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### NGO's suggestions to avoid recurrent man-animal conflicts

Staff Reporter



*The Hindu* A herd of elephants at a water source. File Photo

Kenneth Anderson Nature Society (KANS), a Bangalore-based NGO has sent some suggestions to avoid recurrent man-animal conflicts in the villages adjoining the Reserve Forests in Anchetty, Denkanikottai, Thaly and Shoolagiri in Krishnagiri district.

In a statement sent to *The Hindu* Mr. Laxmeesha Acharya, President said that “crop raiding by elephants is a common phenomenon and has been occurring in this region for several years. Farmers spend sleepless nights to guard their fields, forest department staff also spend sleepless nights in driving the elephants back into the forest and the government spends lakhs of rupees annually as compensation for crop loss.

It is high time that all the stake-holders viz. local people, Forest department, Revenue department and the State government come together to the drawing board, understand the problem and arrive at a permanent solution to this perennial problem”.

Mr. Acharya said that the Elephants are landscape species. They cannot be confined to small regions. It is their inherent behaviour to travel several hundred kilometres throughout the year in search of food and water.

On an average an Adult elephant requires around 250 kgs of fodder daily. This includes grass, leaves, branches, fruits and other vegetation found in forests. The elephant path used by pachyderms for several decades has been gradually pruned and fragmented due to human occupation and land use for agriculture and other livelihood activities.

Forests have been depleted of its resources due to thousands of livestock, including cattle, goats and sheep grazing here throughout the year, not only from surrounding villages but also from far away towns. Such grazing also prevents the forests from re-generating and also results in the spread of invasive species like lantana which further destroys the forest.

Local people also contribute directly to the depletion of forests by collecting firewood and minor forest produce like tamarind, berries, bark etc.

#### **Permanent solution**

The stake-holders like government, forest department and the local people to demarcate the elephant corridor, free from all human occupation, with suitable compensation to the displaced families.

Such corridor should be cordoned by elephant proof trenches, which when dug and maintained regularly will significantly prevent elephant intrusions.

The animal husbandry department should replace as much of the scrub cattle with milch cattle, which can be stall fed and also provide better yield to the villagers.

The afforestation activities of the state viz. Tamilnadu Afforestation Plan (TAP) needs to be implemented and monitored strictly so that the locals can meet their needs of minor forest produce from the TAP areas.

The afforestation plan should also be aimed at a sustained effort in removing lantana and ensure the growth of local species of plants and trees.

The villagers should be given gas cylinders to avoid dependence on firewood for cooking.

If the measures can be discussed and implemented in complete sincerity by all the stake holders, the human-elephant conflict could be brought down drastically.

Keywords: [elephant](#), [man-animal conflict](#), [environmental issues](#), [reserve forests](#)