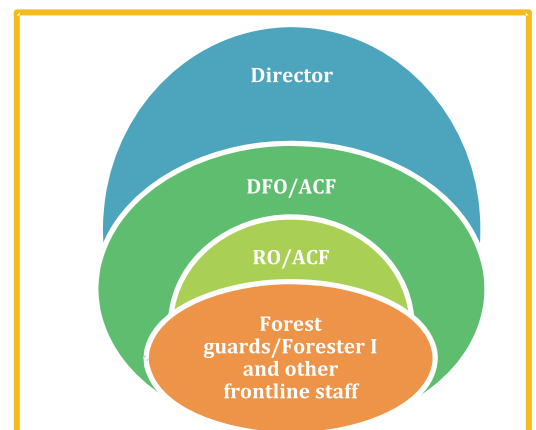




CHAPTER – III HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Introductory

9.1 Effective functioning of an organisation largely depend on appropriate human resources and manpower management. The structure of human resources of the KNP is shown through the block diagram alongside. The overall control and supervision of the park is with the Director.



Sanctioned strength and men-in-position

9.2 Audit analysis of the sanctioned strength *vis-à-vis* men in position of the park as on 31 March 2014 revealed that against 562 posts there were 461 officials in position leaving a vacancy of 101. Of these, the sanctioned strength and the men-in-position relating to frontline staff were 506 and 431 respectively. Out of 101 vacancies, 75 were in the frontline categories¹ which is about 15 *per cent*. The audit findings relating to deployment of manpower are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Posts	Sanctioned strength	Men-in-position	Vacancy	% of vacancy
Dy Ranger	7	7	0	0
Forester I	45	31	14	31
Forest Guards	212	198	14	7
Mahut	34	27	7	21
Driver/tract or driver	17	7	10	59
Game watcher	58	52	6	10
Boatman	63	60	3	5
Others	70	49	21	30
Total	506	431	75	15

¹ Staff posted in the anti-poaching camps.

Deployment of manpower

9.3.1 Scrutiny of records revealed that 32 out of 461 persons at present working as frontline staff were physically incapable of discharging protection duties. Audit carried out an age analysis of the frontline staff posted in the anti-poaching camps. It was observed that out of 229 personnel in the category of Forest Guards and Forester – I which are the backbone of the park, 69 were above 50 years age, 47 pertained to the age group 46 – 49 years, 38 in the age group of 41-45 years while the remaining 75 were below 40 years of age. **This reveals that more than fifty per cent of the staff in frontline categories was more than 45 years of age.**

9.3.2 Audit observed that 100 freshly recruited frontline staff (66 Forests Guards and 34 Forester – I) were deployed to the park by the Government in December 2009. However, 73 of these personnel were transferred out of the park by the Government between June 2010 and April 2014. The transfer of the newly recruited personnel was the main contributing factor for the deployment of aged staff on anti-poaching duties. The table below reveals the age-profile of Forest Guards and Foresters after the recruitment in 2009 and that in 2014 after the transfers of the newly recruited staff.

Post	Age-group after recruitment of 2009				Age-group as on 31-3-2014			
	More than 50	Between 45-50	Between 40-45	Less than 40	More than 50	Between 45-50	Between 40-45	Less than 40
Forester – I	5	1	3	35	14	4	4	9
Forest Guard	26	33	48	105	55	43	34	66

9.3.3 Thus, while 140 personnel were below the age of 40 years after the recruitment in 2009 the same came down to 75 in 2014 after the newly recruits were transferred out of the park. This has also resulted in sharp increase in the number of staff more than 45 years of age from 65 personnel in 2009 to 116 in 2014. The transfers of the newly recruited staff between June 2010 till 2013 despite the increasing trend of Rhino poaching during these years raises serious doubts about the seriousness of the Department as well as the Directorate in dealing with such a heinous crime against wildlife. The park authorities failed to highlight the consequence of such transfers to the competent authorities.

9.3.4 During physical verification by Audit at the anti-poaching camps it was observed that out of 165 camps, 11 are manned by only 2 guards, 68 camps had more than 2 but less than 4 while the remaining 86 camps had 4 guards and above. The wildlife guards stated that with four guards in average, only one

The Wildlife Conservation strategy 2002 of MoEF, GoI prescribes - the vacant posts in the frontline staff shall be filled immediately and provided basic infrastructure for efficient discharge of duties. Also, it prescribes for hiring local people on voluntary or honorarium basis. Besides, the High Power Committee on Prevention of Poaching (instituted by State Government) suggested for deployment of eight wildlife guards per camp.

team with maximum of three members can move at a time as atleast one member has to stay back at the camp to ensure its security. The same team again performs duty in the evening after a break.

9.3.5 It was further noticed that although the Park was established in 1974, the sanctioned strength was reviewed only in 2011 when the park authorities had carried out a detailed study of the manpower requirement in view of the **increased poaching threat and to cater to the additional areas** according to which the **actual requirement of frontline staff was worked out as 1,092 against the available strength of 561**. However, though the proposal was submitted with detailed justification way back in September 2011; yet, no posts had been created till date though three years have elapsed.

Deployment of AFPP

9.4.1 For better protection and security of the Forests, Forest Produces and Wild Life in Assam, the Government of Assam in 1986 raised a Assam Forest Protection Force by an Act (AFPP Act) of the Legislature. Presently, 425 personnel of the 1st and 2nd Battalion of the AFPP are deployed at KNP. Audit scrutiny of the Act *vis-à-vis* physical verifications revealed the following:

- The AFPP Act provided for appointment of a CCF, Additional CCF, CF, Commandant, Deputy Commandant etc. The organisational set-up was worked out in a manner to ensure that the forest officers head the force who would understand the needs of the forestry and wildlife sector and manage the force accordingly. However, in reality the force is headed by only a Commandant and there is no Officer of Forest Department in the force.
- Though the AFPP jawans are posted in the anti-poaching camps under operational control of the concerned Range Officers, their administrative control is vested in the Commandant/Company Commander. Accordingly, the service books, APARs, leave account etc are maintained at the Commandants Office which is a separate establishment other than the park authorities. Audit had come across an instance where the DFO during his surprise visit to Burapahar Range found (16 January 2014) 35 out of 108 personnel absent; of which 14 only were on authorised leave. The concerned RO was not aware about the position of leave.
- Scrutiny of the training module of the AFPP jawans obtained from their headquarters revealed that it contains modules for indoor as well as outdoor subjects. Subjects ranging from physical training, drill, weapons training, crowd control and VIP duties, field craft and tactics, unarmed combat, commando, etc are included in the outdoor training while modern India, role and functions of Police, Police organisation and administration, Human behavior, police public relationship,

law, prominent law and order affairs, disaster management etc consists of indoor subjects. Thus, the force is neither trained in crucial subjects like strategies in wildlife, animal behavior nor habituated to life inside a wildlife habitat. This would indicate that the force had been rather groomed up more like a modern Police force than a Wildlife force. Had the force been headed by a CCF level officer as envisaged in the AFPF Act, these deficiencies in the training module could, perhaps, have been detected in time and rectified.

- Interaction with the ROs revealed that the AFPF jawans depend on the wildlife guards which include even casual labourers to lead them on regular patrolling as well as specific anti-poaching duties.

9.4.2 Thus, due to the absence of absolute jurisdiction, the services of the AFPF jawans could not be optimally utilised by the ROs and the force has become dependent on the wildlife personnel instead of being a re-enforcement to the existing protection mechanism.

9.4.3 Against an Audit query, the Directorate stated (July 2014) that feasibility study of deployment of AFPF and its impact on anti-poaching activities is yet to be carried out.

9.4.4 *In reply, the Department stated that though the area of the Park has nearly doubled over the years, the staff strength has remained almost static. It was further stated that the Department was working on formation of special force like Rhino Protection Force with more representation from the fringe villages. As regards the old staff, the Department stated that the role of old staff cannot be ruled out as they possess rich experience which is passed on to the newly recruited staff.*

9.4.5 **Response of Audit:** *The reply of the Department in respect of aged staff is not acceptable as the unplanned and arbitrary transfer of newly recruited staff from KNP had forced the park authorities to post aged staff in these camps.*

9.4.6 *Regarding the training module of the AFPF jawans, the Department agreed that sensitising the AFPF jawans about wildlife behavior and other facets of wildlife would surely be helpful in yielding their optimum services.*

Training of staff/Officers

9.5.1 The management plan of the park envisaged the need for imparting training and education on wildlife management and other related disciplines to its cadres for efficient management of the park. It also envisioned that staff should be made physically fit through carrying out regular training programmes on matter of wildlife protection including handling of modern arm/combat etc, conservation and

other related subjects of wildlife management in the field as well as reputed institutes of the country.

9.5.2 Audit scrutiny revealed that **no training programme was organised** by the park authorities for any of its wildlife guards during the period 2008-09 to 2012-13. Besides, the initial training of forest guards was of nine months duration, which at present had been reduced to 15 days only. It was observed that during the period under Audit, **none of the forest guards had ever undergone arms firing training.** While the forest guards/Forester-I were imparted theoretical training about the arms and ammunitions without any practical training on firing, the remaining staff in the posts of Boatman, mahut, game watchers, drivers etc posted as frontline staff in anti-poaching camps have never undergone any arms training.

Other Staff issues

Rewards for exceptional performance of staff

9.6 In order to boost the morale of the staff and officers, it is essential that the meritorious works are acknowledged through rewards/incentives.

9.7 Scrutiny revealed that the Government has arranged for appreciating the outstanding contribution of the staff/officers during Wildlife Week, *Vanya Prani Mitra* Award etc. It was observed that even persons serving as casual labourers in the anti-poaching camps were being selected for such awards. Verification also revealed that the park authorities had instituted a system of giving cash rewards to the wildlife personnel ranging between ₹ 17,000 and ₹ 20,000 in each case under which four teams were given cash award of ₹ 4.80 lakh between December 2013 and March 2014. The amount is being enhanced to ₹ 2 lakh per team and ₹ 25,000 for an individual. The expenditure is met from the Kaziranga Tiger Conservation Foundation. These rewards and cash awards have undoubtedly helped in boosting the morale of the staff.

Good practice

Compassionate appointments and lack of safety net

9.8.1 Verification of establishment records indicated that altogether 83 persons had died while in service due to (i) attack by wild animals, (ii) attack by poachers, (iii) road accident while on duty on NH 37 adjacent to the park, (iv) drowning in the flood waters. Scrutiny revealed that of the above deaths, family members in respect of 34 such deceased have applied for compassionate appointments as available in the records of the park authorities.

9.8.2 It was noticed that though the applications were pending for quite long time, compassionate appointment was not made in any case, though a number of posts were lying vacant as of date. Only casual jobs were given to one of the family members. This was despite the fact that the GoA had in March 2009 brought out the revised guidelines for appointment on compassionate ground which prescribed the modalities to be followed by the administrative departments in dealing with such cases and stressed upon timely processing of the applications to cut short undue delays at various stages.

9.8.3 Besides, for insuring the lives of the wildlife guards serving as frontline staff in the anti-poaching camps, there is only a scheme of insurance of ₹ 1 lakh arranged in association with a non-government organisation (NGO) which was felt to be insufficient.

9.9.1 Thus, despite extreme working conditions filled with life threats from poachers as well as wild animals, there is little security of the families of the wildlife guards in case of any mishap leading to their death/permanent disability.

9.9.2 In reply, the Department stated that the arrangement with the NGO for insurance coverage was an adhoc system and a Committee had been formed to look into insuring the lives of the wildlife guards. The Committee has firmed up a proposal for insurance coverage of ₹ 5 lakh per personnel. The scheme will be finalised and implemented shortly.

Allowances to staff

9.10.1 Analysis of the camp wise staff strength under five Ranges of KNP indicated that 11 out of 165 camps are manned by only two wildlife employees; 68 camps had 2-4 employees while the remaining camps had more than four employees. Further, in 21 out of 78 camps (*i.e.* 27 per cent) under Burapahar, Northern and Western Range there are no Forest Guards/Forester – I and the same are being manned/led by game watchers, boatmen, nayaks, mahuts and casual labourers.

9.10.2 It was, however, noticed that **no other allowance is paid to the wildlife guards except ration allowance of ₹ 500 and tiger allowance ranging between ₹ 350 - ₹ 450 per month.** During interactions of the Audit team at the camps, it came to light that each of the wildlife guards had to spend at least ₹ 1,000 per month on ration which is double the allowances given. Evidently, the tiger allowance granted was also being utilised to meet the ration expenses. It was further observed that the AFPF personnel, home guards, casual labourers and fixed pay workers did not get ration till 2012-13 and the same is being paid only from 2013-14 onwards.

9.10.3 Similarly, 'tiger allowance' under the 'Project Tiger' are disbursed among the wildlife guards posted in the camps; yet, the AFPP jawans posted in the same camps and carrying out similar duties are not getting these allowances.

9.10.4 Thus, grant of allowances uniformly to all categories of frontline personnel working in the anti-poaching camps, commensurate to the arduous nature of duties would certainly have served as a moral boost and in turn could have helped in optimising their output. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that the DFO, Mangaldoi, in-charge Orang NP had proposed² for payment of additional allowances of 25 per cent to the wildlife personnel serving as frontline staff.

9.10.5 The Department stated that the ration allowance had been revised to ₹ 860 per month from July 2014. They further stated that requests had been made to the Govt for making provisions so that 'tiger allowance' can be paid to the AFPP jawans as well.

Deployment of Casual labourers

9.11.1 In order to mitigate the gap between the manpower required and that available, the park authorities had deployed casual labourers. It was observed that 96 persons are serving the anti-poaching camps as casual labourers. Each of these casual labourers are serving for periods more than six-seven years. In two of the camps, casual labourers were found to be leading the camps. As per the present rates, the casual labourers get remuneration of ₹ 169 per day. **Interaction with casual staff revealed that the payment of their remuneration is often delayed, sometimes for more than three months.** Considering the daily rates, the casual labourers get about ₹ 5,000 pm against the minimum salary of about ₹ 7,000 pm paid to the regular wildlife guards. Further, the regular staff are entitled to pension, gratuity and most importantly insurance and health care facilities which are not extended to the casual labourers. This was despite the fact that the casual labourers contribute equally in anti-poaching duties with the regular staff.



Appreciation certificate issued to a Casual Labourer

9.11.2 Incidentally, recruitment process of 2009 prescribed for priority to the candidates having experience in forest and wildlife areas and the casual staff working in the Department. However, during interactions with the staff in the anti-

² In his note in response to Gauhati High Court's directive on ways and means to improve the working of Wildlife division in Assam.

poaching camps it was observed that none of the casual labourers serving in KNP could secure permanent jobs through the aforesaid recruitment process.

9.11.3 *The Department stated that after formation of KTCF, regular payment of wages to the casual labourers could be secured by taking loan from the Foundation which is recouped upon receipt of funds.*

9.12.1 During interaction with the AFPF personnel as well as the wildlife guards, it was ascertained that the AFPF personnel were issued with a handbook of items depicting the scale and life of each articles and were receiving these articles accordingly. On the contrary, there is no such

Uniforms etc.



Some Wildlife guards reported borrowing used uniforms of their siblings serving in other forces.

system followed by the KNP authorities in respect of the wildlife guards under its jurisdiction. Further, it was observed that the allotment of uniform, shoes, rain coats etc. is irregular forcing the wildlife guards to arrange these articles from their own sources. Instances were also noticed of issuing winter garments during summer. Thus, though the AFPF as well as wildlife guards are staying in the same anti-poaching camps, they are guided by separate set of guidelines. This places the wildlife guards at a disadvantage *vis-à-vis* their AFPF colleagues.

9.12.2 *The Department stated that uniforms, shoes, raincoats etc is to be provided every alternate year. However, due to paucity of funds the same could not be ensured. From the current year, these are provided by taking loans from the KTCF.*

Amenities for the Staff

9.13.1 In order to ascertain the status of the anti-poaching camps *vis-à-vis* the frontline staff staying therein, a joint verification was conducted of 37 out of 165 camps (23 per cent) along with the concerned Range Officers/ACF. The findings are as follows:

9.13.2 Some of the camps are in dilapidated condition needing immediate repair. In one of such camps it was observed that the Director of the park during his visit (November 2013) had mentioned in the patrolling register to pool funds from the Tiger Foundation and repair the camp immediately which

Accommodation



Some of the camps have bamboo flooring



Some of the anti-poaching camps needing immediate repair.

may be recouped upon receipt of funds through APO. Yet, after seven months (June 2014 when the Audit team visited the camp), no development was found to have been made and the wildlife guards continue to stay in such inhuman conditions. Similar observations were noted in a number of camps with thatch walls, leaking roof, floor made of bamboo to count a few. Interaction with wildlife guards revealed that due to damaged ceiling, water seeps in during the rains making it difficult to take rest as the beds get wet. Besides, the wildlife guards are required to arrange for their own cots and bedding to stay in the camps. Resultantly, in case of transfers in and out of the camps, the guards have to make arrangements for shifting/arrange their beddings etc.

9.13.3 For drinking water, the wildlife guards generally depend on the hand pumps installed at the camps. It was observed that there is no proper arrangement for filtration of water, though the condition of water pumped through tube well is poor. On interaction, it was

Drinking water



Hand pumps are installed in the camps - strategically elevated so that guards don't have to come down

learnt that the guards in the Luit floating camp (under Northern Range) used to consume river water on board the floating camp.



Water is poor - yet some camps don't have filtration facilities

9.13.4 The sole source of power to the anti-poaching camps is solar powered panels. The power generated through the solar panels and stored in batteries are used in charging wireless sets, mobile handsets as well as electric lanterns for use at night. Interaction with the wildlife

guards revealed that the power supply of the solar panels is limited and in many camps it lasts maximum till 9 at night, beyond which they have to manage with candle light.

Power supply



Solar panels - sole source of power in the camps

Notably, due to the limited power source, even the wireless systems become inoperative and the wildlife guards have to use their personal mobile phones to interact with other units.

9.14.1 *The Department while accepting poor condition of the camps stated that renovating the camps at a time would entail huge requirement of funds. They also stated that the Ministry of Natural and Renewable Energy, GoI would be requested to help in equipping all the anti-poaching camps with solar power.*

9.14.2 Response of Audit: *The Department may work out a plan for renovating the camps in a phased manner.*

Recommendations (Human Resource management)

- *The vacancies in the staff strength, especially in the frontline cadre need to be filled up immediately and a staff monitoring mechanism prescribed.*
- *Compassionate appointment cases need to be dealt in time-bound manner in terms of extant Government policy and instructions so that the applications are not pending for years. Besides, adequate insurance coverage for the frontline staff may also be considered.*
- *Additional allowances commensurate to the arduous nature of duties need to be rolled out for the frontline staff; existing allowances need to be revised periodically to be at par with market rates and given uniformly to all types of personnel on frontline duties.*
- *The provisions of the recruitment policy may be complied with subject to fulfillment of other criteria relating to casual labourers.*
- *The anomalies in providing uniforms etc to the wildlife guards and the AFPF staff need to be removed. Other problems relating to basic amenities like accommodation, drinking water and minimum power requirement need to be attended to immediately and monitored periodically.*