

BIODIVERSITY & ELEPHANT CONSERVATION TRUST

HELPING FAMILIES VICTIMISED BY WILD ELEPHANTS



Human-elephant conflicts

Due to the pressure for land caused by an increasing human population in Sri Lanka, the wild elephants are losing a greater part of their habitat. With reducing habitats, the elephants are constantly looking for food and water which has now become scarce. They come out of the jungles in their search for food and water and come upon human dwellings and cultivations and get into conflict with humans.

These human-elephant conflicts leave a trail of destroyed properties and damaged houses. Worst of all is the trail of dead humans and elephants killed due to these conflicts. Almost all the victims are from amongst the rural poor, who live close to elephant habitats. When the breadwinner is killed the poor families become even poorer. In our regular surveys we have found that most families are now destitute.

Records of the Department of Wildlife Conservation show that on an average 65 humans and 130 elephants are killed each year due to these conflicts.

When anyone is killed by a wild elephant, the Department of Wildlife Conservation has a compensation scheme. Rs. 50,000.00 is paid to the spouse or the next of kin. Another 50,000.00 is made available for the children of the victim to share. This is the amount that is given irrespective of whether there are one or many children in the family. The money, however, is not given immediately but kept in a Savings Account till the child or children reach the age of 18 years. **Therefore this is not available to the child when he/she needs it most i.e. to be able to afford schools book and equipment required for school.**

Action by Biodiversity & Elephant Conservation Trust

- The Biodiversity & Elephant Conservation Trust carried out a survey in 9 districts of the families that had the father or the mother killed by a wild elephant. Each and every family that was affected in the last 6 years has been visited by us.
- We initially compiled a list of 94 families and 141 children. Of these we selected 72 children who needed help the most. Many of these children were not able to go to school due to the lack of basic necessities like school books
- After the survey the Biodiversity & Elephant Conservation Trust made out a list of the basic requirements of the children so that they are able to go to school in 2008. (school books, bags, pens colour pencils, box of instruments etc. sufficient to last them for one year). The text books are provided by the government.
- In the last two years we have distributed packages of these of necessities to all the children on our list, before the new school year started.

- This will be the third year that we are carrying out this exercise. 22 families of those killed in 2008 have been added to our list with an additional 24 children needing assistance.

Progress

School books donated so far are as follows

2007 72 children in 8 districts for use in 2008
 2008 106 children in 8 districts for use in 2009
 2009 130 children in 11 districts to be used in 2010



The cost of books etc per child is Rs. 1,500/-(US \$ 15) This makes a total of Rs.195,000 (US \$ 1,950) to help 130 students for the year 2010.

Houses

We have built 3 new houses for the most needy families. One house is in Suriyawewa in the Hambantota district. One in Elepattuwa in the Anuradhapura district. The third in Makichchakukulewa also in the Anuradhapura district.



Messrs Bhuvu Kurian and Ajit Welihinda, have made substantial contributions towards the construction of these houses.

There are many more who do not have a proper house and need housing.

A small house as in the pictures costs Rs. 300,000 (US \$ 3,000)

Donations

This form of assistance is not a one off thing. It will have to be carried out annually. We will, during our visits, also assess the children who need special assistance with their studies and try to help them.

We need the financial assistance of well wishers. For this and for the information of the general public we have website where all our activities in this respect are shown.

Our website is www.elephantsinsrilanka.org

Your generous contributions enable us to continue helping these people in need

Donations could be made

1. By cheque made out to the Biodiversity & Elephant Conservation Trust and sent to the address below.
2. Direct to our account in the Hatton National Bank # 055 0213001
3. Foreign donations to our account in the Citibank, # 531 0074219.
CITILKLX Star 10999583

In addition the following have also kindly agreed to collect money from the donors in those countries and remit it to the Biodiversity & Elephant Conservation Trust.

USA **Ms Heidi Riddle**, Riddles Elephant & Wildlife Sanctuary, P.O.Box 715, Greenbrier, Arkansas 72058, USA. e-mail: gajah@windstream.net
NB: If the Checks or Money Orders are made out to "Riddle's Elephant and Wildlife Sanctuary" that money would be tax-deductible. There should be a note indicating that the money is a donation "for BECT Sri Lanka".

UK **Glenn Sullivan**, 4 Chequers Cottages, Whipsnade, Bedfordshire, LU6 2LJ United Kingdom e-mail gssullivan@hotmail.com

Australia: Ralph Amerasinghe, 17 Roselea Way, Beecroft, NSW 2119.
Phones; 02 98718742; Mobile - 0414630848. e-mail ralphamerasinghe@bigpond.com

Our Contacts

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We are now looking to support sustainable economic activities in the future like sewing machines for women, or bicycles for marketing produce for men, or small loans to start a small sales outlet (kade), This will be taken on a case by case basis and will depend on the funds we receive. This will ensure that they have a steady income in the future and need not be dependent on regular financial assistance.



Jayantha Jayewardene
Managing Trustee