

## **Sensitizing local communities in India in conservation of the declining greater one-horned rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) with training and education**

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The greater one-horned rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) population in India is concentrated mainly in Assam, particularly in Kaziranga National Park with 69% (2290 out of the total number of 3306 rhinos in India and Nepal) of the total rhino population. In India, small populations of rhino are found in Uttar Pradesh and North Bengal. Most of the ongoing conservation efforts are focused in Assam, which has 69% of the total population but it is necessary that Protected Areas (PA) having small populations should be given equal importance. It is evident that the existing rhino range that holds meta-populations and its habitats should be preserved so as to have a viable global rhino population in this region. One of the major impediments of rhino conservation is lack of support from local communities. The primary requirement for Rhino conservation is to bring about attitudinal and behavior change among local people living in and around Pas holding Rhino small populations. To achieve this, conservation educators in rhino range areas holding meta-populations in states other than Assam were identified and given lively training and effective education materials on the Great One-horned Rhino ultimately reaching to wider communities. The program also addressed the issue of human rhino conflict by conveying positive attitudes and effective preventive and practical behavior with respect to rhino and human-rhino conflict; and to create a network of conservation educators in northeast India. The paper explains the contents of the education module developed exclusively for the audience and supporting education materials printed in English and local language for the educators to use and promote rhino conservation. This education module has been tested before and proved to be a successful tool to use in rural areas and hence this worked well with our target group. During the training, active learning and teaching tools were introduced which is completely new to 69% of the participants. The training uses drama, games, maps, personalities, stories, debates, demonstrations, arts, mock conferences, etc. to change attitudes and enhance interest in rhino conservation. The greatest advantage of this module is that it can be used with a variety of audiences such as children, school and college students and also literate and illiterate adults. After each education program the trainees completed a report for us. Thus the reports helped us to evaluate the success rate of the effort. The project also achieved to identify and create a network of dedicated educators in North Bengal to continue the work of conservation education about Rhino. Some of them utilized the Rhino teaching module to teach about other fauna of their interest. As an incentive Zoo Outreach gave free membership in ZEN, a network of educators run by Zoo Outreach Organization, for interested participants. Thanks to Ocean Park Conservation Fund, Hong Kong and USFWS for their support.

### **The use of audio playback to deter crop-raiding Asian Elephants**

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Human–elephant conflict (HEC) and poaching are the foremost threats to the survival of elephants (African, *Loxodonta africana*; Asian, *Elephas maximus*) in their natural environments. Reducing HEC has the potential to save hundreds of elephant and human lives annually across Asia and Africa. Lone adult