

## Project Update: June 2017

During the preliminary field visit (30th April to 11th May 2017), I hired two local forest technicians and two BSc forestry students to assist me. For the first 2 days of my field visit programme, we went to District Forest Office, Jhapa and Jalthal Sector Forest Office and conducted informal discussions and interviews with the district forest officer and other staff regarding the present condition and issues of resident wild elephants in the study area. For the next 5 days, we went to each household who were the victims of human casualty and injury from wild elephant attacks over the last 5 years in my study area. We found that there were altogether 10 human casualties and six seriously injured cases from the attack of wild elephants in different time periods. Two people were recently killed by the attack of wild elephants few months ago. We collected the detailed information regarding the situations when and where the incidents took place. We took the photographs and GPS coordinates of each household where we visited. Additionally, we allocated next 2 days for visiting some households with crop and property damage by wild elephants. The maize crops of some households were currently damaged when we were in the field. Besides, the paddy store of one house was damaged and eaten by wild elephant during night time by breaking the wooden walls of the ground floor. One online Nepalese newspaper has just posted news that one person was attacked and killed by wild elephant on 2nd June 2017 when he was going to collect mushroom nearby Hariyali Community Forest of Jalthal forest (Address: Haldibari village municipality-4, originally Haldibari VDC). <http://www.onlinekhabar.com/2017/06/592974/>. This situation proves that the trend of wild elephant incidents is increasing in my study area.

From the 3 days visits to the Jalthal forest, we found that the *Shorea robusta* was the major dominant tree species of the Jalthal forest and the forest trees and ground cover were highly covered and affected by the invasive species called *Mikania mikarantha*. We observed the broken small trees, fresh dung and footmarks of the few herds of wild elephants. We also heard the sound produced by wild elephants during our visit to some forest sites. The forest had several small streams as the perennial sources of water. Almost all the forest area was handover to the local community as the community forest. At present, there are altogether 22 different community forests in my study area.

Due to the second local election in my study area declared on 14th June 2017 <http://english.onlinekhabar.com/2017/05/31/401243> (postponed to 28th June, many local people are busy in preparing for the election programme. So, I am planning to conduct my next major fieldworks right after the election. During the fieldwork, we will be conducting household surveys in all affected settlements following appropriate sampling procedures and design. At the same time, damage assessments will be carried out for the major crop maize because it is the maize ripening period. Similarly, informal interviews and group discussions will be conducted in all the study sites to collect detailed information about the recent issues, perception of people regarding incidents of wild elephants and develop the appropriate mitigation measures through consultations and discussions.



Left: Our team searching and identifying the wild elephants' indirect signs within the Jalthal forest, Jhapa. © Bishowdip Chaudhary. Right: Maize crop damaged by wild elephants. © Bijaya Neupane



Left: Discussions with one of the household members of human casualty family. © Bishowdip Chowdhary. Right: Interview with staff of Jalthal Sector Forest Office, Jhapa. © Rajeev Upreti.