

**Impact of Human Elephant Conflict (HEC) on Agriculture with
Reference to Farming in Lunugamwehera- Hambantota District**

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Abstract

The Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*) is a globally threatened species. There are about 3000 – 4000 elephants in Sri Lanka. Loss of forest cover in the dry zone agricultural areas has led to intense Human Elephant Conflict (HEC). Number of techniques are adopted to mitigate the damages. The general objective of the study was to evaluate the mitigation measures in resolving HEC with special reference to farmers living adjacent to Lunugamwehera National Park (LNP). The specific objectives were to ascertain types of damages in the area, to identify the constraints faced by farmers and to make recommendations to improve the situation. Four villages were selected from the Lunugamwehera DS division in the area in question. The sample included 60 randomly selected farmers. Information was collected by interviewing farmers using a structured questionnaire. Informal discussions were held with wildlife officers. Data analysis was done by using statistical package for social science (SPSS).

A majority of respondent farmers (98%) have suffered from wild elephant damages. The highest percentage (37%) of wild elephant damages occurs in the maha season. Most damaged crop is paddy. Among short term HEC mitigation measures adopted, translocation of problematic bull-elephants considered as effective by 68% farmers. As a medium term mitigation measure, majority of farmers (77%) stated that the effectiveness of electric fence is high. Majority of farmers do not obtain compensation for damages. Although HEC is a serious problem, 52% of farmers do not like to live in an alternative place. Except translocation of problem elephants- the other short term mitigation measures found to be not effective. Electric fencing (medium term measure) is the most effective mitigation measure. Department of Wildlife Conservation carried out a major elephant drive into LNP in 2005 and 2006.

Keywords: agriculture, human elephant conflict, Hambantota