

Solving human-wildlife conflict in Nepal

Awely, Wildlife and People, has been coordinating a Red Caps programme in Bardia National Park area, Nepal, since 2008. As with all Red Caps projects, the programme aims to limit conflict between wildlife and people in an area where rhinos, elephants and leopards cause regular and significant damage to fields, crops and belongings.

Renaud Fulconis | Executive Director, Awely, Wildlife and People

In collaboration with local NGO National Trust for Nature Conservation, Awely is employing two Red Caps from the local communities to develop a number of activities aimed at improving human-wildlife conflict situations. The Red Caps have been investigating the situation for four years now, entering data into a dedicated database to provide a clear overview of the situation.

Awely's Red Caps organise workshops, create education materials & organise working groups

Data collected includes the species involved, type and cost of damage, precise locations and the most appropriate solution. Greater one-horned rhinos are often involved in conflict, damaging crops when passing through or stopping for food, especially maize and lentils; and sometimes causing injuries and even death to local people trying to protect their fields. Among the initiatives developed to limit these conflicts, Awely's Red Caps organise workshops, develop education tools and organise working groups to maintain the Park's fence.

Thanks to a grant from Save the Rhino International, we have been able to make an educational film focusing on conflict mitigation, especially with rhinos. This has taken longer than expected, as events occur at different periods throughout the year and we wanted to present the whole situation. Both the Red Caps team in Nepal and the Awely team from Europe have been involved in the process, and the movie was finished and sent to the field a few months ago. Our Red Cap Sher Bahadur Pariyar has narrated the story in Nepali, with the text subtitled in English. The 17-minute film has since been presented to specific target groups. In order to reach our goals, eight volunteers have been selected from the four buffer zone Village

Development Committees. Some volunteers are members of the village's anti-poaching units; others play an important role within the committees. Their role is to support the Red Caps in organising the presentations and inviting as many people as possible to attend. Together, the volunteers selected the top priority target groups, such as those living in high conflict areas or on the border with Bardia National Park. From this information, a calendar was prepared, taking into consideration when audiences might be unavailable, for example, when they are busy working in the fields.

So far, 32 presentations have been given to 1,540 people, who have been able to discuss it with our Red Caps. This is a very effective tool as we know that people rarely have a chance to see films, and also because the film's messages have a direct and positive effect on people and their attitudes to wildlife. When people understand what actions should be taken to keep wildlife away, they suffer from less wildlife conflict and have a more positive approach towards wildlife.

Right now, we are finishing the layout of a 36-page educational booklet, in Nepali and English. This booklet will be distributed in the next few weeks to the same target groups and also to students from local schools. Most of the messages from the film are included, along with information on conflicts in other countries, details on other species found in Nepal and on sustainable development and alternative crops (such as camomile) that do not attract wildlife.



ALL IMAGES RENAUD FULCONIS, AWELY



An educational booklet helps locals understand human-wildlife conflict

Grant

Save the Rhino gave £4,841 to Awely in September 2010, to pay for the costs of production and circulation of this film and its messages.

