

# COUNTRY PROFILE OF TIGER CONSERVATION ACTIONS AND STRATEGIES, NEPAL

## OVERVIEW OF TIGER STATUS

The alluvial grasslands and forests of the Nepal Terai supported some of the highest recorded densities of tigers across the range until 1950s. However, the tiger population and prey base remarkably decreased after the loss of habitats due to human encroachment, poaching and degradation of habitats. Tiger conservation initiative dates back to early 1970s with the establishment of country's protected area network. Until 1990s the basic conservation strategy was focused on species and ecosystem approach. Over the past 15 years, the scope has expanded through the creation of the buffer zone network and the Terai Arc Landscape program to bring local communities into the mainstream of conservation, control poaching, restore and maintain tiger habitats, create and manage corridors between core refuges, promote transboundary cooperation with India and China, rebuild the tiger prey base, and reverse the decline in tiger numbers.

Over the past decade, the Tiger conservation program has met with some successes and failures. Tigers now use some critical dispersal corridors, including trans-boundary corridors. However, over a decade of civil strife (1997-2007) prevailed throughout the country, from which Nepal has now emerged, has also resulted in a breakdown of successful protection schemes, allowing poaching to surge. Tigers in some of Nepal's prominent protected areas have declined precipitously and some corridors that were targeted for restoration and conservation have been encroached upon, threatening their functionality.

Yet, despite these setbacks, the Government of Nepal has been committed, and remains steadfast in conserving its tiger population. A recent landscape-wide grid-based occupancy survey and extensive camera trapping have indicated that tiger populations may be now increasing in some areas (Chitwan National Park) and holding steady in other areas (Bardia National Park and Suklaphanta and Parsa Wildlife Reserves), while the total number of adult tigers in the Terai is estimated at 121 adults.

## TIGER CONSERVATION GOAL

Conserve a viable tiger meta-population in the Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) in Nepal

### Objectives

- Increase tiger population to at least 250 adults by 2020 in TAL (Nepal) and manage as a metapopulation with transboundary genetic and ecological linkages.
- Maintain, restore and conserve at least 6,500 km<sup>2</sup> of additional tiger habitats in TAL (Nepal) as high quality tiger habitats outside Protected Areas including dispersal corridors for ecological connectivity.
- Reduce national and international trade of tiger parts and products and control poaching to a level that does not threaten the viability of wild tiger populations in Nepal.

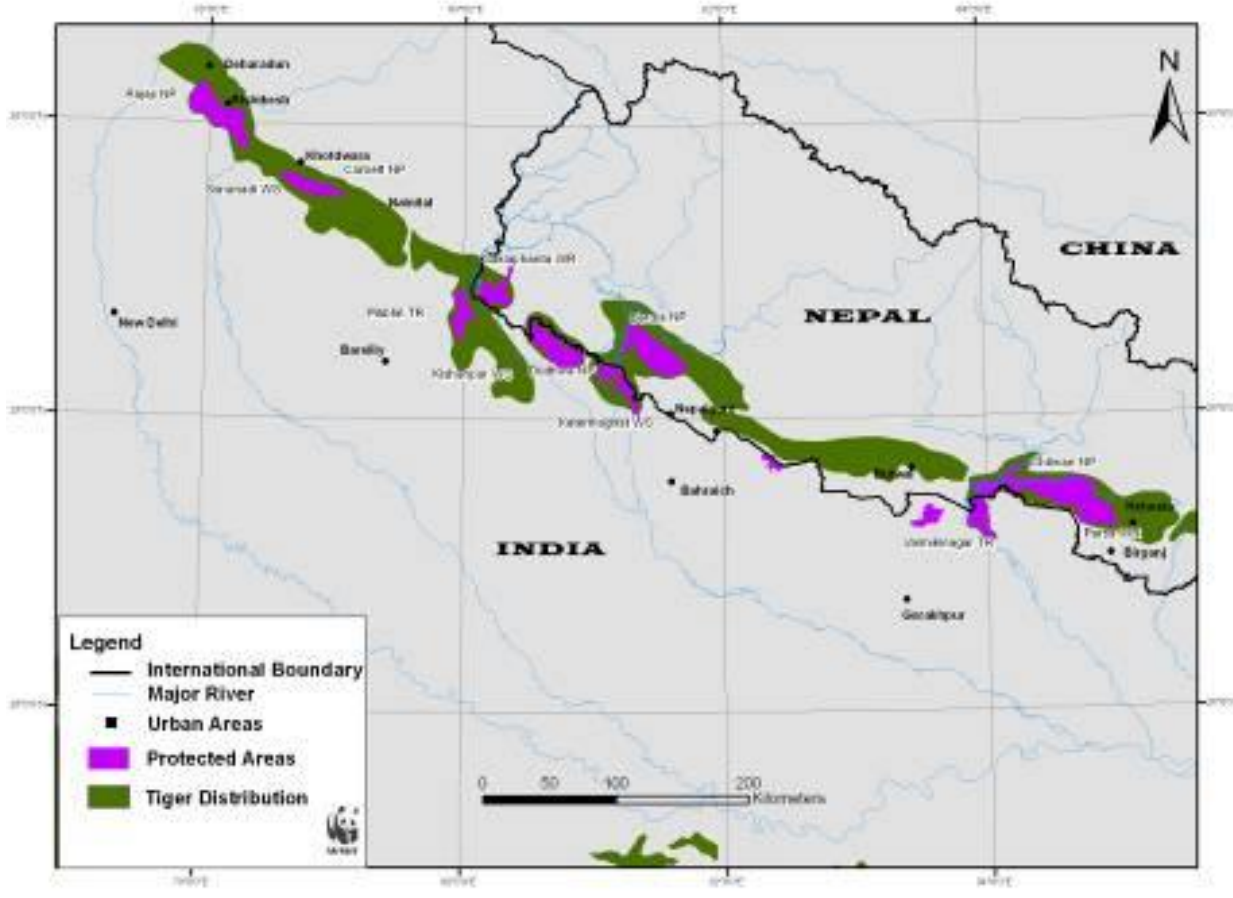


Figure 1. Map of Terai Arc Landscape showing protected areas and dispersal corridors.

## ACTIONS

### The Government of Nepal, in collaboration with stakeholders and partners will:

1. Establish a National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), chaired by the Prime Minister, and the membership comprised of the Minister and Secretary, Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation; Minister and Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs; Chief of the Army Staffs, Chief of Armed Force Police, and Chief of Nepal Police, with the Director General of Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) as Member Secretary. Representatives from national and international non-governmental conservation partners will join NTCA as observers.
2. Institutionalize and implement an effective tiger protection and monitoring program in the Terai Arc Landscape.
  - a. Upgrade and implement Management Information System in tiger presence areas.
  - b. Strengthen anti-poaching mechanisms in protected areas, community-based antipoaching units and intelligence networks in all national forests, including corridors and buffer zones, and establish units where lacking.
  - c. Continue the periodic and structured population monitoring programs.
  - d. Implement an effective and proactive human-tiger conflict mitigation programs.
  - e. Develop necessary human resources and infrastructure for effective protection.
  - f. Government of Nepal to seek financial, technical and technological supports from national and international conservation partners to successfully accomplish above mentioned activities.
3. Manage TAL as a conservation landscape, with core areas, buffer zones, dispersal corridors, and matrix areas zoned for appropriate management prescriptions and regulations in order to conserve and manage tigers as a metapopulation that includes transboundary ecological and population-related linkages.
  - a. Gazette the TAL as a conservation landscape with a focus on tiger conservation.
  - b. Undertake research and management to remove alien invasive species (especially *Lantana camara*, *Mikania micrantha*, *Eichhornia crassipes*, *Pistia stratiotes* and *Chromolaena odorata*) and maintain habitat quality.
  - c. Protect and manage core areas, corridors, and buffer zones from human encroachment through strict enforcement of laws, and resolve ongoing encroachments in other potential tiger habitats outside PAs.
  - d. Approve all large economic and development projects planned for the TAL only on the basis of recommendations from prior impact assessments to determine the impacts on tigers, tiger prey and habitat.
  - e. Address transboundary conservation issues through joint and complementary management approaches.
  - f. Government of Nepal to seek both financial and technical support from national and international conservation partners to successfully accomplish above mentioned activities.
4. Establish a high level Wildlife Trade Monitoring and Enforcement Authority at the central level, with well-trained and well-equipped intelligence networks extending to strategic points in districts within Nepal to monitor trade routes, and create a reward system as incentive for intelligence from the general public.
5. Review and amend the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act and policies related to forests management to include landscape-level conservation policy gaps that constrain in effective management.

6. Establish a sustainable tiger conservation financing mechanism.
  - a. Explore the potential for diverting carbon-related funds (REDD, biogas, carbon credits for forest restoration) for tiger, prey base and tiger habitat conservation.
  - b. Develop mechanism to generate financial resource specifically for tiger conservation from tourism.
  - c. Negotiate with the Government of India for payments for water and other hydrological services from Narayani and Karnali river systems to support tiger conservation in TAL region (Fig. 1).

## STRATEGIES

1. Use the authority vested with the National Tiger Conservation Authority to:
  - a. gazette the TAL (Nepal) as a conservation landscape with a focus on tiger conservation,
  - b. coordinate with law enforcement agencies to address encroachment into designated tiger habitat,
  - c. coordinate with the armed forces to help in tiger protection and control its poaching,
  - d. coordinate among governmental line agencies and Ministries to assess development plans in designated tiger habitats against tiger conservation goals and objectives, and
  - e. review existing policies to facilitate effective conservation and protection,
  - f. assign conservation responsibilities to the relevant organizations (government, non-Government, and international stakeholders) involved and committed to tiger conservation and make them accountable to the NTCA.
2. Approve, adopt and fund new technological and methodological advances to monitor tigers, prey, and habitat in a structured manner and collaborate with relevant agencies to conduct research to gain a better understanding of tiger ecology and population status for management.
3. Develop a land use/land management plan for the TAL corridors and implement with relevant stakeholders.
4. Strengthen and empower the TAL Steering Committee to:
  - a) guide and oversee conservation and economic development projects in the TAL corridors, buffer zones and core areas, and
  - b) coordinate with donors and implementing agencies to ensure that projects are aligned with the TAL strategic plan.
5. Establish close links with regional forums (South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation, South Asian CEP) and accede to international agreements, such as CITES that deal with regional trade and trafficking in wildlife, and parts and products.
6. Establish/Institute a sustainable Tiger Conservation Fund (TCF) for tiger conservation through innovative funding mechanisms that includes regional and transboundary payments for environmental services, carbon- and climate-related payments, tourism revenues etc.
7. Introduce conservation education programs for general public to raise the profile of tiger conservation, the links to ecosystem services, the value of tigers for ecotourism, and to instill national pride as one of the few Tiger Range states in the world.

8. Establish effective and practical incentive package at the Village Development Committee levels to encourage local stakeholders in conservation of tiger, prey base and their habitats at local and landscape levels.

## ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEARS 2010 - 2020

S.N.	Activities	Unit	Remarks
1	<b>Establish a National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)</b>	Year (10)	
2.	<b>Institutionalize and implement an effective tiger protection and monitoring program in the Terai Arc Landscape</b>		
2.1	Implement and upgrade MIST (Management Information System Technology) – Preparation of MIST implementation protocol, Training, Operation cost and equipments	10 events in the four Pas	Cost share will be higher during the initial years
2.2	Strengthen anti-poaching mechanisms / community-based protection units and intelligence networks / establish units where lacking	4 Pas for 10 year	Cost share will be higher during the initial years
2.3	Continue the periodic, structured population monitoring program	3 times in the 4 Pas, 6 time in 4 PA	Patch occupancy and tiger census every 4 <sup>th</sup> year, individual PA tiger census and prey base every 2 year
2.4	Implement human-tiger conflict mitigation program.	10 years	
2.5	Develop human resources and infrastructure	10 years	Cost share will be higher during the initial years
<b>3</b>			
3.1	Gazette the TAL as a conservation landscape	One event	
3.2	Undertake research and management to remove alien invasive species	10 years	
3.3	Protect core areas, corridors, and buffer zones from human encroachment through strict enforcement of laws, and resolve ongoing encroachment problem.	Lump sum	Cost share will be higher during the initial years
3.4	Actively manage critical tiger habitat in core areas, buffer zones and corridors	Lump sum	

3.5	Approve all large economic and development projects planned for the TAL only on the basis of recommendations from prior impact assessments to determine the impacts on tigers, tiger prey and habitat.	10 years	
3.6	Manage transboundary linkages through complementary management	Lump sum	
4.	<b>Establish a high level wildlife trade monitoring and enforcement authority at the Central level, with well-trained, well-equipped, intelligence networks extending to strategic points in districts within Nepal</b>		
	Secretary	1 person for 10 years	
	Office assistant	1 person for 10 years	
	Office helper	1 person for 10 years	
	Driver	1 person for 10 years	
	Transportation	Lump sum	Vehicle/Motorcycle
	Equipment	Lump sum	
	Office set up	Lump sum	
	Operation Cost	10 years	
	Miscellaneous		
5	<b>Review and amend the NPWC and Forest Acts to include landscape-level conservation policy gaps</b>	1 event	
6	<b>Establish a sustainable tiger conservation financing mechanism.</b>	3 years	
	Explore the potential for diverting carbon-related funds (REDD, biogas, carbon credits for forest restoration)		

	Negotiate with the Government of India for payments for water and other hydrological services from the Narayani and Karnali river systems to support tiger conservation in the TAL.		
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