



Supported by



Human-Elephant Conflict Mitigation Project in Ponnampet Forest Range, Madikeri District

Annual Report Summary 2024



SNEHA-NGO

Submitted by

SNEHA NGO

No 680/1 Kotehundi, Rayanakere Post,
Mysore - 570008.

Email: ra.krishnan@sneha-ngo.org. Mobile: 9483479890

Background of the Project

Human-Elephant-Conflict (HEC) has been a pressing issue in Kodagu area of the Western ghats for the past several years, predominantly in the western fringes of the Nagarhole Tiger Reserve and the southeastern Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary. The animals frequent forest settlements inside the reserves and even forest patches within coffee estates and sacred groves known as "Devarakadu," which serve as corridors for the elephants moving in search for crops in the low-lying valleys, putting coffee estate workers at risk. The enduring issue came under the radar of SNEHA and the Human-Elephant Conflict Mitigation Project in Ponnampet was launched with immediate effect with structured objectives:

- Support establishing an Early Warning System through elephant collar data / Construction of warning systems
- Capacity building for the Rapid Response Team (RRT) and front-line staff of the Forest Department
- Strengthening the RRT
- Community awareness and communication measures to reduce the risk of accidental encounters and retaliation
- Support to Grama Panchayat on Solid Waste Management.

Key Achievements

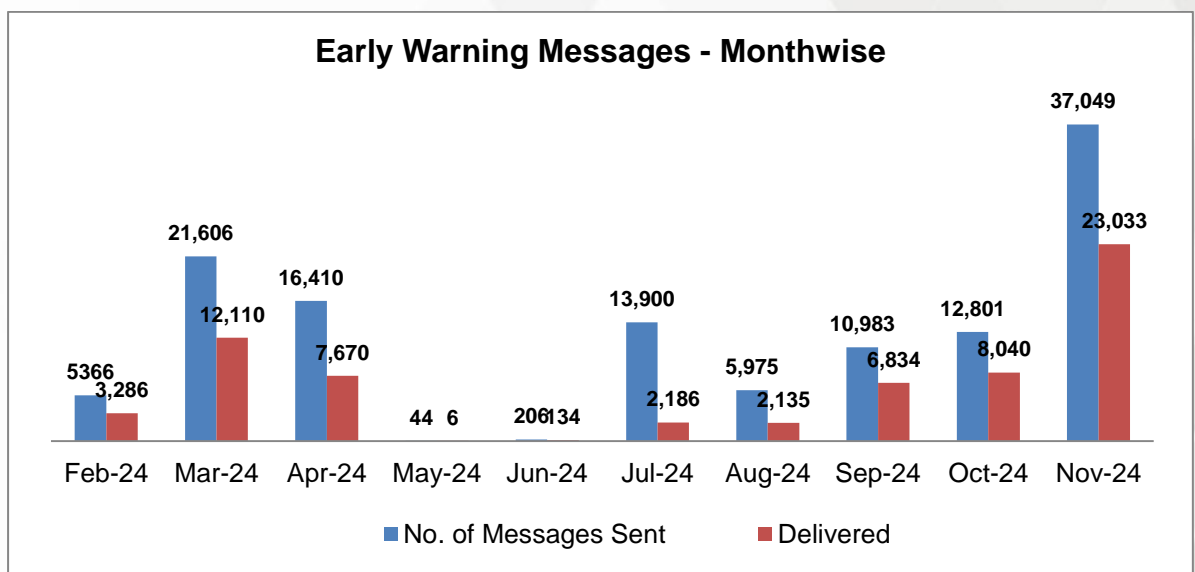
1. Purchase of Tabs / Mobile with GPS: Enabled the field staff track elephant damage and movement, locations of crop raiding and the number of human-elephant interactions. The data also helped develop a map of the affected areas.
2. Purchase of Camera Traps (ten in number):
 - Four GSM-based cameras able to capture animal movements and share via mobile applications were deployed through select farmers in severe areas, helping generate early warning messages.

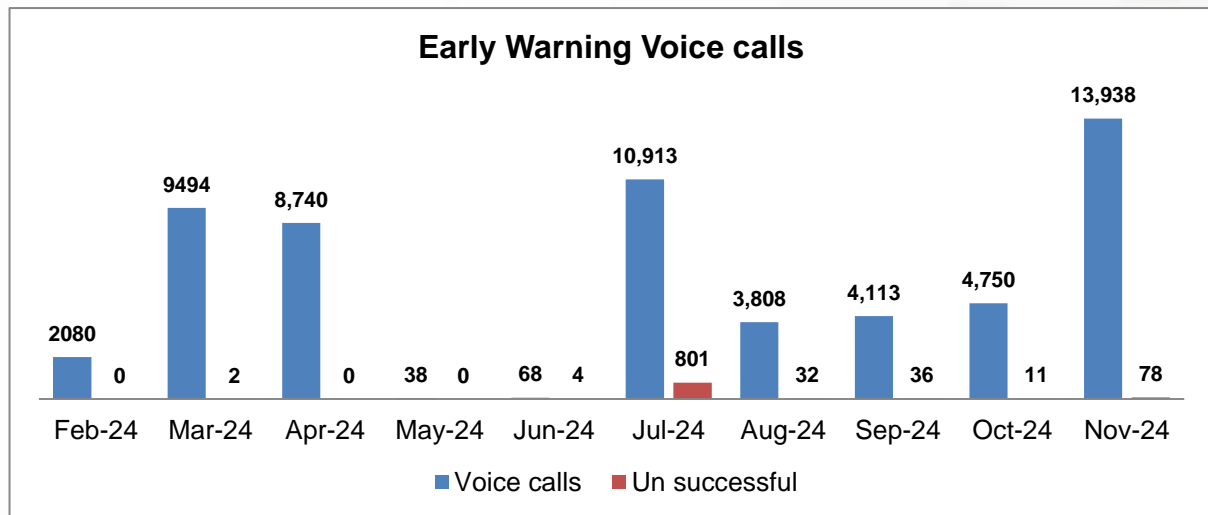


- An AI-based camera to detect only elephants has been ordered and will be installed in the field by January 25.
- 3. Proximity Sensors and Hooters: Hooters linked with an AI-based mobile app predict elephant movements based on the tracking data. Three proximity sensors have been purchased and will be installed soon.
- 4. GSM LED Display Boards: LED boards fitted with GSM sim cards to display messages from the control rooms were for the first time used in HEC mitigation, which received high praise from the department and political leaders who requested for more to be installed. As of now three boards have been installed.



- 5. Early Warning Alert System Text & Voice SMS: Sent in the local language to help the community prepare in advance for elephant encounters. This helps local communities to actively participate in conservation efforts. A total of **1.24 lakh** messages were sent and **65,434** were delivered with the numbers spiking in November 2024 with 37,049 messages sent and 23,033 messages delivered.

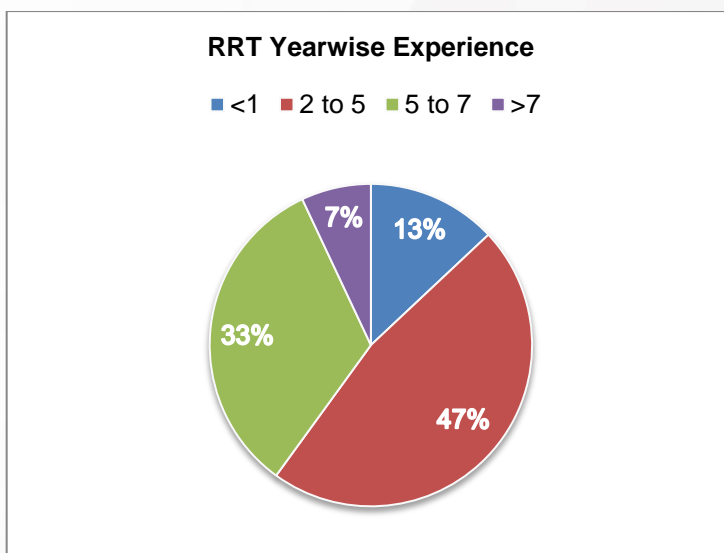
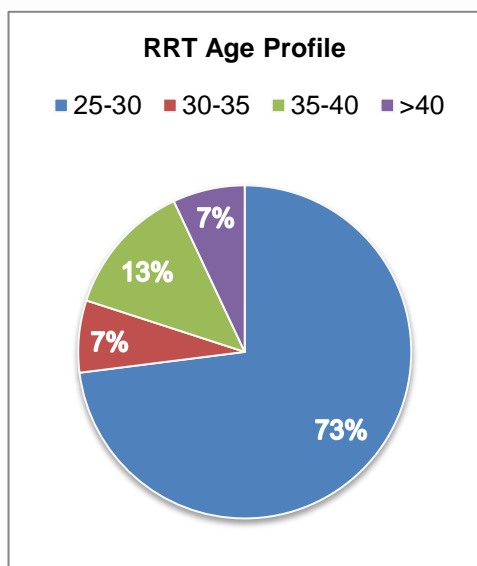




In May and June the officers that have gone for a field stat in Rajaji National Park with support from Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has not shared any warning messages.

6. Training for PRT, RRT, with supporting Kit: The Rapid Response Team (RRT) under the Forest Department is the first line of defence against elephants entering human habitations. The first phase of the training programme conducted for RRTs in Ponnampet from 8 February to 1 March 2024 distributed basic kits containing gear and apparel to each RRT member.





7. Training for different stakeholders:

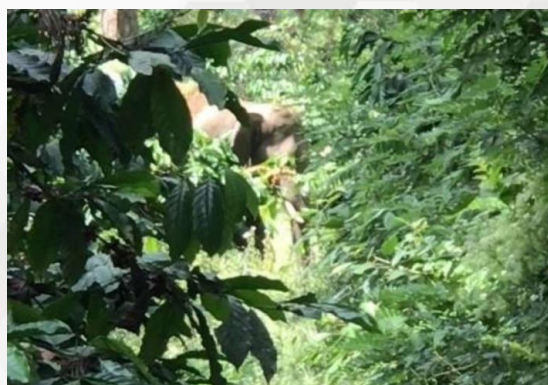
The Elephant Anti-depredation operations proactively redirect elephants away from human habitations with the aid of RRT. Our teams collaborated with the Forest Department to execute the operations under a strategic plan based on data-driven insights and in association with local communities.

No. of farmers visited	1692
Awareness Programmes in Schools	7 (305 children participated)
Grama Panchayat Meetings conducted	12 (248 elected representatives attended)
Self Help Group meetings	13 (2316 people attended)

Training in sustainable and eco-friendly waste management to the stakeholders is considered a priority since garbage dumps in villages and towns create potential for accidental human-elephant encounters.

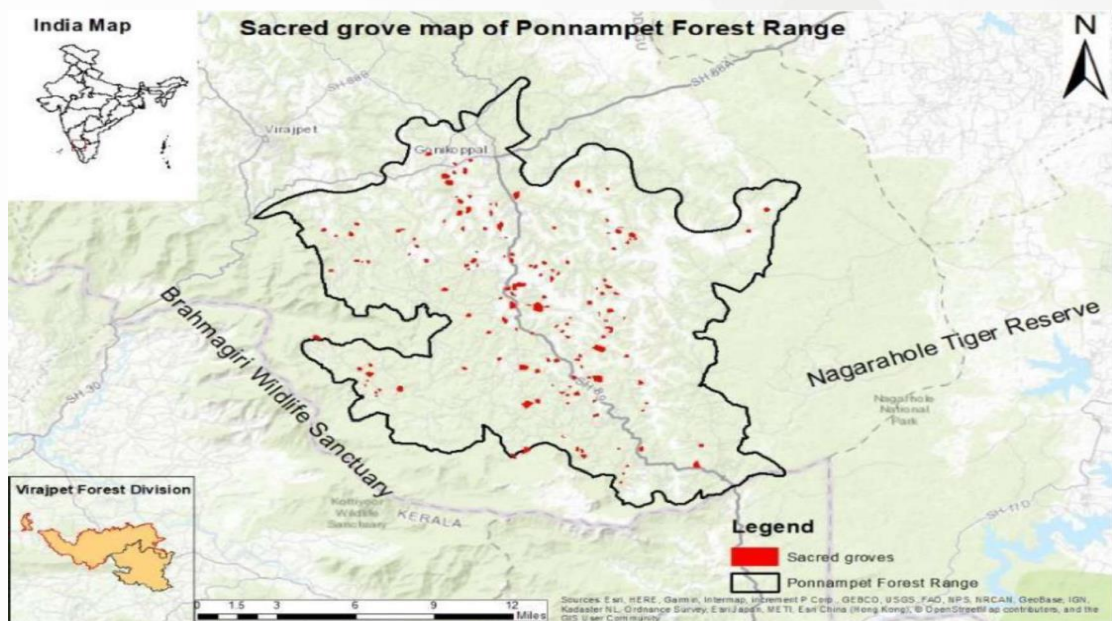
8. Mapping of Sacred Groves:

- Sacred groves and scattered forest patches serve as a harbour for elephants during daytime until they encroach crops during the night, leading to conflicts with local communities. A total of 149 sacred groves and forest patches have been successfully identified within the forest range.





- Elephant movement within the sacred groves was assessed through intensive sampling, direct field visits, and interviewing surrounding villagers.



In a Nutshell

The 2024 phase of the Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) Mitigation Project in Ponnampet Forest Range, Madikeri District, has been successfully implemented through a collaborative effort with the Forest Department and local communities. Key aspects of the project included the installation of advanced monitoring equipment, such as GSM-based and AI-powered camera traps, and LED display boards, to detect elephant movement and proactively warn HEC affected areas. A training programme was conducted for the RRT, equipping them with necessary gear and skills. Sustainable waste management training was provided to local stakeholders to minimize attractants and reduce accidental elephant encounters. Extensive areas of sacred groves harboring elephants in the day time was assessed and mapped. The comprehensive approach of this project emphasizes both technological innovation and community involvement in reducing HEC.