

Project Update: November 2010

Before the monthly report starts, I wish to share good news with all of you:

The Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India has declared the Asian Elephant a National Heritage Animal in order to step up measures for its protection on 13th Oct 2010. We hope the elephant as well as its habitat will get more protection in near future.

The project team has visited the Central Rice Research Institute, Cuttak, Orissa in September 2010 to discuss the measures developed by them to mitigate the human-elephant conflict and outcomes of those measures in elephant prone zone. The discussion was done with Dr. T.K. Adhya, Director, Central Rice Research Institute (CRRI), Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Cuttack (Orissa), India and Dr. B.C.Patra, Principal Scientist, Crop Improvement Section of the same institution. We have collected the seeds of four long-awned rice varieties such as *ARC 12839, Dubraj, Pusa Basmati and Tilak Chandan* from Rice Gene Bank to cultivate it in experimental basis in sample plots within study area. But, due to drought in those areas we were unable to grow it in the target area. All these rice varieties can be developed in monsoon and we will be able to develop in next monsoon. In CRRI, we met Dr. Purnananda Mishra, Principal Scientist, Engineering Division of CRRI to know about RCC Ring Bin for safe storage of paddy in elephant depredation areas. The technical knowledge regarding construction was collected from Dr. Mishra to distribute the knowledge among farmers and help them to adopt the technique.

The knowledge and ideas were shared with the farmer and other villagers living within the Mayurjharna Elephant Reserve and we feel that we need to communicate the same group more to change their mind setup. This follow up interaction programme will be arranged in December 2010 – January 2011.

The project team visited the Forest Training Centre, Rajabhatkhawa, Directorate of Forests, Govt. of West Bengal, India to organise a discussion and experience sharing programme for forest guards. The participants will be the forest guards from different parts of West Bengal who work in different elephant infested zones. In December 2010 – January 2011 we are going to organise several awareness and sensitisation programmes in schools and colleges. Apart from the film show and slide-illustrated talk, we will organise drawing, essay and photography competition for different age group.

During these two months the project also documented the elephant movement routes, depredation and NTFP collection. During this period the elephant depredation and conflicts were higher due to low rainfall.

