

Project Update: January 2015

The year began on a positive and hopeful note for us. We started off with a meeting of core members of Sundarban Rural Development Society (SRDS) where the key objectives of Rufford Grant were discussed while drawing up an initial list of activities.

Amongst this, the first issue was that of the identification of the beneficiary villages. We made a tentative list of about 20-22 villages based on their proximity to the tiger reserve. It was decided that the first phase of the project would include about nine villages.



Further, we are also analysing the generalthe local communities on tiger conservation. This is being supplemented with their views on the ways of reduction of human pressure in tiger habitat.

Our activities have begun with door to door surveys to gather ground level data. A detailed questionnaire has been prepared for the purpose to record the number of dead and injured in tiger attacks in each of these villages, over a period of five years. The survey also includes figures on loss of livestock in the villages that have fallen prey to the big cats during the period. During our survey we are taking into account the basic sources of livelihood of the villagers.

Each survey team has 3-5 members, which include at least 1-2 members from the core committee besides members from SRDS who are also local villagers. Our survey in a village commences with a general meeting with the local villagers. Where the survey team first explains to the local villagers on the basic aims of the project and the immediate course of action in this regard. Most of these meetings culminated into lively group discussions where the villagers shared their opinions and ideas on the implementation of the goals of the project.

We are noting down their observations and will eventually compile them while drawing up the list of activities for implementation of our objectives.



Further, it is interesting to note that SRDS has nearly 40% of women membership many of whom are tiger widows. We were delighted to see their enthusiasm and involvement in our meetings. Further, it was heartening to learn that despite having lost their near and dear ones in the mangrove forest, they acknowledge its importance as lifeline of the village communities.

