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“Love is the essence of conflict resolution - especially between humans and elephants”

HATI BONDHU – A REPORT

A Report on the activities of “Hati Bondhu, Assam” for the year April 2018 till 31st July, 2020, particularly with respect to Paddy, Napier and Broom grass plantations for elephants, its effect in changing the behavior of elephants towards humans and in mitigating Human Elephant Conflicts (HECs) during the period of ripening of paddy in villages along with a Report on its activities after 2020.

I. Objectives: 2018–21: an overview

Hati Bondhu, Assam, is broadening itself as a **fraternity of people** to help the wild elephants who are in severe distress for various reasons, by creating Elephant Heaven Habitat Areas (EHHAs). The following objectives were fulfilled for the year 2018-20.

- i. Preparation of maps of elephant corridors, foraging areas, to better understanding and, subsequently for better management of the human-elephant conflict.
- ii. Raising of sagging high powered electric lines in their migration passages, involving community participation, which has accounted for nearly 34 cases of elephant deaths, between 2015 to 2018.
- iii. Improving the quality **of the shrinking elephant habitats** in areas of our activity.
- iv. Improving the immediate 'food security' for the wild elephants by planting (a) fast-growing Napier grass, 'Jharu' (Broom Grass), 'Tora' (Galangal) and other suitable species like pahari Kako Bamboo etc., in strategic areas as a short term measure (b) indigenous trees, suitable for elephants, as a long term measure and (c) other suitable species and paddy in strategic locations.
- v. To mitigate the human-elephant conflict, particularly during ripening and harvesting of paddy.
- vi. To create awareness on the issues of elephants, especially amongst school children.

- vii. Adequate land has been purchased for setting up a permanent office at Baghorghati, i.e., opposite of the Suwang Reserve Forest near Chapanala, along with a training center for community-based sustainable projects, workshops for sensitizing communities, etc., and a wildlife rescue center for rescued and injured wildlife in the area of operation.
- viii. Identification of a suitable area for an **Elephant Rehabilitation Centre**, to provide a haven for retired elephants of the forest department, orphaned elephant calves from the wild and neglected domestic elephants.

II. Area of present activity of Hati Bondhu, Assam

The area of present activity is from Bagser Reserve Forest contiguous to and South West of Kaziranga National Park up to Kondoli along the foothills of the Karbi Hills. The total length of the activity area is about 70km. Area of activity will be extended each year to embrace other degraded habitats and conflict zones.

III. Field Report from April 2019-July 2020: a comprehensive report

- i. A comprehensive study was undertaken to study the elephant migration passages, foraging areas and based on the data, detailed maps were created by our Field Officers under the guidance of octogenarian Hati Bondhu Pradip Bhuyan for internal use.

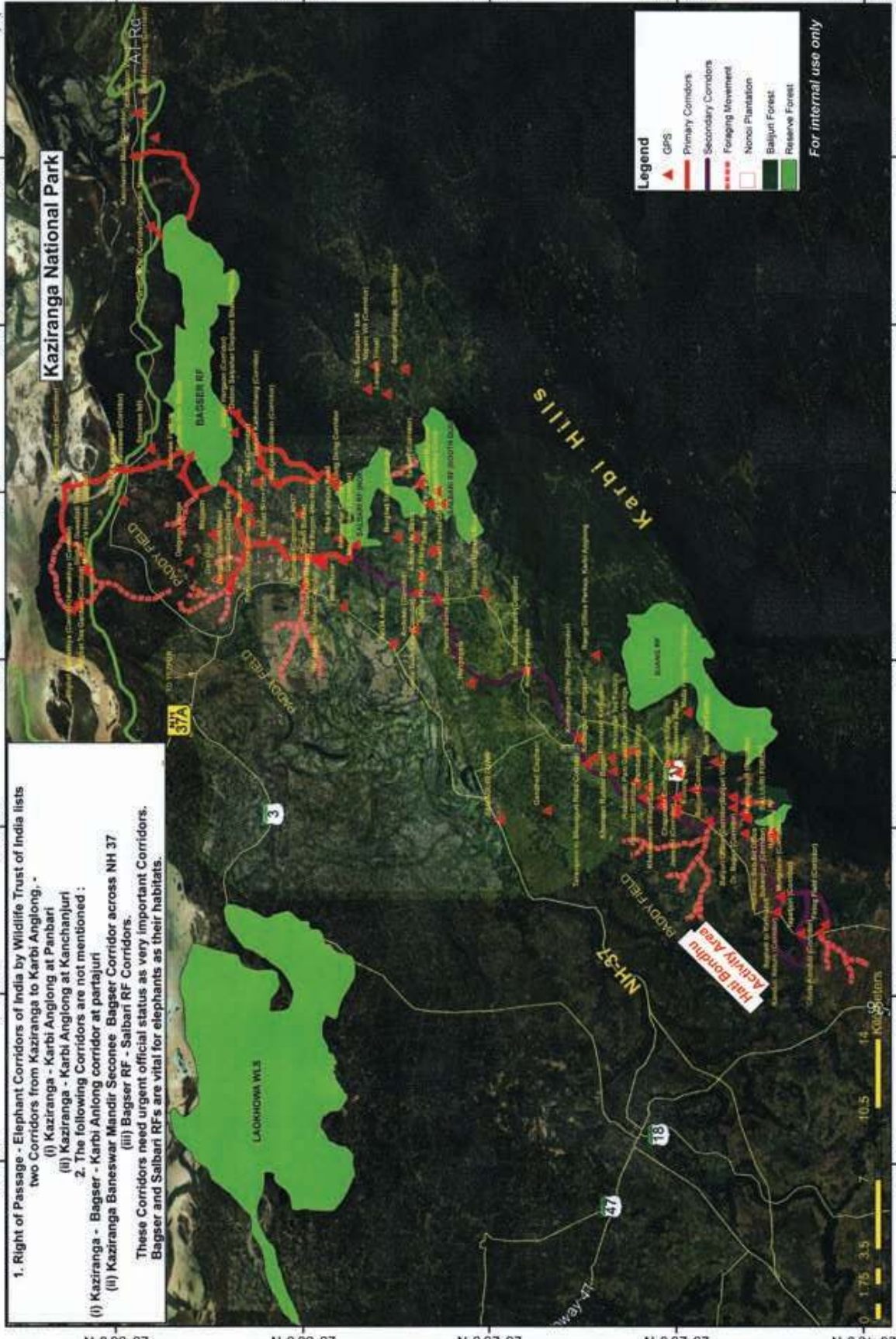


Areas covered

- a) Bagser (located southwest of Kaziranga NP to Kondoli (foothills of Karbi Anglong hills) showing important elephant corridors, foraging corridors etc.
- b) Panbari Range of Kaziranga NP to Garampani Beat House covering the Numaligarh areas.
- c) A Plantation map covering the locations of plantation areas of Napier, paddy etc.

MAP OF ELEPHANT HEAVEN HABITAT PROJECT (EHHP) AREA : ELEPHANT PASSAGES

1. Right of Passage - Elephant Corridors of India by Wildlife Trust of India lists two Corridors from Kaziranga to Karbi Anglong. -
 - (i) Kaziranga - Karbi Anglong at Panbari
 - (ii) Kaziranga - Karbi Anglong at Kanchanjuri
 2. The following Corridors are not mentioned :
 - (i) Kaziranga - Bagser - Karbi Anglong corridor at partajuri
 - (ii) Kaziranga Baneswar Mandir Seconee Bagser Corridor across NH 37
 - (iii) Bagser RF - Salbari RF Corridors.
- These Corridors need urgent official status as very important Corridors. Bagser and Salbari RFs are vital for elephants as their habitats.



Hati Bondhu Activity Area Map, Nagaon District, Assam

- ii. Low Sagging Transmission lines were responsible for a large number of electrocution deaths of elephants in Assam. In our activity field, surveys identified as the 'Red Zones' by our Field Officers led by Dulu Bora along with volunteers and community members of Hati Bondhu fraternity, raised 288 of these sagging lines in elephant corridors using simple bamboo poles. Between November 2018 to July 2020 no elephant deaths due to electrocution were recorded.



- iii. Habitat Improvement Programme: The fast-shrinking forest habitats, much of which is in decline, can be attributed to expanding agricultural land use and demand for wood and bamboo which has led to a severe loss of forest cover, resulting in huge food insecurity for the elephants. With depleting food reserves, it is imminent that herds of elephants stray in populated areas causing human-elephant conflict.

Napier Plantation – A new concept

In the context of urgent need of food supplement, we in Hati Bondhu, decided to plant Napier grass as an emergency measure to boost food supplement for the elephants. Napier grass, generally used for cattle, grows very fast. Planted in May, it will become nearly eight feet high by August or so.

A debate that Napier is not the natural food source for the elephants may arise. But the reality is that elephant habitats have shrunk drastically and the quality of the habitats have deteriorated. In Karbi Hills, bamboo, which is one of the main food sources of the wild elephants, has been destroyed by the agents of the Nagaon Paper Mill, resulting in depletion

of a major component of elephant food in its forest habitat. Although the paper mill was shut down, it will take four to five years to regenerate. Hence the introduction of Napier Grass, as an immediate food supplement, was rational.



Napier shoots to be planted

As we continued with our efforts to plant Napier, we became aware that natural species, like Jharu (Broom grass), grows in the hill slopes, and also pahari Kako Bamboo along with Galangal (Tora) in the low lying

areas, would also be excellent natural food supplements for elephants.



Fully grown Napier

Jharu, (Broom Grass) is a natural grass of the Karbi Hill and other areas of Assam. It's a favourite food of elephants. Planting of Jharu, and pahari Kako Bamboo exclusively for the elephants will be a major step towards the plantation of natural resources for elephants.

With the permission of the priest from Gufa Mandir near Nonoi garden along with community participation, Phase 1 of the plantation of Napier grass began in April 2019 along with over 15000 banana saplings, pahari kako bamboo, elephant apple, jackfruit in approximately 30 acres of land.



Members of different religions gather and offer prayers

The Napier grass, within three months, abetted by the monsoons, grew to a height of over 10 feet. Also, the elephants came regularly to eat the Napier. It was observed that the elephants did not uproot, but ate the plant a little above the base, thereby allowing a quick regeneration of the grass, creating a perennial source of food for the elephants. The hardy grass will also provide more Napier clumps for further expansion of the plantation area in the coming year.



IV. Paddy Plantation Initiative: A Community Effort

Human Elephant Conflict is increasing and the magnitude of the conflict is also growing each year, especially during the harvesting period of rice. Both people and elephants suffer, sometimes fatally, during these conflicts.



Anuradha Sarma Pujari, Journalist & Sahitya Akademi Awardee visits HB plantation site with other esteemed guests at Hatikhuli





Village folk panting paddy in love for the elephants



Village folk enjoying a meal after a day of hard work planting paddy at Hatikhuli plantation site

Hati Bondhu decided to plant paddy – rice in one of its migration routes at Hatikhuli area. It took eighteen meetings to convince the villagers of Ronghang village to allow plantation of paddy for the elephants in their land, intending to keep the herds concentrated in this area and to enable the villagers downstream to harvest their paddy.

The villagers of Ronghang village, a predominantly Karbi village, very generously gave 200 bighas (68 acres) of their paddy land for 'Sali' rice cultivation for the elephants. This unique gesture is probably the first record of a community giving land for cultivation for the elephants.

It was observed during the mapping of the migration routes of elephants in 2018 and from previous records that by mid October elephant herds arrive in jaks (herds) of twenty to twenty five at the Salbari Reserve Forest (North and South). Over one hundred fifty elephants congregate each year and except for fifteen to twenty elephants, all the herds moved to Hatikhuli and Nonoi area to forage paddy of the farmers.

Hati Bondhu planted about 200 bighas of land of paddy for the elephants in 2019 near Ronghang village bordering Nagaon and Karbi Hills. The herds stayed in and around the Napier plantation next to the rice plantation in Ronghang village. Hati Bondhu Field Coordinators removed the electric fencing and allowed the herd to enter the paddy field on October 30, 2019 for eating a portion each night. An area of about 10-12 bighas were opened up each evening for eighteen days. By November 18, 2019, the entire rice plantation was eaten by about 150-200 elephants.

The movement of elephants was restricted for twenty days, which enabled the entire downstream villages to harvest their entire crop without any conflict with the elephants. The rice and Napier plantations benefited the village communities of **Sukanjuri, Borbari, Jolah, Bamuni, Kholiamari, Pambosti, Bhoraguri, Padumoni, Samsoki, Bordol, Balijuri, Kothalguri, Nanoi, Mutiapahar, Rubberbagan** directly.

As the elephant herds moved from Salbari to Hatikhuli, the paddy fields to the North and East of Salbari RF indirectly benefited, namely **Dariguzi, Chekonee, Gohaingaon, Hatbagan, Doloni, Balibat, and Nizaripath**.

It is estimated that over 30,000 bighas (10,000 acres) of community agricultural fields benefitted from the rice and Napier plantations, the winter of 2019 resulted in setting high standards of Human-Elephant coexistence.

Activities of Hati Bondhu, Assam

Hati Bondhu Assam has planted the following till 31st July 2020 and beyond:

- i. One lakh Broom Grass
- ii. One lakh Napier Grass

The process of planting rice in 200 bighas (70 acres) of land near Ronghang village began on 16th July 2020. The Broom grass and Napier grass is being planted next to the paddy field in barren hills as additional food security in an area of about 250 bighas of community land.

Some areas of Broom grass and Napier Grass plantation of 2020 was occupied by people for cultivation of citronella and tea plantation, but had to give up due to elephant presence. Hati Bondhu activities in the areas have now secured these areas from illegal encroachment.

Hati Bondhu is also conscious of the following issues and is trying to mitigate them as best as possible.

Human Elephant Conflict is on the rise due to expanding human populations, loss of forest habitats, and rapid conversion of forest areas for agricultural and commercial purposes. Due to increasing conflicts over space and resources between humans and elephants, cruelty towards elephants have become a common sight in the landscape. Each year, humans and elephants lives are lost due to conflict and this has posed a major threat to elephant conservation in the region. Pelting stones violently, tossing chili bombs, and shooting air pellets at migrating herds are common



forms of retaliatory practices used by local communities to keep elephants away. Such forms of aggression only serve to exacerbate conflict between humans and elephants, rather than solving it. To increase local tolerance towards elephants, practices that instill compassion and empathy are necessary to help sensitize communities. In recognition of such malpractices, Hati Bondhu is committed to not only help resolve human-elephant conflict through gentler approaches but also to promote peaceful co-existence between the two. To effectively mitigate conflict, Hati Bondhu recommends using powerful white lights and loud noises to deter crop-raiding elephants or migrating herds away. The use of harmful and aggressive approaches such as gunshots, chili powder bombs, and projectiles should be prohibited.

Department of Forest and District Administration, Government of Assam.

Hati Bondhu has worked in close cooperation with the Forest Department and District Administration, as well as with the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Beat Officer at Chapanala Forest Range office and the field staff in Nagaon, Assam. Hati Bondhu strongly feels that all vacant forest areas should be planted with fast growing species as an immediate measure to mitigate the lack of foraging resources and draw a long-term plan to re-introduce species favorable for the elephants.

Such initiative by the Forest Department will be a big step in improving their foraging resources, which in turn will have a positive impact in reducing Human Elephant Conflict. Hati Bondhu is ready to offer any possible assistance in this matter. Hati Bondhu remains grateful to all the field officers of the Forest Department, and Govt. of Assam for their valuable inputs and assistance. Hati Bondhu is also immensely grateful to Jitu Goswami, MLA, Nagaon for his continuous encouragement and never ending support.



(L-R) Mr. A.M. Singh, PCCF, Forest Dept., Jatindra Sarma, Park Director and Biswajit Phukan, MLA, Sarupathar, visit Hati Bondhu sites. We are eternally grateful for their continuous support.

Elephant Rehabilitation Centre

Hati Bondhu has expressed its keen desire to start an Elephant Rehabilitation Centre for aged and rescued/abandoned wild calves, to be able to provide a sanctum for their refuge and to extend a helping hand of love and compassion to these magnificent animals.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS:

CHANGES IN THE BEHAVIOUR OF ELEPHANTS AND HUMANS IN HATI BONDHU AREA OF ACTIVITY

'Gajah' meaning elephant, a National Heritage Animal is considered as 'Gyani' (wise) and also as 'Sarabjan' (someone who knows everything) in our old societies. Hati Bondhu organized a Seminar on 26th July 2019 - the theme being Human Elephant Conflict – Love is the essence for a long term resolution. Mike Pandey, recipient of three Green Oscar Awards and other prestigious awards was a participant. Environmental Lawyer from Delhi, Sanjay Upadhya also took part in the seminar. The participants were truly overwhelmed at our approach to resolve human elephant conflicts through Love.

Hati Bondhu planted Napier Grass, Banana, Kako Bamboo etc., in April-May 2019 in the Nonoi plantation as food supplements for elephants. Also in 2018, over 15000 bananas and other trees were planted in the fringe of Suwang RF for elephants. In July 2019 Hati Bondhu planted 200 bighas of paddy near Ronghang village for elephants as a food supplement for elephants and not aiming for resolution of Human Elephant Conflict. But the spin off from the rice and other plantations for elephants have resulted in reduced human elephant conflicts.



The 'Sarabjan' all knowing elephants knew that these plantations are planted by loving humans – Hati Bondhus for them. In 2019 they reciprocated by not entering the paddy field in 200 bighas of land until requested by Hati Bondhus in November. It may sound strange, certainly not scientific, but is actually true. The elephant herds after eating through the paddy of 200 bighas cultivated for them did not go down to eat the paddy downstream. Every year Elephant herds used to go down to eat paddy in the fields and violent confrontations used to take place. Both men and elephants were injured and some died- elephants and humans alike.

Also in 2020 the elephants did not go down to eat the Boro cultivation planted in February by the villagers for their own consumption in 200 bighas land. The elephant herds, though they were in the fringe of the cultivation itself, did not enter the paddy field. Their restraint is unbelievable. In previous years the villagers used to lose much of their crop due to elephant depredation. Elephants entered the paddy field only after the villagers have harvested their rice and came down to eat the rice straws!

Every year, the elephants herds used to enter the Ronghang Village many times and used to destroyed many things but in 2020 elephants entered the village numbers of times but did not damage anything.

Along with the changes in behavior of the elephants because of love and respect shown to them by Hati Bondhus, the behavior of the villagers have also changed when they witnessed great restraint on the part of the elephants in their relationship with humans. People now love the elephants and revere them.



A huge herd seeks refuge in Hatikhuli plantation



Mike Pandey, Award winning Wildlife filmmaker and noted Environmentalist along with Sanjay Upadhay, Environmental Lawyer attending the Hati Bondhu Seminar



Napier & Banana Plantation at Nonoi - 2019

Among the various objectives identified by Hati Bondhu, the following have been established as top priorities on the agenda:

Improving the immediate 'food security' for the wild elephants by planting grasses and other suitable species in selected areas and creating a special habitat for the elephants -

1. **Napier grass** - also known as Uganda grass or elephant grass. It is native to Africa but can be grown in many tropical regions. Napier can be harvested multiple times in a year and produces huge biomass. Hati Bondhu has planted around two lakhs Napier grass till 2020.
2. **Broom grass (Jharu grass)** - which is a perennial, high value, non-perishable, non timber forest product (NTFPs). Broom grass has the ability to grow abundantly in degraded, steep or marginal land. It is a naturally occurring grass in Karbi Hill and other areas of Assam.
3. **Tora or Galangal** - is a tropical plant for low lying areas that originated in Southeast Asia. Botanically named as *Alpinia officinarum*, Galangal is a member of the Zingiberaceae, or ginger family.
4. **Rice or Paddy** - is an annual or short lived perennial grass species native to Asia. It thrives in warm, moist conditions and is grown in most parts of tropical and warm temperate habitats like Assam. As a short-term solution to ensure food security and address human-elephant conflicts during harvesting seasons, these plants have been strategically cultivated in specific areas. This measure aims to mitigate the impact of large elephant herds descending into human territory to consume paddy crops.
5. **Pahari Kako Bamboo** - is a shrub type bamboo which has no used for humans but is an excellent source of food for elephants. It is different from Kako bamboo which is a giant tropical bamboo species native to Southeast Asia.
6. **Jackfruit** - scientifically named *Artocarpus heterophyllus*, is a tropical tree native to India. These trees are of perennial nature and can live for many years and continue to bear fruit seasonally. The jackfruit is greatly favoured by elephants and forms an essential and favoured part of their diet in their natural habitats.
7. **Elephant Apple** - also known as *Dillenia indica*, is an evergreen large-sized shrub that is native to Southeastern Asia. As the name suggests, this fruit is enjoyed by wild elephants.



Nitumoni Saikia, Pratidin Times at HB site



(L-R) Pahari kako bamboo sapling and full grown shrub

AN OVERVIEW

Before 2018, herds of elephants used to visit Diju Valley Reserve Forest (North and South) - about 150 elephants who would come in “jaks” or herds from the Bagser side, i.e., from the Eastern side. After congregating in the Reserve Forest, they would go out to areas like Nonoi, Hatikhuli, Ronghang village areas and raid the ripened paddy of the villagers. Most of these elephants, barring a few who remained back (about 10 or 15) would go downwards to consume rice and paddy. This intrusion by the herds on the paddy fields, gave rise to a great number of Human Elephant Conflicts.

But from 2019, when Hati Bondhu started planting rice for the elephants near Ronghang village, the scenario changed. A habitat was slowly created when Hati Bondhu started sali rice plantation which was planted on 200 bighas (66 acres) of community land, near Hatikhuli-Ronghang village. About 150 or so elephants (the entire herd from Bagser side) came to eat the paddy through the Diju Valley Reserve. It was observed that not even a single elephant stayed back. They came back and ate the paddy for about twenty to twenty five days and after eating simply went back the way they came. The planted paddy would sustain them for about twenty five days, by which time the villagers downstream would finish harvesting their paddy and there was no conflict between human and elephant herds. The elephants never came down to eat the paddy from the field areas of the villagers. All conflicts were averted.

Every year, the number of elephants eating the paddy in our plantation in Hatikhuli area was only growing. In 2023, about two hundred and fifty elephants came from the eastern side of Bagser area. Also, about 80 elephants came from Hojai, Doboka side, i.e., from the west side, making a total of upto 330 elephants. Also, there are about 30 local elephants who are considered as resident elephants, as they remain in Hatikhuli throughout the year feeding on Napier and other grasses.

More than three hundred elephants came to the Ronghang plantation area and ate Napier and other grasses planted for them for nearly a month from November 14 or 15, 2023. After that they were invited by the Hati Bondhu team to eat the paddy planted for them. They ate the paddy for about twenty to twenty five days, by which time the villagers were able to peacefully finish their harvesting. It was observed that the elephants took about one month's time for the plantation eating and about fifteen days time for the paddy eating. The elephant herds after eating the paddy never went down to the villagers' paddy field areas and retreated the same way they came in “jaks” or herds.





A family getting together post meal at Hatikhuli



Two elephants seeking comfort in one another at Hatikhuli



Elephant herds on retreat after eating rice in



Ronghang planted for them, December 2021



Elephant herds leave a trail in Hatikhuli after eating Napier



Elephant footprints and elephant dung left behind in Hatikhuli plantation



A view of our treehouse or 'tongi'



Aerial view of community watch tower



Our Field Officers in a tongi to monitor elephant activity



Aerial view of our plantation at Hatikhuli

Eviction of Forest Areas: Government's bold move

The district of Nagaon in Assam encompasses twelve Reserve Forests and a Wildlife Sanctuary, playing a vital role in the Kaziranga Karbi Anglong Elephant Reserve. These Reserve Forests are small in size and many were encroached to a great extent by humans. But now the government has taken serious steps to free these encroached forest areas from human occupation. A total of about 1900 hectares of forest land has already been cleared of human encroachment and the process is on. This is a very significant step because if the areas which are cleared of human habitation are left alone without any activity, in about four or five years time, there will be a natural diverse forest in these areas, which will relieve the pressure on the elephants for their survival and for their daily activities. In such cases, it has been observed that training of Forest Guards and village groups and equipping them with latest technology for humanely handling elephant herds is an urgent necessity.

Release of Compensation

In this connection it may be also mentioned that if the government ensures the timely payment of compensation to the families of the farmers affected by elephant depredation then the HECs will greatly reduce. The government gives compensation to villagers for houses and crops that were damaged by elephants. But the time taken for this compensation to actually reach the affected families is very long. Usually the compensation reaches the families after a year or so and loses its effectiveness. If this compensation is released within a specific time, say one month or so the HECs will reduce because of the financial security these farmers will have. They are assured that if any damage is caused, they will be compensated within a stipulated time. Forest guards and villagers should try to chase away the elephants through normal and humane means. If that is not possible, they should just leave them to do what they are doing as interference might cause human injuries and even deaths. If any property or crops are destroyed, the farmers and their families can rely on the timely government compensation. This can be a great breakthrough when it comes to reducing Human Elephant Conflicts.



A villager after a successful harvest and no conflict with elephant herds

Thuramukh rice plantation next to the Nambor Reserve Forest, Golaghat District

In Thuramukh area where Hati Bondhu started planting rice since 2020 to take care of the elephants of the Nambor Reserve Forest in Golaghat district, more than 100 elephants from Nambor RF came down and ate the paddy planted for them for about 25 days by which time the villagers successfully harvested their crops. Since 2021, about 80 elephants from Bijuli Reserve Forest also have started coming down to eat from the Thuramukh rice plantation. Our initial plan was to take care of the elephants from Nambor, but we are thrilled to see that the elephants from Bijuli RF are also joining us. These are two different herds - one from Nambor (of about 100 elephants) and the other from Bijuli Reserve Forest (80 to 100 elephants) are eating regularly in Thuramukh rice plantation without any conflict. As a result of the Bijuli RF herd of elephants coming to Thuramukh, the Human Elephant Conflict in Morongi area during the paddy season is now under control.

The plantation of rice has completely stopped the conflict between Human and Elephants herds since 2019 in Ronghang and Thuramukh area next to the Nambor Reserve Forest. About 80 villages are now free of conflicts with wild elephants. Surrounding villages in Golaghat namely Rangajan, Likson, Bebejia, Murphuloni, Uvayjan, Juriyadolong, Moinapara, Kathkotia etc., have reported almost zero Human Elephant Conflicts during their peak harvest time. It is possible that there may be three or four rouge elephants going around creating havoc, demanding food and damaging crops and granary, but that is individual behaviour and not herd behaviour and should be dealt with accordingly.

HATI BONDHU - The Movie

To create awareness of the issue of elephant conservation among the younger generation, we have been showcasing a movie Hati Bondhu in various schools, colleges and other social gatherings. Directed by Kripal Kalita the movie also bagged the 69th National Award for Best Narration by the veteran stage-screen-radio artist Kulada Kumar Bhattacharjee. The movie also was the state's only choice in the Indian Panorama section of the 53rd International Film Festival of India, 2022. It was also screened in various prestigious stages like the 17th Mumbai International Film festival 2022, London Indian Film festival 2021, Indian film festival of Melbourne 2023, 28th Kolkata International film festival 2022 and many more. One can visit our website - hatibondhu.org to watch the movie online.



Screening of the Hati Bondhu movie directed by Kripal Kalita in Ronghang, Hatikhuli village



Students from Royal Global University interacting with HB Founder Pradip Bhuyan & Director Kripal Kalita (standing in blue) after the screening of the movie

Banti Bhuyan Memorial Elephant Care Centre

Construction is underway for the Banti Bhuyan Memorial Elephant Care Centre, located approximately 10 km from Chapanala in Nagaon district, near our plantation area. This Care Centre, honors the memory of Late Banti Bhuyan, a valued member of the original Hati Bondhu team. The facility is dedicated to providing free care and rehabilitation for elderly elephants that can no longer generate income for their owners, subsequently becoming a burden and enduring a life of neglect. The centre will have a capacity of about 15-18 elephants when fully operational. The first phase of the centre is expected to be ready soon.



Pilkhana for six elephants and mahout living facilities

Parbati Barua - We are overjoyed that Hati Bondhu Parbati Barua has been conferred with the Padmashri award by President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhawan as the first female mahout of the world. She has been closely associated with our team since its inception. Under her guidance, we have been able to achieve a lot when it comes to mitigating human elephant conflict in various areas of Assam.



Padmashri Parbati Barua with Pradip Bhuyan sharing their love for elephants



Padmashri Parbati Barua & Pradip Bhuyan with team members Dulu Bora, Bisakha & Meghna Hazarika (R-L)

Dr. Shiela Bora - is at the helm of path breaking heritage conservation work as the Convenor of the Assam State Chapter of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage. The eldest child of Chief Conservator of Forests of undivided Assam (1963 to 1976) Prabhakar Barua, Dr. Shiela Bora had the opportunity to travel widely through the forests of Assam. Late Prabhakar Barua was a farsighted nature conservationist, who succeeded in creating an exceptional model in conservation, in terms of forest area protection & protection of threatened species of animals, culminating in the formation of the Assam Valley Wildlife Society of which he was the founder Vice-President. Dr. Shiela Bora has dedicated herself to charitable work in the space of wildlife conservation as the Managing Trustee of the Prabhakar Barua Memorial Trust to keep the legacy of her father alive. She is closely associated with the team of Hati Bondhu.



Dr. Shiela Bora and Padma Shri Parbati Barua with Pradip Bhuyan at Hatikhuli plantation



A labour of love - Pradip Bhuyan with the same boys who were once pelting elephants with stones, are now all Hati Bondhus



Planting trees at our Elephant Care Centre site at Nagaon - start of our initiative



Daytime at Thuramukh - a herd of elephants enjoying a meal



Hatikhuli plantation



Elephants coming out from Nambor Reserve Forest to eat rice in Thuramukh



Elephants grazing at Hatikhuli plantation



A lone elephant grazes in peace away from human interference at Hatikhuli



Elephant siblings engaged in playful behaviour at Hatikhuli



A herd grazes peacefully at Hatikhuli plantation



An elephant grazes with her calf in Thuramukh paddy plantation at night



Elephant calves playing in Hatikhuli



Elephant herd in Ronghang



An elephant calf plays with birds in Hatikhuli



Elephant siblings have a good time after a meal at Hatikhuli



Two elephants indulging in playful behaviour at Hatikhuli plantation



A lone elephant grazes paddy in complete peace at Hatikhuli plantation

**Those who genuinely love elephants & nature are
all Hati Bondhus. Their loving vibes add to positivity.**

Hati Bondhu - Active Members

Pradip Bhuyan – President

An Octogenarian, IITian who is dedicated for preservation of Nature. He is a true elephant lover. His spirit of love is the essence of the Hati Bondhu movement.



Roon Bhuyan – Vice President

A nature lover and conservationist, Roon has been documenting birds and mammals of North East India for over a decade with many rare photographs to his credit. He has been a co-petitioner in legal cases for many Environmental issues concerning the North East.



Binod Dulu Bora – Field Director

Dulu has been an environmental crusader since a young boy. He has saved over 2500 species & successfully released them into the wild. He is passionate & dedicated to conservation & protection of wildlife. He currently heads all field and community projects of Hati Bondhu. All photographs have been taken by him.



Meghna Mayur Hazarika – Deputy Field Director & Project Coordinator

A true nature lover and a dedicated Field Coordinator for Hati Bondhu, she spends months during the elephant migration in the treehouse, supervising plantation work during the day and observing elephant behaviour at night.



Swaraswati Teron – Community Leader

Swaraswati Teron, also fondly called 'Aie' (Mother) by the villagers of Ronghang Village. She mobilizes the women folk of the villages for the Hati Bondhu cause.



Rajib Timung

Rajib has been a core member of Hati Bondhu and has been working with us since 2018. His activities include staying nights in the treehouses or tongis keeping a watch on wild elephants, with only a handful of workers.



Dhanshing Teron – Community Leader

Dhanshing Teron, the village 'Gaon Bura' or Headman of Ronghang Village is a vital support for the Hati Bondhu activities in Hatikhuli area.



COMMUNITY MEMBERS



Rajib Gogoi



Chao Dipankar Handique



Lunche Kro



Jiten Teron



Lina Timungpi



Kahon Rongfarpi



Promud Pator

TECHNICAL TEAM



Loya Sinha
Technical Head



Bipasa Baruah
Communications Officer



Pankaj Saikia
Technical Officer



Nayan Jyoti Das
IT & Technical Officer

Over time, if the Government clears all forest lands of Assam including the movement corridors from encroachers, then these areas will form part of the habitat areas for the elephants. When the quality of the forests will improve because of stoppage of human activities, the nature and the elephants will then breathe in peace and a natural balance will be restored.



Before and after pictures of our plantation in Hatikhuli

Compassion and love for nature should be instilled in the younger generation early on. Children should be taught to co-exist in harmony with nature and all animals so that compassion and love becomes the norm of the day.



Sensitizing school children during their field trip followed by a banana plantation drive for elephants.



Womenfolk of Hati Bondhu

“We directly or indirectly help over five hundred elephants that come and eat in our plantation and the paddy planted for them. From the behaviour of the elephants it is clear that they know that we have created a plantation and a paddy field just for their consumption. There is a direct heart to heart connection between Hati Bondhu and these elephants. We are fortunate to have a core team in the field who works only for the welfare of the elephants.

This chain of love cannot stop. There cannot be a time when the elephants come and find the plantation dead and the paddy for them gone or disappeared. It is a truly heart wrenching scenario that will never happen. This is Hati Bondhu's vow and our sacred pledge - we will never let the chain of love break.”



Hati Bondhu, Assam

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