



Global Giving Joint Report:

Project No. 33222 - Conserving Wild Asian Elephants

Project No. 37368 - Investing In Communities to Conserve Elephants

Dear sponsors,

Project 37368 continues the work started with project 33222, so in this installment we will be reporting for the final time on schools from the first round. Please visit project 37368 to continue receiving updates:

<https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/investing-in-communities-to-serve-elephants/>

This project has two major components:

- 1) *We want to understand how elephants and people share space to better understand what sorts of risks people perceive elephants to present vs. the risk they actually do.*
- 2) *We want to support communities willing to work together with us by providing a direct benefit – educational resources for local schools.*

Update on Component 1



A study published this year by scientists in Sri Lanka found that up to 70% of the elephant habitat in the country is outside protected areas, and nearly two thirds of this consists of land with people living and cultivating on it. The study also found that elephant herds are a

This elephant herd is on private land. Outside protected areas, elephant herds are active mostly at night.

bit more restricted than male elephants (1). Probably, this is because male elephants can tolerate more disturbance than herds with calves.

The area around the Wetahirakanda corridor is a good example of this. Our camera traps show that elephants are regularly using areas that people also use, including herds with young calves as seen in the photo. This is both good and bad. On the plus side, it means that herds somehow do manage to survive and get around on these landscapes. But on the negative side, it exposes them to risks such as open wells, wire snares and other hunting devices.

In January of 2019, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with faculty from the University of Colombo School of Computing to collaborate on this project. With help from the engineering students will automate the process of classifying what each picture shows so that we can see when and where people, elephants, and other animals are active. This will help cut down on the time required to analyze the hundreds of photographs and enter the data.



Sameera, Kumara, and Ravi of the Udawalawe Elephant Research Project fix a camera on to a sturdy tree. We are pleased that over more than fourteen months of activity, not a single camera was damaged or stolen by people. We take this as a testament to the value of our work to build relationships with each community by supporting schools.

Update on Component 2



Yogi Patel with pre-school teachers in December 2018. Photo courtesy of Mrs. Patel.

In December, we were pleased to host Mrs. Yogi Patel and her daughter, Ms. Nikita Patel. Mrs. Patel has now retired from her role as the head of Kinderhouse Montessori School in San Diego, and is on the Advisory Board for Trunks & Leaves. In addition to taking part in our initial fundraiser, KHM has donated a wealth of Montessori teaching materials to the six schools supported in our first round. Ms. Patel got to see all of the schools and meet the teachers, who also participated in a crash course on Positive Discipline. They ended with a tour of the National Park and the Elephant Transit Home in Udawalawe. You can read more about their experience on our blog:

<https://asianelephant.wordpress.com/2019/02/11/the-patels-visit-udawalawe/>

In January 2019 we distributed the donated materials to all the schools and started preparing to work with the next batch. We have started a new survey of villages in the area to identify more schools and communities to work with. We expect to complete this assessment by mid-March.



Top row: Ms. Gunawathie of Dilena Tharu preschool and Ms. Lakmini of Pubudu preschool with their new desks and chairs. Bottom row: At the start of the school year in January, all six schools received Montessori materials donated by Kinderhouse Montessori School, together with books, pencils and other supplies (Photos: Hamish John Appleby).

References

1. Fernando P, de Silva MKCR, Jayasinghe LKA, Janaka HK, Pastorini J (2019) First country-wide survey of the Endangered Asian elephant: towards better conservation and management in Sri Lanka. *Oryx*:1–10.