

Minutes of the 8th meeting of the Core Committee of the Tripura JICA Project on Inventorization of the Biodiversity Resources held in the Conference Hall of Aranya Bhavan at Pt. Nehru Complex, Agartala on the 9th October, 2009 at 4.30 P.M

The Member Secretary of the Core Committee welcomed, thanked the members and participants for attending the meeting at a very short notice. He narrated about the agenda of the meeting which is to essentially convene to take a decision on the following, (i) A team headed by Dr S D Biju from the Systematics Lab, School of Environmental Studies, Delhi University has sent a letter to the PMU expressing their intention to participate in the Biodiversity Research and Inventorization work of Tripura JICA Project and to carry out the Herpetofauna survey across the hotspots of Tripura. However they are keen to take up the work as per their terms and conditions mentioned in the letter.

2. The copy of the letter was circulated amongst the Core Committee members for view and considered opinion. The Core Committee needs to address the issue and take a final decision at the earliest. Further, the attention thus far is on inventorization of Biodiversity resources and hence it is considered necessary to initiate and carry forward the other activities/sub components of the project namely—Ecotourism, development of Community Reserves, etc. The third issue on which a decision is required is on Payment to Member Institutions.

3. The Chairman, Core Committee briefed the participants against the above backdrop. He mentioned that the letter in question clearly states that funds would not be required by the System laboratory for anything else except the following - (i) funds for air travel for 2 people, for 2 seasons between Delhi and Agartala and (ii) local transport, food and accommodation expenses to be borne by the Project or Forest Department for 2 people for 2 seasons. He further informed that the Delhi University team is willing to carry out work as an independent affiliation to the Tripura JICA Project but not keen to take up the works of the project under the provisions described in the MOU. Further they will only be submitting one progress report within 4 months of leaving Tripura after each field season. The Chairman, Core Committee invited all members to examine the issue and opine so that a decision can be taken on the same. The pace, progress of the work carried out so far by different groups is also discussed in the meeting, the role played by the FA was examined and after detailed discussion following issues and decisions emerged:

- a) The inventorization of Herpetofauna resources is rather specialized task and since the Delhi University team has agreed to work on its inventory, the work may be

assigned but the MOU to be developed shall be authenticated by the Head of the Department or the Registrar of the University so that the project work is carried out in continuity keeping in mind that 2 persons shall have to cover all the 34 hotspots per visit.

- b) Specimen collected shall remain in the state otherwise it would be difficult to identify the source and location at a later stage. Permission of competent authority of the state shall however be required for collection of specimens as per the W.P(P) Act, 1972 and Biodiversity Rules of Tripura, 2008.
- c) Collected specimens shall be suitably preserved in the state.
- d) Payments shall be made by cheque in the name of the System lab of Delhi University for the work as 'independent affiliates to Tripura JICA Project'.
- a) Dr S D Biju shall ensure that right people with the required expertise are appointed and engaged so that the hotspots are covered within the timeline and inventORIZATION of the fauna of the state is taken care of and further information is added to already existing ZSI records for the state of Tripura. And Dr. Biju shall also be requested to spell out the methodology, duration of the survey and coverage of the hotspots.
- b) With regard to sample collection some scientific flexibility must be allowed. Initially the team shall be allowed to carry the entire collection for laboratory works to be taken to Delhi with a condition that a part of the collection is brought back to be preserved within the state. All original samples are to be preserved within the state thus allowing the team to only retain duplicate samples with them at Delhi. Further in case of new species recorded during their work, the type specimen must be deposited within the state. Further each collection should be suitably digitized i.e. all specimens are to be photographed and their GPS locations must be recorded, so that the information can be shared with all groups.
- c) The Forest Department shall take decision on preservation of specimens for future reference and study purposes.
- d) With regard to the funds requested, as they have only asked for air travel expenses and expenses for local travel, accommodation and food, the Project shall reimburse the expenses.
- e) The designated Principal Investigator shall present and keep the Core Committee informed about the activities, progress and findings.
- f) The Delhi University team shall agree to integrate 2 local personnel in their team with aim for local capacity building and they need to ensure that these personnel are adequately trained in all data collection methods they shall follow during their fieldwork and also instil in them an appreciation for the biodiversity resources and the

- need for their conservation. The personnel to be engaged shall be given an exposure on working of the Systematics Lab at the Delhi University to learn the methods of identification of herpetofauna, their preservation including the laboratory techniques.
- g) In view of the differences in opinion which surfaced in respect of the mode of work it was decided that clauses provided and agreed to in the MOU shall be followed while some flexibility considering the field condition shall continue to exist.
 - h) The authentication by the P.I in the field log book shall be accepted for the purpose of documentation of the data.
 - i) The Core Committee members agreed to the participation of Delhi University with broad conditions stated above and additional points if any shall be informed to the Member Secretary within one week of receipt of the minutes of the meeting so that the same could be considered.
 - j) The delay in the initiation of other components of the Biodiversity Project was discussed and It was noted that apart from the inventorization works other components like formation of community reserves and ecotourism activities haven't shown any tangible result. With respect to ecotourism some activities at Sepahijala and Trishna like *Panchakarma* and Bison safari respectively have been the initiatives taken up[and it following the decision taken in the meeting with the Honourable Minister of Forests it was decided that concept paper for establishment of Eco-tourism development Board shall be prepared soon for final decision. will be established.
 - k) Reimbursement towards submission of the bills by the Dishari and Department of Botany shall be made soon.
 - l) The Department of Zoology, Tripura University shall be able to complete the assigned task of 'Inventorization of butterfly diversity' across all the 34 hotspots within 9 months. And so they would like to change the duration of fieldwork from 1.5 years to 9 months. The team shall not require the GPS units.
 - m) Identification of 30 % of the collected butterflies needs to be validated by visiting Delhi to seek the guidance of experts in order to rightly identify the species. And the funds meant for the work shall be utilized for the purpose.
 - n) The balance funds shall be released to the College of Fisheries since field work of 3 months out of the 6 month has been completed.
 - o) The Executive Secretary of Dishari shall submit all the bills and vouchers for the purpose of reimbursement.
 - p) ARPAN shall submit the information on the duration of stay of the data collectors in the log book to be authenticated by its Secretary.

- q) The Core Committee members shall visit Subalsingh on the 24th October, 2009 to inspect the field work.
 - r) The personnel engaged in the field survey work shall be granted 30 days' paid leave.
 - s) The PMU shall be informed about the individuals chosen to replace in future.
4. The meeting was concluded thanking all present.