

## Project Update: December 2008

*Mayurjharna Elephant Reserve* (MER) is an important elephant habitat and elephant passage in South-West West Bengal. Our study shows that the natural fodders of elephants are available in forests. But we observe that the elephants are interested in crops like paddy, potatoes etc. We are assuming that as the crop fields are very adjacent to the forest, it creates this crop-raiding problem. During our last survey we found that elephants are entering the village at night and creates another problem. This is due to the attraction of 'Haria' (local country liquor). These man-made problems can be overcome by repeated awareness and mass education. We have received information of two natural saltlicks in two different entry routes. We'll collect the soil in our next field visit for soil testing. During the 'Wildlife Week 2009' celebration, we performed community interaction programme, school-awareness programme in the elephant problem zone.

By this time the Forest department, Government of West Bengal increased the compensation rate of damage caused by elephants. The compensation rates are as follows -

<b><u>Nature of damage</u></b> <b><u>(INR)</u></b>	<b><u>Previous Rate (INR)</u></b>	<b><u>Current</u></b>	<b><u>Rate</u></b>
Loss of human life	Rs.50,000/-	Rs.1,00,000/-	
Disability of human	Rs.30,000/-	Rs.50,000/-	
Concrete House damage (Complete)	Rs.1,00,000/-	Rs.1,00,000/-	
Mud hut damage (Complete)	Rs.1,500/-	Rs.3,000/-	
Mud hut damage (Partial)	Rs.750/-	Rs.1,500/-	
Crop damage (Rupees/ Hectare)	Rs.4,000/-	Rs.7,500/-	



Left: Tree-top watchtower to protect crop. Right: Village girl with 'Babui' grass. Below: Artificial water storage for Elephants.

