

## Project Update: September 2014

Due to the continued heavy damage to villagers' properties, especially houses, and increasing life threats, I arranged a meeting with villagers who live in areas such as Dahaiyagala, Millagala, Aluthwawa, Pokunuthanna, Laginagala, Neraluwa etc., to guide and build their moral to stand actively to find solutions to mitigate the Human Elephant Conflict (HEC) in the area. In the meeting, I emphasised the importance of working as a unit to solve the ever rising elephant problem in the area. I educated the villagers on some important skills such as the value of team work, organisation, official letter writing and documentation of the HEC incidences, etc. I explained the necessity of team work to grab the attention of the major stakeholders in the country in solving the problem which they have been continuing for decades. The meeting was held at the Dahaiyagala temple on the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2014 and about 60 villagers participated (plate 1). Villagers presented numerous problems caused by crop raiding elephants in the meeting. Various methods were discussed which would attract the immediate attention of the authorities regarding the problems the villagers are facing.



Plate 1: Villagers who participated in the meeting at the Dahaiyagala temple

The villagers decided to sign a petition and present it to major stakeholders such as the park warden of the Udawalawe national park, the director of the department of wildlife conservation, the minister of the wildlife and conservation, the minister of the economic development and some other major stake holders of the country. Over 200 villagers signed the petition (plate 2) and it was submitted to the relevant authorities.

