

Sharing Space: Co-existence through Understanding

Mitigating the Human-Elephant Conflict through Awareness and Education on Elephant Behaviour, New Approaches to Human-Elephant Co-existence and Economic Benefits for Communities



The **Public Interest Law Foundation (PILF)** is seeking funding for the project titled **“Sharing Space: Co-existence through Understanding”** to address the Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) which is a spiralling environmental and social problem in Sri Lanka. PILF together with Experts on Elephant Behaviour wish to pilot test this project that will address the HEC through a new approach, over a period of two years, in a selected village in the Anuradhapura District where HEC exists.

As you know, the HEC affects both elephants and humans. Loss of lives is common for both, while elephants suffer further due to habitat loss, and humans due to injury, property and crop damage.

Since 2019, it is recorded that on average, 125 people and 370 elephants have died annually in Sri Lanka due to the HEC. While threatening the Sri Lankan elephant—an iconic species and part of our national heritage, which is of immense environmental and economic value to the country, the HEC drives rural communities into poverty and socio-economic instability.

As various conflict resolution efforts made by relevant agencies (eg: electric fencing, elephant drives, distributing elephant crackers) do not seem to have effectively addressed the HEC so far, PILF together with Experts on Elephant Behaviour proposes to mitigate the HEC through a **new approach**. This is by promoting **Human- Elephant Co-existence by understanding elephant behaviour**. The project proposes to create awareness on this new approach while bringing economic benefits for the communities.

We invite you to support us to pilot **“Sharing Space: Co-existence through Understanding”** that will help in building trust between the two species, elephants and humans, who are struggling for survival in a shared space. We are positive that the project will ease the HEC and lead to a conflict free, safe and stable future for both elephants and communities affected by the HEC.

Together, let us make **“Sharing Space: Co- existence through Understanding”** a model for human-elephant co-existence in Sri Lanka and beyond.

Project Activities:

The key project activities that will be implemented over the two year project period are as follows:-

- Holding continuous meetings and discussions with Community Leaders, communities and relevant government agencies for the successful implementation of the project.
- Holding 2 Training of Trainers workshops for 10 Community Leaders at the commencement to create awareness on (a) mitigating the HEC by understanding elephant behaviour, adopting new approaches of HEC resolution and human elephant co-existence; and (b) developing guidelines, procedures and training for community-based elephant viewing tourism activity bringing economic benefits for the communities.
- Holding 20 monthly awareness workshops/small group meetings with communities to create awareness on elephant behaviour and adopting new approaches of conflict resolution to mitigate the HEC that will lead towards human elephant co-existence.
- Carrying out 2 field visits to show and educate the communities on community agricultural fences within the Anuradhapura District.
- Developing and introducing community-based elephant viewing tourism activity bringing economic benefits for community members from elephants and their habitats in discussion with a selected group of community members and hoteliers.
- Documenting success stories and a plan for scaling up the pilot project.
- Carrying out project monitoring and reviews.

Your support for the project will directly contribute to:

- reducing loss of human and elephant lives and injury;
- reducing property and crop damage faced by rural communities thereby stabilizing their economic conditions;
- conserving the Sri Lankan elephant an endangered species;
- preserving Sri Lanka's cultural and environmental heritage;
- achieving Sustainable Development Goals 15 (Life on Land), 1 (No Poverty) and 12 (Responsible Production and Consumption) *inter alia*; and
- most importantly converting the elephant from an economic liability to an economic asset for the HEC affected people which is key to long term sustainability of co-existence.