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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT



FOR THE CAUSE OF TIGERS

Since 2008, **Aircel** has been working on the ground in several projects to save the striped cats

AIRCEL'S CORPORATE SOCIAL Responsibility effort strongly supports causes that have a societal and environmental impact. This not only reiterates the company's belief in working with communities and their sustenance, but also places it as a brand that strongly believes in the future of India and its youth.

In a country as large as India, there are innumerable causes and issues that may be taken up and adopted by corporates. At Aircel, it was decided to create an impact in the field of environment and education. In partnership with various non-governmental

organizations, the company conceptualized, designed and began an impactful capacity-building and awareness campaign, *Save Our Tigers*, in 2008.

Aircel began active ground support work in the latter part of 2008 with WWF-India. After a project-donor match, the company conceptualized and put into practice two projects.

■ CONSERVATION OF TIGERS IN ASSAM

The state has one of the highest densities of tiger population in the country, but also has very high human-animal conflict. Aircel concentrated on capacity-building here, carrying out extensive work in training of forest guards in anti-poaching measures, infrastructure build-up within the tiger reserves, and securing corridors.

A considerable impact has been evident. Aircel has been able to provide patrolling vehicles and boats, build watch towers and maintain roads inside the reserves — all facilitating anti-poaching measures. After training of foresters in correct wildlife crime reporting, conviction rates have increased manifold. The number of retaliatory killings has also declined markedly due to timely compensation of villagers for loss of their cattle.

■ SUPPORT INITIATIVE FUND

In this project, Aircel worked across all the tiger reserves in the country, extending infrastructure and capacity support on a need basis.

Infrastructure build-up by way of providing vehicles for anti-poaching measures has created a huge impact in many of the reserves, which lacked means to effectively deploy anti-poaching patrols. Aircel has also been able to motivate foresters by equipping them with necessary gear and protective wear to enable unhindered work from their end. Compensation to foresters in cases of injury or loss of life has also highly motivated them. Cattle compensation also formed an important part of the project, negating the human-animal conflict.

The Sunderbans is known for harbouring perhaps the healthiest

tiger populations, but in recent years has had an increase in incidents of human-animal conflict. Habitat destruction, along with massive human population growth, has led to this. In an attempt to negate it, Aircel is working with WWF-India in a conflict mitigation project in the Sunderbans.

Nine villages have been well-lit through solar lamps, which keeps tigers at bay because the big cats do not like to traverse on well-lit paths.

Aircel has put into use a unique trapping cage, used in case a tiger strays into human habitation. This cage is technologically advanced, is much lighter than the ones used earlier and can also weigh the tiger. Once the tiger is trapped, an SMS goes out to five Forest Officials — which helps in a faster and more precise rescue.

In July 2012, Aircel, along with NDTV, held the 2nd Save Our Tigers Telethon. Over Rs 5 crore was donated by the public for tiger conservation. Aircel partnered with the Wildlife Conservation Trust to implement projects on the ground involving developing and deploying Rapid Response Unit vehicles, revamping anti-poaching camps, and training of foresters. Work on this is in progress, and in the past couple of months six Rapid Response vehicles have been deployed in various tiger reserves. Two Rapid Response Unit boats have been specially designed for the Sunderbans.

As every year, this year too Aircel brought out a Tiger Calendar. Sixteen of India's leading artists were invited to paint for the cause. The paintings were auctioned at an event in Delhi in January 2013, and the funds will be utilized for capacity-building at the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve through the Wildlife Trust of India.

■ KIDS FOR TIGERS

It is a wildlife conservation initiative driven by a national campaign envisioned and implemented by Sanctuary Asia over a decade ago. Conducted in schools across 15 cities, the programme uses the tiger as a metaphor for all of nature and as a symbol of the environmental health of the habitats

in which it is found. The programme emphasizes that the survival of the tiger in the wild is intricately linked to the survival of life forms, including humans. It also draws connections between wildlife and forest conservation, and global climate issues. The programme grasps the vital connection between the survival of the tiger and the country's future ecological health.

In the past few months Aircel has held Kids For Tigers rallies and fests in Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Goa, Bhopal and Ramnagar. These events saw mass participation and were widely covered by the print and electronic media. Aircel employees and leadership teams from these circles actively participated in these events and reiterated Aircel's commitment towards the cause.

■ THE KIDS FOR TIGERS EXPRESS

Launched in April 2011 by Jairam Ramesh, Minister for Environment, is a fully equipped edutainment van that traverses the villages around the Ranthambhore National Park, spreading awareness about the need to Save Our Tigers. Ranthambhore has one of the better populations of tigers, but a number of villages have been relocated from within the park and this had led to resentment towards not only the authorities but also tigers. The Kids For Tigers Express works with a mission to negate this feeling and bring about a positive mindset change whereby the rural folk champion the cause. Bina Kak, Rajasthan Minister of Tourism, Forests, Art and Culture, re-launched this van in March 2013 at her residence in Jaipur. The event was well-attended by Forest Officials and schoolchildren.

The past few months have been eventful and Aircel has been well-recognized for its ground work for Save Our Tigers, winning the Asia Responsible Entrepreneurship Award in the Green Leadership category. This award not only recognizes the large impact the company has been able to have for Save Our Tigers, but also brings laurels on a pan-South East Asian scale. ■