

## Project Update: August 2015

This phase of project activities was initiated in June 2015 and as per proposed activities we have communicated different stakeholders and reviewed previous findings with current available data. We are presently visiting the five districts (Bankura, Purulia, Paschim Medinipur, Burdwan, Birbhum) of West Bengal to strengthen the network and data collection.

Bankura district is the highest conflict prone zone in respect to human-elephant interaction. During the interaction, we found that approximately 100+ elephants stayed there for more than a month and it caused a high intensity of damage. It is noticeable that all these areas are new extended range of migratory elephant herds. This forest areas of this district is managed by three forest divisions (North, South and Panchet). An explanatory meeting with the three Divisional Forests Officer was done to explain project backgrounds and aims. These forest managers also shared their views, policies and information with us.

We have conducted community interaction and awareness programme through audio visual medium in Extended Elephant Influence Zone (new area) and Existing Elephant Influence Zone (declared in 2002). This awareness programme was followed by participatory discussion where we received lots of views and comments (fair, unfair or both). The awareness programme was supported and assisted by Directorate of Forests, Government of West Bengal and the programme was clubbed with the 'Forestry Week' programme. As part of awareness programme, we are conducting sit and draw, poster making with slogans and essay competitions for different age groups.

A very new elephant depredation area was noted in border of Bankura and Burdwan district. The place is agricultural field in river bed where the crop raiding elephants come almost every night.

In August we have started the fodder plant survey as part of habitat status survey. The internes will join shortly to expand the activities.

A video of foraging elephants is available on <https://youtu.be/uCy9d6loI9E>



From left to Right: A small herd of migratory elephants. Energized fence to resist elephants to enter the villages. Fragmented elephant habitats in extended elephant interaction zone. Regenerated forest of Southern West Bengal in elephant influence zone.



Left to Right: Samya Basu is conducting student orientation programme on Human-Elephant Interaction at Sonamukhi, Bankura. Divisional Forest Officer (Bankura North) is interacting with the students during conservation awareness programme at Beliatore, Bankura. Elephant conservation awareness programme at Barjora, Bankura. All photos by Samya Basu.