

## WWF AREAS HEC Workshop Report

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Human-elephant conflict (HEC) is a significant threat to Asian elephant conservation and is a top issue of concern in addition to habitat loss and fragmentation. In India alone, an average of 100 elephants and 400 people are killed each year due to negative interactions that result from HEC. WWF is working to reduce levels of HEC across a number of landscapes in India, Nepal, Bhutan, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia and Sabah, Malaysia.

In order to examine and improve our work to reduce HEC, WWF's Asian Rhino and Elephant Action Strategy (AREAS) Program held a human-elephant conflict workshop for WWF landscape staff and other invited participants from November 20-24, 2015, in Assam, India. The workshop brought together staff from across WWF's Asian elephant landscapes to share lessons learned on successes and failures experienced while addressing HEC in each of their respective regions with the aim of moving forward in a more collaborative and effective way to reduce conflict. In addition, the workshop participants included the coordinator of WWF's African elephant conservation work, as well as a staff member from WWF-Kenya, to enable

sharing of ideas and experiences across Asian and African elephant landscapes.

During the workshop, participants had the opportunity to both discuss larger issues around HEC, like habitat loss and other drivers that exacerbate the issue, as well as to learn about effective HEC prevention and mitigation through demonstration of tools and techniques. The demonstrations were conducted by invited participants from Zimbabwe (Loki Osborn and Malvern Karidzo from Connected Conservation who demonstrated the use of chilli fences, chilli bombs and chilli smoke as deterrents) and Sri Lanka (Pruthu Fernando and Sampath Ekanayaka from the Centre for Conservation and Research who demonstrated seasonal electric fences), as well as WWF staff from the Western Ghats/Nilgiris landscape (Mohanraj and Boominathan who demonstrated a low-cost energizer used to power electric fences). In addition, staff from WWF's North Bank and Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscapes in Assam, India, demonstrated and discussed the use of response teams from local communities and using trained elephants, or kunkies, to safely drive wild elephants away from potential conflict situations.



Discussion topics during the workshop included the presentation of results from mapping WWF's capacity to address HEC for Asian elephants; understanding elephant movement and behaviour to determine how we intervene in HEC situations; deep dives into the root causes of HEC; implementing standardized monitoring and evaluation of HEC across landscapes; the human dimensions of addressing HEC, including conflict transformation through groups like the Human Wildlife Conflict Collaboration; the use of technological tools to prevent HEC (early detection tools); and setting aside time for collaborating offices within the WWF Network to discuss ways of working together to reduce HEC within landscapes.

A key output of the workshop is to have each WWF landscape create a HEC-specific management plan within their larger landscape management plans in the two years following the meeting. This management plan will include the use and implementation of successful prevention and mitigation tools and techniques; testing of new methods that may become available (e.g. technological solutions); a more formalized plan for community engagement; a plan to address root causes, including formalized policy engagement; a standardized monitoring system; and ways through which the wider WWF network can help landscapes build capacity and obtain the tools and resources they need to successfully implement these plans. As a first step in devising these plans, each landscape listed the top measurable goals they plan to achieve in the next two years, with



shorter-term 6-month goals listed as an immediate next step. Collaborator offices for each landscape will follow up with each landscape to ensure these goals are met.

Participant feedback reflected that this was a useful workshop with the opportunity to not only discuss relevant issues, but to also have the opportunity to learn from the hands-on demonstrations of tools and techniques to prevent HEC. Participants appreciated the opportunity for discussion with external experts, networking, field trips, the participative approach of the sessions and learning from each other. Participants also reflected on the need for more time to discuss certain issues like root causes and long-term planning, which will be incorporated and included in the follow-up HEC workshop to be held in two years.

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