

A Progress (Final) report on
Community Based Anti-Poaching Units
(CBAPUs) for the Asian Elephant Conservation
(January – December 2019)



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Overall and specific conservation needs this project addressed

Bardia National Park (BNP) is a well-known prime and largest elephant habitat of Nepal. It links to Banke National Park (15 elephants came back in 2017) in East and Katarniyaghat Wildlife Sanctuary (KWS), India in south with a corridor forest which is frequently used by about 45 elephants for the movement in Nepal (BNP) and India (KWS) protected areas. Buffer zone is an area around the core area of park. Corridor is defined as the strip of forests that allows safe movement of long ranging wildlife populations between two isolated habitats. Both buffer zone and corridor play an important role in the management of landscape by linking forest patches and provides accessibility to alternative habitats for long ranging animals. It also helps in maintaining genetic interchange between two isolated wildlife populations of the same species. Effective conservation actions and strengthening guard forces in Bardia National Park have resulted an increase in Asian elephant population from 2 in early 90s to around 120 in 2018 (DNPWC, 2018). It is great news that elephant number is increasing in BNP, but elephants are being killed and injured every year in the corridor and buffer zone in the name of safeguard of crops, property and human life. The frequent movement of Asian elephant, out of park, resulted an easy killing as there is no any established protection system in the most part of buffer zone and corridor. We have personally examined death of two individual elephants in corridor forest in December 2014 and March 2015. In the last five years, 1300 farmers lost agriculture crops and 674 houses were damaged by elephant attack. Similarly, 42 residents lost their life from elephant attack in last 25 years. On the other hand, 32 dead wild elephants were recorded during the same period and most of them were due to retaliatory killing by local people while protecting their crop, property and life (BNP, 2018). Hence, it has been challenging to protect elephant population in the buffer zone and corridors as the local communities are not aware on conservation of recolonized elephant populations and safely chasing techniques of wild bulls which mostly entered in the settlements. Although the core area of park is fully secured by mobilizing security forces, there is no reliable mechanism for the security of wildlife in the buffer zone and corridor forest. Due to anthropogenic affect and illegal activities, there is a high risk for large animal like elephant. Highly dense populated settlements (120000) are located in the buffer zone and corridor, which plays major role for the breakage of habitat with increasing population. It is also fostering the increase of conflict with local people. Poaching has now created a serious threat for the survival of endangered species like tiger, rhinoceros and elephants, which are now limited to only few protected areas. Poaching/retaliatory killing is emerging major threat for the survival of wildlife in and around elephant habitat. Other important challenges for the re-colonized elephant populations are habitat shrinkage and fragmentation due to illegal logging, conversion into agricultural land and encroachment. It is important to give more focus on collaborative approach for timely action on elephant conservation by involving local village youths for anti-poaching operation and conflict minimization.

In order to address challenges of human elephant conflict and poaching, community-based initiatives such as onsite human elephant conflict assessment, community based electric fence management, conflict mitigation measures (alternative crops, skill training) and Community Based Anti-Poaching Units (CBAPUs) program are implemented in the western buffer zone of Bardia national park and corridor between Nepal and India protected areas since 2014 with the support of International Elephant Foundation and other conservation partners. Community based anti-poaching operation is becoming highly influential by involving local youths. In another term, community based anti-poaching embraces local community for the effective conservation of wildlife. These units also play important role for safely chasing of isolated bull while entering

village for the searching of crop and storage grain. After the initiation of CBAPUs, no killing of elephant is recorded in the western region and corridor forest. Similarly, massive decrease on killing of other wildlife and illegal extraction of forest resources are observed. The elephant related conflicts are also noticeably decrease after the implementation of community-based conflict mitigation measures, conservation awareness and CBAPUs.

The recent statistics showed that human elephant conflict, killing and injury of elephants are dramatically increased in eastern buffer zone of Bardia National Park and highly probable of such threats in corridor between Bardia and Banke national park. Mostly, village youths are involved in these activities as they do not have any knowledge for the conservation importance. There is not sufficient efforts for the security mechanism from the government and community perspective, which lead to the threats for poaching. Leaders of Buffer Zone User Committees (BZUCs) and park authorities have requested us to implement CBAPU in eastern part of park by seeing the effectiveness of such program for elephant conservation and human-elephant conflict minimization in western area and southern corridor. So, we have designed this project to secure the elephant population and its habitat in Bardia complex by mobilizing village youths in CBAPUs. This effort will strengthen the capacity of CBAPUs and secure survival of elephants by minimizing illegal killing and human elephant conflict. This project will help to extend the successful model of CBAPUs in the eastern buffer zone and corridor between Bardia and Banke National Park.

Goals and objectives

The major goal of project is to engage village youths in community based anti-poaching units (20 units, 1000 members) for conservation of Asian elephant population (120) by implementing anti-poaching patrolling (regular), safely chasing of wild elephant from village (60% reduction in conflict) and awareness program (3000 people) in poaching/conflict prone areas of buffer zone of Bardia national park and adjoining corridors. It also aims to reduce killing of elephant (zero) in buffer zone/corridors i.e. out of park and protect buffer zone (250 Km²) from illegal extraction of forest resources (decrease by 80%). It also helps for conservation of other endangered species (tiger, rhino, dolphin, gharial etc.) which frequently use buffer zone/corridor. The project is going to extend the successful stories of Community Based Anti-Poaching Units (CBAPUs) which was implemented for the Asian elephant conservation in the corridor between Bardia national park, Nepal and Katarniyaghat wildlife sanctuary, India with the support of IEF in 2017. The specific objectives of project are:

- To involve village youths in community based anti-poaching units by behavior change conservation awareness campaign.
- To organize regular anti-poaching activities and safely chasing of wild elephant from settlements.
- To engage and motivate other community members in community based anti-poaching operation.
- To establish CBAPU network for the sustainable running of anti-poaching operation with active support of stakeholders.

Specific activities during the period

1. Formation of CBAPU: The conservation and development activities are being implemented by forming 19 Buffer Zone User Committee (BZUC) in the surroundings of park area i. e. buffer zone. The CBAPU are playing crucial role as a sub-committee of BZUC for the protection of forest resources, illegal collection of timber and other natural resources from community forest, poaching of wildlife and safely rescue of problematic animals. Within these 19 BZUC, 104 CBAPUs are actively engaging in wildlife conservation, where 2406 youths are affiliated. Of which, 1281 are males and 1125 are females. Regular interactions were organized with 24 units (650 members) for the renew of members and committee members. The members are frequently leaving village for the searching of job in the city or foreign country, so the regular interaction with the committee members helps to aware new members on the importance of elephant conservation and working modality of CBAPU.



Photo: Interaction program with newly reformed CBAPU members

2. Behavior change conservation awareness training: 22 behavior change conservation awareness were organized where 657 CBAPU members were participated. Active discussion was made after power point presentation on elephant behavior, conservation issues, conflict mitigation measures. Similarly In collaboration with Zoo outreach organization, India, 3 days TOT on elephant behavior and conservation were organized where 35 participants were participated including community leaders, CBAPU member, park frontline staff, NTNC field staff and school eco-teachers.



Photo: CBAPU members participation in TOT, organized by Zoo outreach organization with the support of NTNC

3. Patrolling and logistic support: The youths mostly organized patrolling in the forest areas to prevent the poaching and illegal extraction of resources. We are regularly providing transportation, communication and snacks support while doing patrolling. The other logistic support like mobile set for communication (4 sets), track shoots (220), bi-cycles (25) and torch light (15) were provided by National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) and Bardia National Park (BNP). These types of supports motivate the local youths to conduct patrolling and minimization of human wildlife conflict. With the support of IEF, seven bicycles were provided to CBAPU sub-committee located in the conflict and poaching prone area. Mr. Jack, who is working for human wildlife conflict minimization also supported 8 mobile set for the timely communication with park authorities and among the members. Some CBAPUs are also well equipped by GPS and camera but are not able to support all CBAPUs due to lack of financial resources.



Mobile phone distribution with support of NTNC



Cycle distribution program to CBAPU members.

4. Monthly meeting: CBAPU sub-committees regularly organize monthly meeting by representing members from all the village/tole. The mainly discuss on major achievements made by each CBAPU, difficulties face for the antipoaching campaign, issues and current conservation challenges. In some meetings BZMC and BZUC chairperson, chief warden of BNP and NTNC staffs were also attended. They also identified some important strategic location for the future patrolling and awareness program for the conservation of elephant and other wildlife. These units have not any regular budget for the organization of meeting and office management. The BZUCs have allocated their office room for the organization of meeting and one cupboard for the safely keeping of documents. Our small support on stationaries (pen, register, letterhead, diary etc.), communication, tea and snacks seem very helpful for the regular organization of meeting and interaction with neighboring CBAPU and other stakeholders.



Photo: Special visit of park office in meeting of CBAPU



Photo: Office building of one CBAPU, constructed with the support of fund for the tiger

5. Public awareness: 19 conservation awareness sessions were organized with school students and community women members where 643 local people were participated. Similarly, 31 park visit programs were organized after having the awareness session on wildlife conservation. In the park visit program, 589 people including Journalist, local elected body, CBAPU members, women group members got an opportunity to see different types of habitat and wildlife. Most of the participants had a first-time opportunity to visit the core area of park.



Photo: School students with elephant kits

6. Special day celebration: World elephant day (August 12), World wildlife day/CBAPU day for Nepal (3 March), Wildlife week (April 17-23) and Health camp were organized with the active participation of CBAPU members. Street rally and art program were organized in world elephant day. Cultural program and street rally were organized while organizing CBAPU day. The high-level delegates honorable minister-Ministry of Forest and Environment, parliament member, Deputy Director General of Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) highlighted government commitment to enhance the local economy through tourism and minimizing human-wildlife conflict. More than 1500 people were participated including community leaders, school students, CBAPU member, members from local government and senior officers from DNPWC. The program was organized by CBAPU network, Bardia with the support of BNP, NTNC, WWF Nepal, ZSL, local partner organizations and Ujyalo Nepal. Similarly, CBAPU members celebrated 24th wildlife week by organizing elephant worshipping and highway clean up program. The elephant worshipping program helped to interact between elephant and local communities, especially school students. It also highlighted the cultural importance of elephant among local communities. The 35 km part of major (East-West) highway of Nepal passed through the Bardia National park and elephant frequently cross those part in three places. Vehicle and passenger passing through highway throughout traces in the highway and park. The highway clean program was organized by active participation of 70 participations from different local stakeholders: Bardia National Park, Nepal army, NTNC, CBAPU, Ecotourism Development Forum (ETDF) and Nature Guide Association (NAGA) members where more than 300 kg of wrapping plastic and bottles were collected and safely disposed. On 11 March 2019, a free health camp was organized in collaboration with the local hospital and stakeholders where CBAPU members were voluntarily involved for the facilitation of patients and organized awareness session on elephant conservation. More than 1000 local community, especially, elder citizen and women

were benefited from the health camp. Similarly sports tournament were organized among the different CBAPU sub units.



Photo: Football team of CBAPU

7. Interaction with stakeholders: Importance of wildlife conservation, youth role in wildlife conservation, wildlife habitat dynamics, mitigation measures of human-elephant conflict and escaping techniques from problematic animals were discussed and key role of each participants were discussed by the end of program. In total, 470 people were participated in the interaction program with different stakeholders. These interactions were very helpful to aware on the governmental provision for the compensation process of elephant damage and legal fine and punishment for the illegal killing of elephant. The local government is ready to support for the capacity enhancement of CBAPU members and construction of electric fence and watch tower to minimize the human wildlife conflict which is located adjoin the park and corridor forest.



Photo: Interaction program with political leaders and security forces

Describe any activities that differ from the original proposed actions and explain the reason for the change

No change in any activities whereas additional activities are being implemented with the support of BNP, NTNC, local government and DFO.

Conservation outcomes for elephants, other wildlife, habitat and human communities, and list major findings and accomplishments to date:

Following outcomes are achieved with the support of CBAPUs:

- No any killing record of elephant, rhino and tigers in the Bardia National park and its surrounding.
- CBAPU members regularly monitored problem causing wild animals (mostly elephants) and helped authorities on their efforts to minimize human-wildlife conflict.
- No any human death and injury by elephant in 2019.
- Rescue of 22 problematic and orphan animal (deer, leopard, snake, birds) by CBAPU members
- CBAPU members regularly organize patrolling in the buffer zone community forest which covers almost 1900 ha and stop for the killing of wildlife, illegal extraction of timber and construction materials (sand and gravel) whereas still significance threats from fire, grazing and collection of fuelwoods.
- Timely communication with park authorities, community leaders and security personnel for informing the movement of problematic elephant and illegal activities in the buffer zone forest.
- Illegally kept dead wildlife body parts (mostly deer species) were collected from 7 villages and piled up in park office premises.
- With the support of CBAPU members, park authorities control more than 28 feral dogs which injured and killed deer in the forest.



Photo: Electrocuted elephant was rescued with the support of CBAPU members

Approximately how many humans/communities are/were impacted by your project?

- Although 2406 youths of 104 CBAPUs are involved in conservation activities, this project has directly facilitated for the mobilization 650 members of 24 units in collaboration with NTNC and BNP.
- 1232 community members, including school students and women were participated in elephant awareness program.
- 2680 community members were participated in the special event celebration whereas 470 community leaders and forest staffs were participated in interaction program.
- The indigenous tharu community youths are empowered for the conservation of wildlife and natural resources available around their surroundings.

Describe any problems discovered or that occurred during this grant period

We did not face any problem whereas other CBAPUs and community leaders have requested for the support of anti-poaching program in their respective area. We were unable to support other CBAPU due to our financial limitation. Communities have demanded for the support on repair and maintenance of electric fence. The existing fence can run properly if we can repair batteries and energizer, and allocation of spare wire and other materials.

Was your project successful? State short and long-term goals that you are using to evaluate your accomplishments.

The mobilization CBAPU for elephant conservation seems very effective. Our continuous support is needed as they do not have any regular income source for the mobilization of members in patrolling, organization of meeting and purchase of basic patrolling materials. The growing number of elephants are safe in buffer zone and corridor forest. The human casualties from wild bull are minimized but still significant loss of crop and property damage are happening. If there is provision of regular fund for the maintenance of electric fence, such conflict can be minimized.



Photo: Small herd of elephant in grassland of Bardia National Park.

Based on this Project, what is the “next step” for this project and does it have implications for future conservation actions?

1. Strengthening of CBAPUs and awareness program for the conservation of elephant in critical places: Continuous efforts are needed for the seeking of support from local organization for the sustainable funding of CBAPUs and conflict mitigation measures such as electric fence. The massive level interaction with BNP, political parties, district line agencies, journalist, hotel owner, members of BZMC and BZUC is essential for the sensitization of elephant conservation and seeking support for the future sustainability of CBAPUs. School level conservation awareness (art competition, quiz context, talk program, street rally, sign campaign, street drama, painting, tree plantation, trash collection, exposure village, conservation sports) help for the massive dissemination of elephant conservation message and conflict mitigation measures among the wide number of community members and children.

2. Degraded Habitat restoration: The forest patches surrounding park are handed over to local communities as Buffer Zone Community Forest (BZCF) to provide the basic forest products for the local communities and wildlife habitat extension. The communities are more focus on extraction of forest resources whereas habitat is degraded from repeated fire, high grazing pressure and invasion of unwanted species. I have applied the project proposal for IEF 2020 funding cycle entitled "Mobilizing Community Forest User Groups for the Elephant Habitat Restoration". The goal of the project is to mobilize the members of Buffer Zone Community Forest User Groups (20 BZCFUGs, 3000 households) for the restoration of degraded forest habitat (2700 ha) in the frequently used corridors (3 routes) by wild Asian elephant (120 elephants). It will demonstrate the showcase on habitat restoration and human elephant co-existence by mobilizing local communities in the critical corridors.

3. Documentation of human elephant conflict mitigation measures: The successful stories of human elephant conflict mitigation program will be documented. Similarly, the traditional approach for mitigation measures will be published which will be useful for the adoption in the new conflict prone area. In the next year, we are planning to establish 15 km electric fence to minimize the frequent movement of elephant in villages.

4. Human elephant conflict assessment: The regular assessment of human elephant conflict will be assessed and the status of conflict from 2015-2019 will be analyzed. The rapid response team will be mobilized for the safely chasing of elephant from the village in corporation with CBAPUs, security forces and park authorities. The mitigation measures will be adopted for the minimization of conflict and timely medication, skilled development training and additional income generation program will be conducted for the elephant victims to provide relief from the elephant damage.

Provide at least one human interest story

The chairperson of Suryapatuwa CBAPUs, Niroj Yogi said, " We used to involve birding, fishing, teasing of elephant and extraction of forest resources. Now after the community based antipoaching campaign, village youths have realized the importance of forest conservation for the habitat of elephant and other wildlife. We safely chase if any bull elephant come to village for the searching of stored grain and paddy land during the scarcity of nutrient forage in the forest and park.

In 500 words or less, summarize the progress and results achieved

Wild Asian elephant is distributed in 19 Terai districts of Nepal. The estimated population in Nepal ranges from 150-200 individuals, as there is no any population survey carried out in Nepal to know the actual elephant population. Most of the elephant are found in the protected areas. The survival of elephant around protected area is more vulnerable while moving from one protected area to others. In recent years, human elephant conflicts are major threats and resulting retaliatory killing and poaching in some extent. Around 120 wild Asian population frequently dwell in Bardia National Park (located western Terai of Nepal), of which 50-60 population migrate between Banke and Bardia National Parks, its buffer zone and neighboring protected areas of India. In the past, frequent records of elephant killing were recorded in the buffer zone and corridor by electrocution and gunshot. So, village youths are mobilized in wildlife conservation by forming community based anti-poaching units (CBAPUs) since 2009 in buffer zone of Bardia National Park and corridors. Now, 2406 youths are affiliated in 104 CBAPUs which surround the park and corridor, of which 24 units are supported for the elephant conservation and safely chasing of problematic elephant to protect the life and crops of local residents. During the period, 22 behavior change conservation awareness training were organized for the 657 CBAPU members. Similarly, 1232 local communities are benefited from the elephant conservation awareness program whereas 2670 local communities were participated in the CBAPU day, wildlife week, world elephant day and free health camp. With the support of different conservation partners, logistic and snacks supports are being provided for the motivation of village youths in regular patrolling and control of illegal extraction of forest resources. Bicycles were provided for the 7 CBPU members with the support of IEF. They are regularly organizing monthly meeting for the sharing of their problem, well communication and developing plan for the next month. Interaction programs were organized with leaders from the corridor and buffer zone, retired security personal living in buffer zone and corridor, journalist, hotel entrepreneur, forest staffs, local elected members and official from India's protected area with the aim for seeking their support on conservation of elephant and other wildlife. CBAPU members have collected illegally kept wildlife parts from around 400 houses, rescued 22 problematic and orphan animals, controlled 28 feral dogs causing injured/killed deer

species, safely chasing of wild bulls from agricultural land and control for the illegal extraction of forest resources with the support of park authorities, security forces and local communities. No any killing record of elephant and human in the project area whereas significant loss of crops and property are recorded. Additional supports are urgently needed for the timely repair and maintenance of electric fence to protect the crop from elephant damage.

Organizations associated with this project

Following organization have regularly supporting for the strengthening of CBAPU activities:

- Bardia National Park
- Shiva dal Battalion (armed security forces)
- National Trust for Nature Conservation
- Ujyalo Nepal
- Buffer Zone User Committees (BUCs)
- Buffer Zone Management Committee (BZMC)
- Buffer Zone Community Forest User Group (BZCFUG)
- Community Based Anti-poaching Units (CBAPUs)
- Nepal Police
- Urban and rural Municipalities

Financial report

Attached separately

Five high resolution digital images

Attached separately

Video

Attached separately

Has your project received any media coverage?

Covered by local media (FM, newspaper and TV channel)