

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Aaranyak installs solar fences to keep off elephants from LP Schools**

Guwahati, October 29: The burgeoning issue of human-elephants conflict (HEC) in various parts of Assam has, besides causing hardship to life and livelihood for a sizeable section of population, disrupted education to young children in some of the hotspots where wild elephants tend to force into school premises posing threat to the property and life of students alike.

As part of its pilot initiative to show the way for mitigation of the HEC and facilitate coexistence around such schools, premier biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak recently installed solar fences around two LP Schools and an Anganwadi Centre to facilitate uninterrupted education to young children of those areas.

Two Lower Primary Schools, one each from HEC affected pockets of Udalguri and Goalpara districts of Assam, and an Anganwadi Centre have been shielded with solar-powered fences so that education for at least 145 children can continue.

Solar fence was installed around 331 No.2 Nonke Sonajuli L.P. School, Revenue village No. 2 at Sonajuli under Khairabari Educational Block in Udalguri District with support from SBI Foundation.

The school has 30 Assamese-medium students and 25 Bodo-medium students. An Anganwadi centre with 30 children attached to this school has also been protected by the fence. This way education for 85 children has been facilitated by the solar fence that is expected to keep wild elephants off the school campus.

In another such project, Aaranyak with support from US Fish and Wildlife Service, has installed solar-powered fence for HEC mitigation around Kasibari Kochpara L.P. School near Kumarkhali Reserve Forest of Lakhipur Forest Range of Goalpara District. The school has over 60 students.

Nonke Sonai L.P. School established in 1962, is situated close to Indo-Bhutan boundary. It is staffed with three teachers and two cooks. Wild elephants have been trying to break the school building every year on a number of occasions during the last five year. However, because of villagers' proper vigil, elephants could not damage it. Last year, wild elephants came to the school again and damaged the building and devoured the

rice and other food stuffs meant for mid-day meal, that were stored in the kitchen room.

Aaranyak team led by Anjan Baruah comprising Dibakar Nayak, Rupam Gayary and Bikash Tossa took initiative to install a solar powered fence in that school on 19th October this year. President of the School Management Committee (SMC) Janardan Gayary head master of the school Bibindra Basumatary and some local youths helped the Aaranyak to complete the installation work.

Kasibari Kochpara L.P. School is in Goalpara district was established in 1981. According to head teacher Munurani Sarker and SMC president Namita Koch, wild elephants used to take rest at day time in this area besides roaming in and out of the forest reserve frequently.

Elephants have been causing damage to the school premises since 2018. The school building was damaged eleven times during 2018 to 2023 with elephants barging into it to devour the rice, lentil, salt, vegetables and other food stuff stored in the kitchen for mid-day meals. Besides the kitchen, class rooms' walls too were damaged.

The head mistress said on three occasions so far, elephants had entered the school while the children were taking mid-day-meal and the teachers somehow managed save the life of the children and themselves as well.

On several occasions, the teachers along with the students had to flee the school campus to escape attack by elephants. At present, the school authority has stopped keeping food stuff inside the school building. The elephant attack occurred on the 29th August this year when the kitchen room of the school along with the wall of a class room were damaged.

Due to the increasing conflict, attendance of school students has reduced by almost 50%. The total number of students came down to 26 from 60 plus. Parents are no longer allowing their children to attend the school out of fear.

Aaranyak team installed a single strand solar fence which covered the school premises on the 5th September this year with the support of local community. The Aaranyak team led by Anjan Baruah included Ripunjoy Nath and Rupam Gayary and was supported by Kasibari-Koachpara local community during installation of the fence.

*Press statement issued by Bijay Sankar Bora, Publicity Secretary, Aaranyak.  
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