



Time Sensitive: Ending Human/Elephant Conflicts

THE ISSUE.

Not only is poaching a serious problem threatening the future of elephants, but the rise in human-elephant conflict is adding to the challenge. The causes of this rise are numerous, but the major contributing factors are:

- The loss of elephant safe havens from poaching forces elephants to search for safety in areas with higher human populations.
- Environmental changes have limited elephants' access to food and water, causing elephants to invade villages searching for resources, which leads to an increase in confrontations with humans.
- Geopolitical conflicts have led to an increase in human-elephant conflict as human refugees are forced into the elephants' natural habitats.

OUR STRATEGY.

Our strategy addresses the issue of human-elephant conflict by relocating elephants from areas where these conflicts exist to areas where the elephants can live a safe and natural life. When relocation isn't feasible or not in the best interest of the elephant, we will support efforts to limit these conflicts through the construction of barriers or safe migration corridors. Although human-elephant conflict is a global concern, given the explosive population growth, environmental challenges, and geopolitical conflicts, we have chosen to focus our efforts in the geographic region of Asia with a specific interest in Myanmar and Bangladesh. Our goals are:

- Relocate wild elephants at high risk for poaching.
- Relocate privately owned elephants that are subjected to daily cruelty and used as performance animals.
- Relocate elephants that face certain death from villagers who must protect their crops and livelihood as well as support efforts to build barriers between the elephants and the villagers to minimize these conflicts.
- Relocate elephants along the Bangladesh/Myanmar border where the increased exodus and settlement of Rohingya refugees has caused a dramatic increase in human-elephant conflict and poses significant danger for both the refugees and the elephants.
- Relocate elephants near Myanmar's Andaman beaches where new commercial developments are threatening the elephants' habitat and safety.

NEXT STEPS.

To further these efforts, The Elephant Project signed an agreement with the Myanmar government to assist with the relocation of elephants as outlined above. We are continuing our preparations to execute this project, but relocating elephants is a complicated process and therefore requires extensive planning. It is critical that we move forward in a very methodical manner and address all concerns that relevant stakeholders might have with our relocation efforts. The primary concerns when relocating elephants include the following:

- *What is the intent of the move?* In other words, is relocation **truly** necessary to protect the elephant(s) and/or any humans that may be involved? As part of this, will the new location be **more** safe and secure than the original location?

- Can the issue be addressed by other means such as new fencing, enforcement activities, or other methods?
- Will the relocation be done in a way that ensures the elephant herd and family units can be maintained and not separated? (This is important to ensure the proper integration of the elephant(s) into the new location).
- Can the safety and security of the elephants and those working to relocate them be guaranteed during the move.

We have spent several months preparing for the next phase in our relocation effort and have assembled an amazing team of elephant experts who will travel to Myanmar in November to finalize the relocation plan. The key components of this trip will be:

- Liaise with potential stakeholders to develop necessary agreements. Stakeholders include government officials at national and regional levels and in relevant local villages; and in-country NGOs to ensure proper collaboration and best use of resources.
- Develop an inventory of elephants under consideration for relocation and for future physical assessment and veterinary care before relocation. From this develop a list of priority animals for relocation.
- Evaluate suitable locations for the elephants to be relocated.
- Recommend alternatives to relocation if not in the elephant's best interest.
- Evaluate potential routes throughout the country as safe passage and logistical rest camps, base of operations for walking groups, and other transportation methods deemed necessary.
- Identify relevant staff and roles - veterinary team, rest stop camp managers, medics, walk supervisors. Government liaisons, logistic manager, etc.

Once the team has finalized their in-country assessment, a comprehensive plan will be created that lays out the scope, logistics, partner organizations, and cost of executing the relocation effort.

Additionally, our elephant relocation project will be included as part of The Elephant Project's documentary that is currently being filmed. The documentary highlights the challenges Myanmar's elephants face and the root causes of these conflicts. The documentary team will accompany the relocation evaluation team in November. This will be the third in-country filming trip of the documentary team.

For this effort to be successful, our team must visit Myanmar in late November when the weather is conducive to conduct the research necessary to finalize our elephant relocation plan. Failure to act in November will result in waiting another year to finalize this plan. Time is of the essence for these threatened elephants so it is imperative that we act now.

I hope you will consider helping The Elephant Project by making a tax-deductible donation today. Your donation will help fund this critical next step to saving thousands of Myanmar's elephants, as well as countless humans whose lives are negatively impacted by human-elephant conflict.

I look forward to your response.

All the best,



M. Dane Waters
Founder and President

