

Integrating teaching and folklore theatre to promote HECx in Tamil Nadu, India

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Introduction

International Elephant Foundation IEF funded a project to conduct 10 Human Elephant Coexistence street plays, two days teacher-training workshops and 2 school education programmes in Erode Forest Division, Tamil Nadu. Zoo Outreach Organization conducted several teacher-training workshops in India (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal), Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Indonesia and Thailand. This had an escalating effect in which participants of the training have created momentum in their institution or organization or on their own and as the educators they trained, educated more students.

The Erode district, Tamil Nadu forms the meeting point of



SWORD - Adhiyamaan Kalaikuzhu, Krishnagiri



"Karakattam" one of the folklore arts in this region

Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats separated by Bhavani River, which include the Sathyamangalam Wildlife Sanctuary and Tiger Reserve. The human-elephant conflict has intensified in this district as the number of crop raids has witnessed a sharp rise. The human settlement bordering the

Western Ghats foothills seeing severe human elephant conflict due to expanding human population that results to industrial and agriculture growth fragmenting elephant habitat in this area. More human elephant conflicts are recorded over the years and it has been increasing

year by year. There was no permanent or all-encompassing solution to HEC due to its complexity and variety but that our approach would be through an age-old and imperfect method, coexistence.

Creating awareness to increase the tolerance of the people towards the animal is very important for both human and elephants well being. So it is the need of the hour to conduct awareness programmes for the community who live in the conflict areas through different ways of teaching how to take responsibility for themselves, learn ways to avoid confrontation and promote self-protection by following some simple do's and don'ts. So we decided to conduct 10 street plays, a teacher training workshop and two school education programmes to achieve our project.

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Audience at Bagawathy Nagar, Sathyamangalam

Street play

Street plays are informal folklore theatre, an effective medium of education and impact to the public about the message we convey to them. The advantage is it makes long lasting effect on audiences. Mostly social activists have used it in India and other countries for centuries. So Zoo Outreach Organization wanted to try this communicative medium for sensitizing people on Human Elephant Coexistence. Really we are new to this field.

Street play production & rehearsal

Adhiyamaan Kalaikuzhu runs by the SWORD NGO, Krishnagiri was selected to perform the play. They have very much focused in to social issues, but not in wildlife. So we felt it is necessary to have a production camp to train them. Accordingly the



Elephant facts

camp was held for three days. We hired a trainer from Chennai to assist with us to write a script on HECx and also include other folklore arts in this drama to make it enjoyable for the audience. First the script was done and rehearsed. The script covers song on HECx, elephant facts, tips for the people who can do or not do in the HEC areas, the importance of growing alternative crops which

elephant doesn't like and also including other folklore arts thappattam (beating drums), kolattam (stick dance) and karakattam (water pot dance) for enriching the play.

Selection of the villages

The next important aspect of the drama was selecting appropriate villages for the drama performance. With the assistance of Sathyamangalam Environmental and Wildlife Association, we visited several villages in Bhavani Sagar, Sathyamangalam and T.N. Palayam forest ranges of Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary and selected ten villages, which



Insisting the importance of growing alternative crops in HEC areas

experiences more human elephant conflicts. They are: 1. Kodepalayam 2. Karithottampalayam 3. Ramapalayam 4. Pudhupeerkadavu 5. Periyakallipatti 6. Malliyampatti 7. Puliyangkombai 8. Kembanaickenpalayam 9. Vinobha Nagar and 10. Bagawathi Nagar. Either local people's representatives or village forest committee presidents were met to further selecting the venue and other logistics. All of them were very supportive and extended their possible help during the visit and also performance.



Not to do in elephant range areas



One of the village heads thanks the organiser for the street play



Mini drama - A scene from Habitat loss

Street play performance

The street plays were held from 8-12 August 2015. Two plays were performed in each day in the evening. It is due to most of the villagers are daily laborers and return after the work only in the evening. More than 500 villagers watched the street play in each village. At the end of each show we gave a hand out which contains information on do's and don'ts in HEC areas. The villagers were evaluated randomly about the street play performance and mostly commented that they understood the concept of the drama and the importance of human elephant coexistence.



Ms. Geetha, District Eco-club coordinator talks to the teachers during inaugural



A teacher draw a picture based on elephant timeline card

Teacher training workshop

Objectives:

The objectives of the workshop are:

- To train the teachers, create awareness to students and community the facts about Asian Elephant thereby made them appreciate the species.
- To train or educate them living in or near elephant

habitat of Erode district to improve their attitudes towards wild elephants so as to avoid confrontation and conflict whenever possible.

- To adapt exciting, innovative educational tools which would be effective in bringing about attitudinal



Teachers finding out former and present elephant range countries through a map activity



Teachers looking at the elephant history drawings made by them

and behavioural change among them.

- To train 35-40 teachers, 100 students through two-school awareness programmes to use these tools in order to bring about understanding the cultural and ecological importance and conservation problems of Asian Elephant.

- To train target groups to use information for education of all kinds more effectively, by disbursing it in a variety of more attractive, effective and meaningful styles through active learning techniques.

- To create a momentum which would continue and build upon it long after the workshops. Prior to the workshop the following activities were done:

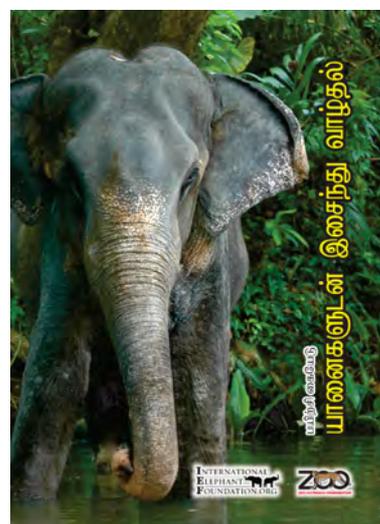


Reviews and Revision of Education Materials

First of all, the Elephant Teaching Guide and Ele-kit packet items were reviewed completely and revised with updated information.

Pre-visits

Three pre-visits were made to meet the local coordinator, Sathyamangalam Environment and Wildlife Association SEWA, Erode, National Green Corps Coordinator, District Eco-club coordinator and Chief Education Officer to chart out



the venue, selection of the teachers from HEC area schools and other logistics. During the trip, we finalized the school teacher's list, which covers most the human elephant conflict areas and decided to have the training at Gobichettipalayam due to easy accessibility of teachers.

Developing and Printing of Education Materials

The updated and revised elephant teaching guide and ele-kit packet items were developed and printed in local language. The education kit contains a variety of active learning modules or techniques to reach a wide range of ages and educational and social levels, including illiterate or non-English speaking persons.



Revised Educational materials



One of teacher groups busy in making properties for mini drama

Teacher training workshop

A two-day's HECx teacher-training workshop was held at Bharathi Vidhyalaya Matric. Higher Secondary School, Gobichettipalayam of Erode district on 25-26 August. Thirty-five teachers participated. During the workshop they were taught about assessment tools, elephant facts, mini dramas pertaining to elephant conservation and human elephant conflict and solutions, former and current elephant range countries,

illustrated history of Asian elephants, elephants in our culture, do's and don'ts in elephant areas, general information about forests in India and Tamil Nadu, Project Elephant and Elephant Reserves, how to plan an education programme with a demonstration etc. At the end of the second day they were awarded with participation certificate and 50 ele-kit packets which will be used to practice their training immediately at their school with

the students or others. During the workshop the participants committed to do awareness programmes using the training techniques and the materials distributed in the workshop.

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Teacher with finger puppets



**Adhiyaman
Kalaikuzhu**

