

# Communities prepared to be resettled for sake of conserving tigers

February 3 2014, by K. Scoggins

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Research from the University of Kent has revealed that people in the western Terai Arc Landscape, India, are prepared to relocate their homes and families to help conserve tigers.

Undertaken by researchers from the University's Durrell Institute for Conservation and Ecology (DICE), the research evaluates the ecological and habitat needs of wildlife in the region and the socio-economic needs and priorities of the local forest-dependent community, known as the Gujjars.

The research aims to provide an objective framework for conservationists and policymakers to prioritise efforts in order to reach their goal of doubling tiger numbers by 2022.

Described in two published papers, the research provides evidence that recovery of wild tiger populations can be achieved hand-in-hand with meeting the livelihood aspirations of the Gujjars.

In the first part of the research, the team found that by reintroducing [tigers](#) into a section of the landscape that suffers from a lack of connectivity to high density tiger populations, as well as carrying out targeted actions to recover important tiger prey at specific sites across the landscape, there was the potential to increase [tiger populations](#) by around 68%.

Results from the second part showed an overwhelming preference among Gujjars households interviewed for resettlement outside the forests. This signalled an unexpected opportunity to expand inviolate habitat for tigers in a specific human-dominated landscape by meeting larger livelihood issues for local people, such as better access to education and health services.

Principal researcher, Abishek Harihar of DICE, said: 'With targets to double tiger numbers by 2022, our research could mark a significant change in tiger conservation in India and across tiger range countries. Likewise, it can provide an objective framework for conservationists and policy makers to focus their conservation priorities on ways to delineate "inviolate core" and "areas of coexistence."

Dr Douglas MacMillan, Professor of Conservation and Applied Resource Economics in DICE, said: 'Although this may not be a solution in all contexts across the tiger range worldwide, we have established that relocation of people at least in this instance would suggest that policy

makers have the potential to create a win-win solution for both tigers and local communities.'

**More information:** Abishek Harihar, Mousumi Ghosh-Harihar, Douglas C. MacMillan, Human resettlement and tiger conservation – Socio-economic assessment of pastoralists reveals a rare conservation opportunity in a human-dominated landscape, *Biological Conservation*, Volume 169, January 2014, Pages 167-175, ISSN 0006-3207, [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2013.11.012](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2013.11.012).

Harihar, A., Pandav, B., MacMillan, D. C. (2014), Identifying realistic recovery targets and conservation actions for tigers in a human-dominated landscape using spatially explicit densities of wild prey and their determinants. *Diversity and Distributions*. doi: 10.1111/ddi.12174

Provided by University of Kent

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