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## **Red Hot Pepper Solution for sustainable Forest Elephant Conservation in Bia-Goaso Forest Block, Western Ghana.**

### **Introduction**

The only viable population of forest elephants in Ghana occurs in the Bia-Goaso forest block of the Western Region. This population is estimated to be less than 250 individuals (Danquah and Oppong, 2013). The West Africa Elephant Conservation Strategy and the Ghana Elephant Conservation Action Plan, identifies the Bia-Goaso elephant block as a prime focus for immediate conservation attention. Unfortunately, the population continues to decline at an alarming rate due to poaching, habitat loss and human elephant conflicts. Human elephant conflicts have been identified as the main menace of elephant population through crop raiding. In response to this menace, the community members have declared retaliation killing against the elephants. This occurrence threatens the sustainability of the elephants.

Overall, this project was conducted to escalate and popularized red hot pepper solution for curtailing crop raiding activities for the sustainable management of the last viable population of forest elephant in the forest block. We engaged and build the capacity of local farmers to implement red hot pepper solution at their farm boundaries. We also build the capacity of farmers and other community inhabitants in some alternative economic livelihood enterprises. Community education and awareness was also raised in fringing communities on the need to protect the elephants population.

### **Conservation output**

The project engaged a total of 380 local farmers and other inhabitants in 20 different communities. We trained the famers on how to protect their farm output from being raided using the red hot pepper solution approach. The practical work was done in 20 farms stationed in 20 different communities. Assessment and evaluation of the red hot pepper solution was done with the various famers one month after the implementation of the red pepper solutions on the farmers. Framers who implemented this method testify that there have not been any raiding activities on their farms.

A three day training workshop was organized for the wildlife staff working in the forest block to build their capacity in resolving incidents of crop raiding within the forest block. Only seven staff participated in this training workshop due to the busy schedule of the staff to patrol the reserve. The staffs were also taught the red hot pepper solution approach and were given

brochure and leaflet to guide them in giving technical support and providing future assistance to local farmers.

We conducted community conservation campaigns to educate stakeholders and communities on the need for sustainable conservation of elephants and their habitats. The education activities included conservation talk shows, presentations, showing of elephants documentaries, and local cultural drama on elephants related topics in schools and communities. Radio programs and community meetings were also conducted in the local language to further educate the communities on elephants conservation issues.

### **Conservation achievement**

Importantly the community outreach component of this project ensured that more people are aware of the plight of the elephants and their natal forest habitats, and take practical steps to protecting them. Until now, there is a wrong perception amongst communities that, elephants are infinite. Such perception leads to unwarranted public persecution. Through the community outreach, we have demystified such beliefs and win communities love and support for these charismatic species. Attitudes and behaviors of farmers and wider communities fringing the forest block were changed positively to conserve and protect these vital forest resources they rely on as their major sources of livelihoods and wellbeing.

### **Next step**

We will continue to solicit for funds to monitor and conserve the remnant elephant population. We will provide support and monitor the activities of the local communities to ensure the conservation of the species and protection of the Forest Block from further destruction. We are also collaborating with the local volunteers and continue to educate and create awareness on the conservation needs of the species and the habitat in other fringing communities.

Some of the pictures taken during project implementation









