

# Measurable impacts of HECx education programmes in HEC areas of Kanchanapuri, Thailand

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ZOO and ECN with the support of USFWS, Columbus Zoological Gardens and Koln Zoo organized a series of workshops in August 2011 to train educators from human elephant conflict areas and to introduce the concept of Human elephant coexistence HECx with active learning methodology. As a follow up of this a refresher cum assessment workshop was organized after six months in Kanchanaburi from 15-16 February 2012. This two-day refresher course was organized by ZOO in collaboration with Elephant Conservation Network, inviting selected participants from August 2011 workshops. Refresher objectives are to determine attitudinal and/or behavioural changes among the trainees after the HECx training programme, to get a feedback about the Teaching guide and the ele-kit packet – its utility and usefulness, to provide an opportunity for the trainees / participants of the August workshop to share their experience about HECx programmes that they organized, to teach new games and activities and to build an educator network for the region.

## Impact of the training on Peoples' attitude

A total of 23 participants took part in the refresher course. Prior to the workshop, a questionnaire was prepared comprising of factual knowledge questions, attitude tests and a measure of behavioural intent. The survey was to find out if the training and the programme had any impact to change their behaviour or attitude towards the problem elephants and helped them to coexist with the animal. Interestingly they shared many points and observations that demonstrated attitudinal change amongst self as well with their audience. Some major comments shared by the participants are:

- I organized programmes in HEC areas for villagers. Before my programme, people were afraid when the elephants visit them. After the education programme, since they expect that elephants may visit their village at any time, they allow the elephants to come to their village. They have no fear for elephants and they know what to do when they are there in their vicinity.
- In my place, the villagers used to drive the elephants themselves when they come to the village but now they report to the forest department and seek their help.



Participants filling up a questionnaire during the workshop



SWOT analysis to understand better and plan

- People in my area understand that the elephants learn fast and react to our action.
- Now they understand why the methods that they have been trying to keep off the elephants did not work after a point of time. So now people change the methods once in ten days to keep elephants off from their area. Now the villagers can see the difference and they are happy.
- I am from the forest department. Before I initiated HEC mitigation

education programmes for the villages, no one from the village come forward to help us to handle the HEC issue. After some education programmes they set up a group of villagers to help with the forest department officials. We achieved and sensitized through education activities.

- A report from a teacher: officials now help the people by way of right

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action, and teach us ways to behave when elephants are there.

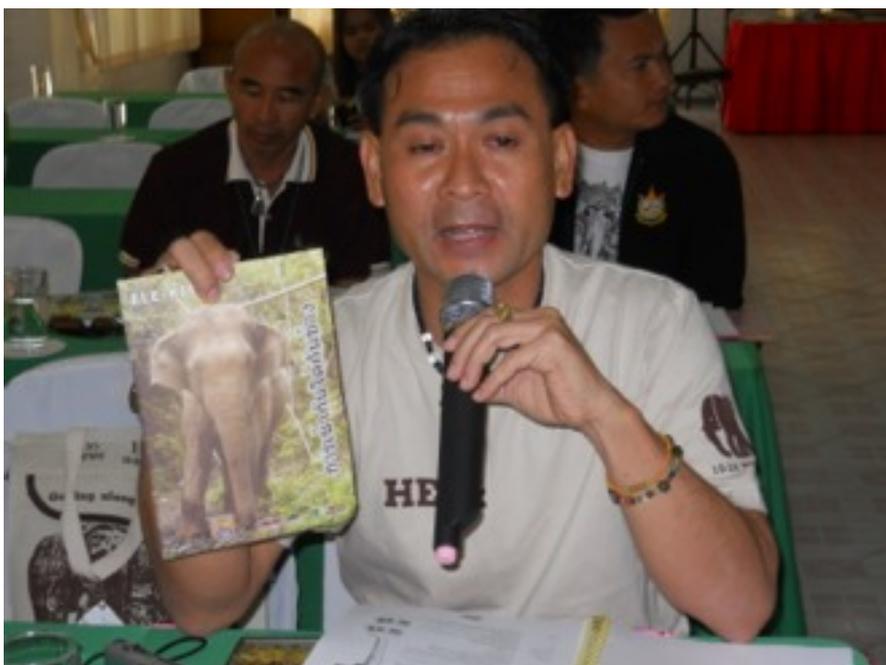
- I am a teacher from Saiokh and did many programmes in my area. This programme has brought change and interest among officials, soldiers, military who live in my area about HEC issue and they are alert now. Earlier they were not much bothered about this.
- People in my area realize that they too have the responsibility with regard to HEC issues.
- In my village people have stopped planting crops like banana planting it close to their house. They understood that having banana

plantation next to their home will attract elephants and it will be a trouble, not only for then but also for their neighbourhood.

- Two people both from protected areas said: they had a feeling that they have been working on this issue all alone and felt uncomfortable since there was no one to support our activities against HEC mitigation. Now somebody is backing up ... like ECN and also ZOO with some module and supporting education materials and so this is an encouragement for me to take up more responsibilities. Otherwise I was feeling all-alone.



**Fishing game to learn sustainable utilization**



**An educator's feedback about the 'Ele-kit' packet**

- In my place not every one agrees with coexistence. I got this impression when I started working with people. This experience helped me to think and work more on this issue in my area. May be we have to work together instead of working alone in my place.
- Earlier people did not understand the need for elephant conservation but now they realize the need for it.
- People are not willing to hear from the officials about HEC and HECx. I realized that people should get a feel individually for conservation. People are not liked to be told by an official.
- Communication between rangers and community has improved a lot and it is mainly because of this programme which brought them together. Attitude of both the groups have changed. They talk with each other and now understand each other. Earlier it was not so. The reason could be, there is no fear among them.
- Two trainees from the forest department reported that a few farmers in their area have opted to cultivate alternative crop. Earlier they have been cultivating plantain, cassava but now they cultivate chili, pepper still get money as usual. However, they experience that elephants walk inside their cultivable area and damage. However they are happy. In some other area farmers are cultivating Onion and Taro (like a potato).
- Elephants that come from other province eat vegetables and food crops. Hence this village group is now trying to plant for elephants outside the village area at Salakpara. Now children are asking 'why elephants are killed?'
- A forest personnel helped the villagers to create an area for elephants by way of planting wild grass and bananas, thus people stopped teasing elephants.
- People used to chase elephants when they visit their village with their calf. Now a days they stopped chasing it. Villagers let them eat and go. Elephants visit in cold season and not during rain.

#### **Utility of the education materials**

During the two day programme feedback was obtained to know about the utility and usefulness of the 'Teaching Guide' and the ele-kit packet used and distributed during the training programmes. The manual has five units and many activities in each unit. To know how useful these activities were they were asked to tell two most interesting activities that they tried from the manual. We came to know that 'Know your elephant'

which introduces the basics of elephant's biology the difference between Asian and African elephants was the most used activity by the trainees. Visual aids such as masks and some of the illustrations given in the teaching guide were used. This is the first time that their audience got to know that two kinds of species exist. Some of the educators used this activity to introduce the HEC issues. The highest number of reach was 300 secondary school children during wildlife camp programme.

The second most widely used activity among the trainees was drama. Drama was tried with school children, during camp fire and also for the tourists at Saiokh to teach about HEC and HECx. Though they used the drama themes given in the teaching guide, they also went to the extent of developing new stories incorporating scenes to appreciate nature.

The next widely used activity was Ele- Dos and don'ts. A teaching community in Saiokh prepared power point presentations and explained to their students in detail.

The trainees utilized the manual in a variety of ways. Some general comments from the participants about its utility: Some of the activities from the teaching guide were modified for the needs, for example, Illustrated content survey, an assessment activity was used as a tool to introduce basic information with a group rather than using it as an assessment tool. 'The country chapter has plenty of information', a forest personnel said, 'however it requires updating'. This helped to tell about the importance of elephants and the reasons why elephant visit villages. Also they could understand the drawbacks of fencing and its impact on elephants. With this I could explain what we should do to prevent entry of elephants. People should give up something and elephants as well. If we cultivate plants like cassava the elephants will keep visiting and they will eat all our crops. It helped me to make local people understand the issue and win their cooperation.

A teacher said, 'I talked about HEC issues in schools and at some organizations working on environment. I took children to HEC areas and showed them the crop damage by the elephants. I also discussed how to prevent crop damage. Lights attract elephants. Turning off lights at night do not attract elephants. They also come to eat banana planted close to the house so do not plant banana close to the house. Children were also introduced to some organizations working with elephants.'

A teacher reported and said, 'I did programmes with the help of ECN. I covered four districts so far. When I talk to people they do not accept it. But later they understand the ECN and other organizations are involved who did some research work and hence the information that I give are acceptable and so they listen to it'.

A Ranger from Salakpara commented that his group is interested in education activities. However, they have not used all activities in the manual. Their audience is the students from Kanchanaburi. They see elephants in the town also. He said, 'I teach them how to behave in front of elephants when they see them. At one point of time I saw a man with coconut on the roadside in an elephant area. I remembered the coconut story that I learned during the training in August, where the elephant broke the man but he was still proud for winning the coconut, which is foolish. I enlarged the illustration of the man holding the coconut but hospitalized and used it during my education programme. While teaching I also explained 'keep yourself in their cage' situation.

A trainee who is the head and director of a school said, as an individual I have nothing to do with elephants but involve in teaching science and hence these activities are very useful and interesting. I first teach my colleagues and the students follow them.

When we tell children all facts they pass the information to others including adults.

Finger puppets are very popular since they are very attractive. They used with teachers first and then with children.

Some activities were done during the prayer during school gathering in the morning. The children in different groups after practice performed selected activities from the teaching guide so that all could see.

All programmes cannot be used so some activities were picked up. Just did some programmes with kids.

#### **Suggestions from the trainees:**

- Get community people and leaders understand to achieve our target.
- Training should not stop with this; it should continue. More and more educators should be created.
- The programmes should target community leaders instead of just officials and the target group has to be prioritized. Working to achieve anything is not that easy.

#### **Constraints in carrying out conservation education programmes:**

During the training they were asked to list out hurdles that they face while planning their education programmes. They listed 54 distinct problems. Some of the main problems are listed here: very poor community, lack of experienced collaboration, many nationalities live near the border and hence very difficult, no cooperation or interest from planters / investors/ officials (they should work together), want to have regular training and more knowledge update, not enough continuous of support and funds.

With these barriers in mind the group did SWOT analysis and understood the strengths and opportunities through which they could strengthen the education activities in their area. As part of the programme the participants learned new games and teaching methods that will help them to keep up the spirit of their activities in their respective places. Thanks to ECN team for coordinating this programme.

