, *Male Kudiya* about 2,500 and *Kapala* about 500 people. Although *Kapalas* are a tribal group they are not officially designated as a Scheduled Tribe.

More specifically referring to the PAs in and around which we plan to implement this project, in BRT Sanctuary and MM Hills *Soligas* are major tribal group. Around Bandipur *Betta Kuruba* and *Jenu Kuruba* are the dominant community. In Nagarahole *Jenu Kuruba* is the dominant tribal group followed by *Betta Kuruba*, *Yerava* and *Soliga*. In Kodagu *Jenu Kuruba* are living in Anekadu Reserved Forest, Menu Kolli Reserved Forest, Maldare Reserved Forest and Devamachi Reserved Forest. Brahmagiri, Talacauvery and Pushpagiri Sanctuaries are more or less free of human settlements. *Male Kudiyas* are found in Pattighat, Padinalknad, Kadmakal Reserved Forests.

Kunabis are predominantly found in and around Dandeli-Anshi and their population is estimated to be 22,000. *Gouliga* are also living in and around Dandeli-Anshi and their population is estimated to be 4,000. *Siddi* people are living in and around Dandeli-Anshi and their population is estimated to be 3,000. *Male Kudiya* are living in and around Kudremukh and Someshwara and their population is estimated to be 2,000. *Gowdalu* also live in and around Kudremukh and their population is estimated to be 1,000 people.

Many components of the proposed project have been implemented over several years in PAs like Nagarahole, Bhadra and Bandipur. We have trained and employed several people belonging to indigenous communities in our projects. We plan to continue and may be even enhance the training and employment of indigenous people in our project. Through other projects we provide health services and support the education of children belonging to these communities.

We do not envisage any component of this project to negatively affect any of the Indigenous People living in the landscape in which we plan to implement this project. The key components are i. Capacity building – We will be working with some members of the Indigenous People to build their capacities to monitor wildlife populations as well as assess conservation threats. We have a track record of several years of working closely with Indigenous People, building their capacities and employing them in our projects. ii. Establishing and strengthening partnerships – We will seek partnerships with Civil Society organisations run by Indigenous People to further the cause of wildlife conservation. iii. Monitoring of large mammal populations – As already stated we will train and involve members of Indigenous Communities in field work and data collection. The key activities including cutting and marking transects and regular data collection and these will not have any impacts on Indigenous People. iv. Assessment of conservation threats - As already stated we will train and involve members of Indigenous Communities in field work and data collection. As members of Indigenous Communities are resident in the landscape in which we will be implementing the project, we will work with them to enable them to become better stewards of the wildlife habitat and champions for wildlife conservation. v. Assessment of connectivity of corridors – Indigenous People will contribute to this component of the project by their unique intimate knowledge of the habitat and also the movement of animals. vi. Providing science-based inputs to wildlife management – We will engage with the elders of the Indigenous Communities to gain a good understanding of the changes that

have taken place over the long term in the habitat, like weed infestation, changes in vegetation structure and the wisdom based on their knowledge and experience will be included in the management recommendations that we will provide to the forest department.

Although we do not envision the project having any negative impacts on Indigenous People living in the landscape where we will implement project activities, we recognize the possibility that unintended and unexpected problems may arise. To this end, WCS proposes to establish a grievance mechanism for the project. Specifically, any Indigenous People or other local communities involved in any project activities will be informed (in their local language) that they have the option to raise any concerns or grievances they may have with WCS, its local partners, the CEPF-Regional Implementation Team at ATREE and CEPF, and provided with the contact details of the same. If any grievance is raised, WCS and its appropriate local partner will convene a meeting with the affected parties within one month, in order to resolve the issue. If the grievance cannot be satisfactorily addressed, the concern will be passed to the CEPF-Regional Implementation Team. All grievances raised will be communicated to CEPF, together with minutes from the meeting(s) held to address them, plus a description of the remedial action taken.