



CATS

Conservation | Tiger
Assured | Standards



The CA|TS Report

Looking back, looking forward

10 years of Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards

The Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards (CA|TS) mission is to secure safe havens for wild tigers. This report tells the story of the CA|TS journey from an idea to a global partnership of countries, sites, experts and conservation organisations implementing this mission across the tiger range 🐾

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OPENING STATEMENT FROM MKS PASHA

Tigers have prowled the Earth for more than two million years, stretching from eastern Turkey to north-western China and Russia, and even as far south as the Indonesian island of Bali. Yet, despite the best efforts of conservationists, the population of wild tigers has plummeted due to rampant poaching and habitat loss; their home range has shrunk by over 95% in the last century.



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MKS Pasha, CA|TS Manager (2013-2021), Tigers Alive Initiative, WWF

Where tigers call home, we find some of the most amazing places of natural wonder, which hold the power to inspire poetry, song and stories that have lived for countless generations. These places have been found to be important spaces for thousands of wild animals and plants, and as providing critical support for human life. These are the ecosystem services – clean air, fresh water, fertile soil and other necessary resources – which our very survival depends on, but we hardly ever pause to think about where they are come from. Thankfully, many of the extraordinary places where tigers roam are recognised for their economic, social and intrinsic values and are demarcated as protected and conserved areas, tiger reserves, or places for special use. This has helped to clearly define spaces where wild tigers, wildlife and other resources are protected from exploitation.

Having worked on tiger conservation for over 20 years, I had to ask myself these questions, “How can we reverse the trend of decline for wild tigers? How can protected areas be effectively managed, and provide safe havens for our wild tigers?” Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards (CA|TS) has emerged as a universal tool for monitoring, demonstrating and guaranteeing effectiveness of the management system in tiger sites across the tiger range countries. By adhering to its comprehensive guidelines and fulfilling strict criteria, we can ensure that tigers are truly safe in their homes. This ideal has over the years become the CA|TS mission – securing safe havens for wild tigers.

An amazing flagship species like the tiger, thriving in varied biomes and ecosystems, is an excellent indicator of the health and biological diversity of these places. CA|TS gives the opportunity to save tigers and so much more. CA|TS is thus a vital contribution to further strengthening commitments on area-based targets set under the Convention of Biological Diversity and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, the institutionalisation of CA|TS has value beyond tigers.

Since its launch in 2013 at the first Asia Parks Congress in Japan, CA|TS has come a long way. Starting from being a small site-based project it has evolved into a Global CA|TS Partnership, expanded across seven tiger range countries covering 100 sites encompassing

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© Joydeep Bose

Joydeep Bose, CA|TS Manager (2021+), WWF

more than 50% of the wild tiger population across the range. In these eight years the excellent governance system established for operationalising CA|TS has formed the backbone of the entire CA|TS functioning. CA|TS is now a collective representation of tiger range governments, inter-governmental agencies, institutions, NGOs and conservation areas. Together these form the CA|TS Partnership. The governance structure of the Partnership includes the CA|TS Council, the Executive Committee, the National Committee, the Support Group and the Management Team. This has brought complete ownership of CA|TS within the implementing tiger range countries and CA|TS has been institutionalised and aligned with their national systems for effective tiger management and conservation. The CA|TS Support Group, and wider Partnership, are the accelerators for the implementation of CA|TS to catalyse and mobilise resources for sites to achieve effective management.

In coming years, the challenges for tiger conservation will become larger and more complex. CA|TS will provide the incentive for improving the effectiveness of protected and conserved areas and key sites. The wide adoption and implementation of CA|TS has led to the adaptation of the model, amplifying the Conservation Assured model globally to other species recovery efforts including jaguars, freshwater dolphins and lions. This has also led to a stronger partnership with IUCN's Green List, the first global sustainable standards for protected and conserved areas, offering site-based species assurance for tigers. Presently Conservation Assured is spread across three continents covering over 100 key biodiversity areas (KBAs), 10 Natural World Heritage Sites and connecting several OECMs and more than 300 protected and conserved areas, and many threatened and endangered species as well as endemics. Conservation Assured has become one of the leading initiatives for area-based conservation along with the IUCN Green List and Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs). This further opens doors for wider linkages and partnership for Conservation Assured as a tool that can help build global conservation approaches for achieving shared targets and goals with effective impact.

This report takes you through the CA|TS journey and shares innovations in monitoring tiger conservation and impact across the tiger range countries that have adopted CA|TS.

FOREWORDS



© Lobzang Dorji

Tiger populations have declined by over 95% during the last century and are now restricted to a mere 5% of their historical range. Recognising the urgency to save this magnificent species from extinction, the 13 range countries in 2010 committed to double the global tiger population by 2022 (the so-called Tx2 target). At that same time CA|TS was initiated to enhance the management of key tiger sites across the tiger range countries with the aim of providing safe havens for wild tigers. It is heartening to note that CA|TS today is adopted by 128 sites across seven range countries as a successful testimony of partnership between range governments, inter-governmental agencies, institutions, NGOs and conservation areas. To reinforce our commitment to tiger conservation and international agreements, I request the remaining tiger range countries and tiger conservation sites to adopt and support the CA|TS partnership. CA|TS ensures that our protected and conserved areas meet the highest global standards for conservation management.

Lobzang Dorji, Director, Department of Forests and Park Services, Royal Government of Bhutan and Chair, CA|TS Council



© Stuart Chapman

At the heart of tiger conservation is the protection and management of the sites and habitats that support tiger populations. Assured effective management of these sites is the single most important step to halt tiger population declines and to lay the foundation for tiger recovery. In 2013, in mutual recognition of this, a partnership was formed between governments and conservation organisations to develop an innovative tool: Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards ... CA|TS for short. CA|TS was launched with the aim to support the conservation and recovery of tiger populations by setting standards to measure the management effectiveness of tiger sites over time. Over the last seven years the CA|TS portfolio has grown to over 100+ sites representing a major step in delivering tiger recovery aspirations. In 2022, the second Global Tiger Summit will be held in Russia to assess the progress made and improvements required to conserve this iconic, endangered and conservation dependent big cat. CA|TS Approved sites will both lead the way and set the standard for future tiger conservation.

Finally, I would like to recognise the significant accomplishments of WWF's CA|TS Manager – Khalid Pasha. His tireless efforts have been instrumental in the establishment of CA|TS as the management standard for tiger conservation.

Stuart Chapman, Lead – Tigers Alive, WWF and CA|TS Executive Committee



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Standards provide robust metrics against which progress is evaluated. CA|TS has evolved over time, incorporating global strategies into local action for site managers. As we approach the next tiger summit planned for 2022 in Vladivostok, the world will take stock of the status of wild tiger populations. We can prioritise where we need to go in order to ensure the tigers' long-term survival in well-managed habitats with sufficient prey, co-existing with local communities, with minimal competition for space or resources. As the global tiger conservation strategy evolves to plan for the next chapter, the standard itself needs to evolve with it. It needs to incorporate the broader spectrum of protected and conserved areas, working with a mosaic of land use types at a greater scale. As chair of the Executive Committee, it has been my pleasure to work with the CA|TS Secretariat as well as the Committee in moving this agenda forward. I am particularly grateful to the sterling efforts of Khalid Pasha who has guided so many diverse stakeholders on this journey.

Sugoto Roy, Chair, CA|TS Executive Committee

Sugoto Roy, IUCN Integrated Tiger Habitats Conservation Programme Manager and Chair, CA|TS Executive Committee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards (CA|TS) started with a simple aim - to contribute to the many efforts around the world to secure wild tigers. But such tasks are never so simple to implement. Developing CA|TS over the last ten years has involved a huge collaborative effort in standard setting, advocacy, software development, training, fundraising and much more. For the sites and people involved it has represented a major commitment in supporting national systems to implement CA|TS.

As the Tx2 target date approaches (the global pledge to double wild tiger populations by 2022) it is time to look back at what CA|TS has achieved over the past 10 years and to send a huge message of thanks to the whole CA|TS partnership for working together to support tigers in the wild.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

128 tiger conservation sites from seven countries are registered with CA|TS.

CA|TS Registered and Approved sites cover 25% of tiger range but include about 75% of the global tiger population.

21 sites have been CA|TS Approved, which signifies they have reached the globally agreed standards of management for wild tigers, or are in the final stages of approval.

NEXT STEPS

Some critical next steps to achieve this include:

- 🐾 Monitoring and implementing CA|TS across all tiger range countries.
- 🐾 Exploring options for co-management of CA|TS with support group members to ensure adequate funding (around US\$250,000 per year) to manage:
 - the CA|TS governance process
 - supporting tiger conservation sites
 - monitoring and review of progress on site-based tiger recovery
 - linking with global process, in particular the Green List
 - guiding investments for active management interventions
 - training and capacity development.



In addition, over the next few years CA|TS will continue to:

- 🐾 Exchange knowledge and build good practices in conservation management across tiger sites.
- 🐾 Develop a regional network of expert reviewers and mentors to guide tiger conservation management across sites.
- 🐾 Centralise tiger and management data within countries using CA|TS-Log.
- 🐾 Enhance site-based management effectiveness across the tiger range.
- 🐾 Provide the assurance and evidence-based framework for directing large-scale funding into tiger conservation.

Finally, CATS will continue to strengthen global conservation by:

- 🐾 Contributing to global processes, bilateral-agreements and targets, such as GTRP processes and helping provide site-based information for reporting to SDGs and CBD targets.
- 🐾 Supporting the expansion of the Conservation Assured concept to other species, particularly other big cats.
- 🐾 Helping develop guidelines and systems for Conservation Assured globally and ensuring strong and harmonious links with the IUCN Green List.



Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards (CA|TS) is an accreditation system where participating tiger conservation sites provide evidence demonstrating that they meet a range of criteria, which together should ensure effective conservation management.

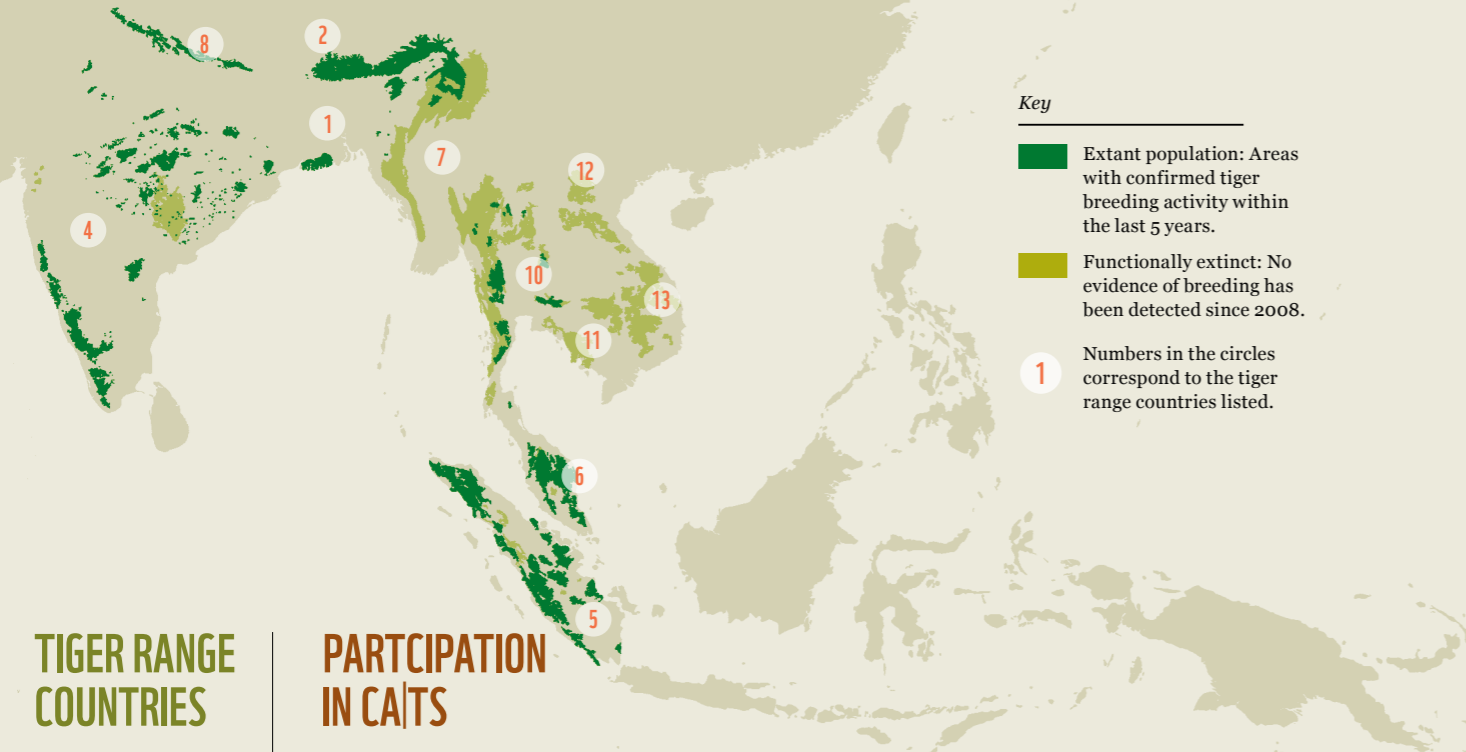
CA|TS AT A GLANCE

21 sites have been CA|TS Approved, which signifies they have reached the globally agreed standards of management for wild tigers

CA|TS Registered and Approved sites cover 25% of the tiger range which includes over 75% of the estimated global tiger population

US\$11 million has been mobilised from federal and other agencies through CA|TS to improve site management

CA|TS has developed the largest global knowledge base on tiger site management



TIGER RANGE COUNTRIES

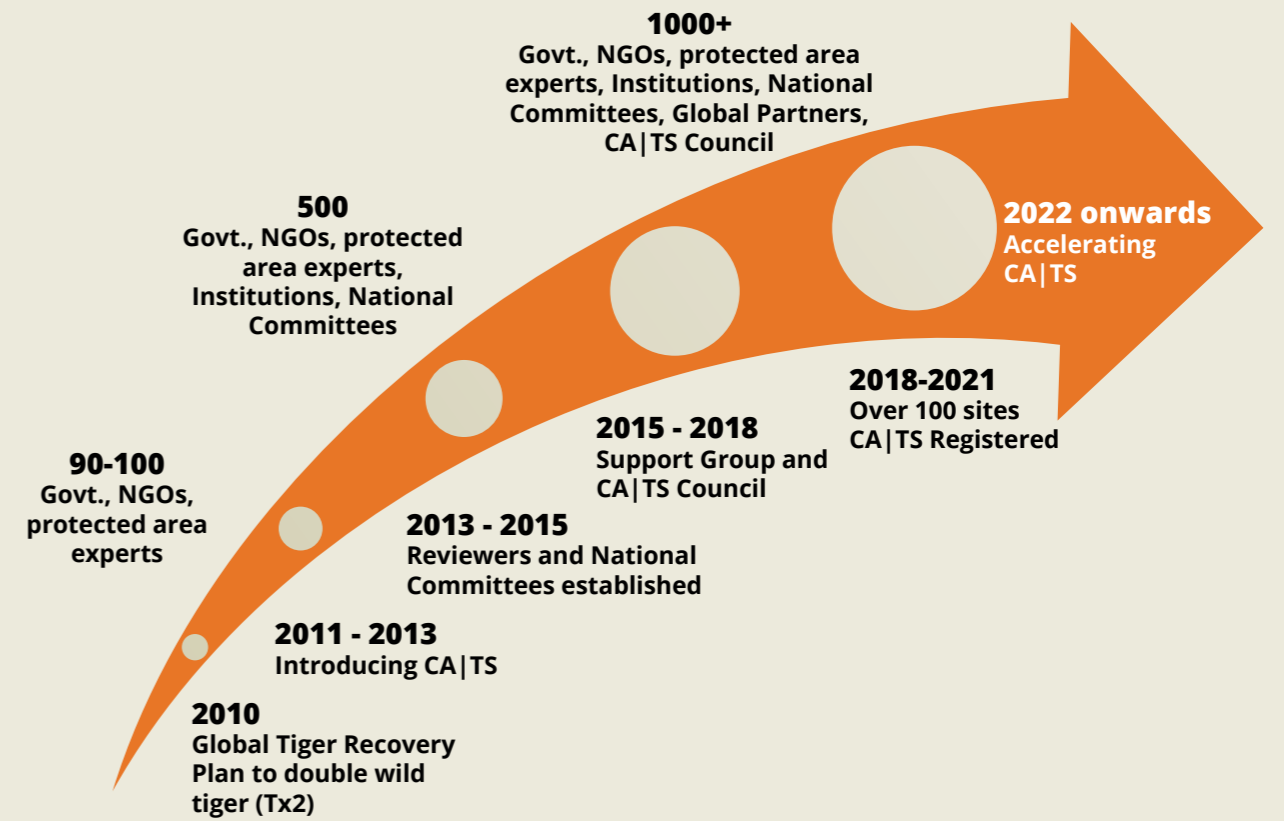
PARTICIPATION IN CA|TS

1 Bangladesh*	→ 3 sites → 3 Registered
2 Bhutan*	→ 10 sites → 8 Registered → 2 Approved
3 China*	→ 6 sites → 6 Registered
4 India*	→ 96 sites → 79 Registered → 17 Approved
5 Indonesia	
6 Malaysia*	→ 1 sites → 1 Registered
7 Myanmar	
8 Nepal*	→ 5 sites → 4 Registered → 1 Approved
9 Russia*	→ 7 sites → 6 Registered → 1 Approved
10 Thailand	

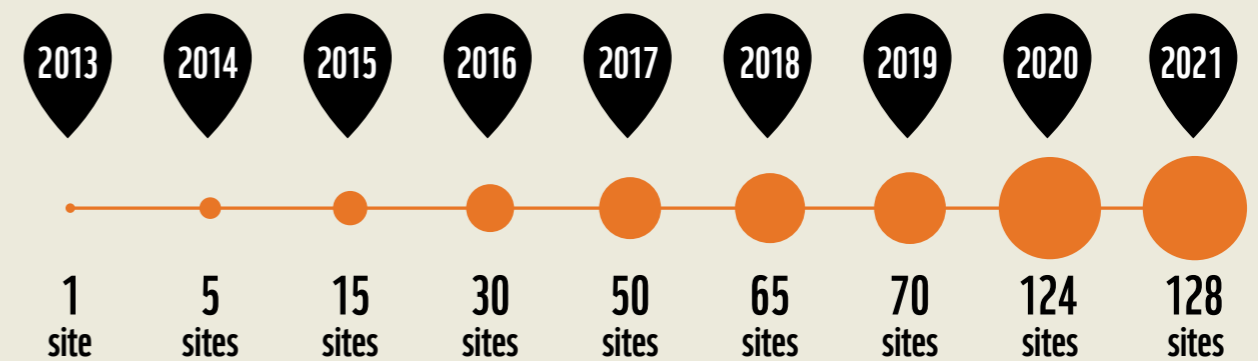
COUNTRIES IN THE TIGER RANGE WHERE TIGERS ARE FUNCTIONALLY EXTINCT

- 11 Cambodia
- 12 Lao PDR
- 13 Vietnam

THE CA|TS JOURNEY



128 sites registered across 7 countries



WHY CA|TS?

The 2010 global pledge (see box) to double wild tiger (*Panthera tigris*) populations by 2022 (known as **Tx2**) focused attention on the need for effective conservation management in areas which still had tigers, and areas where tigers might return. This emphasis on site management, anti-poaching efforts and better monitoring over the last decade is beginning to pay dividends with indications of improved survival of tiger populations in the wild. But progress remains inconsistent and there are still probably less than 5,000 tigers surviving in the wild.

CA|TS was established as a major contribution to the Tx2 pledge. Its overall goal is to identify expert-based good management standards for wild tigers, promote these within tiger conservation sites, verify those areas which reach the standards and identify management gaps in those that don't.

Although the CA|TS story is still in its opening chapters much progress has been made, as reported over the next few pages, but much remains to be done as we move into the next decade of conservation.

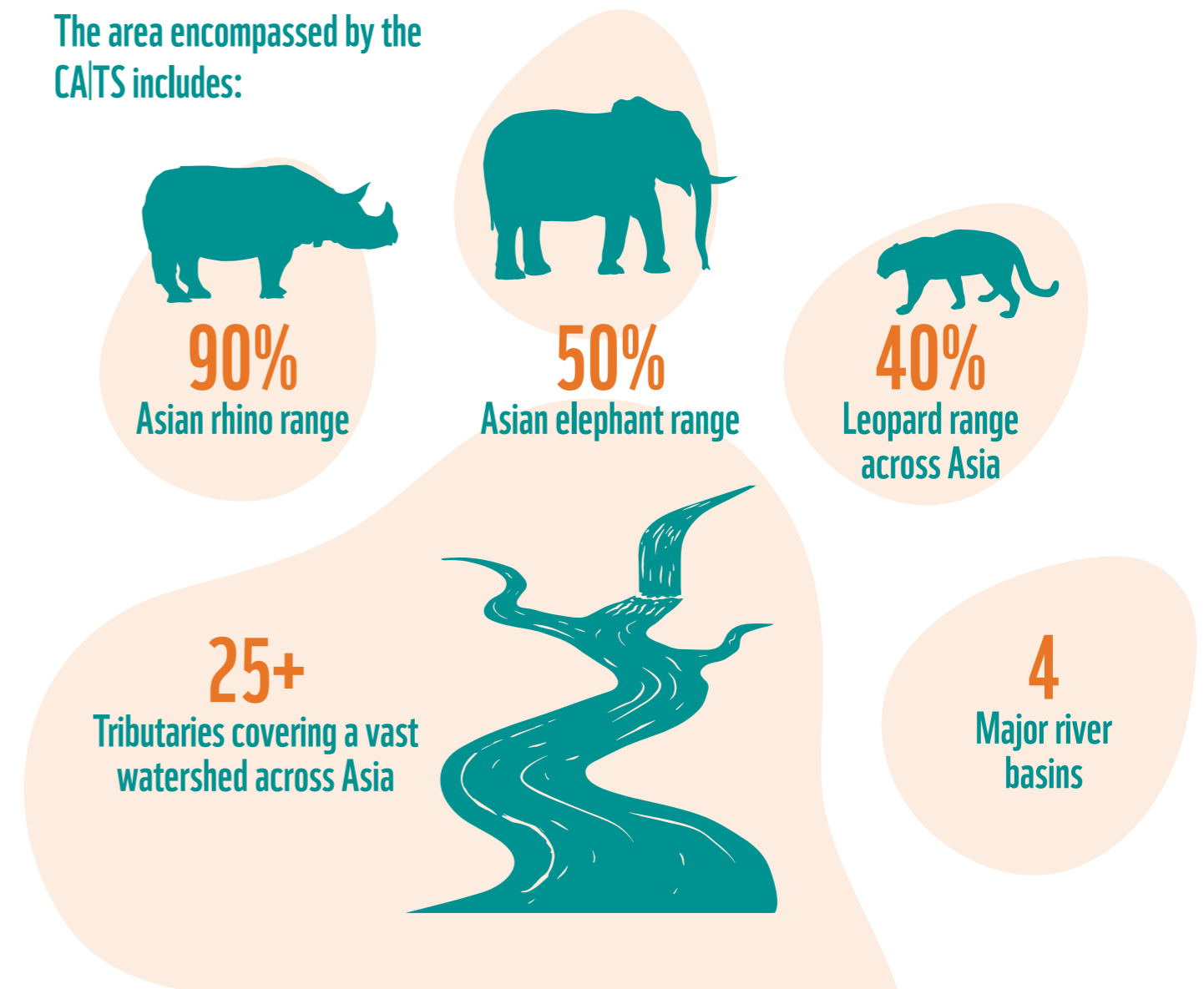
In 2018 the CA|TS Partnership (see page 28) undertook the first of what will be recurring assessments of tiger conservation sites across the range. The study covered approximately 70% of the current global wild tiger population; its findings highlighted the work that still needs to be done to achieve the CA|TS mission. Over a third of sites had major management deficiencies. The situation is most critical in Southeast Asia where if the trends indicated hold true, and despite some clearly successful sites, there is a serious risk of loss of tigers across further large parts of their range.

Investments in tiger conservation are needed more than ever; and importantly CA|TS provides the perfect tool for investors, whether governments, non-governmental organisations, intergovernmental organisations or private funders, to assess the impact of their funding and tailor funding approaches to the exact needs of sites (see page 40).

Tigers range across a wide variety of habitats, with huge differences in elevation, temperature and ecosystem, so the good management practices that CA|TS promotes can also help secure thousands of wildlife species and the livelihoods of millions of people. So, if countries use CA|TS as a blueprint for effective land management, we can secure tigers and so much more.

The good management practices that CA|TS promotes can help secure thousands of wildlife species and the livelihoods of millions of people

The area encompassed by the CA|TS includes:



The Global Tiger Initiative

The Global Tiger Initiative (GTI) is an unprecedented alliance of governments, international organizations and civil society, launched in 2008 for the purpose of reversing a long and steep decline of tigers in the wild (from ~100,000 in 1900, to as few as 3,200 by that time).

It was through the GTI processes that that the 13 tiger range country governments agreed to the Global Tiger Recovery Program (GTRP: 2010-2022), and the collective commitment top level goal doubling wild tigers to **more than 6,000** by the next Lunar Year of the Tiger in 2022. This goal is often referred to as Tx2.

The GTRP and Tx2 were formally agreed to at the *St. Petersburg Tiger Summit* of November 2010, which to this day remains the most high-level meeting ever held for a single species. Then World Bank President Robert B. Zoellick and then Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin co-hosted the Summit, and were joined by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, as well as the Prime Ministers of Bangladesh, Laos and Nepal. The remaining eight tiger range countries sent ministers and other senior officials to the meeting.



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The initial workshop to discuss the structure of CA|TS in Delhi in 2012

CA|TS THE JOURNEY SO FAR

Tigers require large areas of habitat to survive. Their conservation has focused on habitat protection and conservation, through the designation of protected areas, conservation management of forest reserves, designation of wildlife corridors, etc. However, this strategy will only ensure a corresponding and sustainable increase in tiger populations if these areas are effectively, efficiently and equitably managed.

There are three key elements to safeguarding wild tigers. Firstly, protection which is unfortunately an expensive necessity given the scale of the poaching crisis. **100 or more** wild tigers are still being lost to poaching annually, although this number is declining. Secondly, staffing across a range of disciplines but with a focus on protection and professionalisation. Nothing beats boots on the ground to reduce the threats to tigers; as an example, a study of **11 protected areas in five Southeast Asian countries from 2005-2019 found some 53,000 snares needed to be removed annually** from just this small subset of the tiger range. And lastly, but vitally, sustainable financing. The global deficit in conservation funding is estimated at up to **US\$300 – 400 billion per year**, across the tiger range most of Southeast Asia has insufficient government funding for the task required, posing a major risk to tiger conservation.

With these needs in mind, a handful of conservationists began to explore the ideas behind what became CA|TS in 2011. After two

The CA|TS vision, goals and objectives

Vision

Wild tigers have spaces to live and breed safe from threat resulting in increased populations and recovery of range.

Goals

- Adoption and implementation of CA|TS Standards ensures tiger habitats are effectively conserved, well-managed and ecologically connected to maintain, secure and recover viable populations.
- CA|TS demonstrates and promotes good practice in protected area management in Asia.

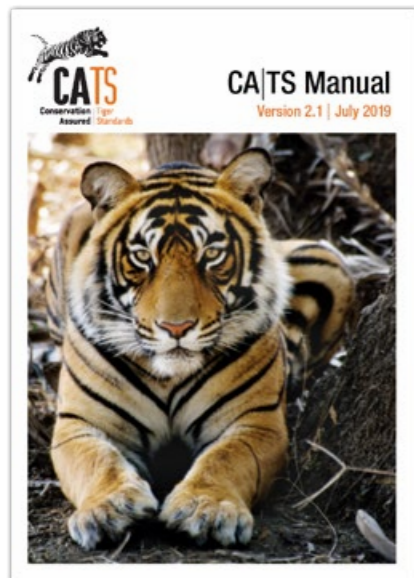
Objectives

- Develop expert-led CA|TS criteria and accreditation processes, which are credible and scientifically relevant and linked with associated conservation standards (e.g., IUCN Green List).
- Register the world's most important tiger sites and develop programmes which mobilise support and capacity for management in order to help these areas meet the CA|TS criteria.
- Establish linkages with global conservation agencies, government agencies / institutions to build capacity and mobilise resources and promote good practices.

years of development and an exhaustive stakeholders' consultation with tiger and conservation experts around the world, CA|TS was launched at the first Asia Parks Congress in 2013. Since then, an enormous amount of time and expertise has gone into developing processes, partnerships and, most importantly, working with sites to ensure good practice management and safe havens for wild tigers.

Since the launch, CA|TS has come a long way with currently 128 sites involved across seven tiger range countries. Some gaps however remain: Myanmar is still in the early development of its tiger conservation action plan and of establishing protected area monitoring, and recent political events have hampered conservation efforts. Thailand and Indonesia have yet to join the programme. The three remaining countries within the tiger range, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam, no longer have tiger populations. However, the potential for reintroduction has been explored in Cambodia, where CA|TS has been used to assess management conditions.

WHY GOOD PRACTICE STANDARDS?










Protected areas, and other areas with conservation objectives such as other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), are a proven good strategy for retaining vegetation cover. However, their role in protecting animal species is more equivocal and dependent largely on the quality and focus of management. Over the last 20 years many methodologies have been developed and applied for assessing management effectiveness, to enable better understanding of how well sites are being managed and how successfully they ensure that conservation objectives are achieved. However, these tools do not set standards against which to measure results and rarely involve any kind of accreditation process.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) identified the need for management standards in its [2004 Programme of Work on Protected Areas](#). This was in recognition that standards can, among other things, determine which methods and approaches are most favourable and specify monitoring needs and adaptive management approaches. CA|TS was developed with this need in mind. It does not replace existing management effectiveness tools, but provides a way to assess good management objectively against an agreed set of standards.

CA|TS is thus an accreditation process in which participating areas need to demonstrate their management achievements. CA|TS has a hierarchical structure; seven ‘pillars’ covering different management issues, 17 elements, subdivided into standards, for which criteria have been laid down (e.g., management actions required). CA|TS is a blueprint for good management across tiger conservation sites, covering varied geographical, cultural and ecological needs.

The standards and an explanation of how CA|TS works is laid out in the [CA|TS Manual](#), and a dedicated CA|TS-Log software has been developed for undertaking the assessment (see page 16). Areas taking part in CA|TS are initially ‘CA|TS Registered’ (standards not yet attained) and become ‘CA|TS Approved’ when evidence prepared at the site, using CA|TS-Log and subject to expert review, confirms compliance with the CA|TS standards.

Tiger landscapes are undergoing transformation throughout their range, with multiple demands on the landscapes and the many stakeholders that live and work in them. As our knowledge of these pressures and responses to them changes, so do the CA|TS standards, which under-go regular updating and periodic stakeholder review and revision.

PILLAR	ELEMENT
CONSERVATION ASSURED	
 A. IMPORTANCE AND STATUS	1. Social, cultural and biological significance 2. Area design 3. Legal status, regulation and compliance
 B. MANAGEMENT	4. Management planning 5. Management plan/system implementation 6. Management processes 7. Staffing (full-time and part-time) 8. Infrastructure, equipment and facilities 9. Sustainability of financial resources 10. Adaptive management (feedback loop)
 C. COMMUNITY	11. Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) 12. Community relations 13. Stakeholder relationships
 D. TOURISM	14. Tourism and interpretation <i>Note: this standard is only applicable for areas with major tourism objectives</i>
 E. PROTECTION	15. Protection
TIGER STANDARDS	
 F. HABITAT MANAGEMENT	16. Habitat and prey management
 G. TIGER POPULATIONS	17. Tiger populations

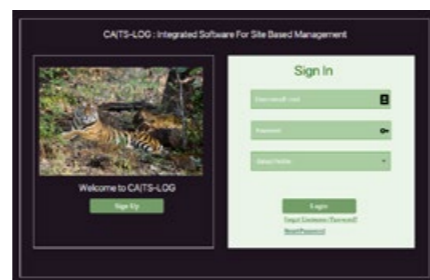
CA|TS-LOG MONITORING PROGRESS

CA|TS-Log is the dedicated software developed for undertaking a CA|TS assessment. Effective monitoring of management actions and impacts, natural assets and social issues is a critical responsibility of conservation managers. As the demands for management interventions and funders' reporting requirements increase, the challenge of effective data management and retrieval to demonstrate conservation impact has also increased. Equally quick decision-making with all the facts to hand is critical in an ever-changing world where pressures can suddenly become overwhelming. The CA|TS-Log can help collate, measure and carry out management quickly and effectively.

The initial roll-out stage of CA|TS relied on manual data management, but this required hours of work, finding documents and collating insights from staff. So, the development of a digital platform was always a high priority and an essential part of the CA|TS business plan. The CA|TS-Log software allows the development of the evidence base required to show compliance with the CA|TS standards in a step-by-step process.

CA|TS-Log has an 'assessment page' for each of the criteria. The 'page' allows for evidence of achievement of the criteria to be recorded as a narrative and for associated documents, weblinks and pictures to be uploaded. Comments from the independent reviewers, assessment of the quality of data provided and, most importantly, next steps in terms of management all need to be completed during the assessment process. Once data has been inputted the software features simple visualisation and communication of conservation impact and effective site management. It is also a tool for identifying management gaps and planning interventions to fill these gaps.

Important, CA|TS-Log is an offline tool to ensure data confidentiality with results shared only through password protected access. It builds a virtual library for the site and ensures easy retrieval of site information and data presentation. For those who are allowed access the CA|TS-Log provides the perfect evidence-base for funders and impact investors on how their money has been spent and what has been achieved.



CA|TS Log landing page

Celebrating success

The evidence-base gathered by the CA|TS-Log help us celebrate conservation success through awarding CA|TS Approved status after an exhaustive verification process, and for those not yet reaching the full standards, acknowledging major achievements through the [Tx2 Tiger Conservation Awards](#) launched in 2020.

CHITWAN LEADING THE WAY

Nepal's commitment to double the number of tigers between 2010 and 2022 required a significant increase in management inputs; success was due to many initiatives including CA|TS.

Nepal has been actively engaged in the development of CA|TS from the beginning; helping develop the first version of the standards and nominating the first site to be CA|TS Registered. The assessment of Chitwan National Park for CA|TS was conducted in 2013/14 and was facilitated by WWF Nepal and the Department of National Parks & Wildlife Conservation. Despite the threats that Chitwan faces, including the constant threat from poachers and high demands from tourism, the site has seen an increasingly effective management and protection regime put in place. Thus, Chitwan also became the first site to be CA|TS Approved in early 2015. Unfortunately, because of the massive earthquake that struck Nepal in April 2015, Chitwan was also the subject of the first emergency review of CA|TS status. Conservation areas are not static entities and management challenges come from many directions. In some cases, these challenges may impact an area's ability to comply with CA|TS even after it has been CA|TS Approved. The aim of emergency reviews is to support a site to retain the CA|TS Approved status. This was indeed the case with Chitwan after the review showed that despite the terrible and widescale impacts of the earthquake the conservation of Chitwan was still secure.

CA|TS is now being implemented in tiger sites across Nepal. Implementation is highlighting the need for increased management effectiveness and support for a range of issues across Nepal's tiger range, including: providing safe drinking water systems to protection staff; providing equipment to increase office efficiency; capacity building of protection and frontline staff through orientation and training including in anti-poaching operations; mitigation of human wildlife conflict; increasing community roles and responsibility in management; more community-based antipoaching units; habitat restoration; park infrastructure construction and maintenance; and support for mobility and patrolling to enhance antipoaching and anti-trafficking operations and efforts.



Awarding the CA|TS Approved certificate to representatives from Chitwan National Park

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THE CA|TS PARTNERSHIP

CA|TS was built on the idea of bringing people together who share the same dream to safeguard wild tigers. CA|TS functions through a wide partnership comprising governments, NGOs, donors, experts and academic representatives. National Committees made up of a people from mixed disciplines (e.g., biodiversity and human rights expertise) and from a mix of organisations (e.g., governments and NGOs) run CA|TS in each country or jurisdiction (applicable where the tiger range is only in a small part of a large country as in Russia and China). Independent of this structure, expert reviewers guarantee scientific rigour, and an Executive Committee ensures good governance and equivalence of CA|TS implementation and awarding of Approved status across the tiger range. (Details of the various committee functions can be found in the CA|TS manual). The CA|TS management team ensures technical and financial viability.

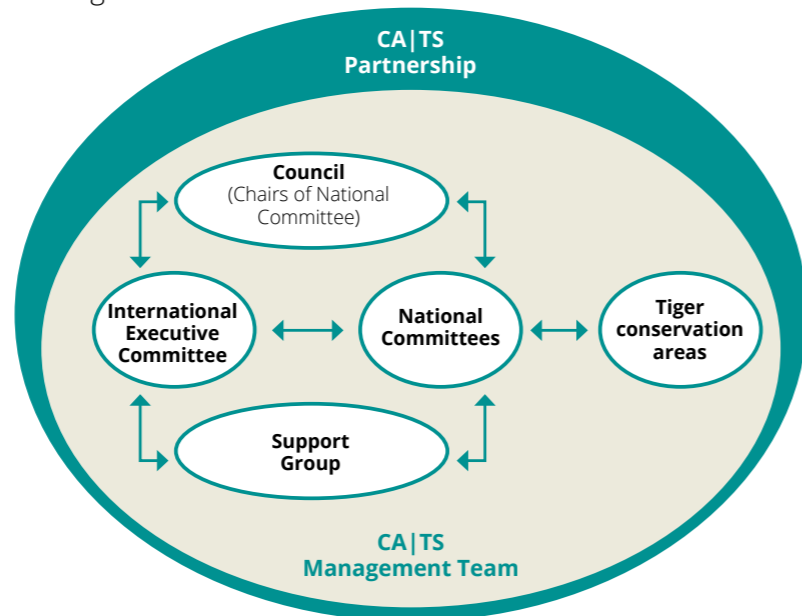
The first global CA|TS meeting was organised in Bangkok, Thailand in 2015, in collaboration with the Thailand Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, the Global Tiger Forum and WWF-Tigers Alive Initiative. This three-day event with 73 participants from 18 countries addressed two key questions:

1. How can CA|TS improve tiger management in protected areas and other important areas for tigers?
2. How do we encourage and coordinate involvement in CA|TS from government institutions, NGOs and others to sustain and maximise impact?

The highlight of the event saw delegates making a series of pledges and commitments to make CA|TS a reality. Much of our work over the last six years, has focussed on these undertakings and sustaining the enthusiasm and involvement of governments across the tiger range.

In June 2017, a major step forward was the formation of the CA|TS Support Group. The support group now has 13 members (see back cover). Together all those involved, from tiger conservation areas to UN institutions, make up the CA|TS partnership – supporting, developing, advocating and implementing CA|TS to safeguard wild tigers.

Summary of the CA|TS governance structure



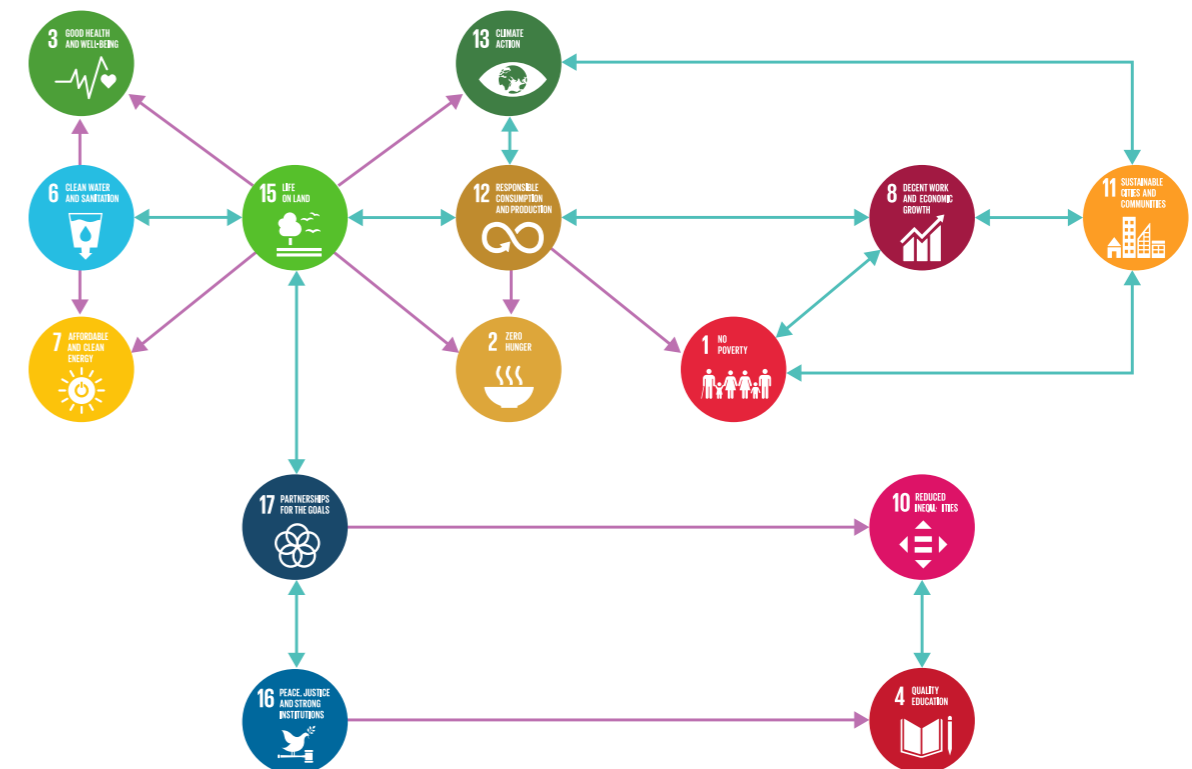
CA|TS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has been the driving force behind much of the global work on sustainable development and conservation over the past decade and will continue to provide a blueprint for conservation over the next few years. Central to the Agenda are the **17 Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs). Their development marks an important stage in a process of international cooperation on environment and development that began at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

Each SDG has an associated set of **targets and agreed indicators** which are being monitored using official statistics from the UN and other international organisations. The goals are interconnected and frequently interdependent, with sustainable development overall relying on resilient and biodiverse ecosystems that support livelihoods and socio-economic wellbeing.

CA|TS contributes to 14 SDG goals and many more targets; this is illustrated in the infographic (below) with a single arrow demonstrating a one-way impact and a double-headed arrow demonstrating interconnectivity. Thus, CA|TS has a one-way impact between SDG 15 and SDG 7; through supporting the conservation of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems (SDG 15, target 15.1) in countries like Bhutan, Myanmar and Nepal, where tiger conservation land is helping maintain the water flow to the dams which generate 74-100% of electricity (SDG 7, target 7.2). In other examples, CA|TS is calling for a unified international response (SDG 17, target 17.6) to end poaching and trafficking (SDG 15, target 15.7).

Impact of CA|TS on the SDGs and how they are interlinked



THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF REVIEWERS

16 reviewers trained across tiger range countries

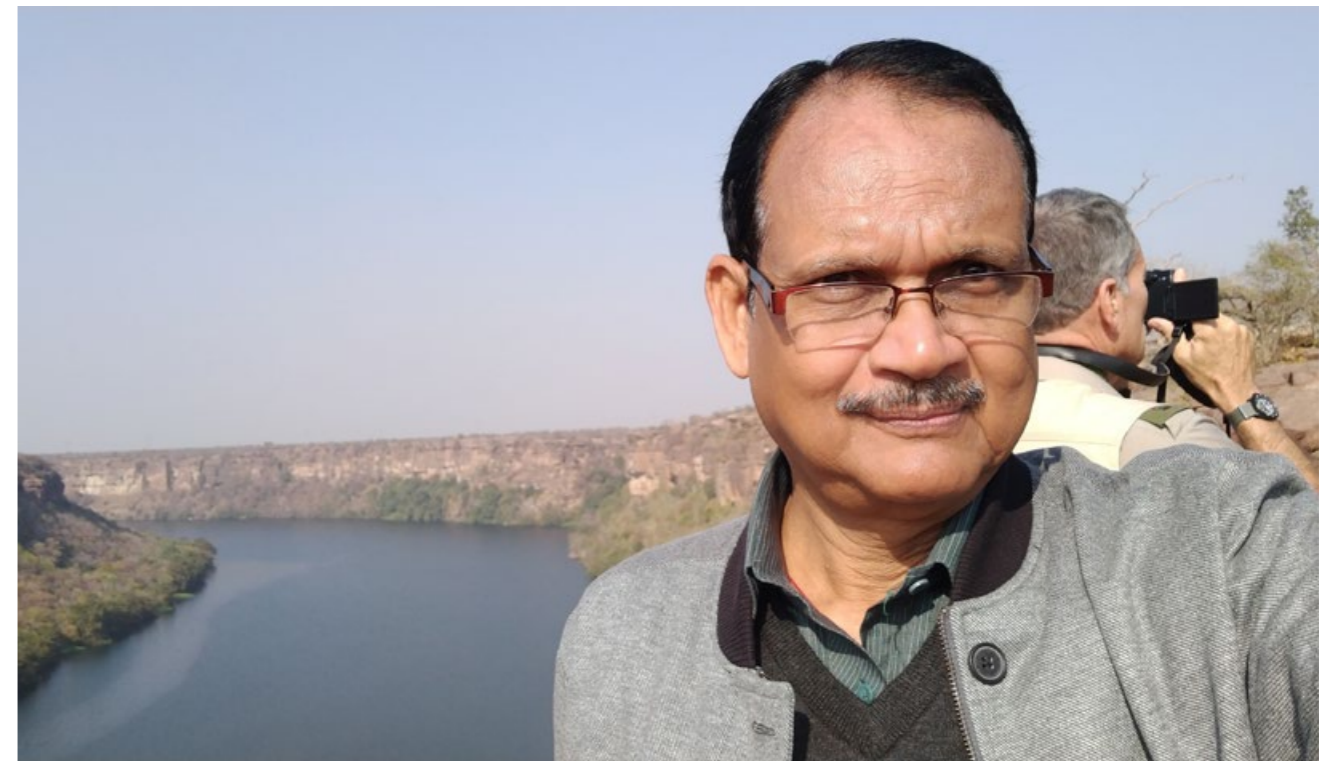
The tiger range countries have taken ownership of the CA|TS implementation process at the site level thanks to the expertise of National Committees and the developing independent reviewer network, which supports sites to improve management. Reviewers are experts from across the tiger range who have profound experience in tiger conservation and management. They play the dual role of advising sites in presenting their management through the CA|TS-Log software and are also required to dispassionately analyse the assessment to point out gaps in evidence and check conformity to the standards. Reviewers must be fully independent to avoid any bias. Their reports are a vital contribution to the accreditation decisions taken by the National and Executive committees. Here we highlight the importance of this network from the perspective of one of the most experienced CA|TS reviewers.

A REVIEWERS PERSPECTIVE OF CA|TS

BK Patnaik, Retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force, Uttar Pradesh, India

I have been associated with CA|TS since 2015 taking part in various orientation and training workshops. Before retirement I held several senior government positions in the Indian Forest Service in Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Central Government, including Chief Wildlife Warden of UP, Director of Nandadevi Biosphere Reserve and Rajaji National Park. This long experience has helped me build a wide knowledge in the field of conservation, protection, and management of wildlife and protected areas, particularly in relation to human wildlife conflict (HWC). Post retirement, I have led various Central Government high-level committees for Tiger Reserves, including Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) for several sites, Security Audit for Uttarakhand and Rajasthan and Village Relocation and Rehabilitation. I have expertise in a range of management issues including HWC, adoption of participatory management practices, security audits, MEE, habitat management, ecotourism management, sound stakeholder relationships and good record keeping of supportive documents on management practices for quick retrieval.

Helping sites develop their CA|TS assessment is a vital role of the reviewer. But reviewers can also act as mentors for site managers by advising and guiding actions needed to meet the CA|TS criteria. These services can be utilised on the request of managers during the accreditation period or when additional compliance actions are required by the CA|TS National Committee or International Executive Committee before accreditation.



Over the last five years I have worked with Ramnagar, which has since received CA|TS Approved status, and Haldwani Forest Divisions to advise them on developing the self-assessment. I have also visited Kanger Valley National Park (Chhatisgarh), South Balaghat and North Balaghat Forest Divisions of Madhya Pradesh to assist in the preparation of the assessment. I helped the managers of 24 South Pargana Forest Division (West Bengal) develop their management practices and self-assessment and advised the West Bengal Forest and Wildlife department on implementing additional protocols and monitoring mechanisms to address issues raised by the International Executive Committee following review of the initial CA|TS assessment. 24 South Pargana is now CA|TS Approved.

There have been several challenges implementing CA|TS in Indian Forest Reserves managed for multiple use. These include HWC, which is always a serious issue, especially in the absence of efficient and trained staff to monitor and deal with problem animals; peaceful co-existence is necessary but difficult. Protection strategy implementation is also challenging due to inadequate resources and technical manpower. Staff have limited training plans, courses and trainers, and physical fitness is a challenge.

For CA|TS to progress further adequate financial resources as well as professional staff are needed. International conservation partners need to develop a financial resource pool as well as the pool of technical experts to ensure wild tigers prosper.

Each reviewer has at least two decades experience working on tiger conservation.

SIKHOTE-ALIN MONITORING FOR SUCCESS



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Above: Ecotourism development, Sikhote-Alin Nature Reserve

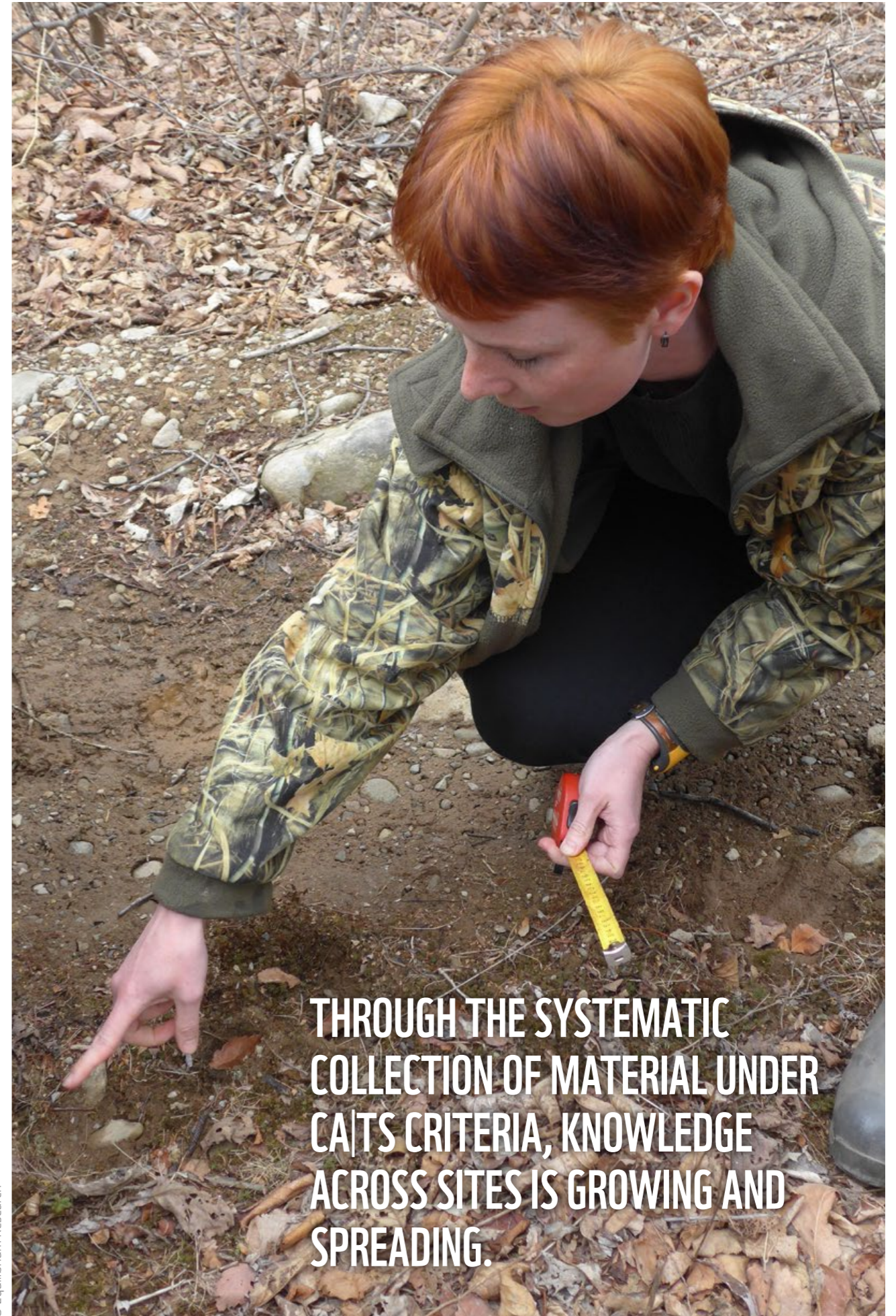
Right: Monitoring tigers in Sikhote-Alin Nature Reserve

Sikhote-Alin Nature Reserve in Russia's Far East forms part of the easternmost habitat complex of tigers and has a unique combination of ecosystems. Tigers are found in low densities across a wide landscape, of which the Sikhote-Alin is only a small part.

Sikhote-Alin was nominated as the first Russian site to register for CA|TS in late 2014. The CA|TS field assessment began in early 2015 and was aided by local and regional staff of WWF and the Wildlife Conservation Society. The Jurisdictional Committee was established in March 2015 and **CA|TS Approved** status was conferred on Sikhote-Alin by the Executive Committee in July 2015.

The information collected for the CA|TS assessment highlights both good practices and minor gaps in management. Sikhote-Alin has an excellent system of management and a history of continuous monitoring of tigers, using consistent protocols for the last 80 years. Annual plans for administration, finance, protection and infrastructure are linked to three-year plans, and the management system has a robust auditing mechanism.

One of the underlying aims of CA|TS is to highlight what works and what does not to ensure wild tiger survival. Through the systematic collection of material under CA|TS criteria, knowledge across sites is growing and spreading.



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THROUGH THE SYSTEMATIC COLLECTION OF MATERIAL UNDER CA|TS CRITERIA, KNOWLEDGE ACROSS SITES IS GROWING AND SPREADING.

COMMUNITIES AND CA|TS

Tiger conservation sites can have both positive and negative impacts on local people. Community engagement processes are vital for managing the intended and unintended consequences resulting from conservation. The rapid baseline survey carried out for CA|TS (see page 28) found that social engagement and community relations were amongst the weakest elements in site management. So, although over half of the sites surveyed reported that they involve communities in applicable areas of site management, less than a third had involved stakeholders in management planning, so for many sites addressing management issues such as this are a priority and vital steps towards becoming CA|TS Approved.

CA|TS promotes an equitable and positive process for mitigating any negative social impacts of conservation. There are 10 Standards and 23 Criteria which cover various issues related to communities and social impacts for both people and conservation, with an emphasis on community relations and ensuring that community / social safeguards are in place. CA|TS advises National Committees to implement environmental and social safeguards throughout the CA|TS processes and through the implementation of the CA|TS standards at site level.

Two of the most serious issues impacting communities and tigers are human wildlife conflict (HWC) and poaching. Both issues also have major social and livelihood consequences and are thus a focus of CA|TS.

The Community pillar of CA|TS deals with various elements of HWC mitigation and community practices in or around tiger habitats; criteria are closely linked to the **SAFE Approach** (a system developed by WWF) to HWC which was instigated in Bhutan in 2016. The SAFE approach ensures that HWC Strategies address actions across all elements of conflict: prevention, mitigation, policy, monitoring, response and research. The SAFE approach, which CA|TS recommends is used in sites with HWC, puts people and their assets at the forefront of conflict prevention activities and seeks gradually to remove risk from their local landscapes. Key to the approach is active stakeholder participation during the HWC strategy design phase where affected stakeholders participate in a Rapid Assessment Workshop to determine current HWC challenges and define and agree on steps forward to manage conflict and remove risk.

Community-based approaches to anti-poaching operations are also encouraged in CA|TS as effective in protecting wildlife, engaging communities in conservation, increasing community governance in site management and supporting local communities towards the broader social goal of coexistence with wildlife. Community-based approaches have proven successful in Nepal (see page 17) and

CA|TS promotes an equitable and positive process for mitigating any negative social impacts of conservation



© WWF-Malaysia/Lau Ching Fong

helped achieve a dramatic reduction in poaching threats to tigers in Malaysia. The clear gaps in management identified by CA|TS in the Royal Belum State Park (see page 30) have helped provide a focus on these issues. **WWF-Malaysia's Project Stampede**, Rimau – The Tiger Protection Society of Malaysia Anti-Poaching Team and the Malaysian government's Tiger Protection and Patrolling Programme (TP3) have helped employ local Indigenous peoples including the Menraq people and Jahai tribe, who live within the Royal Belum, to conduct regular foot patrols and to monitor encroachment and poaching activities in the Belum-Temenggor Forest Complex. This has led to an over 95% reduction in snares encounter rate and reduced poaching within the state park to almost zero.

WWF-Malaysia's indigenous community patrol team Copyright WWF-Malaysia Lau Ching Fong

SECURING THE FUTURE OF TIGERS IN INDIA

India has 70% of the world's remaining wild tiger population; and 22% of these tigers live outside tiger reserves. It made sense therefore for the CA|TS Indian National Committee to start their CA|TS journey by implementing the system in Reserve Forests. These areas receive less attention and funding than the country's extensive system of Tiger Reserves; but are vital for the survival of tigers.

Lansdowne and Ramnagar Forest Divisions in Uttarakhand, two of the three first CA|TS Approved Forest Reserves, were seen as a landmark achievement in tiger conservation and connectivity in India. Lansdowne is a corridor for tigers between Rajaji and Corbett Tiger Reserves whilst Ramnagar is contiguous with Corbett Tiger Reserve. By highlighting the significance of areas outside tiger reserves as important tiger habitats, and focusing on the quality of their management, CA|TS has resulted in the two forest divisions in Uttarakhand receiving additional funds from Project Tiger – the Government of India's tiger conservation programme and two of Lansdowne Forest Division ranges have been included under Rajaji Tiger Reserve, thereby increasing their protection status.

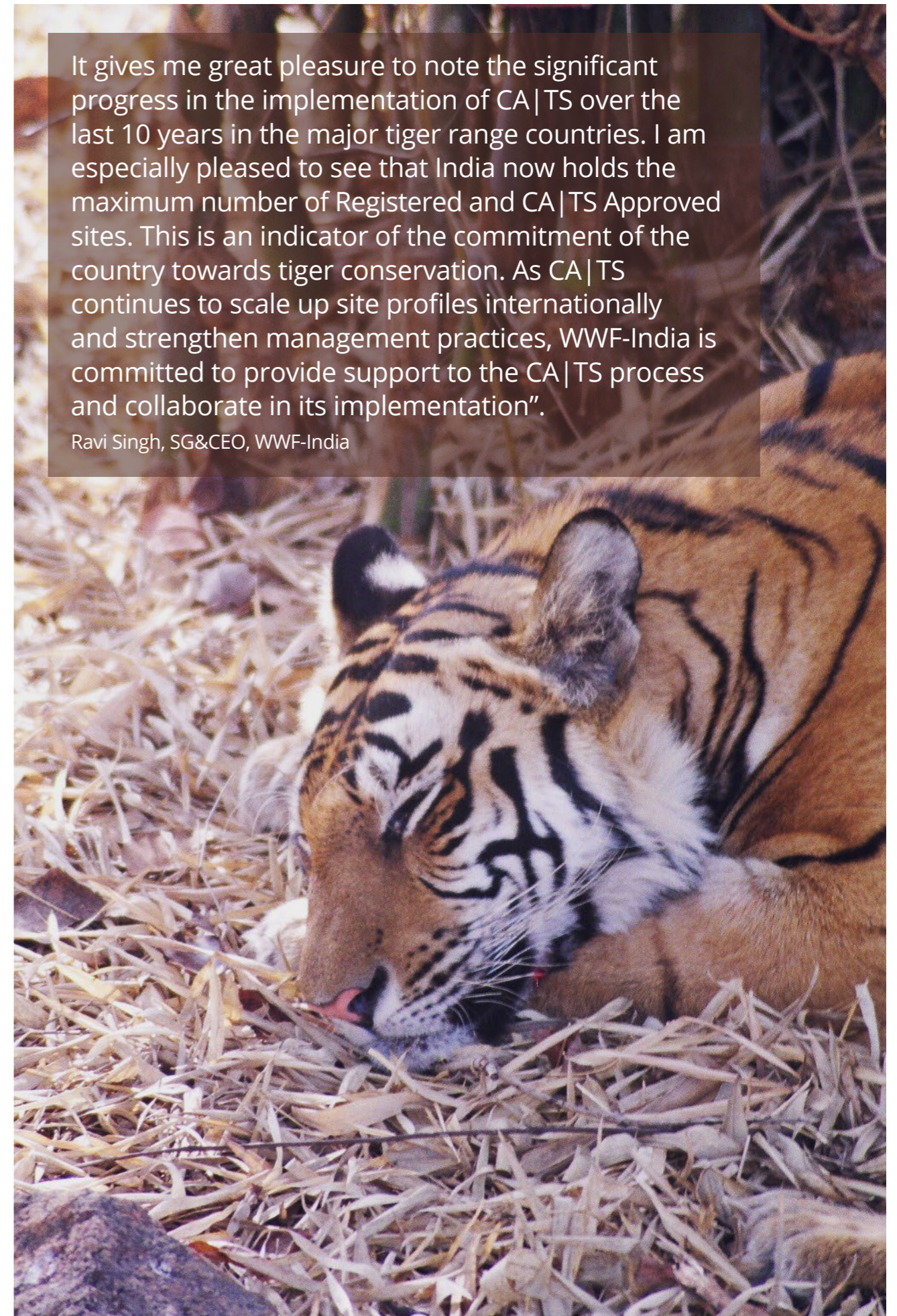
The Global Tiger Forum, a CA|TS Support Group member, in partnership with WWF-India, has been coordinating CA|TS implementation between the National Tiger Conservation Authority and the different state forest departments. This has proven an effective partnership to assess effective management levels, encourage good standards of management and support the Tx2 goal to double the number of tigers in the wild.

"I am happy to highlight that India, conserving the largest tiger population in the wild, is implementing CA|TS nationally both within Tiger Reserves and outside; this is significant in terms of holding tiger numbers as well as often from a wildlife corridor and connectivity point of view. India currently has the largest number of CA|TS Registered (96) and Approved sites. The Government of India is committed to take CA|TS forward not just in terms of number of sites but also using CA|TS to improve management."

S.P. Yadav, Member Secretary-National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Government of India, Chair-CA|TS National Committee of India, member-CA|TS International Executive Committee

It gives me great pleasure to note the significant progress in the implementation of CA|TS over the last 10 years in the major tiger range countries. I am especially pleased to see that India now holds the maximum number of Registered and CA|TS Approved sites. This is an indicator of the commitment of the country towards tiger conservation. As CA|TS continues to scale up site profiles internationally and strengthen management practices, WWF-India is committed to provide support to the CA|TS process and collaborate in its implementation".

Ravi Singh, SG&CEO, WWF-India



WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO SAVE TIGERS?

The most immediate and direct strategy for tiger recovery is to provide safe, well-managed habitats, where tigers can breed, where there is sufficient prey population and where human conflict is managed and impacts mitigated. How to achieve this strategy is laid out in the CA|TS standards. However, like any standards and accreditation scheme, CA|TS will only be a success if it makes a difference in the areas with the most pressing management issues. Accrediting well-managed sites is thus only one of the goals of CA|TS. Perhaps an even more important priority is using CA|TS as a contribution to increasing management capacity across the tiger range, particularly in places where tigers are under severe threat.

To understand these management needs, in 2017-18 the Global Tiger Forum and CA|TS Support Group approached 180 tiger conservation sites to take part in a 40-question survey based on a simplified version of the CA|TS standards. Survey responses were received from 111 sites from 11 tiger range countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia and Thailand). This data formed a benchmark to assess progress on tiger conservation and data will be updated biannually as a contribution to the Asian Ministerial Conferences on Tiger Conservation.

The **survey** found over a third of sites have major management deficiencies. Respondents were asked to assess whether actions were being implemented, initiated, planned, not actioned or not even thought about. This was an important nuance. Managers are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of management. It was striking how many actions are planned; in the 20 sites surveyed in Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand), for example, 196 actions were in the planning stage (almost 10 major actions per site) as opposed to just four actions per site only at planning stage in the rest of range where management is stronger. The challenge now is to make these planned actions a reality. Which is far from easy; while 86% of sites in South Asia, Russia and China stated that finances are, or are on the way to being, sustainable, with additional revenue streams maximised and linked to management priorities, only 35% of sites in Southeast Asia are in a similar position.

The results show that actions need to be tailored to a range of contexts. Some sites are manifestly failing and need support in the form of both increased funding and policy support from their own governments and targeted support from donors, NGOs and others, to aid basic capacity building. In other cases, requirements are more specific, particularly in terms of policies and training in relation to issues such as management of stakeholder relations and enforcement. CA|TS is working with sites to help realise these actions.

CA|TS will only be a success if it makes a difference in the areas with the most pressing management issues

Which areas of management are weakest?

Community issues related to management are weak across the whole tiger range.



Site management in Southeast Asia in particular needs major improvements in areas related to:

- Community Relations 
- Human Wildlife Conflict 
- Adaptive Management 
- Tiger Monitoring 
- Management 

Supporting tiger conservation in Southeast Asia

50% of the sites surveyed in Southeast Asia had major deficiencies in management. One major response from CA|TS and the Government of Malaysia was to develop an expert Mini-Lab to address the national tiger crisis by bring together all national stakeholders, raising the political commitment and providing on-the-ground support and resource mobilisation for action. The results of this initiative are being seen in the work in Belum (see page 30). Encouraging the other countries in the region to see the utility of the CA|TS systems remains a major goal for the coming years.

ROYAL BELUM IMPROVING MANAGEMENT



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Royal Belum was gazetted as a protected area in 2007. The park covers 1,175 km² in the north of Peninsular Malaysia and is managed by Perak State Parks Corporation (PSPC), a statutory body of the Perak State Government.

Although having the highest known density of tigers in Peninsular Malaysia, the population was significantly reduced over the last decade, mainly due to poaching. Improving management effectiveness and addressing the poaching threat was imperative.

Royal Belum was registered for CA|TS in 2017; the first site in Southeast Asia to adopt the standards. A CA|TS Jurisdictional Committee was established to oversee its implementation until a National Committee is formed. An initial assessment completed in March 2018 revealed only about 50% of the CA|TS standards were reached. Improvements were needed in several aspects of park management including management plan implementation, staffing, sustainability of financial resources, human wildlife conflict, community relations, protection and habitat and prey management.

The recommended actions from this assessment are being implemented by a range of partners and the overall management of Royal Belum has steadily improved. Amongst the major achievements since 2018 are:

- The adoption and implementation of Royal Belum Management Plan (2018-2027)
- Intensified patrolling efforts through collaboration with stakeholders (see page 24)
- Developments to impose stiffer penalties for offenders to increase protection
- Enhanced protection of access to the park through the installation of a barricade and a surveillance tower
- Development of a Protection Strategy
- Continuous training on anti-poaching patrol techniques and the use of SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool)
- Development of Standard Operation Procedures for arresting and investigating activities
- Engagement with Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation in Thailand to develop a Memorandum of Agreement on transboundary cooperation

It is envisioned that Royal Belum will be CA|TS Accredited by 2023 if all gaps are addressed. However, the long-term sustainability of these initiatives and collaborations remains one of the biggest challenges. Being directly under the jurisdiction of the State Government, Royal Belum has limitations in terms of funding for a substantial increase in staffing. Hence, a sustainable financial resources mechanism needs to be devised to ensure long-term funding for conservation efforts with help from external sources such as the private sector.



Royal Belum CA|TS standards compliance based on Elements in 2018 and 2020



CA|TS ACROSS THE TIGER RANGE

Tigers are landscape species, so for CA|TS to be effective its good practices need to spread across the tiger range. In December 2019, the CA|TS Council chair invited all the countries implementing or planning to implement CA|TS to Bhutan to share experiences and outline plans for future development. Summaries of these reports and updates are included below.



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CA|TS country review and planning meeting, Bhutan 2019

CA|TS IMPLEMENTATION ACROSS THE TIGER RANGE

Bangladesh: The three Sundarbans Wildlife Sanctuaries (East, West and South) registered for CA|TS after a workshop in collaboration with IUCN in 2014. There is good potential of tiger conservation in the Sundarbans. But to be effective, tiger habitat needs to be protected and secured. Although there is significant work to be done to reach CA|TS Approved status, the Bangladesh Forest Department has been making progress, SMART patrolling has been initiated and a Wildlife Crime Control Unit formed where different law enforcement agencies work together.

Bhutan: Bhutan's Tiger Action Plan for 2018-2023 has one specific output related to CA|TS which aims for at least five tiger sites (protected areas and forest divisions) to reach CA|TS standards. The CA|TS National Committee was established in December 2017; sites are CA|TS Registered, two are CA|TS Approved (see page 39, the other sites are Jigme Dorji National Park and Phipsoo Wildlife Sanctuary). Five additional tiger conservation areas (Paro Forest, Sarpang Forest, Zhemgang Forest, Bumthang and Thimpu Territorial) were registered in 2020, with another three due to be registered by 2022. There is a CA|TS national support group; WWF Bhutan is the main partner, as well as UNDP and the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature Bhutan.

China: Since 2015, the central government of China has increasingly focused on environmental and ecological protection representing an opportunity for tiger conservation. Progress in implementing CA|TS was initially slow in China due to wider issues relating to the reorganisation of the country's nature conservation approach. The National Committee has registered six sites for CA|TS (Wangqing National Nature Reserve, Laoyeling National Nature Reserve, Hunchun Nature Reserve, Suiyang Nature Reserve, Tianqiaoling Nature Reserve, Huangnihe Nature Reserve) and started work in April 2020 to collect the evidence required to show how management is meeting CA|TS. In 2018 the Huangnihe Nature Reserve Management Bureau and stakeholders worked together to develop a five-year (2019-2023) conservation and management plan based on the CA|TS standard. CA|TS has also implemented training for the Amur Tiger Conservation Area of China in late June 2019; 19 people, including staff from four nature reserves, attended.

India: The CA|TS National Committee was set-up in India in September 2014. Tiger habitat covers about 72,000 km² in tiger reserves and 16,000 km² outside of tiger reserves, which means 30% of tiger habitat is outside of tiger reserves. It was therefore decided that the initial focus of CA|TS should be on areas outside the tiger reserves, mainly the Forest Divisions to secure the wild tiger populations within them (see page 26). In 2015, the National Committee selected the first ten sites to be registered under CA|TS in Uttarakhand. A total of 44 sites outside of tiger reserves have since been registered across Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. In 2020, CA|TS was extended across India to also register the **Tiger Reserves** (currently 52) under CA|TS with 14 receiving CA|TS Approved status in 2021 taking the total number of CA|TS Approved sites in India to 17.



© MKS Pasha

Malaysia: According to the preliminary results of the 1st National Tiger Survey conducted from 2016-2018, the Malayan tiger population is currently less than 200. Investment in tiger conservation over the last five years has reached over US\$25 million and the *Save Our Malayan Tiger Campaign* launched in 2019 is seen as a major boost for tiger conservation in the country. WWF-Malaysia and the GTF have been supporting CA|TS roll-out initially through the development of the Perak State Jurisdictional Committee to implement CA|TS in Royal Belum State Park (see page 30). There are plans to expand CA|TS into a national programme and an MOU on transboundary cooperation on tiger conservation is currently under development with Thailand. An additional four sites (Taman Negara Pahang, Taman Negara Terengganu, Taman Negara Kelantan, Endau Rompin National Park) are planned to be registered by 2020. The remaining six sites (Temengor Permanent Reserved Forest (PRF), Korbu PRF, Ulu Kinta PRF, Tapah PRF, Ulu Jelai PRF and Perias PRF) are planned to be registered by 2022.

Nepal: The protected areas of the Terai Arc Landscape are established largely for tiger conservation, covering around 5,500 km² area of habitat in five protected areas, four protected forests and many community and national forest areas. Despite many challenges tiger populations surveys (2009 and 2018) have shown increased tiger populations in protected areas, from 2009 to 2018, the estimate for the national tiger population has increased from 121 (100 – 191) to 235 (220-274). Bardia National Park's population, for example, increased from 18 to 87 tigers due to the control of poaching, using real time SMART patrolling, and community-based intelligence gathering. Habitat, grassland and wetlands, were also subject to long term improvement plans. The CA|TS National Committee was set-up in 2013 and was endorsed by the Government in December 2015. The committee has ten members and works with two independent reviewers. Four sites are CA|TS Registered (Parsa National Park, Banke National Park, Bardia National Park, Shukla Phanta National Park) and one (Chitwan National Park) is CA|TS Approved (see page 17). The National Committee met in late November 2019 and recommended the remaining four parks for approval.

A word on Covid-19

The Covid pandemic has impacted life across the globe. **Conservation initiatives have suffered badly.** This is a major irony given evidence of the contribution of a healthy ecosystem to combating pandemics. Limited opportunities to travel have impacted field-based work and social safeguards to stop the spread of the disease are limiting the interaction with local communities, have providing a further challenge. Work plans have had to be realigned and implementation processes revised.

The negative impacts of Covid on protected areas' management capacity, budgets and effectiveness are significant. This has reinforced the need for a major input of funding over the coming years to focus on the management improvements identified, and the new challenges raised, across much of the tiger range.



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Russia: Political support for tigers is having an impact in Russia. Monitoring has recorded 580 tigers (the population had been less than 200 in the 1970s); prey species are stable or increasing and the range has increased by 0.3 million ha to 1.8 million km². 25% of the Amur tiger habitat is in protected areas, with the potential to increase to 6.6 million ha. Approximately US\$13.5 million per year is invested in tiger conservation. CA|TS is run by a Jurisdictional Committee in the Russian Far East which includes WWF Russia, the Amur Tiger Center, administrations of the protected areas, and the Wildlife Conservation Society. Three sites are CA|TS Registered (Lazvosky Nature Reserve, Kedovaya Pad Nature Reserve and Land of the Leopard National Park). One site is CA|TS Approved (Sikhote-Alin Nature Reserve – see page 22). An additional two sites will be registered by 2020 and the remaining site will be registered by 2022. Consideration is also being given to registering other areas, such as hunting concessions, as some 70-80% of tigers in the region live outside protected areas.

IMPLEMENTING CA|TS ACROSS THE REST OF THE EXTANT TIGER RANGE

Although most of the tiger range countries are implementing CA|TS, several countries vital for securing tigers across their remaining range have so far not developed national or jurisdiction CA|TS committees. These countries have vitally important populations of tigers, their numbers are low and generally declining but without them the tiger range will contract significantly.

Thailand: Major challenges facing tiger conservation include how to increase the tiger population in the areas with low tiger density and how to bring the tiger back to the potential sites where tigers used to exist. That said, there has been some success: data from the western forest complex shows tiger populations rising and Thailand remains at the centre of tiger recovery in Southeast Asia particularly if transboundary management can be put in place (see page 30 and agreements with Malaysia). Furthermore, multiple partners are working and supporting tiger work in Thailand, working with the Department of National Parks, and the SMART patrol system has been implemented in all protected areas in Thailand.

Myanmar: Was taking a similar approach to the implementation of CA|TS as Bhutan (see page 39) until the recent coup. The first step was the development of a management effectiveness assessment system across the protected area network. CA|TS supported the development of the MyMETT, as version of the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool adapted for Myanmar and has worked with agencies developing the National Tiger Recovery Plan. The aim is to introduce CA|TS once the capacity for monitoring and assessment has increased, although given the current political situation exact plans are now unsure.

CA|TS HELPING BRING BACK TIGERS

Implementing a comprehensive CA|TS assessment can also serve as a general auditing tool and yardstick to gauge the readiness of conservation landscapes for [tiger reintroduction](#). CA|TS ensures identification of challenges and capacity needs for effective management of reintroduced tiger populations, and all elements of CATS should be in place before reintroduction is considered. This approach was tested in Srepok Wildlife Sanctuary in Cambodia.



CA|TS CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

The 2019 meeting in Bhutan also reviewed both the challenges for implementing CA|TS and the benefits and successes of its implementation. The main themes across the tiger range arising from this review were:

CHALLENGES FOR IMPLEMENTING CA|TS

- 🐾 Insufficient workforce and capacity
- 🐾 Need for secure long-term funding from the government and external parties to implement management actions to meet CA|TS criteria
- 🐾 Relevant support from federal/state agencies is needed to increase support for sites to register for CA|TS and to institute CA|TS National Committee
- 🐾 CA|TS has not yet proved to be an effective tool to create a major increase in finances

BENEFITS AND SUCCESSES OF IMPLEMENTING CA|TS

- 🐾 The setting of standards for effective management of tigers
- 🐾 Stressing the importance of protected areas for tigers
- 🐾 Identifying technical needs for improvement in the management system
- 🐾 Documenting conservation achievements and assessment of conservation management interventions
- 🐾 Bringing together all stakeholders to focus on the future of tiger conservation
- 🐾 Helping sites align management to international standards for effective management of tigers
- 🐾 Using tiger conservation to focus on improving conservation management generally
- 🐾 Helping sites better record and assess conservation management intervention
- 🐾 Increasing support for protected area status
- 🐾 Providing good public relations opportunities

STANDARDS FOR CONSERVATION



Conservation strategies for rare and threatened conservation objectives, such as species and habitat, are commonly founded on effective protection, management and recovery/restoration objectives. Usually, many areas share these common conservation objectives and conservation success is most likely when each area can ensure effective management of these shared objectives. This is the basic principle behind Conservation Assured, and CA|TS: to ensure successful conservation outcomes many sites need to come together under a shared set of good practices.

Tigers are the first set of Conservation Assured standards. They have helped develop the blueprint to design the Conservation Assured Framework and a set of guiding principles for Conservation Assured systems. Conservation Assured systems have also been developed for jaguars and freshwater dolphins and are planned for lions.

Conservation Assured has close links with the [IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas](#) (the IUCN Green List initiative). The overarching objective of the Green List is to recognise and increase the number of protected and conserved areas that deliver successful conservation outcomes through effective management and equitable governance. Whilst Conservation Assured and CA|TS are species specific; the Green List is a global standard.

Conservation Assured and the Green List have been collaborating since their [inception](#) and learning from each other to develop effective systems and processes. Conservation Assured and the Green List are currently working together in Bhutan (see page 39) to demonstrate how the two systems can be mutually complementary and beneficial for achieving conservation and equity outcomes. The aim is to:

- Develop procedures for sites that implement the Conservation Assured and the Green List combined approach.
- Building a strong case for the inter-linkages between Conservation Assured and the Green List highlighting how this can further enhance and strengthen conservation.
- Consider how the Conservation Assured Framework could be nested within the Green List as a contribution to the evidence-based monitoring and assurance system.

BHUTAN PROMOTING GOOD MANAGEMENT



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Management records used in the CA|TS assessment of Royal Manas National Park

Conservation of the environment is one of the four pillars of Bhutan's Gross National Happiness philosophy: a unique approach to national governance and conservation globally. So, it was perhaps not surprising that Bhutan was keen to become part of CA|TS. From initial meetings to help develop the standards in 2013, to announcing official adoption of CA|TS in 2016 and the first two parks, Royal Manas National Park and Jigme

Singye Wangchuck National Park becoming [CA|TS Approved](#) in 2019, Bhutan has been a major supporter of CA|TS. Bhutan also chairs the CA|TS Council, which provides a forum for all the chairs of CA|TS National Committees. The government is also looking beyond national parks in implementing CA|TS and has registered three Forest Divisions where assessments have begun; all sites contain breeding tiger populations. As part of the process, Bhutan is implementing the SMART patrolling systems and the zero-poaching approach in these sites.

CA|TS fits in neatly with overall plans to professionalise conservation management across Bhutan. Before adopting CA|TS, a system of management effectiveness assessment was put in place and a State of the Parks report produced as a baseline assessment. The [Bhutan METT+](#), the development of which was supported by CA|TS, is a tailor-made version of the [Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool \(METT\)](#) and will be used across protected areas and buffer zones every five years. The major Bhutan for Life project is a 14-year financial bridge that allows for immediate improvement in the management of Bhutan's protected areas for climate resilience, and the prompt delivery of mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity gains, while the country gradually develops its own financing resources.

An additional step in this story of increasing effectiveness, and based on the value gained from using the CA|TS standard, Bhutan has recently committed to implement the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas at a national level (see page 38). Bhutan will implement the IUCN Green List standard to recognise and improve effective management and equitable governance for successful conservation outcomes for tigers and all major conservation values initially in three sites, including the two CA|TS sites, with the aim of scaling up to the national system of protected areas over time. This initiative will provide these two aligned systems an opportunity to explore in detail how they can work together to support effective conservation management.



FILLING THE FUNDING GAP

For the commitments made and the enthusiasm generated by CA|TS to be fully effective, there is still a need for major investment in tiger conservation sites. Conservation funding is not evenly spread across the tiger range and where investment is lacking tigers are suffering (along with local people, other species and habitat). Tigers have consequently been lost from vast areas of their potential range ... and more of their range may diminish even while we see success in reaching the Tx2 goal.

We realise that tigers already receive more funding than other less iconic vulnerable and endangered species, but thanks to tiger's extensive current and potential range, adequate funding for tigers can also help effective conservation management for habitats and other species over large parts of Asia and beyond. To date around US\$11 million has been mobilised through CA|TS for effective site management by governments, partners and other donors. But this is a drop in the ocean of the funding needed for effective management of tiger conservation sites.



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Can CA|TS help to find new funding initiatives for tiger conservation?

Conservation is increasingly 'borrowing' ideas from the mainstream financial sector to develop funding initiatives which help both secure conservation funds and assure conservation results.

Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) is adapted from Wall Street practices for organising and financing complex, expensive and well-defined projects such as power plants. As the name suggests the focus is on permanence by providing the entire funding needs of areas with a major conservation vision. PFP initiatives address a common complaint of the conservation community: piecemeal or insufficient funding for conservation management. PFP thus typically finances complex, expensive and well-defined areas to maintain and protect them with a single project, often with a reasonable long-time frame and commitment for funding to be continued in the long-term. Tigers are already benefiting from a PFP project in Bhutan (see page 39), and the range-wide evidence base, clarity of good practices required, data-gathering capacity and ambitious vision of CA|TS could be the basis of a future Tiger PFP.

'Green bonds' have emerged as one of the tools to raise capital for environmental protection, environmental services and conservation. The bonds rely on attracting impact investors who accept slightly lower returns on investment in return for the environmental and social benefits of the bond being absolutely assured. Generally, bonds have been developed and then systems for verification follow. CA|TS however is already well established and is perfectly positioned to provide the diagnostic tool needed for reporting on impact investments should a tiger bond be developed.

Government investment in tiger conservation sites needs to provide the backbone of any long-term strategy to meet the true costs of management. While some countries are investing in sites, many, in Southeast Asia in particular, have insufficient government funding – a situation which needs to change. Once in place adequate funding would impact many other aspects of natural, economic, and social capital, so investments would have far-reaching benefits.

Scaling up conservation funding will also require new sources of finance, such as harnessing the power of private finance, which in turn implies new ways of doing business, including greater focus on measuring impact (see box). CA|TS can provide the diagnostic tool needed for guiding investments in tiger conservation and help understand the impact of this support. As an independent and fully verified assessment system, which starts with site-level information and is then reviewed at multiple levels, investors can gauge not only where the funding is really needed but the implementation success of the projects and sites that have received support.

SCALING UP CA|TS

We hope the last few pages have provided a sense of how and why CA|TS was developed, the cooperation CA|TS has generated across the tiger range and beyond, and the differences CA|TS is making to individual sites across the tigers' remaining range. But there is still much to do to enthuse all those involved to fully support CA|TS and to expand CA|TS across remaining countries with viable tiger populations.

The 2018 CA|TS business plan provided a projection of what tiger conservation might look like if key sites reached CA|TS Approved status under three scenarios: a slow but steady implementation; implementation with major engagement from the CA|TS partnership (governments and support group) to aid and help finance management gaps; and implementation aided by a significant injection of funding through a specific tiger fund. We have thus adjusted this estimate to the realities of 2021 (see figure). **The difference between these scenarios is startling.** Despite all the hard work of those involved, the roll-out remains slow and steady, a situation not helped by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is still every opportunity to make a major impact on tiger conservation this century ... but this needs to be a collaborative effort to increase the pace of implementing good practice tiger management, particularly in the sites where tiger populations are just hanging on.

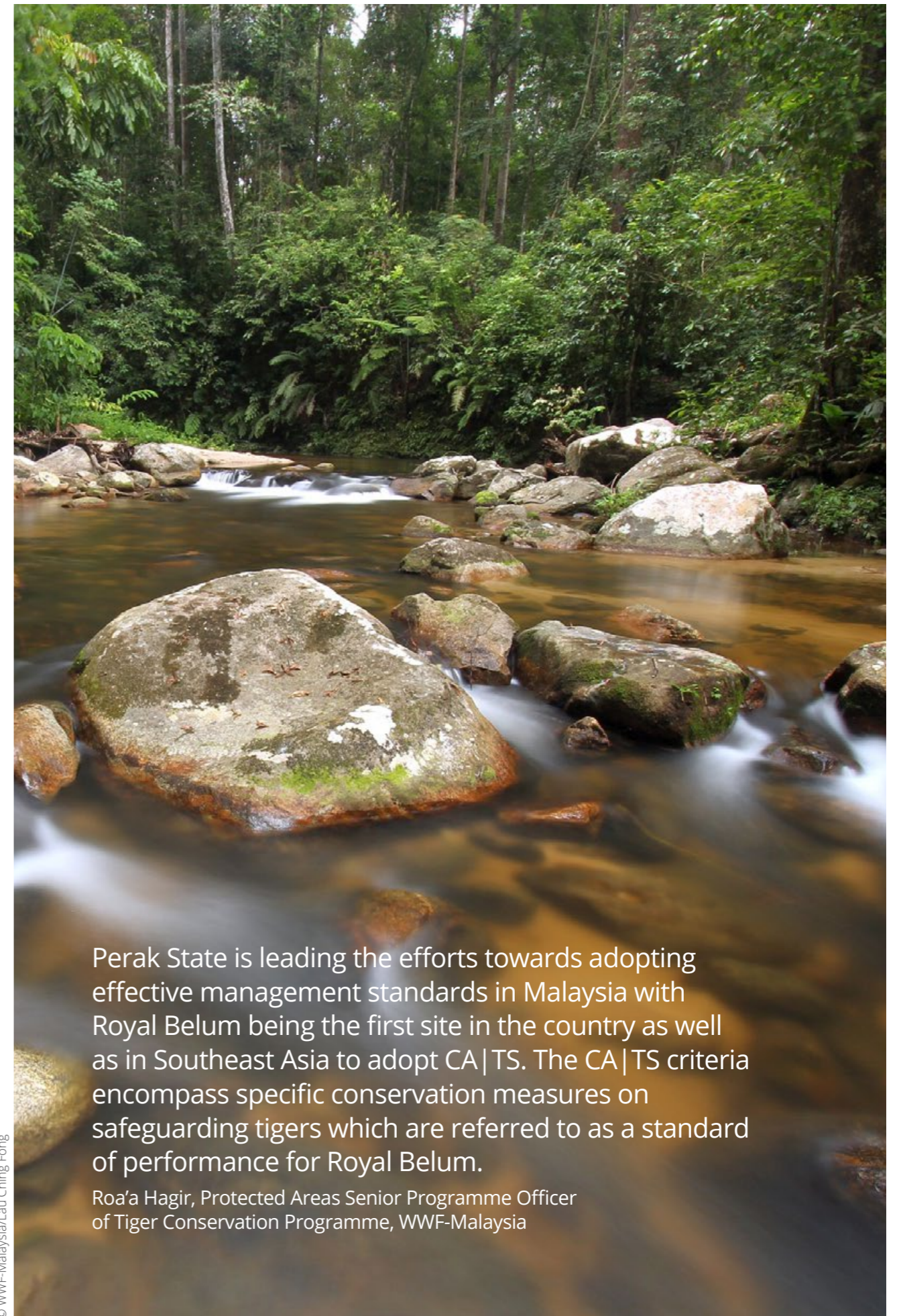
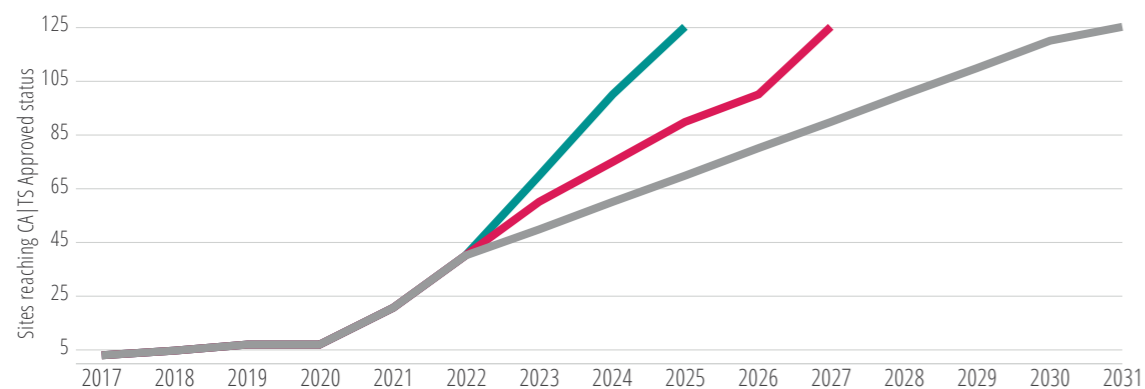
Thanks to CA|TS, and the many conservation projects working on tigers, we know where the gaps in management are (see page 28) and the global conservation community has a sufficient toolbox to fill them. With the backing of the whole CA|TS support group and the funding to fully implement these tools many more sites could have effective management in around five years, without them and with current levels of conservation funding it will take at least 10 years if not more.

There are already 128 sites registered for CA|TS and more are registering. We must ensure that there is now the enthusiasm from the CA|TS Support Group to work together on implementation and the funds available to support these sites to move from CA|TS Registered to CA|TS Approved.

The key question for tiger range states is will tigers survive in the wild in the time it takes to introduce effective conservation management?

Implementation of CA|TS across the 128 registered sites under three implementation scenarios

- Implementation under advancement programme (scenario C)
- Implementation with full Support Group engagement (scenario B)
- Current implementation (scenario A)



Perak State is leading the efforts towards adopting effective management standards in Malaysia with Royal Belum being the first site in the country as well as in Southeast Asia to adopt CA|TS. The CA|TS criteria encompass specific conservation measures on safeguarding tigers which are referred to as a standard of performance for Royal Belum.

Roa'a Hagir, Protected Areas Senior Programme Officer of Tiger Conservation Programme, WWF-Malaysia

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CA|TS NEXT STEPS

2016 marked a pivotal moment in the struggle to restore wild tiger populations. For the first time in the history of tiger conservation, the precipitous fall of global wild tiger populations had stopped, and global numbers had started increasing. The regional approach, with high level political commitments backed up by improved management, research and monitoring, increased enforcement at sites and along trade chains, intelligence sharing and strong public support, had achieved the first key step in the Global Tiger Recovery Program: stop the overall loss.

A number of tiger range countries have delivered a remarkable national recovery of their wild tiger populations in the 11-year period since the 1st Summit; they deserve public recognition for these accomplishments in the lead-up to the 2nd Summit. In particular, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Russia and China have each made impressive gains against their 2010 baseline. Progress has not been consistent across the tiger's range. While some countries have achieved significant increases, others have lost their tiger populations. Of continued concern, the threats causing the decline have not disappeared. Overall, the first phase of the GTRP shows tiger numbers can be restored, but also that progress is hard won and fragile, such that tiger conservation needs to be urgently strengthened to achieve long-term success.



The 2nd Tiger Summit will be hosted by the Russian Federation in Vladivostok, September 2022. The meeting, hosted by President Vladimir Putin of Russia, will be an incredibly high-profile moment that will almost certainly eclipse the previous Tiger Summit in 2010. So, as we head into 2022, a year which will also finally see the Convention on Biological Diversity's post-2020 agenda agreed in China, we need to ensure the CA|TS standards stay up to date, the network of experts remain engaged and the innovation of the CA|TS-log software widely used. Some critical next steps to achieve this include:

- 🐾 Monitoring and implementing CA|TS across all tiger range countries.
- 🐾 Exploring options for co-management of CA|TS with support group members to ensure adequate funding (around US\$250,000 per year) to manage:
 - the CA|TS governance process
 - supporting tiger conservation sites
 - monitoring and review of progress on site-based tiger recovery
 - linking with global process, in particular the Green List
 - guiding investments for active management interventions
 - training and capacity development.

IN ADDITION, OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS CA|TS WILL CONTINUE TO:

- 🐾 Exchange knowledge and build good practices in conservation management across tiger sites.
- 🐾 Develop a regional network of expert reviewers and mentors to guide tiger conservation management across sites.
- 🐾 Centralise tiger and management data within countries using CA|TS-Log.
- 🐾 Enhance site-based management effectiveness across the tiger range.
- 🐾 Provide the assurance and evidence-based framework for directing large-scale funding into tiger conservation.

FINALLY, CATS WILL CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN GLOBAL CONSERVATION BY:

- 🐾 Contributing to global processes, bilateral-agreements and targets, such as GTRP processes and helping provide site-based information for reporting to SDGs and CBD targets.
- 🐾 Supporting the expansion of the Conservation Assured concept to other species, particularly other big cats.
- 🐾 Helping develop guidelines and systems for Conservation Assured globally and ensuring strong and harmonious links with the IUCN Green List.

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¹ These meeting took place over several years. Names and affiliations were correct at the time of the meeting but may now be out of date.



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