

## Project Update: April 2017

The project has been running for about 9 months now, as the first 2 months were spent on securing permits, reporting to the local authorities and completing the formalities at the university after which we did some initial surveys to decide on research sites which were based on permits from the provincial authorities.

With regards to the two objectives;

1. Elephant population and demography throughout Leuser, training the local NGO and collaborator Forum Konservasi Leuser (FKL) rangers, and students from Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh, also a local collaborator, was conducted by myself and Dr Abdullah from the University in September 2016. The data is still being gathered and analyses will be conducted after all the data has been compiled.

2. Understanding the reasons for the escalating Human Elephant Conflict (HEC) is being conducted through interviews with the local people. So far, a total of 276 interviews on the HEC have been conducted in parts of Aceh and further data will be gathered till the end of the project. A full and final report on the two objectives will be provided after the completion of the project. After all the data has been analysed, we will aim to publish our results in international journals.

I am also pleased to inform you that the data on HEC that was gathered from the Rufford funds has been instrumental in getting the next phase of the project started. As outlined in the proposal, based on the data gathered from this project, we have now managed to successfully fix GPS collars on three wild elephants from different herd in Aceh, Sumatra in collaboration with the provincial permitting authorities responsible for the protection of wild animals, Balai Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam (BKSDA). The GPS data is not only helping with understanding Sumatran elephant ranging patterns but is also being tested as an early warning system to help mitigate the HEC, particularly in those areas that were considered worst affected.



Left: In Aceh, Sumatra, the pipe or bamboo cannon into which carbide and water are placed to generate methane gas, which is then ignited and explodes creating a loud noise, is commonly used to drive elephants and other wild animals from plantations. Right: Interviewing local people in Aceh Utara to develop a better understanding of the Human Elephant Conflict. Also pictured are the Forest Police (Polhut) and members from the Conservation Response Unit (CRU), the elephant patrol unit of Balai Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam (BKSDA) - Aceh.



Left: A herd of crop raiding elephants in Keumala, Aceh Pidie, seen feeding on rice at the edge of the forest. Notice that there are no fences or barriers to stop the elephants. Right: Evidence of rice fields being damaged by elephants. Besides, crops that are eaten by elephants, trampling also causes a lot of damage and loss to the farmers.