

Press Release

Another ECN adds teeth to HEC mitigation in Assam valley

Guwahati, Feb 15: In tune with the sustained efforts for facilitating coexistence between human beings and wild elephants through community participation in conflict affected areas of Assam valley, premier biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak (www.aaranyak.org) has formed an Elephant Conservation Network (ECN) at Bhooteachang Tea Estate in Udalguri district.

The exercise of ECN formation took place at the office of All Adivasi Students Association of Assam (AASAA) in the tea estate on February 12 last.

A group of 23 community members from different villages of Bhootachang area participated in the ECN formation meeting and formed a team to work for mitigation of human-elephant conflict (HEC) so as to facilitate human-elephant coexistence.

Aaranyak resource team conducted a day-long training for the newly-formed ECN on conservation of elephant, HEC mitigation measures and assessment of crop and property damages as well as the application process for claiming compensation against damages caused to property, crops and human life during interface with wild elephants.

With this new group, 12 ECNs which act as 'early warning units', have been formed by Aaranyak in Udalguri, Baksa and Goalpara districts of Assam for mitigation of HEC with support from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and SBI Foundation.

An ECN comprising community members are well-networked through formation of a WhatsApp group that is used by members of the network to raise alarm over presence of wild elephants close to human settlements or paddy fields so as to prevent close contact with between human beings and elephants.

An ECN helps the community in various way such as crop and property damage assessment, help the victims in prepare application for compensation , first aid service to the HEC victims, initiative in community managed mitigation measures, make the villagers aware about the need for elephant conservation, monitoring of solar-powered fence and other mitigation tools installed in HEC-affected areas, help the community to promote alternative crops which are elephant non palatable. An ECN may share information about elephant movements with the Forest Department.

Another training was conducted at Badlapara Anganbadi centre in Udalguri district for Badlapara ECN group on February 14 for strengthening the team. Twenty-one ECN group members participated in the that training programme.

Anjan Baruah, a senior official of Aaranyak conducted the trainings for the ECN groups through presentations that elaborated the roles and responsibilities of ECN group members. He discussed on how to make assessment of crop and property damage through a mock exercise.

The training sessions covered elephant conservation issue, threats, behaviour, movement and different mitigation measures for human-elephant conflict, how to assess the crop and property damage and procedure for compensation application.

At the end of each of the training programmes an assessment café was conducted. Aaranyak official Mondeep Basumatary moderated the programmes.

Other Aaranyak officials Dibakar Nayak, Didom Doimari and Bikash Tossa and Haben Mochahary coordinated the training programmes. Miss Washima Begum of Aaranyak also attended the second training programme at Badlapara. At the end of each training programmes Aaranyak's T- shirts were gifted to each ECN members as a token of appreciation.

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