

Project Update: January 2013

Crop raiding by elephants is the most prevalent form of human–elephant conflict and can result in devastating economic losses for farmers, loss of human lives and the killing of elephants. Chilli (capsaicin)-based elephant deterrents have been promoted as tools for reducing such conflict. Suggested uses have included hand-held pepper sprays (aerosols) or smoke canister bombs fired from simple mortar-like launchers, pepper grease (chilli-grease), which is applied to rope fences around crop fields, and pepper dung (chilli-dung), which is burnt to produce a noxious smoke. There have, however, been few tests of the effectiveness of chilli-based deterrents in Cameroon

The current project aims at testing chilli-based methods as part of our efforts to develop efficient crop-guarding systems at human–elephant conflict hotspots around the perimeter of Campo-Ma’an National Park. Specifically, we would like to test conventional human–elephant conflict reduction tools with string and tin can system and novel chilli-based elephant deterrents (chilli-grease and chilli-dung).

In December 2012, we selected a previously identified human-elephant conflict hotspot on the border of Campo-Ma’an National Park for a test of community-based crop guarding with conventional tools “Tin Can” at one site (the conventional site) and community-based crop guarding with chilli-based deterrents and tripwire-triggered sirens at an adjacent site (the chilli and sirens site). Allocation of the sites to either the chilli and sirens method or the conventional method was done by flipping a coin. These sites contained mainly plantain crop and are of different size. One community meeting was organised to explain the project and the importance of a wider adherence by affected community in the project area followed by the identification of elephant entry-exit point in the field. Crop protection and damage assessment along with the assessment of the effectiveness will be conducted with the assistance of game guards and field technicians.

