

Project Update: June 2010

Human-elephant conflict is a major problem in the south-west region of West Bengal, India. The project team is working for human – elephant coexistence through habitat conservation and minimizing the elephant depredation cost.

The process of secondary data collection from the field offices, appointment of field assistant from villages are going on and we are already in contact with The Central Rice Research Institute (CRRI), Cuttack, Orissa, India. During our consultation with Dr B.C. Patra, Principal Scientist, Crop Improvement Division, CRRI, we got the list of rice varieties which can be grown in different elephant depredation areas. All these are long, fully awned traditional rice varieties. These varieties can be introduced in the elephant depredation zones with consultation with the local farmers.

During our primary survey we found that the villagers are dependent on the forest resources in entire elephant zone and these people collect non-timber forest products like leaves, medicinal plants and edible plant parts from the forest which are also used by elephants as fodder (e.g. *Halorrhena antidysenterica*, *Bauhinia vahlii*, *Terminalia bellerica*, *Dillenia indica*, and *Diospyros melanoxylon*). The detailed documentation and quantification will be initiated soon.

The important behaviour of the migratory elephant herd observed in the recent past was that the elephants were also moving in the daylight instead of their usual dusk – dawn movement period. They used a new route during their return journey in June 2010 which may have been caused by absence of hoola party (elephant driving team). A detailed survey of the new route will be done soon.



Left: Samya Basu and other project members are doing meeting with forest officials. Right: Regenerated forest of MER.