

এটা হাতী বন্ধু অভিপ্রায়

AN ELEPHANT HEAVEN

HABITAT PROJECT (EHHP)

by Osom Educational Trust (OET), (1986), North Guwahati, Assam,
&

Faculty Environmental Group (FEG)



Baby Elephant struggling in a garden trench
Gajah: Our Heritage Animal

OUR BASIC AIMS

- To prevent any “electrocution” deaths of elephants by dangerously sagging electrical lines, through temporary innovative measures for this winter 2018-19 with the efforts of the community, and to press APDCL for permanent steps “in the area of EHHP activity” and other areas.
- All round improvement of the Elephant Habitat in “area of EHHP activity” as a long-term initiative (Phase 1: 10 years).
- To prevent/minimise human elephant conflicts through awareness in a holistic manner and through pragmatic elephant friendly preventive steps and by creating impenetrable Natural Barriers in sensitive areas.





“ELEPHANT HEAVEN” HABITAT PROJECT (EHHP), OF OSOM EDUCATIONAL TRUST (1986)(OET) NORTH GUWAHATI, ASSAM

Introduction:

As a result of degradation, encroachment and fragmentation of forest areas of the habitats of elephants, due to human activities, there is a steep rise in human elephant conflicts. Both humans and elephants are being maimed/killed in the process. In this grim scenario, the lost habitats of the elephants need to be restored/supplemented and rejuvenated as much as possible, as a long term solution, along with short term mitigating measures.

(1) The Initiators:

The initiators of the “Elephant Heaven” Habitat Project (EHHP), is Osom Educational Trust (OET) along-with the Faculty Environmental Group (FEG), and envisages to undertake the above measures through its Environmental Field Coordinator, Binod Dulu Borah, (who is a reputed animal/reptile rescue and rehabilitation expert).

And

with active help and cooperation of the Department of Forest, Government of Assam

- The local school children and communities as হাতী বন্ধু

It will be the endeavor of EHHP to seek co-operation from the Tea Gardens of the area to achieve some of the basic aims of EHHP.

(2) **The Aim :** The project envisages specific immediate and long term goals in the area of activity

A : Immediate

a) To prevent all “electrocution” deaths of elephants from sagging electrical transmission/distribution lines by lowering the earth below the sagging electrical lines and other innovative temporary measures by the communities themselves with EHHP’s initiative and support, till Assam Power Distribution Company Ltd. (APDCL) raises the electrical lines properly as per electricity laws.

IT IS THE AIM OF EHHP TO ENSURE THAT NOT ONE ELEPHANT DIES THROUGH “ELECTROCU-TION” THIS WINTER (2018-19), AS IT HAPPENS EVERY YEAR, IN THE “HABITAT WORK AREA” OF THE PROJECT, OR TO MINIMISE THE RISK.

(b) To press Assam Power Distribution Company Ltd. (APDCL) to raise their electrical lines urgently as per Electricity Act and Rules as well as guidelines issued by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

(c) Protecting wells to prevent all deaths / distress of baby elephants caused by falling in unprotected wells.

B. Longterm goals :

Human Elephant conflict resolution

To prevent/reduce ‘human-elephant conflict’ by changing the people’s perceptions about elephants and their perceived ideas and feelings about elephant depredation of crops, homes, human and elephant deaths etc. – from anger to understanding and love, – from spears to bananas and tenants of the scriptures.



Electrocuted elephants in Gendhali Pothar, near EHHP work area on Dec 11, 2017
(This work area is the killing fields of elephants through electrocution)



As community's perception changes from anger to understanding and love for elephants, so will the behavior of the elephants change, gradually.

The community will be guided through awareness programmes to participate in the EHHP's - এটা হাতী বন্ধু অভিপ্রায়, in order to improve the elephant habitat,- to understand that elephant habitats are shrinking and fragmented due to human activities and elephants are forced to intrude into human habitation, no doubt, angrily.

a) Improvement of habitat

To improve the elephant habitat in the 'area of work' through continued plantation in selected areas in a big way of:

Owtengas (elephant apple, 4 – 5 thousand each year)

Elephant grass

Kako and other bamboo

Udal and Kumbhir trees

Bhimkol (a type of banana, 15-20 thousands each year), in foot hills and hills of Karbi Anlong, away from habitation i.e. plantation of the above at a major scale, every year so as to bring a perceptible change in the habitat within the next 4-5 years, with the help of the communities, and co-operation from the Department of Forest, Government of Assam.

Sources of owtenga and Bhimkol saplings are tied up for timely plantation. Kako bamboo, elephant grass is being collected from Karbi Hills through community effort.



Prickly bamboo (was used by Ahom Kings for fortification) কোকোৰা বাহ



Cane (calamus tenuis)

b) Planting of Bhimkols and other trees as above in a large scale each year, should not be construed as a deterrent for elephants to eye on ripe paddy fields and to raid them for which separate steps will have to be taken. But availability of adequate food in their habitats will make the elephants calmer over a period of time, when they come to raid the crops in the fields

Bhimkols are not part of elephant habitat though bananas grow in the habitats. But many species of trees, shrubs etc have now vanished/has become scarce from the elephant habitats and elephants are adapting their food habits to changing situations.

c) Natural barriers

To create natural barriers, not in the elephant movement corridors, but in other sensitive areas, by plantation of cane (calamus tenuis), and prickly bamboos (Bambusa Bambos). Kazi nemos can be planted to protect households.



Kazi nemu

- d. To approach the Deptt. of Forest to take up growing of cane, prickly bamboo, bhimkols, increased numbers of udal, kumbhir, owtenga and other species which are food for elephants
- e. To organize the Gaoboras of Karbi villages above the foothills to protect the forest under their protective areas from depredation specially of Udal, Kumbhir that is going on now.
- f. **To create Crop Protection Units** to divert elephant herds through powerful red lights, and other elephant friendly effective measures. EHHP have already approached Dr. Uddhab Bharali, Inventor per Excellence to come up with technological solutions to divert elephants.
- g. To set up a nursery for raising prickly bamboos (Bambusa Bambos).

(3) **Tenzing Bodosa : Embodiment of a spirit of love of nature**

World's first Certified Elephant Friendly Tea Garden by World Wide Fund for Nature – India (WWF) Located in the foothill of Bhutan in the Kokrajhar district in Bodo Territorial Council (BTC), Assam, Tenzing's tea garden/farm in 25 acres of land reflects his philosophy : **If you show love and kindness to**



Nature, - Nature will reciprocate the same.

Tenzing's tea garden/ farm is located in an Elephant Country, - in a major elephant corridor. He did not put up any barrier in his garden to prevent movement of animals, especially elephants. Alongwith herds of elephants, hornbills, wildpigs, peacocks and a variety of birds is common sight inside Tenzing's garden.



(4) Progressive Tea Gardens:

Many progressive gardens allow movement of elephants through their gardens without barriers. They have recognized the fact that the gardens have been established in traditional elephant areas and corridors which existed for ages before the Britishers usurped these prime forest lands for tea gardens.

It will be the endeavour of EHHP to sensitise the tea gardens to extend free passage through to the elephants, to remove all electrical/RBT fencing etc and to make the trenches safe for baby elephants, in short, **to take a compassionate and loving attitude towards Gajah, the traditional Heritage Animal of India.**



Electric wires and sharp barbed wires along the Guatemala grass cultivation in a tea garden

Elephant baby with trunk lacerated by RBT fencing in a tea garden in Sonitpur District, currently in the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation in Kaziranga. The baby is in extreme distress and pain. Chances of survival is slim as the trunk is essential for elephant survival.





(5) **Area of work :**

At the foothills of Karbi Hills in Balijuri, Lung-sung Chapanalala, Kothalguri, Udmari, Nanoi, Rangamati, Borjuri, Semena, Salona, Nopani, Di-juvalley, Sonajuli, Langkang, Kalibhati areas of Nowgong District and contiguous areas of Karbi Hills.

Area : 300 sq.km or so.

This is an elephant country. **Many elephants have died in this area through electrocution in the past.**

(6) **Some activities since April 2018 upto June 2019**

(a) Planting of about 9,000 bananas including bhimkols, 150 Owtengas near Chapanalala with the co-operation of Green Guard Nature Organisation, an NGO of repute, in April 2018.

(b) Creating safe passages in all areas of sagging electrical lines through community's effort by motivating and by extending necessary support, - like lowering the earth under

the sagging electrical lines thus creating adequate space for elephants to move safely under the sagging lines and by other innovative methods by the communities.

Total number of "elephant passages" made safe under sagging electric lines for crossing by lowering the earth underneath the sagging electrical lines/and by innovative measures by communities directly by raising the sagging electrical lines with bamboo post and wooden brackets as a temporary measure:

An amazing 280 sagging lines (in Sep.'18)

This probably is the first such innovative effort in the country by the community to save elephants from "electrocution deaths" as a temporary measure, atleast for a year, before APDCL raises the height of the sagging electrical lines as per the Electricity Act and Rules and Guidelines issued by the MoEF and CC.

(c) To plant 4,000 - 5,000 owtengas (elephant apple) and 15,000 - 20,000 bhimkols, kako bamboo, elephant grass etc by April, May 2019 in two selected areas.

(d) To create atleast 500m of natural barrier to protect sensitive areas from elephants. Prickly bamboo, cane will be planted which will create the barriers in 2-3 year's time.

(e) To create crop protection units with necessary support.

(f) Distribution of হাতি বন্ধু caps to school children and community workers to foster bonds.

(7) হাতি বন্ধু '**Hati Bondhu' Movement (Friends of Elephants Movement)**

It is our aim that our small effort towards improvement of the elephant habitat and human animal conflicts, finds a chord in others in other areas of conflict and a network of হাতি বন্ধু s are formed, helping each other towards a shared goal,- reducing human elephant conflicts.

For any information, contact persons:

Pradip Kumar Bhuyan

Senior Conscious Citizen

Ph. No (M): 99540-61758

email Id : pkbhuyan2014@gmail.com

Joydeep (Roon) Bhuyan
Nature lover and wildlife photographer
Ph. No (M): 99540-40020

Binod Dulu Borah
Ph. No (M): 70028-81182

For details of 'elephant petition' for redressal of various issues of wild elephants before Hon'ble National Green Tribunal, Delhi as filed by P.K.Bhuyan, Kashmira Kakati, Joydeep Bhuyan, kindly refer to www.issueofnortheastindia.org

[Next bulletin will be published in Oct 2019 where work done in one year will be listed for review. Also the objectives for next 1 year]



Plantation Photos

Students of FHSS North Guwahati planting Bhim Kols in April.'18



Plantation in Jun.'18 (Binod Dulu Borah, Environmental Project Coordinator of OET, seen in the picture)





Students of Faculty H.S.S (FHSS) North Guwahati digging under dangerously sagging lines



Local school students lowering ground level under dangerously sagging electrical line



Digging under dangerously sagging electric line in garden areas



Cleaning of jungle for 'plantation' of bhimkols, owtengas etc. - community's involvement:



Community's own innovative measure – Bamboo post and wooden bracket to raise dangerously sagging lines.



Carrying the post by community



Community's own effort.



A dangerously sagging line



Sagging line inside tea garden after being raised: community's effort



Hati bondhu cap logo



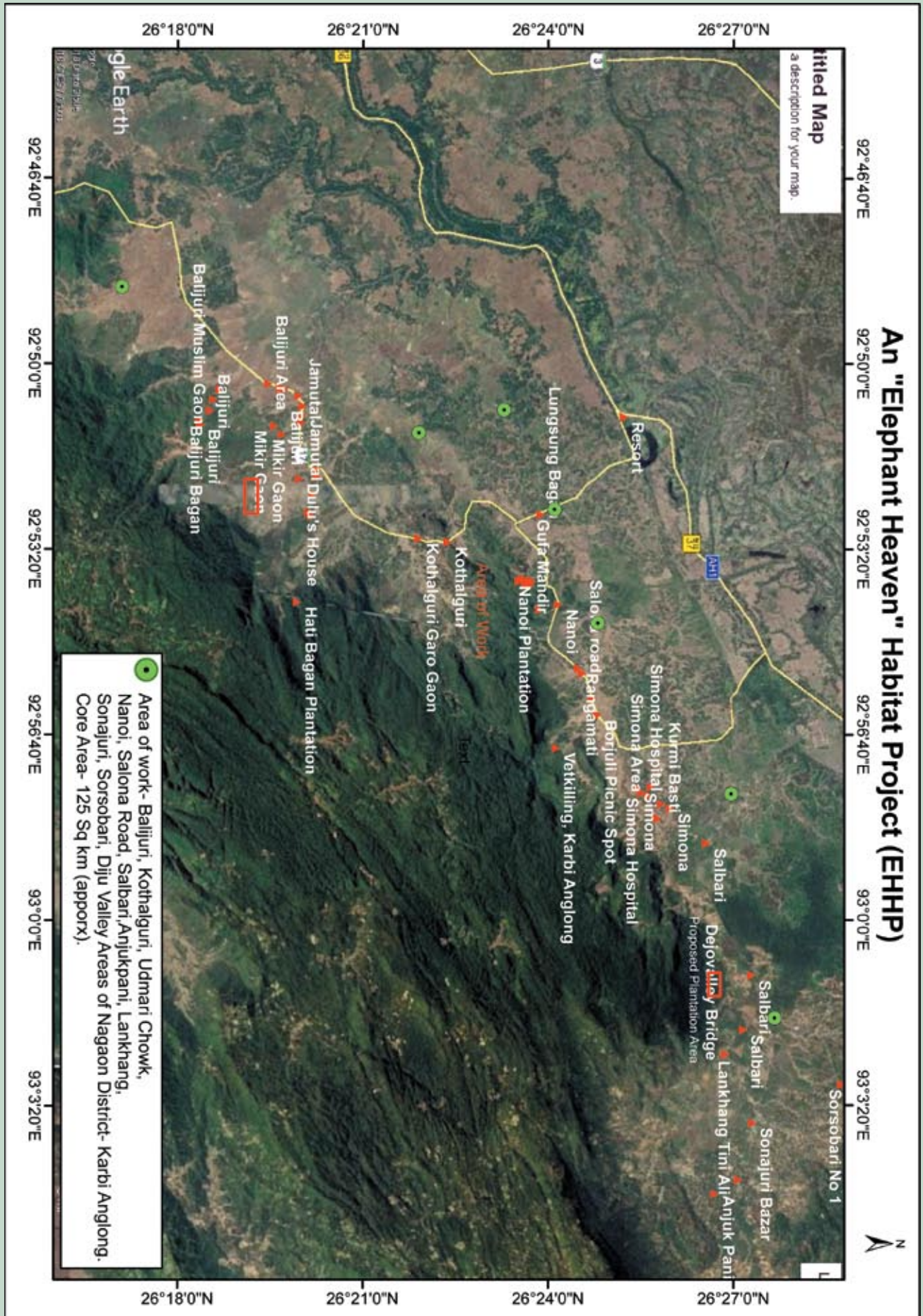
Distribution of "Hati Bondhu caps" to local children



Plantation of bhimkols on 30.09.18 Women and children taking active part



We shall overcome!



Let হাতী বন্ধু fraternities unite and work together

এটা হাতী বন্ধু অভিপ্রায়