

## Press Communiqué

### Students enact play to sensitise HEC-hit villagers for coexistence with elephants

Guwahati, December 4: Drama being a proven medium of mass communication from the yore, it has been adopted by the region's premier biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak to woo cooperation from villagers to facilitate coexistence with wild elephants in areas affected by human elephant conflict (HEC).

With the objective to educate villagers and students, Aaranyak ([www.aaranyak.org](http://www.aaranyak.org)) team enacted a play engaging school students to highlight the message of coexistence with wild elephants. The plot of the play revolves around a conversation between a grandfather and his grandson where the grandfather narrates about how their village was living in harmony with the elephants in the past. He paints a word-picture of how big herds of elephants used to live in the forest adjacent to the village, but never harmed any villagers. However he grieves on the sudden developmental changes in their village that took a toll over the lives of the elephants as well as villagers. Such a poignant portrayal of the village by his grandfather moves the young boy and instils hopes in him that one fine day people will make paths for the elephants to walk back to the jungles, which were once their delightful abode.

For enacting this play, Aaranyak team conducted a four-day training for 25 students of 9th standard of Paneri Higher Secondary School, Udalguri district of Assam and the first play was performed on November 28 in the school auditorium in presence of the students and the teachers, many of whom hail from high human-elephant conflict areas of the district.

This play was scripted and performed to sensitise the locals on the rising level of conflict and the need of empathy towards the gentle giants to facilitate coexistence, while collectively planning to restore the lost remnants of habitats.

Aaranyak's senior conservation biologist Dr Alolika Sinha conceptualised the play, which was penned down by researcher Anushka Saikia. Other team members who played an active role to make the event successful were Rabiya Daimary, Abhijit Saikia, Reshma Narzary, Mondeep Basumatari, Pradip Barman, and Bikash Tossa.

The drama will be enacted in two more different HEC conflict zones of Udalguri district and is expected to sensitise locals about the rising conflict with wild elephants and the key reasons behind the conflict and the need for coexistence with elephants which are so important for sustenance of biodiversity.

*Press statement issued by Dr Alolika Sinha, Publicity Secretary, Aaranyak.  
Contact No. 9435021312, Email ID: [alolika@aaranyak.org](mailto:alolika@aaranyak.org)*