

## **IUCN/SSC Conservation Translocation Specialist Group- Human-Wildlife Interactions Working Group**

**Thursday the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 2022, 2-3pm (UK time)**

**Discussion title: Hidden costs and gender issues in reintroductions and translocations of wildlife: a case study from India**

**Dr Upma Manral: Wildlife reintroductions and translocations – why we need to consider women? A case study from India**

The forest cover stands at a little over 21 percent of the geographical area of India, the second most populous country in the world, with over 60 percent of its population residing in rural areas. A large part of country's forests is not free of human presence, as the local communities in such landscapes are dependent on forest resources for both sustenance and income generation. On the other hand, these forests are also home to numerous wildlife species with high conservation concerns including large mammals such as Asian elephant, Royal Bengal Tiger, bears, leopard, Indian gaur, and several other species of ungulates and primates. In such a scenario, interactions between wild animals and local inhabitants are a regular phenomenon. Increasing habitat degradation and fragmentation due to natural and anthropogenic factors, increasing human population and expanding human-use areas are driving increase in human proximity to wildlife. Whether people entering into wildlife habitats for resources or wild animals straying into human-use areas, both situations can result in negative interactions between humans and wildlife. In India, translocating individuals involved in conflict on a regular basis such as elephants, tigers, leopards and primates, into areas with better habitats, is a key management practice. Wildlife translocation is also an important conservation tool in today's time, when habitats are increasingly fragmented or for reintroducing a species/ population in its historical range. Thus, wildlife translocation is being used to play the dual role of improving wildlife populations and conflict-related problem solving.

Where do women fit in this conservation scene then? In many of the communities inhabiting wildlife landscapes in India, women and girls form the backbone of local economy and comprise a significant work force. Besides being responsible for taking care of family and numerous household chores, they also work in fields, rear livestock and bring resources from nearby forests. In many such communities, particularly in mountains and remote forest-dwelling societies, male either migrate to urban centres for work or commute in groups on daily basis. Thus, leaving behind females as the main work-force and ones getting affected due to interactions with wildlife on regular basis. They not only are important for running households but also play a crucial role in providing volunteer labour for community works

such as clearing village and forests trails, cleaning springs and other water sources, chasing primates away from agricultural fields and as part of local welfare groups. As the natural resource collectors, they are also custodians of traditional knowledge, often being well-versed with seasonal patterns of plant resources and animal movements in the region. The gender is also important when it comes to attitude and perception of local community towards wildlife conservation, and management authorities. Women with less opportunities for education and exposure to outside world, can have negative perception towards both. Despite being an important wheel for both development and conservation, women are often overlooked when it comes to planning and decision-making.

Through this talk, I try to implore the gendered facets of wildlife management in various landscapes in India. I list some of the reasons we might have to wear gender lens when making decisions relating to wildlife conservation and management, including wildlife translocation whether for conflict mitigation or restocking depleted populations. I share my experience of working with hill communities in Western Himalaya and share stories from different landscapes of India, listing some of the experiences of people who have been part of translocation programs/ projects and exploring the connection between social issues and wildlife conflict in India. I draw attention of policy makers, practitioners and scientific community towards acknowledging women' role in wildlife management including translocation, and encouraging their participation in decision making to achieve sustainable development and wildlife conservation in the developing world.

**Dr Upma Manral** is working as a Project Scientist at the Wildlife Institute of India. She is part of a team working in two Protected Area landscapes of Ladakh, in recognizing the High Conservation Value areas for the biodiversity and people there, and in developing effective management practices. Previously, she has worked in various PA landscapes in Indian Himalaya, Terai, Gangetic floodplains and Eastern ghats. She has contributed to the development of Management Plan for an Urban Wetland Protected Area, Action Plan for river-bed mining sites in key wildlife habitats, and more recently, State Strategy and Action Plan and other guiding documents on mitigating Human-Wildlife Conflict in India. She studied the livelihood security of local communities in Western Himalaya including their vulnerability to human-wildlife conflict and environment changes, for her doctorate. She also worked briefly with hill women in improving resource availability in agro-forestry systems, and finding ways to improve their incomes through value addition. She has been part of various capacity building exercises for forest managers and frontline staff involved in conflict mitigation, and a number of outreaches works related to environmental conservation. Other than her work, she likes to spend time with her family including her two dog-daughters, and does some poetry, gardening, cooking and photography.

**Dr Kalli Doubleday**

This quick overview will touch on research from Sariska Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan, India and will briefly cover results including: (1) gender-based violence is a hidden cost of women working in and around Sariska and the reintroduced tigers, a hidden cost of human–wildlife conflict otherwise unnoted in the literature, (2) this hidden cost is not solely the product of human–wildlife encounters but in large part a consequence of the highly patriarchal society that dictates gendered human–environmental relations. This body of work seeks to inform developing debates around gender-based violence in relation to environmental change, human dimensions of apex predator conservation, and sustainable rural livelihoods in and adjacent to protected areas.

**Kalli F. Doubleday, Ph.D.** is a Research Fellow at The University of Texas, Austin. Kalli explores the human dimensions of human-wildlife interactions and rewilding initiatives through qualitative and mixed-methods research. At the heart of her work is listening -- listening to people who live with tigers, leopards, elephants, and other wildlife and understanding what prevents coexistence. A large part of her research has a focus on gendered aspects of human-tiger coexistence and conflict as a result of participant-driven conversations leading to the published revelations.