

Final Project Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Aritra Kshetry
Project Title	Resolving Human Elephant Conflicts Using Scientific and Traditional Knowledge via Community Engagement in Northern West Bengal, India
Application ID	21630-2
Grant Amount	4975 GBP
Email Address	kolkatalife@gmail.com
Date of this Report	28 th September 2018

1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Understanding the role of elephant drives in minimizing crop loss and threat perception among locals				This activity is also complete and we have found that locals are engaged in aggressive elephant drives due to a lack of alternate measures. We will use these findings to try alternate protection measures to protect crops so that aggressive tactics are minimised. Furthermore, we also found that chasing elephant from crop fields also leads to high number of human casualties and hence this practice needs to be stopped.
Evaluating the role of compensation in alleviating conflict				This activity is complete and now we are in the process of drafting a manuscript to share our findings with peers in conservation science. The study has also laid the foundation for drafting a more efficient compensation payment policy in collaboration with the State Forest Department.
Effect of elephant drives on elephant behaviour and stress				This activity needs to be continued over several seasons for robust inferences. However, we have finalised the protocol and methodology which will be continued over three seasons and across several elephant groups.
Activities conducted in addition to proposed activities:				
Elephant distribution pattern over a 2500 sq km non-forested area				This activity was not stated in the grant as was conducted as an additional activity to identify critical areas for elephant movement and connectivity
Initiating a trial of contact programs to share our findings with local communities				This activity was also not part of the grant but included due to our method of functioning where we take the results of our studies back to the stakeholders. This method has played a key role in our long term presence in the landscape as well as mitigating

			conservation conflicts in a more inclusive manner.
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2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

Since we have been working in the landscape for many years now, we were able to ensure smooth running of field activities. There were no unforeseen difficulties or delays.

3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

- a) Elephant drives from crop fields leads to higher aggression in males and higher stress in female groups. This also leads to high number of human casualties when people go too close to the elephant while chasing them in the dark.
- b) Elephant drives is the only tool available for locals to protect their crops since the Forest Department also follow the same system. However, due to lack of training and coordination, these drives end up causing more damage to crops since elephants also trample crops while running away from people.
- c) Elephants in the landscape use tea estate and villages which connect two adjacent forest patches and hence these areas need most attention in terms of damage mitigation. Hence we have started contact programmes and mitigation measures in these highly affected areas which are also critical for ensuring connectivity for elephant populations.

4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project.

Involving local communities have been the backbone of our research and conservation work in the landscape.

Our field team is entirely composed of locals who have been trained in several aspects of field research, conservation action as well as communication.

We also believe in involving the communities to come up with solutions and hence we have started the contact programmes where regular discussions have been held with the local communities who are directly affected by the problem.

We have also been successful in integrating the various stakeholders in the conservation work. The stakeholders we work with include the tea estate administration, the State Forest Department and the local administrative bodies (panchayats).

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

The project will be continued and in future we plan to share the findings with the communities and share safety precautions and measures to reduce loss of life and property. This will be conducted using workshops at all the highly affected tea estates. Furthermore, we have also collaborated with the central ministry via the GIZ-MOEFCC Human Wildlife Conflict Mitigation programme where our project site has been included as one of the three priority sites in India (<https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/65391.html>).

Apart from the conservation activities, we also plan to continue long term ecological monitoring of elephant populations in the region using citizen science as well as ecological research.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

We have a three tiered system of disseminating the results of our work with local, national as well as international groups.

Our reports and results are continuously shared with the State Forest Department and association of Tea-estates in the project area. We share our findings with the broader community of readers through popular articles on various aspects of human-elephant coexistence and shared spaces.

We also published our findings in peer-reviewed articles in International Journals of repute to share our research with peers in conservation research.

7. Timescale: Over what period was the grant used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?

The grant was used between August 2017 and September 2018.
 The anticipated length of the project was May 2017 to November 2018.

8. Budget: Provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used. It is important that you retain the management accounts and all paid invoices relating to the project for at least 2 years as these may be required for inspection at our discretion.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Project Assistant Wages for three assistants for 12 months	2177	1637	540	Part wages were paid from other sources
Two wheeler Rent for 12	362	404	-42	Difference may be attributed to

months				change in value of Pound versus Rupee
Fuel for two wheeler	400	415	-15	
Accommodation field station	700	307	383	Rent was paid for few months from other funds
Food and Ration	600	327	273	Food expenses were paid for certain months from other sources of funding
Communication	300	89	211	Communication cost was paid from other funds for certain months
Stationery	100	111	-11	
Contingency	186	1486	-1300	Contingency money and money saved from other budget heads were used to partially fund the purchase of a low light camera for recording elephant activity at night near human-habitations. (Sony Alpha A7s body) Lens was funded by other funding sources.
Overnight Travel	350	198	152	Most of the travel expenses paid from other sources
Total	4975	4975		

9. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

The next important steps would be to organised extensive awareness campaigns and continue our contact programs. The aim of the programme is to enable local communities to deal with elephants and minimize losses. Currently, elephants are largely perceived as a responsibility of the Forest Department and we plan to slowly change that so that elephants are perceived as part of the landscape so that there is less aggression towards the animal and more acceptance. The idea of the workshops is to also to ensure continued reinforcement of this idea and hence these sessions are held repeatedly in the tea-estates rather than a one-time event.

Furthermore, we are also plan to work in the collaboration with the Forest Department so that the current compensation policy is revamped with efficient assessment and payment. The current process is often quite arduous and time-consuming which has stopped locals from claiming compensation. This has also led to conflicts between locals and the state.

10. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

The Rufford Foundation was acknowledged in our paper on human-leopard interactions which was published in 2017 and PDF of the same was shared with Jane Raymond. We have also developed posters in local languages with has the Rufford

logo on it. More than 5000 copies of the same has already been distributed among the workers. The same posters in English have been shared with all the Major Tea-estates in the region as well as the Forest Department Offices.

The Rufford foundation has also be acknowledged in all presentations in conferences and also in all meetings at the state and national level.

11. Please provide a full list of all the members of your team and briefly what was their role in the project.

Aritra Kshetry: Project Leader

Role: Fund raising, project design and monitoring, field work, public relations, networking

Deep Subhra Biswas: Project Coordinator

Role: Field data collection, supervising awareness camps and sessions as well as public relations

Amir Kumar Chettri, Motahar Rahaman & Ramesh Mahali: Project Assistants

Role: Field work, awareness camps

Dr. Vidya Athreya

Role: Mentor and project monitoring

Dr. Raman Sukumar

Role: Mentor

