



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **INTERNATIONAL ELEPHANT FOUNDATION**

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#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Announcement of the 2006 Elephant Conservation and Research Funding Awards

#### **Elephant Outreach Program**

In Botswana, elephant and humans are in conflict, especially in the rural areas where villagers try to grow crops close to elephant habitat. In the Okavango Delta region, one of the country's last major wildlife sanctuaries, the perception of elephants is very negative and most children have experienced or heard about elephants destroying crops or injuring people. At the same time, ecotourism continues to develop in Botswana. Unfortunately, most Botswana citizens do not yet view tourism as a career and few have access to tourism facilities. The Elephant Outreach Program is a conservation education program offered to children of the Okavango Delta region. Village children too poor to attend school and Maun pupils ages 8 and 12, experience a two-day outreach program with an environmental teacher at the field station. There they learn about elephants, wildlife and tourism of their country through educational games. The participants can then share what they have learned with the other pupils of the environmental club of their school or with the other children of the village. Currently, over 20 primary schools of the southern region of the Okavango Delta and 5 secondary schools are involved with this program that:

- offers an opportunity to have a positive point of view on elephants while not ignoring the difficulties in living with elephants;
- encourages children to consider a career in ecotourism rather than subsistence agriculture, and promotes elephant conservation; and
- encourages parents, through the experiences of their children, to reconsider their negative opinions about elephants.

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