

Getting along with Elephants in *Sumatra, Indonesia*

Sally Walker

Sick and Tired !

ZOOS' PRINT readers are probably sick and tired of reading reports of these active learning educator workshops! Even I, P.I. of the projects, must confess that I can't even bear to proofread these reports now. My attention spans about one paragraph, if that, and then wanders to thinking about something to eat perhaps, or another career choice definitely, or what to wear today. If I feel like that, how are our readers managing? Although the theme and taxon groups change, the basic material of the games and activities sound exactly the same.

So for this report I decided to take over and see if I can make the document a little more interesting or, at least, different. Our poor Marimuthu spent the New Year's day in the office writing up this report. Even he has changed the format a bit, but it is not enough for me. The same old tension, impatience and finally rage torment me as I read of the agenda and introductions and various games and dramas.

If you are on site, running the workshops, it is not so bad, no matter how many times you do it because your parental instincts take over and you see each workshop as a brand new creation. And it is new, because it is in a new place with new trainees involved with different responses. Still when I have to go and monitor these workshops as is the duty of the P.I., I have many bad moments (hours, days), exacerbated by the fact that we never now conduct anything in English.

Or maybe it is just me, an old curmegeon who never liked innocence over black humour. But when teaching about Human Elephant Coexistence, everybody has to have a certain tolerance of black humour or they would never make it through a workshop. There is really nothing at all entertaining or funny about HEC and even HECx, yet within no time at all, our participants are creating dramas and mock town meetings, stories, debates which are just hilarious. Some of the dialogue is so funny that it cannot be properly delivered, as participants are falling all over one another with laughter ... at themselves and the totally unfunny situation. This is therapeutic I think !

Talent scouts for film would do well to attend our workshops as observers. Some of the actors in the dramas, just ordinary folks -- teachers, ngos, forest rangers, local people (potential and actual victims) give such amazing performances in these short skits I am sure they would be snapped up as potential cinema and t.v. stars!

So what am I complaining about having to visit exotic countries rural areas and sit around laughing a lot? Well I will maybe get to that, or maybe I should just appreciate my opportunity to be there as P.I. without having to do any of the dog work and with the ability

to sneak off my room and hide out with my computer or a book during the tedious parts.

Background:

Let me remind readers who just started reading these reports that these "active learning" teacher-training workshops were introduced to us in 2003 by Dr. Tom Naiman, lead author of the first iteration of this genre of workshop, Teachers for Tigers. Tom and his team spent eight years at Wildlife Conservation Society WCS, International Programmes (off and on) developing the Manual of activities which was centered around Tigers. Tom had contacted me from time to time with some questions about tigers in India and people working to save them and I gave some information. Tom popped up one day (via email) stating that the Manual was complete, funds had been raised and they were looking for a partner to help them deliver the teacher training workshops. There was a strong hint that the partner should be Zoo Outreach Organisation. Despite my adventurous spirit, I can be deadly conservative sometimes and I almost refused this great offer to work with one of the most active and prestigious zoo/wildlife society ngo's in the world, at their expense and with us calling a lot of the shots and adding our own ideas.

So we conducted two workshops, one in Coimbatore and one in Chennai with Tom and his assistant Nalini Mohan. We learned to introduce and conduct the exercises and to bring our own teaching elements into the mix. Then for the next workshops, with the help of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, we took over. We still asked Tom and Nalini to come and run the workshops for some time but we did everything else. Soon it occurred to me that the model could easily be adapted to other species and themes which required education of this nature -- effective and fun -- and we adopted and adapted from then on.

So began our immersion in active learning, targeting species that we were working on in some way, such as Hoolock Gibbon, Sloth Bears, and, now, not just Elephant Conservation or Human Elephant Conflict as a theme but Human Elephant Coexistence ... not a straightforward theme ... often a controversial theme.

Never a time do we go for a workshop when I don't think "THIS TIME, we are going to be attacked. THIS TIME, it is not going to work. THIS TIME, participants are going to say "HOW DARE you tell us to coexist like our ancestors did, and to take personal responsibility for our survival, and to be careful, to give right of way to elephants, to avoid confrontation". Yet every time, so far, we are heroes, and there is humor, good will, hilarity and total acceptance of our methodology. **Go figure!**

HECx EdTrain workshops all over Sumatra, 1-12 December 2009

R. Marimuthu and Sally Walker

The 4th series of 'Getting Along With Elephants- HECx which is the 5th iteration of WCS-inspired active learning workshops was conducted by Zoo Outreach Organisation outside of South Asia for the first time. We've conducted them in India, Bangladesh, and Nepal with one scheduled for March 2010 in Bhutan and possibly Sri Lanka in future. Normally we won't go outside South Asia for fear of conflict with other NGO's, particularly western NGOs which we can't bully so easily. When we got an invitation from FFI's Sumatran Elephant Conservation Programme via Heidi Riddle, our Promoter, Mascot and Cheerleader, we forgot our principles and agreed. Not only that we even have agreed for Thailand, also Heidi's doing. Heidi also knows a little about elephants !

Cutting to the chase, the objective of these workshops is to train local people who can play an educator role (teacher, ngo, forester, ranger, local official, etc.) in HEC localities to lead local people into changing behaviour that puts them in harm's way, to behaviour that avoids confrontation altogether if possible and therefore avoids conflict.

This is controversial because (we have observed through survey) people living in HEC areas might have become a bit careless, which is, (we believe) a product of government overkill with compensation, provision of mechanistic (which are easily abused) methods of running elephants away, and reassurance of help during conflict. We feel this reassurance is unwarranted as it creates a false sense of security when no government can provide protection to every possible case of conflict, round the clock and throughout the year. The department can't even be expected to protect at that level but people *do* expect it and become furious when the forest department doesn't come through, often enough, taking it out on the elephants. (It is a bit like airport security to prevent terrorism, only worse!) Also the mechanistic methods of deflecting elephants are quickly understood by our clever elephants who learn ways to thwart these obstructions.

Unfortunately some of these methods also inadvertently put weapons in the hands of irate villagers, who can ramp up the current on electric fences and literally fry an elephant. The less said about the track record of translocating elephants the better, but one cannot leave out the fact that any mechanistic method has the potential for harming, possibly fatally, the elephant and also for making the elephant very angry which is dangerous for human beings. No method is perfect. There is actually no solution in sight.

ZOO's method also is not perfect but if followed, it has some potential to reduce conflict by avoiding confrontation. It **promotes coexistence with elephants** (which is actually a form of solution) by

teaching various behavioural and biological facts about them, which aids in understanding their psychology, convincing people of the intrinsic worthiness of elephants and of their unbeatable strength. It **stresses wildlife conservation and habitat protection** by teaching about elephant decline and ecosystem degradation and theft which (we hope) would instill a more sensible attitude in the youngsters who are taught by participants. It also **teaches old methods** which have been used by villagers when they had no help at all, which promotes coexistence.

The hoped for result is **less conflict** and therefore **less death, injury and destruction** for elephant, habitat and homo sapien.

These workshop were hosted by Flora and Fauna International - Sumatran Elephant Conservation Programme (FFI-SECP), and their CRU in Tangakhan near Medan, Saree near Aceh and Bengkulu. *See the map on our website.

We gratefully thank our sponsors and collaborators for the Sumatra HECx workshop

**US Fish and Wildlife Service,
Asian Elephant Conservation Fund
Ministry of the Interior, USA**



**AG Zoologischer Garten Köln / Cologne
Zoo, Germany**



**Columbus Zoo Conservation Fund,
Columbus Ohio**

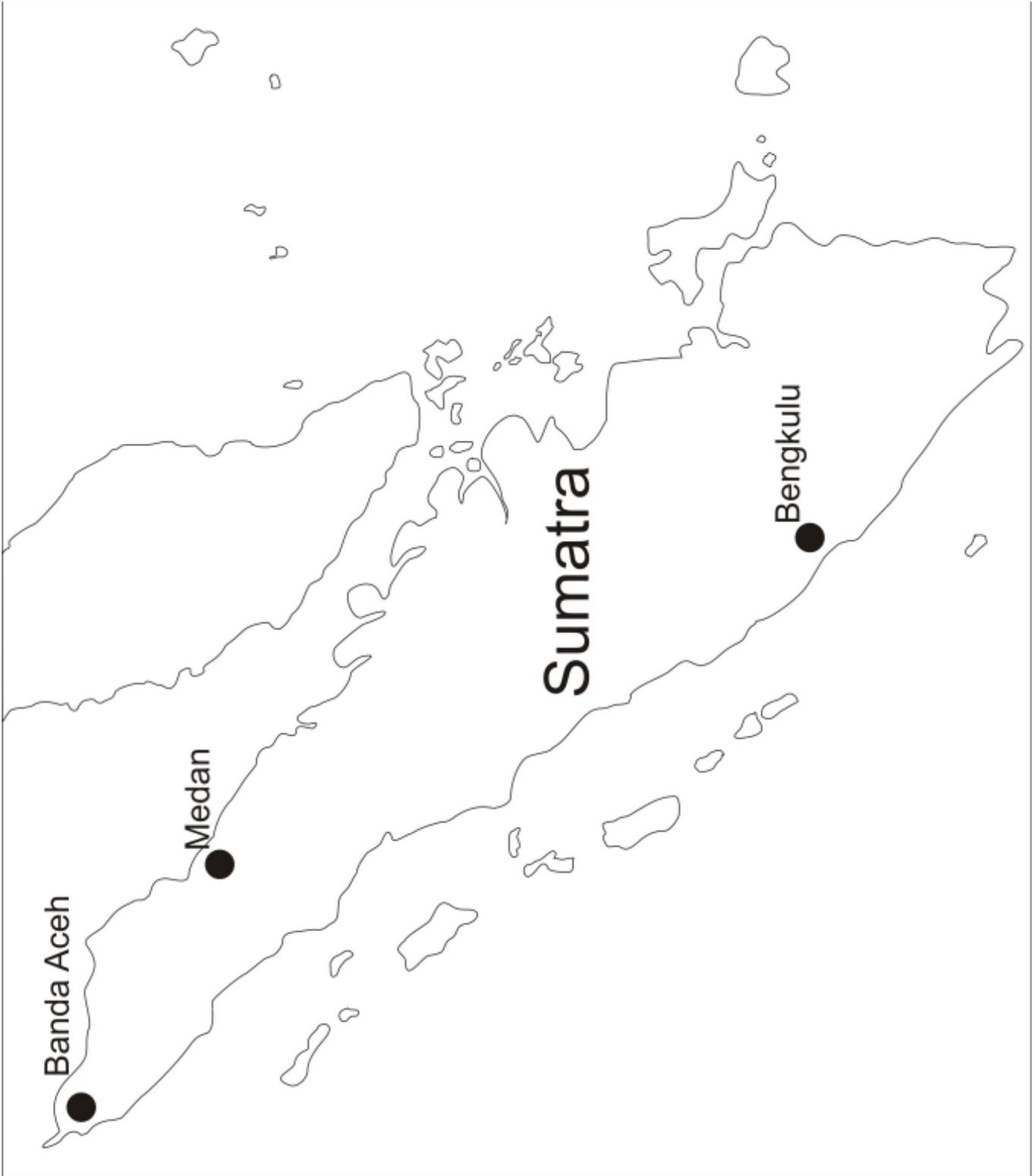


**Universities Federation for Animal
Welfare, UFAW**



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HECx Sumatra Workshop personalities

Sally Walker

Wahdi Azmi, Programme Manager, Fauna & Flora International - Sumatran Elephant Conservation Programme (FFI-SECP). Wahdi is a Veterinarian also which is helpful monitoring associated **CRU, Community Response Unit** elephant programmes and camps. We met Wahdi via email through Heidi Riddle. When we asked for people who could be trained ahead of time to take care of planning and ground-level logistics as well as teaching, Wadhi nominated **Harmita Desmerry, Education & Awareness Manager (FFI-SECP)** and **Kaniwa Berliani**, (affectionately called Wawa), **a Teacher specialised in Environmental issues**.

These two Sumatran educators were invited to the three HECx workshops conducted in Bangladesh by **B.A. Daniel and R. Marimuthu**. Their status was Intern Trainees and with each successive workshop they took part in teaching, packing, unpacking, distributing and packing again a very large amount of educational materials. With this experience in hand, they were very much in control of things when we joined them at the first Workshop, held at the Jungle Lodge in Tangkahan Village, from 1-3 December 09. **Edy Sunardi**, associated with the CRU Camp there was contact person and local organiser.

Throughout the 3 workshops, participants were Sumatran-speaking only, so everything had to be translated by Merry and Wawa with help from Wadhi and our Marimuthu. Marimuthu lived in Brunei, South East Asia for some time and was fluent in Bahasa. This was very helpful to the rest of us from ZOO as well as our Sumatran partners.

There was a good crowd of participants, liberally peppered with Aceh CRU people who were hosting the next workshop near Aceh at a government training facility. Halimatussa'diah (Iep) as contact person. The Aceh CRU folks were all totally into these workshops, jumping into activities such as childrens games, drama, painting displays, mapping, role play and all the other techniques we use to teach people to teach meaningfully.

What's that? Teach meaningfully ...? That's "active learning". Get people to relax and have fun while they learn - it works great. They bond emotionally with the theme, the objective and the methodology so that information sticks with them but, more importantly, behavioural and attitudinal change also takes place.

But I must say something about the Jungle Lodge in Tangkahan Village. Tangkahan which means place of transit has been declared an ecotourism area and is managed by the villages Namo Sialang and Sei Serdang. Before, locals misused the forest for their own livelihood and were rewarded by ecological

events such as destructive floods that caused them to wake up. In 2001 the two villages worked together, creating rules to prohibit people from exploiting the forest. They set up a body called Lembaga Pariwisata Tangkahan, LPT or Tangkahan Tourism Institute and took help from Indecon and FFI in managing the whole ecosystem of Tangkahan.

On the way to Tangkahan which is about 2 plus hours from Medan, where you fly from Jakarta, Wadhi explained that it was adjacent to a 1 million ha. national park. What he didn't say is that the Jungle Lodge where the workshop was to take place is like a Magic Kingdom out of a movie set. It is situated right inside the Jungle beside a fast flowing river up on a cliff face with nothing to see except beautiful vegetation, birds, primates, amazing geckos, monitor lizards, and other wildlife while you eat your lunch on the verandha. To balance this luxury, you sleep to the accompaniment of huge but playful rats galloping in the eves of your hut and bats batting around, and mice chewing their way into your room and into your backpack (it happened to Heidi), and no lights after midnight. Not so easily seen are Sumatran orangutans, tigers and elephants... but they are there. Gibbons also can be heard calling and occasionally seen swinging through the trees.

So the workshop went on in the main lodge which had a roof but no walls so that the park paradise was continuously on view. It was a magnificent setting, and once I got a flashlight and a couple of big bottles of Coke Zero, I calmed down and was almost tolerable to be around. I don't see well or even walk well on rough ground so the lack of good light made me more prickly than usual.

The enthusiasm of these participants of the first workshop never waned ... we admitted to them that they were the BEST ever at the validictory. The group from Aceh who were putting on the 2nd workshop stayed till the end of the first one, meaning they had to drive day and night to reach the workshop they were hosting!

The II Workshop took place about two hours from Aceh, 5-7 December 09 at a government training centre. As a venue it was fine and the workshop went very well, but nothing could beat Tangkahan.

Unfortunately I had to miss the Bengkulu workshop but got an opportunity to see some of Banda Aceh tsunami impact, which I will never forget. My driver lost ten family members and got goose bumps whenever he mentioned it. He took me to see the ocean liner which was washed up 3km on shore during the tsunami. It is being retained where it is as a memorial to those who were killed. Villages which were destroyed there have come back again and people go about their lives as if the presence of a giant ship next door was nothing unusual.

HECx Workshop content
R. Marimuthu and Sally Walker

In previous reports various activities in the workshops and how people respond have been described. Even for different countries and activities, these descriptions are almost the same. For this issue they are summarised in bullet points with very short descriptions. These are many of the techniques we use in every workshop adapted for different countries, cultures and conservation issues.

- **Assessment tools:** there are several assessment or evaluation tools in the manual which are designed to help organisers/educators determine how much



Citizens debate is one of the exciting activities of HECx, in which participants come to understand different points of view



Habitat loss is a cause of HEC which is dramatised by participants here



Finger puppets are useful for Mini dramas in small spaces, even at table in schools

and whether participants learned. At least three of these exercises are taught. They can be used in any teaching setting about any topic.

- **Species information:** factual differences between Asian and African elephants are covered as well as more details of Asian elephants which enable people to better understand their behaviour.



Mapping activity helps participants understand past and present distribution of elephants

- **Mini-drama:** help participants understand the complexities of human and elephant behaviour in the context of HEC/HECx. Participants have just half an hour to organise their drama, costumes, props, etc. which has to be done in mime ...no speaking. Workshop tools include a drama kit of and guidelines booklet for their future use with their target audiences.

- **Country Chapter:** a general overview of important elephant habitats is included in the manual to reinforce a lecture by a local expert.

- **Learning to Live with Giants-HECx:**

A Power Point presentation takes participants through a logical train of thought about HEC, encouraging them to think in new ways and establish



Participants are given different events in elephant history to illustrate, explain and then post on a wall with others

priorities. They are challenged to decide what is more important, a sugar cane crop or their life or life of their family. The obvious truth is that you must be careful with your life and person. Only if you are alive and whole, you can replant a crop and rebuild a house. This simple truth eludes villagers who often disobey simple common sense. Many deaths are due



Participants make their own masks based on the drama their group develops and their role in it

to unnecessary careless action; this has been documented. Our programme attempts to teach people not to take risks with their lives.

- List of MANY “Ele Do’s and Ele Don’ts” learned from people living in HEC areas are included in the Power point.

- **Elephant Characteristics:** this activity elucidates the power and acumen of elephants.

- **Former and Current elephant Ranges:** this mapping activity illustrates of decline of elephants over time with implications for immediate future.

- **Illustrated history of Asian elephants:** drawing exercise to illustrate the close relationship between human beings and elephants since ancient history



Participants viewing their poster exhibition on history of human-elephant relationship



People masks are designed afresh for almost every country-this one is specifically a Sumatra girl

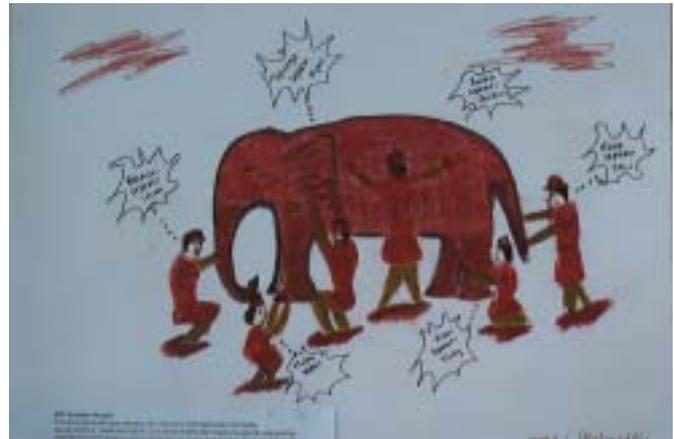
- **Asian elephants in Asian Culture:** group exercise to find examples of how elephant has been and is used in ancient and modern culture



Rescuing elephants illustrated by participants in their group’s drama



Role play illustrating farmers perspectives on elephants - these activities help in understanding



The six blind men and the elephant story narrated by drawing by a participant

and helps participants see the point of view of vastly different people and even elephants.

- **Presentation by Guests:** normally, there is a guest presentation by a local official who is expert on HEC or wildlife issues.

- **Energizers:** whenever we need to boost the energy level of participants we conduct an "energizer", a short activity involving all which is both physical and mental and (ideally) related to the theme.



Role play-politicians perspectives on elephants

- **Asian Elephants and Asian Perspectives:** people have different views about elephants depending on their experience. This activity involves role playing



Wrist bracelets, called Rahki's, symbolise brotherly love but are used in our workshops to make a commitment to conservation

- **Human-elephant conflict mitigation with community participation:** role-playing exercise to unravel conflict issues. The village committee member hears their views and put together at the end and introduces a scheme as a solution to solve HEC.

- **Mock conference on protection and management of HEC affected areas in Indonesia:** role play with each group representing Human Elephant Conflict areas. The group supplied with workshop recommendations suggests measures to improve management and protection of HEC affected areas.

- **Tips for planning an education programme:** how to conduct different kinds of education selecting from



Short dramas are used to illustrate different concepts - this one explains why a village is attracting elephants

workshop, manual, 100 Ele-Kit education packets, drama kit and elephant finger puppet kit given out.

- **Personal commitment:** The participants are asked to write two commitments on a pledge card to do within six months time, using their training.
- **Education packets:** At the valedictory participants are presented with a certificate, 100 education packets in their language and a drama kit to help kick start their use of the training.



All participants get 100 educational packets with their certificate so they can start teaching groups immediately



Sally Walker explains about the usage of finger puppets



Host's Report on HECx Workshops Sumatra Harmita Desmerry* and Kaniwa Berliani**

The workshops started from 1st Dec and ended 12th Dec 09, conducted in three different locations in Sumatra namely, Tangkahan North Sumatra, Saree, Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam and Bengkulu provinces. These chosen locations are areas affected by human-elephant conflicts which bring about suffering to both human and elephants. They were selected based on the surveys conducted several months before in each location, which were also part of the HECx education project. This followed our commitment made in a workshop in Bangladesh attended by the writers, 2 educators from Fauna & Flora International Sumatran Elephant Conservation Program (FFI-SECP) from 22 June-2 July 09, organised by ZOO IEF and WTB (Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh).

The objective of this workshop is very relevant with our Conservation Education Program in FFI-SECP. It is focused on "A Teaching Guide on Human Elephants Co-existence" to be used as a tool of delivering conservation education messages to people living in human elephant conflict areas in Sumatra through various active teaching and learning methods. The Guide Book was written by Sally Walker and B.A Daniel and produced by Zoo Outreach Organisation, but for one chapter, Indonesia country chapter. This was written by Harmita Desmerry, Kaniwa Berliani and others of FFI-SECP's Team. An Indonesian version was also provided for using in Indonesia. There are two themes in this Teaching Guide namely HEC and HECx. HEC is human-elephant conflict and HECx is human elephant co-existence, both are important items to reach the objectives two of which as follows:

1. To empower teachers of all kinds (school, NGOs, forest and wildlife personnel, etc) to confront and teach about HEC and HECx, partially.
2. To demonstrate innovative teaching and learning techniques designed to change human attitude and behavior for better future.

The objectives were delivered through various interesting and fun activities through, drama, games, interactive discussion, etc., that later will be transferred by trainees as educators and then shared with students, colleagues, family, etc. The manual demonstrates active teaching and learning techniques to make changes in human attitudes. This will not give a total solution, but some ways as partial solution to live harmoniously with elephant. The main material is Teaching Guide book and Elephant Etiquettes Booklet, the first one containing all reference material/subjects to be delivered in the workshop or any classes which will then to be conducted by participants with their own target groups and the second is about do and don't concerning with human-elephant conflict and coexistence or some etiquettes on how to live in harmony with elephants. Then the supporting items are elephant packages and drama packages. There are several items available in these packages; finger puppets, rakhi, bracelet, placard, and instruction card for using those items. Drama packages contain several characters representing by using masks. We provide both Indonesian and English version. Indonesian version

was mostly used in all location. We also provided participants with a natural friendly bag made of jute and batik which was filled by stationary used in the workshop such as pencil and note book, besides a t-shirt with elephant pictures and workshop information and stickers.

The participant came from various institutions consisted of schools (teachers), local organization, local rangers around Tangkahan and Sei Lapan area, village representative, 29 people of invitee plus 3 FFI -CRU Tangkahan staff, so totally 32 participants. All of the participants came from human-elephant conflict areas and they are familiar with confronting human-elephant conflict problems and most of them used to give conservation education lessons in their place with different target groups.

Special notes on the participants is that they were very active and creative, so that made the workshop 'live'. They also paid full attention and actively involved in the workshop. Good types of participants. At the end of the workshop, Ms. Sally Walker from ZOO, appreciated that it was the best participant and workshop from the whole HECx workshop ZOO ever conducted in Asia (12 workshops). All the best trainers we had in this first workshop, because besides the appointed two trainers for this workshop from ZOO (BA. Daniel, Marimuthu) and two from FFI (Harmita Desmerry, Diding M. Ichsan and Kaniwa Berliani), it was also involved some experts from FFI, Wahdi Azmi, from ZOO, Sally Walker, and from IEF Heidi Riddle. This were the good team work that could help each other to share the skills of delivering the lessons and handling problems.

We made the activity into detailed agenda each day systematically so that the participants could easily understand the teaching and learning method in this training to conditions on site, some revision or adjustment was made every day. The changing agenda was flexible to accommodate the condition of the workshop. Active teaching and learning methods are very interesting and effective. By using this method people were not bored and they could remember the lesson better since doing it through such an activity, games or drama, participants would remember it for a long time, even for good. It would be easier for the participant to later convey to their target groups when returning home to their bases. It seems that there was no boring lessons in these three days workshop in Tangkahan. We conducted t evaluation after workshop which is the best way to find our weakness/ mistake in the already conducted workshop. In general, the workshop was successful based on the comments from participants, and through the evaluation we conducted.

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