

**2014**

### **Trip to India**

For almost three weeks eight international students of the IMES Program and the Law Faculty of the University of Cologne, the TERMA program of the Cologne FHS and ERASMUS had the opportunity to work together with more than 30 Indian students of the University of Pune on the topic of Biodiversity Conservation. From February 28<sup>th</sup> of 2014 until March 14<sup>th</sup> a set of discussions, presentations, safaris and interviews took place in beautiful India.

The trip was divided in three parts. The first one consisted on the pre-field work preparation. These stage involved group discussions with all the students. The main outcomes of this phase were a series of research questions, which settled the goal of the overall trip. These questions go from local people's attitudes toward wildlife, to tourism as a driver of conservation, among others.

Later, the most amazing and enlightening part of the trip initiated. We ventured to Kaziranga National Natural Park in Assam, one of the oldest National Parks of India, a recently denominated tiger reserve and also well known for being the habitat of the One-horned Rhino. A very positive cultural exchange between the participants was achieved after a four-day train journey (back and forth). People from Germany, The Netherlands, Bolivia, El Salvador, Colombia and of course India shared stories, traditions and knowledge.

During field work, we had the opportunity to go into the National Park in both jeep and elephant safaris. There, we observed the rich wildlife of the park, from Rhinos, Elephants, Deers and Wild Buffalos to a great number of birds. The Indian fellows are very enthusiastic about bird watching, to the point that we got interested as well and learnt some tips for identifying birds. Nevertheless, the trip had also a significant social component. Every day we went to the villages around the park and performed interviews with the locals. The latter gave us a very good overview of how people and nature affect and nurture each other, as well as the getting the importance of studying conflicts management around National Parks.

Finally, the last part of the trip included the post-field work discussion. Back in Pune we presented our findings to the professors and talked about opportunities for future research.

I extend my gratitude to those who made this trip possible. Professor Junker, Professor Kumar, Professor Bharucha and all the kind Indian students.

By Sara Becerra