



I N T E R N A T I O N A L  
E L E P H A N T  
F O U N D A T I O N

*To Support and Operate Elephant Conservation and Education Programs*

## HUMAN - ELEPHANT CONFLICT RESPONSE NETWORK



ESTABLISHMENT OF A HUMAN-ELEPHANT CONFLICT RESPONSE NETWORK IN CAMBODIA

(INITIATED 2004)

Cambodia

## Status

This project has been launched in response to increasing human-elephant conflict in Cambodia. Human communities unused to living near elephants are migrating into forested elephant ranges as the Cambodian human population expands resulting in human-elephant conflict. This project acts to prevent retribution killings of elephants by ensuring that the frustrations of local people are promptly addressed by government decision makers. Project staff also ensure that land use planning guarantees suitable conditions for elephant ranges.

## **Establishment of a Human-Elephant Conflict Response Network in Cambodia: Development of locally-applicable human-elephant conflict mitigation methods in rural Cambodia and Conservation Capacity Building for national project managers (initiated 2005)**

Only in the past two years has human-elephant conflict been examined systematically in Cambodia. With the establishment of the nationwide human-elephant conflict response units (in-part funded through IEF), a hub and communication network has now been established throughout the rural areas of Cambodia. Rapid responses have meant that local people and agriculture officials have had access to the latest mitigation advice provided by trained field staff. This project has been so successful that no retribution killings of elephants have been reported since project startup. In the coming year, project activities will continue with an increased focus upon improving the mitigation methods available including the development of improved chili-based agriculture (such as growing methods and seed sourcing), and the initiation of transferring project responsibility to national agencies to ensure project sustainability.

## **Establishment of a Human-Elephant Conflict Response Network in Cambodia: Improving Livelihoods for Farmers Affected by Human-Elephant Conflict (initiated 2006)**

Cambodia is host to two of the largest contiguous elephant habitats left in Asia. The Cardamom Mountains region & the Province of Mondulhiri are approximately 1 million ha of forested elephant habitat, presently undeveloped by people. While elephant population sizes are low (approximately 100 animals in each area), the potential for long term viability of large herds is extremely high, if poaching and habitat loss can be controlled. Though Cambodia has an impressive 53% forest cover, the human population growth rate of 2.7% puts the large forest areas under severe pressure to be replaced by agriculture and

industry. Key government policies on land reform, relating to land tenure for small holdings, as well as guidance on human-wildlife conflict mitigation are not yet in place. This leaves a chaotic set of circumstances for forest-edge communities who are unable to absorb the impacts of elephant damage.

This phase of this multi-year IEF supported elephant conservation program will conduct studies at human elephant conflict sites and provide mitigation methods to farmers such as noise systems, deterrent methods (scarecrows and hammocks with smell of perfume), chilli fences, chilli ropes, and chilli dung to demonstrate that there are many options to prevent elephants destroying crops.

Education programs and strategies for alternate crops will also be studied and provided. For example, traditional Cambodian religion encourages farmers to grow bananas and sugarcane for people to offer to the Goddess Yey Mao, to protect them. This project educates the farmers on alternative crops less appealing to elephants. In 2005, a pilot site for growing chilli was established with harvests already being sold in tourist spots. However, in order to improve harvests to a level where there is sufficient chilli to provide an income, wells need to be constructed as rainfall in Cambodia is seasonal. Though expensive, wells will not only improve the agricultural yield, but improve living conditions for the very poor families in the area.

Recently it was discovered that Taro, a tuber used in soups and desserts with its leaves fried as vegetables, appears to be unpalatable to elephants and brings a good price in the markets of Cambodia and Vietnam. This project will assess the suitability of planting this crop in human-elephant conflict (HEC) areas. This project will also manage and advise on HEC events, providing short term emergency advice, as well as longer term mitigation strategies. Local farmers will be provided assistance to prevent and actively deter elephants in a humane manner, and specific training will be given in early warning and inter-plantation contact systems, as well as compiling HEC event report forms for central database deposition. Printed t-shirts will be provided to members of these guarding groups, to ensure they feel like part of the team. This will be combined with simple awareness raising initiatives throughout the year for local farmers and their families.