Project Update: August 2010

In 1st and 2nd week of August 2010, the project team has done a Rapid Assessment Survey on elephant and their habitats in and around Mayurjharna Elephant Reserve. We have also visited the forest areas where the fodder plantation was made in 2009 by forest department. The secondary data collection on NTFPs (non-timber forest products) resource use pattern by fringe villagers is continuing. The data primarily shows that apart from the fuel wood, the villagers collect leaves of *Shorea robusta* to make leaf-plates etc. to sell in the market. Another forest resource which has high market value is medicinal plants. The medicinal plants and their market value have already been documented. All these pre-monsoon data have been recorded and the compilation work is ongoing.

A meeting with the '*Hoola Dol*' (*Hoola Dol* - a team of 30-35 village people who drive elephants with fire-torches) was made during last field exercise. The aim of that discussion was to gather local knowledge and experience sharing on nature of human-elephant conflict. The discussion helped us to know their grievances, expectations etc., and these people, as eyewitness, also helped us to know human-elephant conflict incidents. The forest department pays INR. 200/- per day per head to these people during elephant drive and the also provide food, transport and accommodation separately and these packages is satisfactory to them. But we feel that more interaction, training and sensitization programme is required to make them more professional.

We have also identified one Bigha land for cultivation of long-awned rice varieties developed by Central Rice Research Institute, Orissa. The Field Assistants are appointed from the fringe village and we had a discussion session with them. We are shortly going to make another training programme for them to show the technical methods of field survey, primary/secondary data collection methods etc.

'Hoola Dol' (Elephant Driving Team) is lighting the fire-torches before driving operation