

. Guidelines for Developing Framework Mechanism for Mobilizing Financial Support for Supplementing Management of Zoos

Introduction:

The Zoos in India are mainly under the control of State Government, however, few zoos are managed by Municipal and private organisations. The Zoos are mainly located in the city suburbs with relatively large green areas and with a natural ambience. Zoos have transformed over the years from small menageries to Zoological park/ biological park where animals are exhibited in large naturalistic eco-system based enclosures. The zoos regularly attract large number of visitors as they exhibit animals not easily seen in the wild.

Zoos are conservation centres with a large potential to educate visitor and develop understanding and empathy for wildlife. They serve as institution of knowledge and learning about the life history of captive animals.

The zoos need to make their operations sustainable through judicious use of available resources, using various marketing tools to raise funds for attaining financial stability without compromising on the welfare of animals in their collections and conservation goals.

Organizations and individuals with a strong sense of responsibility towards nature and ecosystem integrity are keen to associate and donate funds for the development and growth of zoos. As most of the zoos are operated by governments, certain restriction on raising and utilization of such funds exists hence guidelines, procedures and mechanism may help the zoos in raising funds.

The zoos run by trusts and private sector may also use these guidelines for availing benefits. It is true that unless zoos have best marketing strategy they cannot tap the financial resources from the organizations and private individuals. Zoos can be self sustaining and financially stable if they can raise funds through innovative marketing. A workshop on marketing, fund raising, and resource management was organized by the Central Zoo Authority at Kolkata from 27th -30th April 2009 in collaboration with Zoological Garden, Alipore to discuss the marketing and fund raising opportunities for the zoos in India. More than 27 zoo directors and 2 International resource persons from Singapore attended the workshop. Following practices may be adopted in marketing and fund raising in zoos:

Zoos as Conservation Centres:

Zoos exhibit a large variety of wild animals with potential to attract visitors keen to know about the wildlife resource of our country. Zoos can be developed into knowledge houses by innovative nature education and interpretation strategy. Zoos can reach out to the general public, educational institutions and develop partnership in the field of wildlife conservation and education. The ex-situ and in-situ conservation linkages can be leveraged to make zoos centres for study and research on natural resource management. The zoos should formulate strategy to market itself through dissemination of information on its exhibits.

Zoos Finance Models:

Zoos have a large variety of animal housed in natural ecosystem based enclosures. The animals still maintain their natural traits in the restricted environment and are natural panorama of the wilderness. Zoos' advantage is the natural aesthetics and ambience which is lacking in urban areas and which people desire. The empathy towards animals and the sylvan- surrounding evoke the emotional cords of human beings and they begin to associate and identify themselves with the cause of conservation of species and habitat. Zoos' business model should reflect the natural yearning of human beings to conserve pristine habitats and wildlife

The sections of society, institution and organisation should have a means of knowing about the purpose, objectives and mandate of organisation. This can occur through dissemination of information not only through words of mouth but by a sustained effort through print and electronic media.

The zoos under Government control are not free to openly canvass for raising funds as the maintenance funds are allotted by Govt and the zoo managers do not consider it as important part of their activity. It is necessary that the state govt should explore avenues to make zoos self sustaining and financially sound so that the welfare of animals do not suffer.

SWOT Analysis

Each zoo should carry out a SWOT analysis and develop a financial business model based on its core strength and enter into a dialogue with organizations and private individuals to support the zoos for conservation. The zoos have to decide the marketing module best suited to their strengths. SWOT analysis can indicate your current position and the way forward. It can give insight to your strength, sphere of your excellence, your advantages, valuable

assets and resources, visitor perception of your strength. It can also give you areas of your weakness, where you can do better, locate your weak areas of management, your vulnerability. The opportunities in an ex-situ conservation facility with respect to Conservation breeding, education and research, green initiatives and education are immense and we need to capitalize on them. The zoos are facing criticism on Animal ethics and welfare and media perceive them as vulnerable entities. Internally and externally there are threats to its progress and growth in spite of good legislation, rules and guidelines. The zoos have to reorient themselves and incorporate significant changes in the outlook of the management and keep abreast with new technologies, concepts and ideas emerging in management of animals.

The first step towards economic viability of zoos is to:

Developing a Zoo Finance Model

Your business plan needs to cover the following:

- a. The market,
- b. Market segmentation,
- c. Consumer analysis,
- d. Competition,
- e. Zoo Activity features and benefits,
- f. Competitive analysis,
- g. Positioning,
- h. Advertising and promotion,
- i. Sales,
- j. Research and development, Operations,
- k. Visitors- the target group,
- l. Professional Financial Projections

This exercise will create a business model innovation; understanding the logic through which the business can create and deliver value for the customers/ clients.

Set up a Finance Unit

Zoos should first set up a separate unit deploying existing staff if available. In case expert opinion and advice is required, zoo should hire consultants to manage this unit.

The Important features for your Zoo Finance setting

- a. Clear Objectives
- b. Your Mission Statement
- c. Your Keys to Success

The business vision should be clear. How far you can work and achieve under the existing Govt norms. Do you need to set up a special purpose unit under a society model.? Will the state govt agree to this dispensation? How you can convince the govt to give you the powers to raise and deposit funds and also plough back and revolve the funds from entry fees and other collections. You have to develop the vision and strategy for management and business. For this set out the guiding principles and ethics.

Maximise Strengths

Location, surrounding, natural landscape and water bodies etc What is your zoo known for, your hallmark, find it, develop it and make your position statement in society. Develop rapport with other organisations private or govt in entertainment and allied sector. How your zoo has adapted to the changing role and philosophy about wildlife. What is your visitation and market share as compared to other natural landscapes and entertainment centres. How to increase your market share. You have to make the system of governance and management work for you. Your vision should be to become a major and important natural resource recreation and learning centre in your city with a top position. Most important is to develop your brand and then strategically associate and align with other supporting business (theme park, botanical garden, transport sector, caterers etc) What is your target audience, do you have a separate and exclusive niche audience .You may have to revise tariff rates and operating hours to strategically take your business forward.

Zoos Dilemma

The Govt zoos bound by rules framed for govt service, finance, maintenance procedures etc can not effect any changes deviating from govt procedures and feel themselves restricted in executing new ideas and business concepts. They need to form society and adapt elements of organizations management and ethics to produce results. Govt zoos have to learn to set up and operate towards achieving sound financial returns within the govt norms. This calls for a optimum, efficient and effective allocation of resources, a quick turn around time and growth of the zoo. The zoo manager should be more than an administrator, a business manager.

HRD-Training

The zoos have to work and invest in the staff on training and development as staffs are the most important assets that build an image of your organisation. Rude and discourteous staff can ruin any organisation Empower your staff with knowledge and efficiency of work, Provide appropriate courses, reward and grant incentives for enhancing performance.

Practices may be adopted for Marketing and Fund raising:

1. Marketing:

a. Effective marketing strategy.

All zoos in the country should formulate effective marketing strategy to popularize their zoos using exhibits, animals, landscape, vegetation, free ranging fauna, zoo events etc to attract visitors from all section of community. The market has several competitors so we must first assess our potential based on our objective and mandate and select our target group to deliver services in an efficient and effective manner. We should be clear as to our market segment and focus our energy to cater to this segment. Our market is the educational institutions, school and colleges, families from rural and urban areas, professional, executives and business sector. The organizations would like to expand knowledge of their work force and make them sensitive to animal conservation, efficient energy, alternate energy, pollution and other environmental concerns. Zoos are best placed to offer customized services and can develop natural resource knowledge and learning modules and impart knowledge through informal outdoor learning, including a judicious mix of fun entertainment and learning. Marketing principles requires to sell your zoo events and attractions much more than present levels and build your market share.

b. Image and brand building, including use of celebrities as brand ambassadors

The zoos should make their image and brand using various strategies e.g. role of zoo in conservation breeding of endangered species, captivity of endemic or exotic animals, specialized enclosures (walk in aviary, drive through enclosures), arrival of migrating birds, free ranging fauna etc. The image and brand of the zoo may further be built or upgraded involving celebrities as brand ambassadors from media, film industry, sports, social sector and even politician. Press will enhance your market if the zoos programmes are educative and enriches peoples experience. The zoo brands need to be developed to give it unique identity. Marketing communication will sell the

zoos activities to public. Develop stakeholders long term relationship for continued support. For brand selling a trained person is required as peoples interest in the zoo brands wane quickly. Strategic positioning and image rejuvenation is required all the time in this dynamic sector

The positioning and branding of the zoo activity features and exhibits with right names which attracts people can do wonders for your zoo image. Positioning zoo towards target audience can attract large number of people. Work out the unique selling proposition in consonance with the target audience. Make your zoo different from others. Brand is a unique image builder and connects to value, emotion etc and excites people and makes them loyal towards brand and people want it all the time.

c. Professionalism and transparency

In spite of your dedicated work in govt sector your integrity is at stake as people perceive govt working as not above board and manipulative. Therefore zoo should adopt professionalism and transparency while making & executing marketing strategy and generation of fund and its expenditure. Such zoos should constitute a governing body having representation of all stakeholders including donors in decision making of zoo management and implementation of such policy.

d. Use of signage, hoardings, print and electronic media

The zoo should have proper signage (directional, non directional, animal bearing signage, innovative signage), hoardings to make their image good before the public. Electric media can also play effective role in enhancing image of zoo in public.

e. Good public amenities

Public amenities in zoo also play big role in making its image in public hence zoo should ensure that public amenities of zoo are of best standard and accessible to all. The zoo should focus to have best toilet, visitor shed and drinking water facilities. Zoo moreover should have proper road, trails, and battery operated vehicles if zoo are large in size.

f. Sensitization of policy makers, bureaucrats

From time to time, zoo should organize meetings and seminar with the policy makers and bureaucrats to highlight achievement and their problems encounter in day to day and long term management and seek their intervention in solving such problem if so.

g. Strengthening of infrastructural facilities

To market the image, the zoo should have best infrastructural facilities e.g. good exhibits (enclosures), good visitor and service roads, drainage, rain water harvesting, veterinary hospitals with all desired equipments, store, kitchen, offices, disposal facility, and public amenities and staff quarters.

h. Postal stamps/currency to market the zoos

Zoo can request to government of India to issue stamps, currency to market the image of zoos and highlight the issues of ex-situ conservation of endangered species.

i. Zoos to have website

To furnish desired information to the visitors and other agencies, zoo should have their websites with up-to-date information including the grievances redress mechanism. This website can also have gate way of banking institution to receive fund online from individuals and organizations. Zoos should develop logo and tag line.

j. Add new attractions regularly

All zoos should keep adding new attractions to the visitors may be in the form of animals in their collection or events related to animals births, wildlife week celebrations, quiz programme, conservation education activities to school children, and other section of the society.

k. Friends of Zoo- Potential Donors

Zoos should identify potential donors organizations or individuals by inviting a them to events and functions of the zoo. Organizations who have evinced keen interest in donating funds for social and public causes can be introduced to zoos and its mandate informally so that they can develop a empathy for the zoo animals. A long term relationship can be developed by continuing to involve them in zoo related matters of interest to them. The donors choice regarding the area of support is important. The donors would like zoo management to ensure maintenance of standard and norms for animal care.

l. Donors conditions

The donors would require concessions and preferences with regard to entry in zoo and acknowledging their contribution and role which can be agreed by consultation within the ambit of the guidelines Possible request from donors are: waiver of entry fee, preferential entry, visit to enclosures, erection of

board with details of sponsors and acknowledging their role in the official website.

m. Networking with other sectors

There are amusement parks, museums and outdoor adventure activities which attract visitors and zoos which hold endangered and charismatic species struggle to increase visitation. We need to come out of isolation and work together with other natural amusement and entertainment centres Zoos need to network with tour operators, transporters, caterers, airlines and hotels as their clients can be made aware about the experience zoo offers. Further bundling with other local entertainment and amusement park will bring more business to zoo.

n. Zoo Tariff and pricing

Pricing the various activities and events offered to public has to be carefully done by looking at the price sensitivity of the target market audience. The capacity of the people to spend for such experience will vary depending on market place. The income of various income groups their priorities and willingness to spend for leisure is to be assessed. Comparative pricing of similar leisure activities viz watching cinema, amusement and theme park, museum, outdoor adventure activities are to be analysed before pricing. Differential pricing for Indians/ foreigners, school and college students, physically challenged have to be determined. Pricing on weekdays/week ends, school holidays/ govt holidays have to be determined. Dual Pricing on low and high seasons will enhance visitation. The operating hours can be changed based on seasonal exigencies. Dual pricing should be done in such a way that rural people are not discouraged rather visit to zoos in large groups and 'business model approach' has not forgotten the role of zoos towards educating rural people.

2. Fund raising:

Fund raising is an integral part of the zoo to make it self sustaining and financially sound. Govt rules do not encourage active fund raising events as done in foreign zoos. Considering the restriction imposed in Financial Rules of Government (GFR), if needed, it is advised that the zoos may have a Registered Charitable Society/ Foundation for receiving the funds from people and organizations for the better management. The many States have created zoo authorities to plough back the revenue generated by the zoo in terms of entry fee etc. for the better management of the zoo. The States who does not have State zoo authorities yet may constitute the same for

the purpose of fund raising and its utilization. It is observed due to lack of information or awareness, zoos don't know how to receive and utilize such fund. Following criteria may be adopted to raise the funds.

- a. The zoo should be allowed to raise & use funds by their respective operators or governments.
- b. The zoo may have a Registered Society/ Foundation comprised of all stakeholders to raise fund and utilize same for the development of zoos.
- c. Zoo should also be allowed to spend their revenue generated from ticketing.
- d. Funds or the services in the zoos may be generated using some of the below suggested ways:-
 - o Appropriate advertising in zoos by organizations.
 - o Making friends of zoos through charging fee.
 - o Outsourcing or establishing souvenir shops in zoos.
 - o Monetary donation from individuals and organizations.
 - o Monetary endorsement by organizations to zoos.
 - o Parking of vehicles.
 - o Endorsement from the organizations for certain services e.g. cleaning and hygiene in the zoo, road, enclosures, hospital and office maintenance in zoo premises.
 - o Zoo can also receive certain equipments as donation such as furniture, computer, and battery operated vehicle, veterinary equipments, stationary item, ticketing machine etc
 - o .Sponsorship for various activities viz transport, drinking water kiosk, education programme for school children, hygiene and health care of animals, uniform and other accoutrements for staff, medical camps etc
 - o Adoption of exhibits—providing feed for animals and maintenance of enclosure and health care etc
 - o Sponsoring conservation breeding programmes, ex-situ & in-situ conservation of animals, species recovery programme etc

- o Receive donation and wills
- o Special fund raising events for Environment protection and general conservation
- o Zoo can create a program aimed at connecting NGO's and government organizations with nature. More importantly, the program can show them a business case for improving the efficiency and green-energy of their operations. The strategy is to take executives out of the boardroom, bring them to the zoo and immerse them in a close-up encounter with endangered species, and provide workshops and presentations on innovations and new technology on green-energy, and the business' zoo ecological footprint.

3. Other Revenue generation options

Zoos should examine other revenue generation possibilities from serving/leasing rights to supply Food and Beverages, adoption of animals and sponsoring maintenance activities, photography, transport rides, entry to new attraction areas and overnight stay in zoo education centres etc Food and beverages should be of excellent quality in a natural setting, with specific themes so that the food becomes a unique zoo visit proposition. Research is required to cater the choice meals to customers. Outlets for distribution of Food and Beverages (cold drinks, tea, coffee etc.) should be appropriately spread in the zoo.

The role of the donor organizations/individuals in the management of zoo should also be clearly spelt out as without proper precaution they may likely unduly interfere in the internal management/administration of the zoo to the detriment of the stated objectives of the institution. While advertising on zoo signage or sponsoring structures/literature or adopting animals it should be ensured that their messages/ads/logos do not over shadow the zoo message/animals or zoo landscape. The zoo management should retain its discretion in the matter and there should clear guidelines for the same.

All zoos will develop protocol for receiving such aid, fix price or amount of different services and adoption of animals. All such aid will be entered into records and subjected to the audit. The zoo will have annual audit by competent authority for said grant and aid as well. Attempt should be made to deploy marketing professionals to market the image of zoo and raise of funds.