

**Project**

Gram Rakshak Programme, Panna Tiger Reserve

**Reporting Period**

1 April 2022–31 March 2023

**Submitted to**



**Submitted by**



**Project Team**

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### Project Details

<b>Reporting period:</b>	1 April 2022–31 March 2023	<b>Project title:</b>	Gram Rakshak Programme, Panna Tiger Reserve
<b>Date of report:</b>	<b>10 April 2023</b>	<b>Project Manager:</b>	Gaurav Shirodkar
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### Achievement:

- Patrolling activities continued by 20 gram rakshaks across 20 villages engaging in regular patrolling activities in conjunction with beat guards and forest officers. Additionally, in the event of reports of sightings of animals, GRs regularly assist in crowd control, directing animals back to the forest, and information sharing with neighbouring villages of animal movement that may affect them too.
- Awareness and education activities have reached over 2000 people across 20 villages, with various initiatives such as do's and don'ts of reducing animal conflict, hygiene and distancing protocols related to COVID-19, conflict mitigation, snake-bite awareness, cleanliness and sanitization as a result of a breakout of scrub typhus in April/May of 2022, and a friendly cricket match among villagers of Tara and Vikrampur in celebration of Republic Day on 26 January 2023.
- 30 villagers from the village of Bilhata joined Forest Department (FD) staff to help control forest fires in the dry season in May as part of the FD's regular fire management activities
- GRs took part in a plastic clean up drive in Akola celebrating World Environment Day in conjunction with 10-15 staffs from Panna FD



**Figure 1 Friendly cricket match played among villagers as part of Republic Day celebrations**

- Villagers assisted with and successfully compensated by the authorities for losses incurred due to cattle killed by tigers, leopards, and jackals
- Whatsapp group successfully initiated for information sharing and reporting of sightings. The group included Gram Rakshak and officials of the forest department. Compared to the situation before the project was established, compensation has been procured for villagers with the help of GRs and through liaising with the FD in a much faster and more streamlined process.

**Appendix I: Gram Rakshak Panna Whatsapp group's screenshots.**

- In addition to standard sightings of wild animals within recognized areas and territories within the project area, increased sightings of tigers and sloth bears have also been reported from within the main Panna city. Reports have been primarily



shared via the Whatsapp group, increasing the speed and efficiency of information gathering



**Figure 2 GRs on safari in the park as part of an incentivization effort in collaboration with the Forest Department**

- GRs assisted FD with Cattle Kill Census across villages within the core area from 21 September 2022 to 26 September 2022.
- 5 more villages (Raksha, Khajri, Patha, Brijpur, and Sarkoha) identified from the territorial corridor as a result of predicted shifting tiger movement due to Ranipur Wildlife Sanctuary being declared a tiger reserve and the Ken-Betwa river linking project + territorial region and have been successfully incorporated into the project. A significant milestone in the project has also been the fact that two of the newly recruited GRs are women from the villages of Patha and Khajri.
- 2000m of electrical wiring was “poled” in November as part of anti-electrocution campaign to avoid accidental electrocutions

- After a year of discussions and negotiations, the first EcoDevelopment Committee meeting was held in December amongst all stakeholders to discuss various issues related to safety, conflict management, compensation, and preventative measures. The committee has decided to meet on a quarterly basis (eg, before fire season begins)



**Figure 3 Field jackets distributed at the end of a motivational meeting with senior staffs of the Forest Department**

- Custom Made GR Jackets were distributed to all GRs in a meeting attended by GRs, the Panna Tiger Reserve Field Director, Deputy Director and veterinarian as an incentivization effort in January 2023. Furthermore, a safari was organized for the GRs as a motivation exercise, who happened to sight 3 tigers.
- ‘Van Samiti’ meeting was arranged among villagers, GRs, and FD staff to advise villagers to not lay traps and snares during the crop season and to follow safety protocols when working in the fields.



- GRs assisted in Anubhuti events organized by MP tourism board and MPFD in which nature camps and games are organized for school children from villages within the project area.
- PTR received a 'very good' status as part of the Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) conducted by the National Tiger Conservation Authority across all the tiger reserves of India.



**Figure 4 GRs engaging with villagers in environment-themed games during a Fire Safety and Awareness project being run in PTR to prevent forest fires**

- A Fire Safety Awareness was conducted from 2 March to 13 April 2023. A total of 600 people from 20 villages across 5 ranges (Mandla, Gangau Sanctuary, Panna Core, Panna Buffer, Kishanganj Buffer and Amanganj Buffer) in batches of 25 people were taken to Panna Tiger Reserve for day, where they were engaged in various activities including a powerpoint presentation, nature games, conversation regarding fire

awareness, safety, and control programs and do's and don'ts and ending the day with a Panna Tiger Reserve Safari and visit to the Pandav Falls. These sessions were also used as conduit for building relations and opening dialogues amongst various stakeholders. Additionally, GRs were also involved in this program, at the end of which they were rewarded with a safari into the reserve and gifts as further incentives.

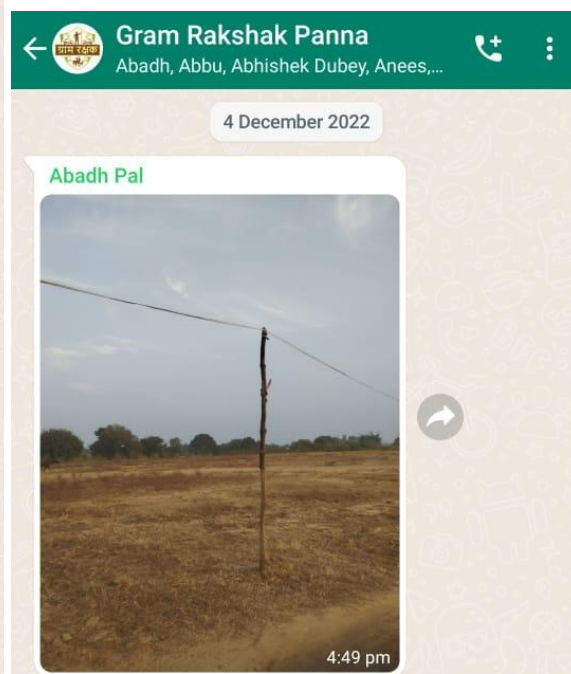
**Future plans:**

- As a result of the success of the project, most of the issues related to conflict with wildlife and unsafe practices have been addressed and incorporated into several villages. Therefore, moving forward, focus will be redirected to villages within the territorial forest region and high-risk villages will be incorporated into the program, whereas those villages that no longer require active intervention will be removed from the roster of villages employing GRs, ensuring that the final number of villages retained in the project will still be 20. Furthermore, along with regular informal conversations and ad hoc visits to the delisted villages, GRs from these villages will be incorporated into other education and tourism activities, such as nature walks and cultural experiences, such that the knowledge and skills they have gained are still employed towards overall safeguarding of the local landscape and community engagement.

## Appendices:

### Appendix I

Attached below are some of the screenshots taken from the Gram Rakshak Whatsapp Group. There is regular, and active communication by the GR's and by the Officials.











End of Report