

Annual report- 2021-2022



Sustaining Environment & Wildlife Assemblage

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Athos of the organization

In and around Maharashtra's Gondia district, an NGO called SEWA (Sustaining Environment and Wildlife Assemblage) is helping regenerate tiger habitats, and protecting Sarus Cranes, blackbuck and wolves. Located close to the state borders of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, Gondia is the gateway to Maharashtra from central and eastern India. It is in this central Indian landscape that Gondia-based NGO, Sustaining Environment and Wildlife Assemblage (SEWA), has been working for wildlife since 2014. Since wild animals do not adhere to human boundaries, SEWA works with communities and forest officials to protect forests, organize anti-poaching drives, conduct mass-awareness campaigns, rescue and rehabilitate wild animals, reduce villagers' dependency on forest resources and monitor the dispersal of tigers.

Reducing human-wildlife conflict in villages around the Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve is a key intervention. "We began studying tiger dispersal in 2011 to help improve management practices and policies for the long-term survival of tigers in the landscape. We discovered that the predators move from Nagzira to Kanha-Pench towards the north and towards Umred-Karhandla in the south. Protecting these critical corridors therefore emerged as a vital priority," says Sawan Bahekar, President, and SEWA who was presented with a Sanctuary Special Maharashtra Wildlife award in 2016. He adds, "Political will and administrative resolve can turn this landscape into one of the finest tiger habitats in the country."

Our Strategic

Sustaining Environment & Wildlife Assemblage (SEWA) analyses all the problems using a simple rule that "Problem is like a tree, and every tree has its roots". It assumes reasons for every problem and states that only its effects are visible, not the roots/reasons. So, the first step towards its solution is its understanding, which is done using Problem Analysis.

- To improve service delivery and living conditions of corridor communities through empowerment, good governance and access to information
- To boost economic opportunities in disadvantaged communities through skills development, alternative livelihood opportunity to reduce the pressure of the forest

Involvement:

The SEWA team is working apprehensively bearing in mind that "To save nature, you've to work in Harmony with Humans", balancing the natural and manmade habitat is what our efforts are put forward for. The awareness programs, celebrating various nature-related days marked in the calendar throughout the year, and covering all the peripheral villages in one activity or the other, our team makes sure that everybody is aware of the constant presence of the Wildlife and

hence are on guard when dealing with daily prospects of life. This awareness is created in the form of surveys and workshops or group discussions among the villagers and including the management too. These workshops and programs help the Human race to understand the importance of survival of the Wildlife and henceforth, saving the Mother Nature.

Other programs in which the SEWA team cordially organizes and sometimes actively participates include Plantation programs, drawing and painting programs in school, health camps and blood donation camps in villages etc. The team is always actively participating and involving themselves in activities, programs and workshops organized by the Department. Whether it is a rescue operation or catching thieves and poachers in the area or simply monitoring the areas with continuous Carnivore movement, our SEWA team is always working effortlessly and in complete coordination with the Dept.

Protecting the boundaries of Nagzira WLS, working in coordination with the authorities, creating awareness among the population and keeping an eye out on everything that's going around the area is what the SEWA team is trying to do and at some lengths achieving it too.

Field study:

A team of 8 is always monitoring the corridors and the periphery of the adjoining villages for threats. Patrolling round the clock, be it early morning or mid night, any news of threat and our team is doing double takes on the more unimmunized areas. The threats and observations are reported daily and collated and forwarded timely. Be it the water bodies or the villages or the dense forest patches, regular monitoring according to a fixed schedule is done. The areas around the whole Nagzira WLS is monitored daily for Carnivore movement, other Wildlife crossing and the constant Human presence.

The team works effortlessly along with the Forest Dept and various village communities and other NGO's to protect the Nature and hence protecting the Mankind. The informers spread all along the area keeps the team informed about the movement of Wildlife and other threats moving around the area. The indirect signs and observations were copied and marked till the situation is under control, this require timing and coordination with different teams working for the same cause.

One such feature which distinguishes Nagzhira WLS from other Sanctuary and Nature Hubs is the population of Migratory birds coming through the year. The poaching activity takes a front seat according to the seasonal cycle of Migratory birds. Due to our watchful team the poachers are keeping their distance from the area.

The remarkable presence of the SEWA team in the area and their coordination with other sources of protection keeps the threats hence at bay and the area protected. The efforts of the poachers and anti nature elements are futile in this landscape due to the watchfulness of SEWA and department.

The main threats which undermine the Nagzhira WLS are Grazing (overly done), Poaching, Timber and Bamboo collection and Forest fires (manmade as well as natural). This poses a great challenge in the Sanctuary throughout the year, some threats are more in particular seasons while some are all year round.

Work index

Sarus Crane Project

A. Team SEWA is conducting Sarus crane census in three district of central India in a month of may we target Winganga , Bagh river of 22 ghat& 24 water body. We are arrange 22 team of 44 individuals at a time including farmers, Volunteers and forest department. Count of gondia district of following river ghat and water body

Total count of Gondia district is 39



B) Routine Monitoring of Breeding Pairs and Individuals

We are planning for Routine Monitoring ones in a month of sarus crane presence area for searching Breeding pair and individuals. It is useful for finding their Nesting, Feeding and rusting sides, Information Gathering and networking and also useful for finding their threads with formers and forest guard of belonging areas. During monitoring we cover following aprox. 50 villages and ghat of three districts

Gondia – paraswada, zilmili, kamta, ghattemni, newargaon, temni, ghiwari, lohara , nilaj, makdi, shiwni, goregaon, dasgaon, tedwa, dangorli, kini , kati, birsola , bajartola, nawegaon, dewri, satona, Mahelgaon, murdada ,

Balaghat- Dighida, Piparzxari, Marri, Rajegaon, Dini ,Puni, Kirnapur, Dhadimangoili, Newargaon, Mohgaon ,Sarud, Hatta, Saleteka, Dewgaon , Kirnapur,

Bhandara- Wahni, Wangi, Regepar, Pujara

Two Sarus cranes found dead in Gondia

■ District Correspondent
GONDIA, Feb 1

CARCASSES of two sarus cranes were found in a field near paddy nursery on the border of Gondia - Balaghat on Wednesday. The birds are said to have died due to poisoning.



The dead crane found in a paddy field in Gondia.

This is the start of Rabi season and farmers are in process of making nursery beds of paddy and to protect them from birds and insects , they use highly harmful Timate chemical pesticide.

Honorary Wildlife Warden Sawan Bahekar expressed
(Contd on page 2)

C) Nest Identification Monitoring and Protection

We are identify nest with the help of information gathering, past nesting experience, hole year monitoring experience with our farmer, informer, volunteer and forest gourde. We start searching of nesting sites from September starting in sarus crane presence area with respective formers and volunteer. After identification of nest. We are start monitoring of nesting sites during monitoring we are identify possible trades of nest and Sarus chicks likewise pry dogs, poachers, fertilizers used in nesting field.

D) Awareness program in Sarus crane presence area

Awareness programs are helping us to aware farmer, Villagers, volunteers. It is useful for information gathering, and it is first step to gather and attract interested people for Sarus conservation activities and nest protection it is also useful for crop selection and use of pesticides. We are planning of cover all Sarus presence area specially targeted Sarus nesting villages twice in a year

Routine maintaining of breeding pairs individuals.

- Nest identification & monitoring.
- Awareness Programme in Sarus Crane Presence areas.
- Orientation & Sensitization of farmers.

E. Annual patrolling and monitoring programs.

Visit to sensitive area for considering wildlife movement and find out threats which is harmful to wildlife. Patrolling was mainly divided into two parts 1st is day patrolling and 2nd one is night patrolling these two major way is also divided into three parts Bike/car/foot. In entire three year we had done thousands of km patrolling in surrounding area (buffer) of NNTR landscape and covered almost 90% area of corridor



area which is called Navegaon-Nagzira corridor. So many time we found various threats like electrocution, snares, forest fire, illegal tree/bamboo felling. For make it effective we had divided the landscape in different five blocks.

- 1) Koka block
- 2) New Nagzira and old Nagzira block
- 3) NNTR corridor block
- 4) NNTR- Balaghat corridor block.
- 5) Navegaon block.

Basically patrolling is conducted in two ways. On foot and on motorcycles. On an average about 80-100 kms of bike patrolling (DAY/NIGHT) is done per month and about 3-8 km of foot patrolling is done as well. Most of the time we will take help of local villagers and informer for done patrolling most of the time when we are doing foot patrolling locals knowledge are so much important. While patrolling we took care of the following things:

- Checking waterholes with litmus paper.
- Checking for electric lines in the jungles.
- Checking clues for the traps placed in the fields and trails(*pivat*).
- Checking indirect signs of animal presence.
- Direct sightings.
- Sharing knowledge with local informers.
- Target village center and discussion with villagers.

F. Monitoring awareness of wildlife sensitive area.

Monitoring when done for the benefit of overall aspects of the environment becomes a threat for the anti-harmonic group which is continuously trying to disturb the balance of nature. Keeping a track on Wildlife movement and the periphery of the Park gives us an edge over the threats. Dealing with daily challenges of Wild and maintaining a hold of the area helps in manning the boundaries and protecting the Wild in the Wild without compromising with opposing conditions.

Further daily monitoring keeps the locals aware of the team's presence and that they should be on their guard is constantly preached by our team. Monitoring the dense patches to the open water bodies, opens up a whole new area of observations. The pugmarks, traces and markings of Wildlife keeps us informed about the presence of continuous movement in the Sanctuary. From observing the pugmarks to identifying the scat, SEWA team is always on the move for fresh signs of Wildlife habitat in the area.



Meeting the informers, collecting information and maintaining secrecy to keep the whole function intact and recorded, requires positive response from informers and valuable information

hence provided by them. Keeping in touch with informers spread throughout the area requires regular efforts and timely meetings.

SEWA team is always on the watch, be it manning the boundaries, collecting and recording data, to communicating with the forest department to know the latest updates to helping the locals and tribal in dealing with the threats, our team has always been a great source of support and a pillar of strength as an Organization. Camera trapping with the Department and then monitoring those traps is what an essential part of monitoring is.

Identifying the threats, dealing with them in best way possible, trying to lessen the threats and trying to maintain harmony our team has always been on the front to deal with it. The unidentified or suspicious activities inside the forest or suspicious trespass were always reported timely to the officials so that appropriate action can be taken on time.

Walking hundreds of miles on foot in a week to watching the wildlife silently from a distance, our team has always been patient and active all along. From helping the Forest Department in catching thieves or poachers to creating awareness among the local tribes, SEWA team has always set a benchmark to be envied and get inspiration from.

From fighting the threat of over grazing to illegal timber and bamboo extraction, SEWA team has always been present to fight the cause of the threat or the threat itself. Fighting fires in the middle of the night to keeping an eye out on Carnivore movement around the periphery, it has always been the priority of the team to protect the Wildlife and Nature without compromising with its environment.

To identify the specific landscape and biodiversity of a particular landscape it required that a proper study it depend on scientific way and traditional way. We had done various type of monitoring In NNTR landscape which is divided into three type

Trap camera monitoring

In entire two year time span we had done almost two trap camera monitoring in different two blocks which is corridor section of NNTR and buffer area of old Nagzira. In this monitoring period we had installed almost 20 trap camera for 2 month in the sensitive area where we found very good wildlife movement picture.



- 1) **Kill base monitoring-** in the NNTR landscape we are doing kill base monitoring since from eight year. In entire two year we had done almost 15 kill base monitoring with forest department to find out the presence and animal behavior

2) **Tiger migration monitoring-** SEWA team has been identified various migration path of tigers which is the result of Tiger migration monitoring. SEWA team successfully identified and study three to four migration from NNTR to peanch, NNTR to UKPWS, NNTR to Balaghat and Balaghat to NNTR.

3) **Informers Networking And Information Gathering**

- In this programme we had focus on information networking in which informer's gave important & sensitive information which is more useful for Conservation and maintain co relation between man and wild animals.
- These programme had conduct in wildlife sensitive areas.

We are targeted few buffer villages which are sensitive for wildlife as well as humans. To build informer network first of all we have to identify villages

which is notorious, where man animal conflict level is very high and also we are target those villages which are involved in poaching case. We always try to felicitate our informer. Now SEWA team working in almost 80 villages of NNTR buffer and NNTR corridor area its very wider level of information gathering network which is very effective to avoid man animal conflict and to identify threats



Awareness programme & capacity building programme

Awareness programme in wildlife sensitive village & areas. Awareness programs are totally related to information gathering and informers networking. It is a first step to gather or attract interested people from mob. Especially we'll take awareness programs throughout the year in summer and winter season by using projector and slides. In the presentation we'll speak about preventive measures about man animal conflict, crop raid issues and how to get compensation from forest department. Awareness programs which build a capacity



between local communities we also try to help them to make a Self-Hand Group for village development and to decrease dependency of forest.

Awareness program specially divided in two category

- 1) Awareness program in school/collages- 19
- 2) Awareness program in villages- 35

Black buck and wolf conservation and awareness programme.

Since from decade we are working for black buck and wolf conservation in different three landscapes which is the small pockets where good population of Indian grey wolves and their prey black buck found. We are targeted local villagers to protect and conserve the Antelope species. We also help forest department to guide and inform about black buck conservation.



The following small packets where conservation program is running out.

- i) Dahegoan-monegaen of Amgaon range
 - ii) Khamari-Gonditolapowaritola of gondia range
 - iii) Ambetaliao-Gidhaddi of Goregon range.
- Regular monitoring of blackbuck & wolf packs.

We are doing regular foot patrolling and bike patrolling in that three landscape within a week we targeted 2 days to working in this landscape we also take regular meetings with villagers of surrounding area and beat guard of that range.

- Conduct orientation & sensitization of local committee members, farmers and field staff.



Recuse programmes

SEWA team has always been a Nature's Guide and a Nature's friend. Keeping in mind that every species of animal be it a reptile or bird or herbivore or carnivore, it should stay in its natural habitat and that it does not disturb the balance, our team works effortlessly in the rescue and release of mostly snakes and birds in their natural habitat with utmost care and precision. Rescuing not only birds but also snake, tiger, leopards, nilgais, black bugs, sloth bears from to poachers, our SEWA team tries with all their might to keep the species safe till they release it in their natural habitat.

• Livelihood Activities

- We did livelihood activities in ruler& tribal areas.
We selected almost 13th villages where we started livelihood program to make villagers self-depended and the main motto behind this program is to decrees dependency of forest. We also improve their mind and thinking about wildlife and why it is important to protect them. We are making Self hand groups in these 13th villages we are helping them to improve their crop pattern and we also help them to directly connected to various frame producer company.



• Man – animal conflict

In awareness programs and workshops our main motto is to avoid Man animal conflicts situation. We discuss with people about animal movement pattern does and don't into the forest area.

• Anti-poachingactivates and anti-electrocution movement

In NNTR landscape Poaching and electrocution is the biggest threat. People using electric current for killing wild animals most of the time they use electric current fencing to protect their crop from wild herbivore but unfortunately it's a big fact that not only herbivore but also carnivore animals and various time humans are also lose their life. It's a very big issue for NNTR landscape. Our team is frequently working for solving this big issue. We seized and caught various electrocution cases in this two year.

• Celebrate world wildlife week – 1st Oct -7thOut.

-we had celebrate world wildlife week in wildlife sensitive villages, schools, collages & sensitive areas.

• Wetland development and monitoring programme

Gondia district is a lake district, we have more than10, 000 lakes.

Alternate Livelihood:

With a sequence of continued consultative meetings, it was mutually understood that lack of employment was the key factor behind most of the illicit activities in forest by the local villagers. Also, since the agriculture is rain fed in the landscape, a majority of villagers are left with no organized activities to support their livelihood. Over the course of years, these factors had driven the local villagers to venture into the forest for NTFP collection and other related activities.

Mahua flowers (Madhuca indica), Tendu (Diospyros melanoxylon), Palash (Beautea monosperma), Amla (Phyllanthus emblica), Hirda (Terminalia chebula) and Baheda (Terminalia bellirica) are the most widely collected NTFP in the landscape.

Consequently, S.E.W.A. approached the existing Self Help Groups (SHGs) within the project villages and discussed various measures that can be incorporated by these SHGs to boost their livelihood. The point of interest/subjects were noted and S.E.W.A. went on to discuss the same criteria with two 'Farmer goods producer companies' named

i) 'Chirag Patil Krishi Vikas Sanstha' and

ii) 'Gondia Shetkari Utpadak Company'

We successfully established an organized link between the company & SHG's for a better and structured market. It was decided that the agro based goods produced by SHGs will be purchased by the above mentioned companies. These companies are recognised by the government and are permitted to operate throughout the state of Maharashtra. This also helped in removing the middleman or agent's share on the goods so that the SHGs can reap added benefits of their income. Within this collaboration, the practice of organic paddy cultivation was initiated by concerning SHGs.

Workshop of SHGs at Mandodevi :

A one day workshop was organized at Mandodevi temple on 7th September 2018 for SHGs of five villages, namely Alebedar, Jambhdi, Tilli, Pipartola and Nimba. This being the first structured workshop for SHGs was prime opportunity for the different SHGs to interact and exchange views. The SHG members were trained broadly on the following subjects:

- Organic Farming
- Secondary crop produces.
- Horticulture
- Goat Farming
- Sustainable NTFP Collection and Bamboo Art craft Training
- Beneficial Agro based schemes and policies by government

Experts of the above mentioned subjects were the trainers for this workshop. A total of about 300 beneficiaries were trained.



(Trainer Dr. Narendra Deshmukh giving insights about goat farming as an opportunity for alternate livelihood generation.)



(SHG members of Tilli, Jambhdi & Alebedar observing the bamboo articles which were on display & was a part of the training. Also, lunch being served for the participants)



(Mr. Sawan Bahekar guiding about the numerous ecosystem services we enjoy and why we must protect them.)

After passing individual resolutions by the existing SHGs to work in accordance with S.E.W.A., we divided the SHGs in two clusters of five villages each. The first cluster included Jambhdi, Dodke, Alebedar, Khamtalao & Jhurkutola and the second cluster included Tilli, Mohgaon, Pipartola, Nimba & Telankhedi. Similar training cum workshops was later conducted at Jambhdi, Tilli and Nimba.

Equipment & Training:

- Spray Pumps:

Since agricultural practices affect majority of the local villagers, aiding in agro based equipments was found to be of great importance. After consultative meetings with both of the cluster of SHGs, it was noted that local villagers hire spray pumps to spray insecticides and pesticides from local vendor. This practice eats up a considerable share of their income. Hence, with the consent of SHGs it was decided that S.E.W.A. would provide spray pumps that will be handed over to both the cluster of SHGs.

10 Spray pumps were distributed to each cluster of SHGs, i.e. total 20 spray pumps.



(Spray pumps being distributed to the Tilli SHG members by S.E.W.A.)



- 'Baati' (earthen lamp wick) production:

After a series of consultative meeting with both the cluster of SHGs, it was observed that local stakeholders are keen in adopting the baati making activity as one of the method to aid their livelihood. Baati making with raw cotton has been an activity that the local villagers, especially women were already doing from many generation. But this activity was completely manual and didn't assist much in fetching a higher price. S.E.W.A. went on to discuss this topic with several experts and it was learnt that a machine can be used for the production of Baati. This machine required less manual work, saved significant amount of time and the volume of production can multiplied number of times. SHGs of Jambhdi, Tilli and Dodke passed a resolution requesting S.E.W.A. to aid in fetching the machine.

S.E.W.A. purchased two baati making machines and they were allotted to the SHGs of Jambhdi.

A separate workshop was conducted by S.E.W.A. to train the SHG members about the use of Baati making machine. The trainers illustrated ways to operate machine and also how to manage business for small enterprise.



(Consultative meeting with SHG members at Khamtalao)

Sewing machines:

Most of the members of SHGs are women and hence it was stressed by S.E.W.A. to involve them in a long term activity, in which they are comfortable working. S.E.W.A. procured 20 Sewing machines in the first phase and was distributed to 10 individual SHGs, i.e. 2 machines per SHG. The year 2020 faced covid scenario in the landscape and also there was an existing ban on single use plastic bags by the state government. Therefore, it was discussed in the consultative meetings with each SHG that the sewing machines will be used in production of cloth bags, face masks and other related cloth items. This would not just provide a stable employment to women but would also aid their standard of living in the society with pride and dignity.



Photo Gallery



Two Sarus cranes found dead in Gondia

■ District Correspondent
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Honorary Wildlife Warden Sawan Bahekar expressed
(Contd on page 2)



The Forest Department has now formed ten separate teams of forest and FDCM employees and have also installed camera traps at different places to search the tigress. Officials are now making efforts to get the cub reunited with its mother.