

Project Update: June 2016

After a brief gap, we began our second round of RSG project in high spirits and enthusiasm. To begin with we had an inception meeting with the core committee members of Sunderban Wildlife & Rural Development Society (SWRDS) to review the key objectives of the grant and draw up the list of our initial activities, of our project.



Figure 1- Inception meeting for SWRDS core committee

These include-

1. Selection of Villages - . Based on our survey conducted in the last round of RSG and after reviewing the work done in the last round, the core committee decided to finish the pending work in our previous lot of villages and then select fresh lot of villages. Our last lot of villages include Patharpara, Annpur, Tipligheri, Duttagram, Hamilton Mouza, Parasmani and Rajatjubilee. We found that in villages as Parasmani, Duttagram and Hamilton Mouza, and Pathapara, there was land still left to be covered by mangrove plantation. The members decided to complete these areas in our first stretch of work.

2. Village Level Meetings and Social Surveys - In our meetings with the local villagers, we first reminded them of the key objectives of the project and our line of activities. Then, based on a questionnaire drawn up by the members of the core committee of SWRDS, we had social surveys to analyse the general perception of the beneficiaries and integrate their thoughts and ideas in planning our line of action

Some of our questions were as follows -

- How do they rate the implementation and outcome of the first round of pilot project supported by RSG?



Figure 2-Village meeting & social survey

- Do they think that the second round of the project is really necessary in their village? Why ?
- Apart from the activities carried out in the first round of RSG, do they have suggestions of additional activities?
- For some of our local community members, tigers have impacted their lives in a big way, why then, do they support the idea of tiger conservation?
- Is it possible for them to survive without having to go to the tiger habitat? How far they think would our proposed project help in achieving this objective?
- What is the importance of mangroves in their lives?
- What according to them is the best solution to reduce man tiger conflict? Again, do they think that the proposed project can help in minimising them?

These sessions culminated into lively group discussions where the villagers shared their opinions and ideas with us. We noted down their observations to incorporate them in our list of forthcoming project activities.



Figure 3 - A local government official participates in one of our social surveys

3. More Involvement of Children - This time, it was agreed to create more opportunities for involvement of the children, especially in promoting more awareness on tiger conservation. To begin with, we organised a poster drawing competition in the local school and offered token appreciation to the best drawing.



Figure 4 - Children participating in drawing contest on tiger & mangrove conservation

4. Commencement of Our Fieldwork- After the completion of our initial preparatory work, we formally began our fieldwork, from the last week of May 2016. The members had not quit but continued with seed collection and nurturing the saplings in the nurseries, even during the hiatus period between the completion of the first round of RSG project and commencement of the second round. Now, they back in earnest, strengthening the net fencing of the mangrove nurseries, cleaning them up and getting set for further round of activities. With monsoon set to approach within the next few weeks, it would soon be plantation time of the mangrove saplings.



Figure 5 -Collecting mangrove seeds by river banks and strengthening the nursery poles & nets