

Project Update: August 2003

I have been working closely with community members in initiating a dialogue with government officials and policy makers. We are trying to start a snake rescue service for the city of Delhi. This would mean the snake charmers rescue snakes that show up in people's homes, and then release them in forests. This would employ only two snake charmers but it would still be a worthwhile symbolic gesture which shows that the government recognises the traditional talents of these people.

Currently, 25 snake charmer families have come forward to give up snake charming and start some alternate business, especially since the government has banned their occupation. I have been sitting with them and preparing business plans etc. to get access to financial loans to start alternative work. The kind of business they are taking up is related to their music and culture so it has a good chance of being financially viable.

The Asia for Animals Conference is happening in Hong Kong in a few weeks' time. I have been asked to make a presentation on 'the way forward for animal welfare: working with local communities'. I shall be presenting some of my work on the snake charmers as a case study.