

ELEPHANT CONSERVATION NETWORK (ECN)

Human-Elephant Conflict Mitigation Project to
Improve Elephant Conservation in and around the
Salakpra and Tham Thanlod Protected Areas

Kanchanaburi Province
West Thailand

Report on

2nd Community Feedback Meeting

16-17 November & 30 November 2006

“Human-Elephant Conflict:
Participation and Collaboration for HEC Mitigation
Solutions”



by

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November 2006

Meeting Objectives

The key objectives of the 2nd feedback meeting are:

1. To share data on the crop raiding incidents of the last dry and wet seasons (Feb-Oct , 2006) with affected villagers and others concerned;
2. To share the lessons learnt and experiences gained from Kuiburi study trip;
3. To present and HEC mitigating methods applied in various HEC sites and share the HEC mitigation lessons learnt from Kenya;
4. To brainstorm to help seek solutions to solve the HEC problem at household, village and sub-district levels (by small working groups); and
5. To strengthen collaboration and network development among all stakeholders at village and sub-district level needed for solving the problem in the immediate and long-term future.

Meeting attendance

The 2-day meeting was held on 16 and 17 November, 2006. The first day of the meeting was attended by 42 people, but a number of attendants dropped to 27 on the second day as some had other tasks to take care of i.e. attending other meetings and watching/protecting crop fields from wild elephants at night. As in the first, 1st feedback meeting in June 2006, HEC affected villagers formed the largest group of attendants (17 persons or 40% of the total number). The figure is followed by government officers (10 persons from Salakpra WS, Tham Tanlod NP, provincial livestock office, EGAT Kanchanaburi and Bo Ploi district office), representatives of sub-districts and heads of villages (9), and ECN volunteers (5). A reporter of local cable TV attended the meeting on the first day.

Note: None of the affected villagers and local representatives except two from the three affected sub-districts (Tha Kradaan, Nong Ped and Dan Mae Chalaeb) due northwest of the sanctuary, turned up during this meeting due to their engagement in corn harvest season in these areas. As a consequent, another half-day meeting was held specially for them on November 30, 2006, at the office of Nong Ped Tambon (sub-district) Administrative Organisation (TAO), which lies between the other two sub-districts. The date, duration and venue of the meeting was decided with local leaders beforehand to ensure the attendance of local villagers

Results of the Nong Ped meeting will be reported separately from the Erawan Meeting to avoid confusion. So this report will start with the Erawan meeting and then cover the Nong Ped meeting

I) Results from the Erawan Feedback Meeting:

Meeting venue & accommodation

The meeting was held at the headquarters of Erawan National Park, on the eastern side of the River Kwai that splits the park from Salakpra Wildlife Sanctuary, the ECN project area with HEC conflicts. As the meeting was run for two days consecutively, the project then provided the meeting attendants an overnight stay at the park's guesthouses.

Meeting Content

The key topics presented and discussed during the meeting are:

- Data on crop raiding incidents and crop damages in the last dry and wet seasons of the affected communities;
- Lessons learned and experiences shared from Kuiburi study trip;
- Network development for elephant conservation and crop-raiding mitigation efforts;
- Lessons learnt on HEC mitigation methods from Kenya;
- Potential/suggested prevention and protection methods by local communities around Salakpra WS; and
- Policy and plan to solve HEC of the governmental agencies concerned.

Key topics presented and discussed:

1) Crop raiding and damages around Salakpra WS

The ECN project manager/community coordinator, Ms Jittin Ritthirat, started with a powerpoint presentation on the combined data of crop raiding and damages over the last dry and wet seasons (Feb-Oct 2006). The main reason to repeatedly present the dry season data for this time is to make sure that those who missed the 1st feedback meeting are given a chance to access to the data available from the last dry season.

2) Lessons learnt and experiences shared from Kuiburi study trip

This session was mainly presented by key persons who joined the study trip. This included a deputy chairperson of Wang Dong sub-district administrative organization (Mr. Manop Riang-ruab), a village headman from Ta Manao village (Mr. Nipon Sunjirat), and two farmers from Ta Manao and Khao Dang villages (Mr. Somchoke Arayawattana and Mr. Surachai Limpakananatawi). The ECN project manager assisted with their presentation by adding some key issues when needed, in combination with the powerpoint presentation prepared by the ECN team.

- **Mr. Manop** told meeting attendants that he found the study trip really useful in seeking ways to prevent crop raids and protect crops in his sub-district. Some of the mitigation methods he learnt and saw from the trip might be effective in preventing crop raids here. One seemingly successful method that sounds simple, cheap and affordable is combining the use of light and CD (put it in the field to mislead the elephant that people are present there).

Another point he made is that the study trip gave participants a chance to know each other, to learn from each other and hopefully to work together in future to solve the problem. He was interested in forming a local collective group to work on nature conservation and crop raiding issues and asked the meeting attendants to share their views on this issue. He promised to be an active coordinator of the group if formed. This idea of setting up the collective group was inspired by the experience gained from Kuiburi where there is a local group called Kuiburi Elephant Lovers, comprising HEC affected villagers around the park.

- **Mr. Nipon** started his talk on the context inside and around Kuiburi national park in many aspects which are apparently different from that around Salakpra. These aspects cover the issues of land title deeds, local livelihood, the royally initiated project to solve HEC, the policy, manpower and efficacy of forest personnel of the national park in handling crop raiding incidents. These altogether play a crucial role in helping solve the problem there. All in all, the national park is well equipped with resources to handle the problem, but Salakpra is the opposite. This is why the national park can conserve their protected area and manage their crop raiding problem much better the sanctuary here. The same as Mr. Manop, he suggested the affected villagers form a group to fund raise and to powerfully negotiate with the government sector to solve the problem which apparently can not be solved by single individual.

Background to Kuiburi's Rehabilitation Project:

The royal project was founded in 1998 after the death of an elephant one year earlier. The project covers the whole area of Kuiburi National Reserved Forest which lies between the national park and the pineapple cultivation area. This area was taken back from local tenants after the elephant was shot dead in 1997 with huge support from Princess Noppadon Rangsri and practical assistance from the army. The land was heavily cultivated with pineapple before it has been restored later thanks to the project.

Since its establishment, the project has implemented its continued four activities:

- i) forest restoration by transforming pineapple farmland into forest with the food plantation project over 18,000 *rai* (28.8 km²) plot of land in its first phase;
- ii) soil & water conservation by building 1,300 check dams and ponds all over the restoration area;
- iii) feeding ground & mineral licks creation by digging 60 man-made licks;
- iv) fire prevention and control.

In future, the project aims to extend its activities to the rest of the reserved forest.

Lessons learnt from the Kuiburi project

Though the project offers better feeding and a safer environment for wild elephants, the existence of the project unexpectedly created undesirable outcomes and some lessons are worth sharing in the context of HEC problem as follows:

- i) **Reforestation & habitat restoration:** the plantation project in a so-called buffer zone is located next to the agriculture area; the forest rehabilitation area unfortunately draws wild elephants closer to the cultivated land, leading to an increase in crop raids around the park as a consequence;

- ii) **Food plantation:** Banana not recommended for any food plantation project as the banana, once grown, can be eaten overnight by elephants. Alternatively, grasses are told to be sustainable and sufficient to meet the elephant's need;
- iii) **Check-dam construction:** One practical problem found is that white plastic sacks filled with sand to build check-dams to improve the soil humidity are often destroyed by elephants. The elephant is said to dislike such conspicuous colour as white. A successful solution to this practical problem is to cover the sack with pieces of wood/sticks and put rocks on the outer layer.
 - **Mr. Surachai** said he was interested in testing a combined use of light and CD to help protect his crops, though he was not sure how effective it can be. He was also keen to know if a trench to be dug around his field would be a successful obstacle to prevent elephants from raiding his sugarcane. These are the two methods that interested him. His neighbour added that he and Surachai will use their own money in digging the trench for 2 kms.
 - **Mr. Somchoke** expressed concern about the difference between Kuiburi NP and Salakpra WS in the reactions to handling and managing crop raids among the forest personnel of both areas. Salakpra completely lacks of resources necessary for handling the problem effectively. He questioned how they can solve the problem so that people and elephants can co-exist peacefully.

3) Network development for elephant conservation and HEC mitigation

The idea of forming a local group mentioned by Mr. Manop and others was strongly reinforced by Jittin who asked if everyone present agreed with the setting up of the group. They all agreed and finally at the end of the meeting, a group tentatively called the *Greater River Kwai Elephant Conservation Group* (Kanchanaburi) was set up. Initially, the group's immediate aim is to work towards mitigating the HEC problems confronted by local residents around Salakpra area. Its chairperson, key positions of the group and committees were selected. They all agreed to have ECN as a treasurer in the beginning and also an advisor to the group. The group comprises those from all sectors involved. Names of the key persons elected are given below:

1. Mr. Monop	Riang-ruab	Chongla village	Chairperson
2. Mr. Thongchai	Chuancheun	Khao Singto village	Vice chairperson
3. Mrs. Yupphadi	Boonnom	Tha Sanun village	Vice chairperson
4. Mr. Somyod	Nakcheen	Mo Thao village	Secretary
5. Mr. Pravut	Prempri	Salakpra WS	PR
6. Miss Salakjit	Muanbua	Bo Ploi district	PR
7. ECN			Treasurer/Advisor

4) Lessons learnt from Kenya on HEC mitigation methods

Before the working group discussions started, Jittin and Supitcha (ECN staff) presented some of the mitigation methods currently used in Africa, particularly Kenya. Both strengths and limitations of the mitigation methods were presented as part of lesson learning and sharing experiences. Apart from trying to broaden the attendants' perspectives on this issue outside their local context, this is also to encourage thoughts, and any innovative ideas to prevent crop raids and protect crops in their local areas.

These methods included:

- Standard electric fence around Aberdare National park in Kenya;
- Watch tower and treetop platform to keep watching elephants;
- A combination of chili, grease, engine oil and tobacco;
- Burning of elephant dung mixed with chili;
- Make noises by locally modified horns;
- Beehives along the elephant exits;
- Elephant translocation; and
- Trench dug around fields;

5) Group discussions on HEC mitigation efforts

The attendants were split into four groups, comprising 8-10 persons each. The affected villagers and representatives from villages and sub-districts were divided based on which villages or sub-districts they are from. Those from the same villages will be in the same groups. When a number of affected villagers from one village are too small, i.e. less than 4, this village will be combined with another or other villages adjacent to it. The government officers from the sanctuary, national park, EGAT and Bo Ploi districts represented in every group where possible to help work on the discussion topics.

Before they started the discussions, we asked them to draw maps of their own communities (villages) on flip-chart paper showing key features such as temple, school, crop fields, location of raided farms, elephant exit trails/routes to facilitate their discussions. The topics discussed in this session included:

- Describe the HEC situation at each village (number of affected farmers, crops species planted and destroyed, when raids happen (i.e. seasonality and growth stage of crops and plants). A4 paper filled with columns of the relevant inquiries was given to each group to fill in the answers accordingly.
- Current methods applied to protect their crops: success or failure, and why?
- Mitigation methods they would like to test (after learning some examples from Kuiburi and Kenya); advantages and disadvantages of each method from their points of view or experiences;
- What kind of participation and collaboration between government agencies and all stakeholders they want to see or happen to solve the problem;
- Possibility to set up a community fund (by village or sub-district) to solve the problem in a more sustainable way;

Some key points addressed during the group discussion:

a) Participation and collaboration between all stakeholders:

- o More forest personnel must be assigned to handle the crop-raid incident;
- o More responsibility must be demonstrated from the government side;
- o Government officers (from forestry and conservation) should work more closely with the community to be aware of the problem;
- o More coordination and involvement is needed with non-government sector;
- o Collective action among affected villagers needed to solve the problem i.e. forming a group, elephant conservation group;
- o The District Administrative organisation should give financial support to Salakpra WS to build & improve water sources inside the sanctuary;
- o Jointly build & conserve the water & food source for elephants and wildlife;
- o Raising public awareness of the environmental issue;

b) Community fund for financial sustainability & sustainable solution:

Suggested source of funds:

- o Financial support from the government sector;
- o The government administration agencies at all levels (PAO, district, TAO), EGAT and the forest sector must involve in setting up the community fund;
- o Fund raising from the private sector and public;
- o Fund raising activities/events from the public;
- o A combined fund from TAO, private sector, non-government organisations and ECN

Suggested proportion of financial contribution to the fund:

The groups came up with the two distinct categories of organisations expected to contribute to the fund:

➤ government sector	60-70%
non-government	20%
local people	10-20%
➤ Department of National Park	50%
Tambon (district) Administrative Organisation (TAO)	30%
HEC affected villagers	20%

c) Policy and plan of key government agencies to solve HEC

The chief of Salakpra WS (Mr. Nipon Sa-nguanyaat) and head of Kanchanaburi provincial natural resources and environment (Mr. Winit Rakchart) were two speakers of this session held in the first half of the second day. Mr. Nipon illustrated some of the potential causes of crop raids by wild elephants in his area including bamboo cutting and collecting forest products. These practices compete with elephants for food and drive them out of the forest. He will try his best to draw elephants back into the heart of the forest by improving water sources and habitats inside the protected area. The sanctuary has started a project to build hundreds of check dams around the core area of the sanctuary at Thung Salakpra to help improve the forest

condition/humidity in the soil in the hope that more available water will keep elephants in. In the next fiscal year, he should also be able to allocate some budget and more manpower to handle the crop raiding problem/incidents more effectively.

Mr. Winit Rakchart elaborated the potential causes of the problem with an emphasis put on human pressures that lead to the shrinking natural habitats of elephants. He encouraged affected villagers, local communities and other stakeholders involved at local level to initiate their own mitigation programmes rather than asking for financial assistance from outside or the central government. The process of drawing up a mitigation plan should involve affected farmers, sub-district administrative organisations and representatives from Salakpra WS. Both short-term and long-term plans needed to solve the problem. The sub-district administrative organisation should give financial support and ECN should be the secretariat and coordinate all project in order to integrate them. He was glad to get involved in future meetings.

Key issues for future HEC prevention & crop protection measures

- Crop-raid monitoring team must be set up by Salakpra to react to incidents more effectively than now;
- Zoning management of Salakpra must be introduced to regulate forest use by local people and to reduce pressure on the elephant habitat;
- Habitat improvement and water source restoration inside Salakpra is needed to restore the forest for wildlife, and elephants in particular;
- Livestock grazing in the forest must be tackled more seriously as now it is clearly degrading the wildlife habitat inside Salakpra. Areas designated for livestock may be one option where appropriate, but this needs to be better managed. Livestock from non-local communities should be forced out by local residents.
- Clear boundary of the sanctuary needed to be identified with local people.

Suggestions

Two key suggestions, both by Mr. Winit (head of the provincial natural resource and environment office), were welcomed by the meeting attendants

- Future meeting held urgently between key stakeholders at sub-district level (*Or Bor Tor*), Salakpra WS representatives and ECN to discuss and draw plans to ask for budget from local government to mitigate HEC problem;
- A study trip to where the HEC problem has been successfully solved such as Phu Khieo National Park;

Evaluation of the Erawan Feedback Meeting 16-17 November 2006

All meeting participants were given a questionnaire with a number of relevant topics to be evaluated (see table below) to assess the usefulness of the meeting, to be aware of their concerns & perspectives in order to improve future meetings.

As the meeting evaluation was conducted on the second day of the meeting when only 27 participants were present at the meeting, a number of respondents were in total only 24. The respondents evaluated their satisfactions on the topics concerned by choosing levels of appropriateness/satisfaction (most appropriate = 4 to least appropriate = 1) that they feel suit their thoughts most.

Evaluation results

The results of the evaluation are shown in the table below. Comments and suggestions were also provided. Overall, the feedback is favourable with 74.5 % of total responses being ultimately satisfied or very satisfied, while another 23% was reasonably satisfied. It is interesting to note that half the respondents (12) thought that the government should be more active in setting policies and making plans to solve the HEC problem.

Table 1: Evaluation of the 2nd feedback meeting, 16-17 November 2006.

Topics evaluated	Most appropriate /satisfied	Very appropriate /satisfied	Fairly appropriate	Not appropriate /satisfied	Total
1. Meeting venue	14	7	3		24
2. Travel & Transport	9	11	2	1	23
3. Content					
3.1 crop damage around Salakpra during dry and wet seasons 2006	8	10	6		24
3.2 Results & lessons shared from Kuiburi study trip	6	8	7	2	23
3.3 Lessons learnt and solutions from Kenya	5	6	10	2	23
3.4 Crop protection methods presented	4	12	7	1	24
3.5 Small group discussion	7	8	6		21
3.6 Policy and plans of gov. sector to solve crop-raiding problem	6	5	12	1	24
4. Presentation (Equipment, language, clarity)	7	9	5		21
5. Comprehensiveness	8	14	1	1	24
6. Benefits from the meeting	9	13	2		24
7. Benefit for networking and collaboration to solve the problem	11	10	3		24
8. Participation or efforts of gov. sector to solve HEC	3	12	9		24
9. Accommodation & food	11	10	2	1	24
Totals (from 24 respondent)	108 (33.22%)	135 (41.28%)	75 (22.93%)	9 (2.75%)	327 (100%)

II) Results from Nong Ped Feedback Meeting 30 November 2006

Meeting Objectives

The key objectives of the Nong Ped feedback meeting are similar to the Erawan feedback meeting:

1. To feed the data on crop raiding incidents of the last dry and wet seasons (Feb-Oct , 2006) back to affected villagers and those involved;
2. To share the lessons learnt and experiences gained from Kuiburi study trip;
3. To present some of the HEC mitigating methods applied in various HEC sites and share the lessons learnt from Kenya;
4. To keep the meeting attendants informed about the results and progress from the Erawan feedback meeting; and
5. To strengthen collaboration and network development among all stakeholders at village and sub-district level needed for solving the problem in the long –term

Meeting attendance

The half-day meeting was held on 30 November 2006, and was attended by 22 people from the affected sub-districts due north/northwest of the sanctuary. The meeting participants included some of the affected villagers (9), village and sub-district leaders (5), representatives from TAO (4), ECN volunteers (3) and a teacher from local school. The meeting venue was offered free of charge by Nong Ped TAO (Tambon Administrative Organisation).

Meeting content

The meeting content was similar to the one at Erawan. Jittin Ritthirat started with a powerpoint presentation on the dry and wet season crop raid data around Salakpra, followed by lessons learnt from the Kuiburi study trip. The meeting was briefed on the results and network development progress from the Erawan meeting. The ECN village monitor from Tha Manao and two local residents (a member of Tha Kradaan TAO and a village headwoman) who joined the Kuiburi trip and the Erawan meeting shared what they had learned. The Kenya study trip presentation was the last before the session was opened for discussion, comment and suggestions. Due to time constraints, there was no group discussion involved during this meeting.

Key topics addressed and discussed

a) Consistency of the current protection method action

There was apparently a common concern over the implementation of the current protection method applied in Nong Ped sub-district. Due to the crop raid problem, the active elephant exit trails on the edge of the protected area were fenced since 2003. Affected villagers take turn to activate the electrical current to the fence, to maintain the fence and also to guard the fence at night, both for preventing theft of the battery units and for keeping an eye out for elephants. However, in the past three years, this collective action was active and consistent only in the harvest seasons, around July/August and November/December for maize, and April/May for mangos.

The lack of consistency of this operation in non-harvest seasons has, unfortunately, led to unprecedented off-season elephant raids that caused damages to perennial plants and off-season planted crops. The question addressed here is how to establish or enhance the operation consistency to enable the current protection method to work more effectively. Discussions focused on how to fund this crop protection operation and whether some people should be employed to conduct this daily task.

Other key points addressed in relation to the crop protection were:

- individual efforts to protect crops do not seem to work as well as more collective efforts;
- reactive measures to raiding incidents are one-off activities and did not solve the problem in the long-term; and
- stronger electric fencing needed, along with much better maintenance.

b) Crop protection method suggestions

An active member of Dan Mae Chalaeb sub-district TAO suggested planting plants or trees along the forest exits which elephants do not like or avoid such as the plant with itchy pots, particularly the one locally called *Tam Yae Chang* (elephant itchy pod). This is a seasonal species that will die back in the dry season, but nowadays not many raids happen in the dry season. Most of the mango trees in this area were felled due to repeated elephant raids over recent years.

This idea was well received by the rest of the meeting attendants and they seemed to be interested in finding out more about plants that elephants dislike and tend to avoid. A few years ago, for an experiment, they planted a thorny tree (Thai name *Sisiad*) along elephant forest exits, but because of drought and lack of regular care, the trees died. Its spikes are thought to discourage elephants from break in.

c) Local network development

Meeting participants agreed with the idea of setting up a group tentatively called *the Greater River Kwai Elephant Conservation Group* (Kanchanaburi), to solve the HEC problem in a collective, sustainable way. They wanted to call their sub-group *the Greater River Kwai Elephant Conservation Group* (Srisawat) to identify their area. A chairperson and committee were elected, comprising those from all the villages in the affected sub-districts. They agreed that the group leaders will be their representative to get involved in the project's activities and to interact/work with groups of the same kind in other local areas. Names of the key persons are given as follows:

1. Mr. Chamlong Sudprasert	Koh Buk village	Chairperson
2. Mr. Sumon Chankham	Tha Sanun village	Vice chair 1
3. Mr. Kanok Duangplee	Tha Kradaan	Vice chair 2
4. Mr. Chaiwat Wimonphan	Koh Buk village	Secretary
5. Mrs. Samruay Muangpansri	Mong Kratae	PR
6. Mr. Patpong Mongkolkanchanakul	Thung Na	PR
7. Mr. Nikom Chankham	Tha Sanun	PR
8. ECN		Advisor
9. Mr. Suwit Srichan	Srisawat School	Advisor
10. TAO Reps		Advisors

Nong Ped Feedback Meeting Evaluation

The meeting evaluation was conducted in the same way as it was for the Erawan meeting. In total, 18 respondents took part in the evaluation as some left before the end of the meeting due to their engagement in another business.

The results of the evaluation were shown in the table below. Comments and suggestions were also provided. Overall, the feedback is favourable with 66% of total responses being ultimately satisfied or very satisfied, while another 33% was reasonably satisfied. Notably, a lot of respondents expected more participation or attention from other sectors involved, particularly the government sector (Topic 7).

Table 1: Evaluation of the 2nd feedback meeting 16-17 November 2006

Topics evaluated	Most appropriate /satisfied	Very appropriate / satisfied	Fairly appropriate	Not appropriate / satisfied	Total
1. Meeting venue	6	6	6		18
2. Content	4	10	4		18
3. Presentation (Equipment, language, clarity)	4	11	3		18
4. Benefits from the lessons learnt from Africa and Kenya	4	10	4		18
5. Benefits from the lessons learnt from Kuiburi study trip	3	10	5		18
6. Practical usefulness from the mitigation methods to local areas	3	13	2		18
7. Progress on collaboration between affected villagers and other sectors	3	5	9	1	18
8. Comprehensiveness	4	8	3		15
9. Benefits from the meeting	5	10	3		18
10. Benefits expected from forming Community Conservation Group	5	10	3		18
Totals (from 18 respondents)	41 (22%)	83 (44%)	62 (33.%)	1 (<1%)	187 (100%)

Comments & suggestions

- Representatives from EGAT should attend future meetings
- Government officers should be present at the meeting;
- More affected villagers should come to the meeting;
- Budget allocation plan to solve the problem should be provided;
- In future, the meeting should not be held in a harvest season