

## **Full Project Report 2000 BT0852: Anti-Poaching Programme**

### **Project Summary**

Bhutan's expansive forest cover and near-intact natural environment shelter some 160 species of mammals, 770 species of birds and 5,400 species of vascular plants. Many of these species are threatened and appear in the IUCN Red Data Book. Poaching of wild fauna and flora pose a serious conservation problem in Bhutan considering the lucrative trade in parts and products of wild animals and plants in the region. Based on field reports of incidents of poaching, the Forestry Services Division embarked upon a programme to monitor and mitigate wildlife poaching and trade in Bhutan with financial support from WWF.

### **Project Background:**

Owing to diverse climatic and altitudinal conditions and extensive forest cover, Bhutan has one of the best stocks of wild fauna and flora in the world. Within its small area of 46,500 km<sup>2</sup>, the country is home to some 160 species of mammals, 770 species of birds and 5,400 species of vascular plants. These species include many which are listed as threatened in the IUCN Red Data Book. Species such as the musk deer (*Moschus chrysogaster*), Himalayan black bear (*Selenarctos thibetanus*), Bengal tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*), snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*), leopard (*Panthera pardus*) and Chinese caterpillar fungus (*Cordecypis sikkimensis*) are poached intermittently due to a lucrative market for their parts and products in the region and in retaliation to the damage some of the predators cause to livestock and humans. The country's mother forest law -- Forest and Nature Conservation Act of Bhutan, 1995 -- accords total protection to 23 species of wild animals and 7 plants and prescribes severe punishments for violation of the law. Whilst stringent legislation and regulatory provisions are in place to protect wild fauna and flora, poaching continues due to a dearth of trained staff, lack of information and awareness amongst the general population and inadequate equipment for surveillance. In order to address these problems, the Forestry Services Division launched the anti-poaching programme in 1995 with the financial support from WWF.

### **Project Objectives:**

Specifically, the programme aims to:

- Increase the efficacy of implementation of legislation on wildlife protection by enhancing coordination among various law enforcement agencies and by involving local communities;
- Establish and support anti-poaching squads in vulnerable areas by providing them adequate training and equipment;
- Educate and raise the awareness of the general public on the implications and issues of poaching to enlist their support for wildlife protection.



## **Evaluation Criteria:**

### ***Activities:***

- Training of anti-poaching personnel;
- Provision of surveillance equipment and field gear to the anti-poaching squads;
- Events of public education and awareness campaign on protection of wild flora and fauna;
- Production of various types of public education and information materials to control poaching;
- Development of a framework and a set of criteria for implementation of a rewards scheme for local informants.

### ***Outputs:***

- A network of well-trained and equipped anti-poaching squads covering all vulnerable areas;
- Nation wide high school art competition for tiger conservation held
- Audio music cassette advocating conservation of tigers and other wildlife produced.
- Consultant hired to propose a national anti-poaching strategy for implementation of anti-poaching activities in a coordinated and holistic manner;
- Involvement of local people as informants for detection and prevention of poaching activities.

### ***Indicators:***

- Number of anti-poaching squads and the extent of their coverage;
- Level of competence of anti-poaching squads to mitigate poaching activities;
- The national anti-poaching strategy document;
- Level of public understanding of, and support for, wildlife protection;
- Level of local involvement in anti-poaching activities.