



CORE

Centre for Organisation
Research & Education

Indigenous Peoples'
Centre for Policy and
Human Rights in India's
Eastern Himalayan
Territories

Registration No.98 of 1987
under the Manipur
Societies Registration Act
of 1860

*CORE is an indigenous
peoples' NGO with Special
Consultative status in the UN
Economic and Social Council*



H2H

The Human to Humane
Transcultural Centre for
Torture and Trauma is an
autonomous humanitarian
action service of CORE

MISCELLANEOUS POLICY PAPER # 4/2016

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS REGARDING THE DRAFT "MANIPUR PONY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY", 8TH NOVEMBER 2016

Introduction

1. These are the comments and suggestions submitted by the Centre for Organisation Research & Education (CORE) in response to a resolution of the Government of Manipur, Vety. & Animal Husbandry Department (No.1/16/2-16-Vety (Pt.) dated 8th November 2016) in which an invitation was extended to all stakeholders and general public for comments.

2. The CORE is a registered society under the Manipur Societies Registration Act of 1860, and as such its mandate includes policy matters concerning India in general and Manipur in particular.

3. The organisation is pleased to note that the Government of Manipur is undertaking a long overdue exercise to establish a state policy for Manipuri pony conservation and development. We welcome the invitation extended to all stakeholders and general public to submit comments to the draft policy.

Comments and Suggestions:

4. The draft policy may begin with a **brief introduction** wherein some points may place in a tabular form like pony growth rate and death rate, demographic changes, infrastructure, shifting like resources, grazing grounds, polo grounds, current scenario, funds allocation, income, tourist attraction, distribution of Manipuri pony and its habitat, conservation, development, and other sustainable measures, the role of pony owners, polo association, etc...role of Vety. & AH, information, education and communication, wide dissemination/media, role of state and its agencies, role of NGO, civil society, role of Private sector, etc.

5. For the ease of reading and reference of such policy documents, especially in the draft stage, we suggest that all paragraphs are numbered. Without numbering of the paragraphs, it becomes an avoidable challenge to make particular references to the document text. The time frame for comments and suggestion may be extended up to one month. The draft policy may also be introduced in Manipuri as well. There should be full postal address with Fax No. of the concern office for any comments about the draft policy.

6. In the first introductory page to the draft policy, a reference was made to the pony population was made. A particular figure was quoted from the "17thQuinquinal Livestock Census 2003". In this regard, we wish that an updated figure is also quoted along with comparisons from previous census figures to clearly illustrate, with evidence that the pony population in Manipur is indeed "dwindling rapidly". Different references give a wide range of numbers, however.

7. In March 2016, it was reported that "[I]n the livestock census conducted in 2012, the population of this pony was found to be 1,100 only," according to Veterinary Minister Govindas Konthoujam (http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/manipuri-pony-facing-extinction-116030400505_1.html).

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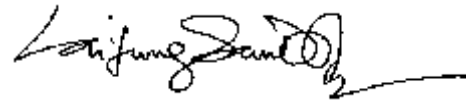
8. In the website of the NATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE ON EQUINES (Indian Council of Agricultural Research), The Equines in India, with no reference to dates, it is mentioned that it “is a matter of concern that the number of Manipuri has decreased drastically. As per latest data the population of Manipuri pony is 2327only.”
(<https://web.archive.org/web/20100525212416/http://nrce.nic.in/eqindia.htm>).
9. In a report dated 22nd July 2015 in the Imphal Times, it is mentioned that “it may be surprising to know that the Manipur Pony is becoming an endangered species with the total population of less than 500. A Comptroller and Auditor General of India report says that the population of Pony according to 2014 census filed by the Manipur Horse Riding & Polo Association (MHRPA) is less than 500 whereas in 2011 the total population of Pony numbered 1037, comprising of 597 males and 440 females respectively.”
(<http://www.imphaltimes.com/it-articles/item/3238-pony-endangered-treasure-of-manipur>)
10. Another news report from The Assam Tribune dated 19th October 2016 mentioned that “(T)he total number of Manipur Pony as per the Livestock Census 2003 was 1,898 while the Livestock Census 2012 had reported that the total pony population has declined to just 1,101.”
(<http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=oct2016/oth054>)
11. It would be very helpful that a proper authentic record of the Manipuri Pony population is reflected in the present draft policy so that the concern is well founded.
12. With reference to the draft policy’s text itself, we have the following comments.
13. In the draft Manipuri Pony Conservation and Development policy” the word “*Development*” is missing in the title of the draft policy.
14. . The **objective** of the draft policy needs more inputs. For example, what are we going to achieve in next 10 years? What is our target in 50 years? What have the government of Manipur done so far for the conservation of Manipuri pony? May be we can place our objective in a table form, e.g. eradication of specific disease, production of pony, reduction of mortality rate, reduction/ reduce prevalence castration/gelding, improve nutrition, establish an integrated system of surveillances, enforcement of cattle trespass, fodder production, subsidy scheme to pony owners, grazing areas, impact on the state economy and income, etc.
15. **Under the section/Article 4, (Constitution of Manipuri Pony Development Board)** the word “conservation” should be added in the board, (*i.e the Manipuri pony conservation and development board*). There are no rooms for pony owners, animal lovers, etc. in the board. The board may include a secretary or member secretary to run the office/board. What are the power and functions of this board? What role are they going to take up in this draft policy?
16. **Under Section No. 5 (Breeding strategies of the Breed.)**, a number measures have been listed. There is a concern, expressed in the section, that the practice of early castration/gelding by owners presents a problem with regard to maintaining true bloodlines and good breeds. However, no mention is made of an obvious need to establish a “Pony Breeding Facility” with modern stud maintenance and breeding facilities. Measures such as “cryo-preservation” mentioned may be placed in such a facility. Community based owners should participate and make us of such a facility for breeding purposes.
17. The establishment of “a breeding tract in every District” may be not desirable or feasible. For instance, pony breeding may be very difficult in the hill districts due to the terrain and fodder scarcity issues. Additionally, the breeding and culture of pony in Manipur is exclusively confined to the Manipur Valley districts, particularly within the domain of the Meitei people. This should be an important consideration.
18. The board may consider patenting the Manipuri pony.
19. There is a need to add plans for pony owners. (subsidy schemes for entrepreneur, pony lovers, pony owners, medicine, nutrition, grazing grounds, foddors, fencing, gears, etc.)
20. **Under Section No. 6 (Feeding Plan of Manipuri Pony.)**, we note that available so-called ‘wastelands’ near the foothills or any other areas around/adjacent to the breeding tract may be declared as reserve/preserved

for the purpose of shelter, fodder production and grazing area for the ponies. This is a very crucial issue as the so-called “wastelands” in the Manipur Valley have been rapidly shrinking over the years due to encroachment, land reclamation and land grabbing. Wetlands and their surrounds, very conducive to the ponies, have themselves become “endangered species” in Manipur due to the government’s neglect.

21. The pathetic example of Lamphelpat and its surrounds is a very obvious case in point, where the State government itself is a major encroacher to these natural reserves and commons. Other examples include Yaralpat, Khongampat, Waithoupat, Lousipat, Ikop Pat and so forth.
22. It may be noted that the State has been developing and formulating many laws and rules concerning land in Manipur. The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Draft Rules 2016 circulated earlier is a case in point. Such rules framing make no sense when there are no regulations to be implemented. A Wetlands Regulation should be framed that include the measures envisioned in the present draft policy for ponies. Such a regulation must ensure that community ownership and participation is mandatory.
23. Under **Section No. 8 (Development of Permanent Polo Ground and Race Courses)**, we have come across the management issue again. The village polo grounds to be developed “should be entrusted to local communities and polo clubs”, the draft mentioned. However, there is no mention of an appropriate budgetary provision to lend teeth this laudable idea.
24. Polo grounds in the valley districts with adequate infrastructures may be initiated and the board including management, conservation and development.
25. The Section further mentions that a race course should be developed in Imphal City. This is an interesting proposition as it is a common knowledge that race courses require lots of land and infrastructure, During the 50s and early 60s, Imphal indeed had a race course designated in the Palace Compound. This was an initiative of the late Maharaj Kujmar Priyabrata Singh. It did not last long. Some important lessons may be learnt from this experiment more than 50 years ago. Other locations should be explored in lieu of Imphal City, with minimal land acquisition and displacement of communities, keeping in mind that racing is all about gambling and betting.
26. Under **Section No. 9 (Pony Based Employment Opportunities)**, we see many ideas being included. In order to re-establish and popularize the culture of horse riding and provide continual impetus to the various activities and events being proposed, we suggest that horse riding may formally be introduced and included in the physical activities curricula of schools.
27. It is unclear what is meant by “scientific utilization of Manipuri Pony”. We suggest that this idea be expanded upon to give a clear direction along with mandatory independent ethical oversight to all research concerning this endangered species.
28. Under **Section 10 (Incentives Programmes to Pony keepers.)**, it is extremely important to provide start up financial support to interested pony keepers to build appropriate and healthy stables for the ponies they wish to keep. Just providing maintenance costs only has no meaning as such incentives will be abused. Proper regulations should be framed for pony keeping on homestead and private lands by owners. A licensing system may be considered, which requires regular inspection provisions and renewal by an authority specifically established for such activities.
29. Under **Section No. 11 (Organisation of Eco-tourism Activities.)**, it may be pertinent to establish a Manipuri Pony Museum or Manipuri Resource Centre that showcases a permanent exhibition and keeps archival materials regarding the history and culture of the Manipuri Pony. This initiative would have multipurpose uses, such as education, awareness raising, community participation and tourism. This initiative should be taken up together with the Department of Art & Culture, Education, etc.
30. Under **Section No. 12 (Inclusion of pony literatures in text books)**, we find the idea very interesting too. However, merely introducing literature may not be useful unless the curricula in schools and colleges include the comparative study of the culture of the Manipuri Pony and other ponies in Asia.

Concluding Remarks

31. In conclusion, the development of the policy is much needed for this much loved but equally neglected animal. We suggest that due to the many technical and specialised issues that are included in this policy, a “Technical and Scientific Committee” be established under this policy, which should be multidisciplinary and advisory to the proposed “Manipuri Pony Development Board”.
32. We thank the Government of Manipur for giving this opportunity for comments to the draft policy. Our comments and suggestions are submitted in the sincere hope that the concerned authorities developing and finalizing this policy will give due attention to such submissions.
33. We also further suggest that such formal submissions be also uploaded on the webpage of the Veterinary & Animal Husbandry Department for all to read.



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