

## **Golaghat Chapter**

Population estimation, habitat utilisation and movement patterns were studied to understand the present status of elephants in the area. The study recorded high anthropogenic pressure on the remnant forest patches and the corridors. Plantation of elephant food plants were carried out in one of the potential corridors-Deopahar reserve forest. For future plantation drive, a nursery was established in Geleki area where elephant food plant saplings are grown. Support to local communities and forest department are provided periodically to resolve HEC.

Besides, ecological studies on elephants various initiatives targeting local communities are carried out. Outreach programmes among the school student and local communities are conducted regularly to create awareness. Different activities like quiz and art competitions, exposure visits to the nearby protected areas involving students are carried out periodically. Anti-depredation materials like construction of permanent watch towers to guard the crop fields, distribution of fire crackers and search lights to chase off the elephants are provided to the villagers. The team has been successful in cultivating "*BhotJolikia*"- the king chilli which is a potential cash crop. We encourage the villagers to take-up chilli cultivation as an additional source of income as the paddy and chilli cultivation period doesn't coincide. This chilli is a very good elephant deterrent and can be used to chase the elephants away during the paddy cultivation. The team has carried out a small experiment to test the potential of chilli fencing for guarding the crops. The fencing is quite effective but it requires maintenance during the monsoon season. This experiment was carried out in the model village and this can now be replicated to other parts as well. Selected youths from villages visited Manas National Park to learn the measures adopted by local communities of Manas to resolve HEC. They have been given demonstration on biofencing, watch towers and other methods. Another support in terms of education scholarship was provided to the students whose parents had been a victim of HEC. Last year, women self-help groups from different conflict prone villages were imparted a training on micro-enterprise development. The training was of three days, where the women folk learnt about different entrepreneurship options from experts.

Moreover, capacity building trainings like use of GPS in recording conflict locations are imparted to the frontline staff to mitigate HEC. To ease the process of driving elephants of the agricultural lands, vehicles are provided to the department.