

Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh conducts HECx Refresher Course

Gawsia W.Chowdhury*



Games: Basic elements of life-Food, water and shelter

A total of three educator skills training programmes titled 'Getting Along with Asian Elephants: Human-Elephant Co-existence' was conducted at Rangunia, Sherpur and Netrokona during 22 June - 2 July 2009. Each workshop lasted for three days. The objectives of the workshop were to 1. empower teacher of all kinds to introduce and teach about the human-elephant conflict and a partial solution for human elephant coexistence; and 2. demonstrate innovative teaching and learning techniques designed to change human attitudes and behaviour for their betterment. The participants were teachers, local leaders, conservationists and farmers.

As a follow up of the Human-Elephant Coexistence (HECx) workshops held 22 June - 2 July 2009, a refresher course was arranged from 22-23 April, 2010 in Dhaka.

The workshop was jointly organized by the Zoo Outreach Organisation (ZOO) and Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh (WTB), and Bangladesh Forest Department. Sponsor for this workshop is U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Asian Elephant Conservation Fund, USA.

Dr. Tapan Kumar Dey, Conservator of Forests, Wildlife and Nature Conservation Circle, Forest Department was present in the inaugural session as the guest of honour. Twenty three participants from human-elephant conflict areas (Sherpur, Netrokona and Rangunia) participated in this follow up workshop. The purpose of this workshop is to provide a reminder and reinforce to participants and thus strengthen what they learned, improve their confidence, give them a chance to interact with one another and to evaluate the effectiveness of the previous workshops by interviewing and collecting a questionnaire from participants.

A total of 23 participants from Rangunia (Chittagong), Sherpur and Durgapur (Netrokona) participated in the workshop. Ms. Gawsia started the training programme with an innovation on the icebreaker activity "Know Each Other" called "Talk to the Elephant."

Dr. Tapan Dey, CF Wildlife, Bangladesh formally inaugurated the workshop and interacted with the participants asking their views on the mitigation measures. He was happy to know that his colleagues attended last year's HECx workshops. After tea participants filled up the feedback forms indicating from their answers that most of the participants kept their pledges of the previous workshops. They mentioned

* Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh,
Dhaka, Bangladesh.
Email: Gawsia@gmail.com

details of their own programmes in the report.

Ms Gawsia gave a Powerpoint on their previous workshops, when she checked with them whether they could recall what they did during those workshops. All participants were pleased to see their photo and gave very quick responses her queries, some stating they had replicated some activities in their own programmes. Prof. Anwar lectured on status and distribution of elephants in Bangladesh. During his talk he checked whether the participants could recall some of the facts. He related that Government had recently declared four new protected areas (1 National Park and 3 Wildlife Sanctuaries) in southeast.



Created own drama ideas and performing

After lunch ten participants presented their reports on their activities which they conducted in their areas after the workshops, while others presented theirs on the next day. Most of the participants had conducted the programmes in schools, colleges, villages and market places. Before their presentation they told how last year's workshops changed their mind-set, stating that the earlier hatred towards the elephants had been replaced by a positive attitude towards these animals. Now, when there is an issue on elephants, locals want to discuss this with them. Before the workshops no one in their areas heard about co-existence and they are eager to hear more about it from them.

Mr Md. Dilder Khan, President of the local teachers association, said that he has 600 teachers in the association and he had to talk about elephants during all the meetings during the last one year. They said people started realizing that they have no other option but to co-exist. They said they could convince the locals that crackers, hand bombs make the elephants more violent. Now they have examples where people kept quiet and the elephants did less damage! Two participants from Sherpur said



Participants presenting their follow-up HECx education programmes



Dr. Anwarul Islam explains about networking of educators and also SANIZE



During recap about main HECx workshop one of the participants recall what he had done..his photo on the back

that they now calculated how much the elephants are going to damage; so now they accept it as their annual loss and are not much worried.

One participant, Mr. Nitai Chandra Saha, a Durgapur journalist published articles on Human-Elephant Coexistence in national and local newspapers. Mr. Md. Ali Jinnah, a participant from Durgapur along with 4 other participants had conducted a seminar on Human-Elephant Coexistence with 61 participants



Games: Elephant dance describes habitat loss

from various professions. Mr. Alauddin Al Azad, Ms. Basanti Rani Saha and other participants of previous workshops conducted awareness programmes in two schools. Mr. Azad, local elite, has the opportunity to meet many people every day and these days most of the people love to talk about elephants with him with a feeling that he has solutions! He even talked to people in different markets about the coexistence. Whenever someone organized any programme the trainers from their area assisted to make it a

joint effort which they find more effective.

The participants from Sherpur were from the 'elephant country'. When they conveyed the coexistence message to the community it was accepted by a few as the message was from victims. The initial reaction, in most cases, was certainly very negative. But when they set examples, in some places people tend to believe them and are willing to practice.

From both days' presentations it is apparent that the perception of the participants towards elephants is being changed or getting changed. They always thought elephants were trouble-makers but now they take a positive stand and instead of a war-like situation. A few said elephants have equal rights to live on this earth. A few felt that today the problem so acute, tomorrow it will be worse. So where they are leaving their future generations! Today they find no places to survive, tomorrow what will happen!

The participants also participated in some active learning games and were asked for the lesson they received from it. The participants were given an opportunity to tell elephant stories/facts. All of them have some stories/facts to tell. They then performed a drama on a particular story/fact wearing masks and using other education material. The course came to an end with a cultural programme performed by the participants and a vote of thanks from Professor Md. Anwarul Islam.



Participants with resource persons