

Living in the city

[Life](#), [Home](#)



Living in the city can be a daunting task, with all the rush, crowd and the traffic. But it has its perks too. Like for instance the overall quality of life or the undeniable availability of multiple choices for any merchandise. Another 'Perk', if I may add, is how the glitter of the city lights effortlessly blinds the numerous adversities surrounding them. As the city breathes comfortably, along with all the hustle and bustle, suffering in silence and oblivion are the rural areas sharing space with the gentle giants. Only a few miles to the north, surrounding the lush green forest patches lies the little villages of Northern Bengal. For these people elephants are an important part of their lives where the feelings towards these animals is characterized by deep ambivalence, which has both political and economic dimensions.

Generally during peak harvesting season's wild elephants raid crop fields mostly during night and early morning hours, when people are less active and alert. Locals usually inform the forest managers once elephants are sighted in their area and largely depend on their assistance to control the situation. For the community, elephants fall under the jurisdiction of the Forest Department, and hence responsible for their management. But to manage this enormous level of conflict it needs a quick response and a well synchronized operation run by skilled personnel, which most of the time is not possible due to countless reasons.

Farmers spend sleepless nights guarding their crops from the wild Elephants. " If I do not remain awake what will I eat?" said Bishnu Kumar Tamang, resident of Chenga village of Northern Bengal. He has been facing severe issues of crop depredation by wild elephants. When it comes to harvesting, there is hardly anything left for him or his family. All his crops gets either

eaten or destroyed by the elephants. The elephant raids have become so recurrent that many have abandoned cultivation. However, recent conservation intervention has ensured that Bishnu and others in the same predicament, doesn't have to do the same.

Through support from WWF-India, cost effective, risk free and indigenous crop protection measures have been introduced among the farmers. It is designed to reduce the level of dependency and empowering communities to manage conflict on their own, with limited resources. It mainly includes the use of early warning systems (EWS) and other chilly based deterrents.

These EWS introduced, are cost effective and can be easily installed with the help of locally available tools. It requires a thin nylon rope, a door bell, an iron clamp, few nails and switches. The nylon rope is placed on the boundary of crop fields/households. One end of the rope is attached to the toggle switch of a door bell that is installed on the tree or any strong pole.

Whenever elephants try to enter the crop field/household, the rope gets pulled and the alarm sets off. This is used in combination with other chilly based deterrents. " Sleepless nights are old stories" said Bishnu, after few months of installing EWS around his house and crop field. It is therefore not surprising as to why farmers from neighbouring areas are increasingly adopting these measures, thereby sharing responsibility of managing conflict at their own level.

In the beginning, human-elephant coexistence seemed difficult in a situation growing intolerance. But these new conservation interventions have given people new light to thrive and survive. It is community's active participation

and willingness to work together towards a particular goal that has made our conservation struggle a success story today.