

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

Community-Led Human-Elephant Conflict Prevention in Mt. Cameroon

Elephant Managers Association Small Grant Program

Project Leader	Anya Dabite Abeh
Organization	Bio-Conservation club in partnership with ACES
Project Location	Bakingili Area, Mt. Cameroon Region, Southwest Cameroon
Reporting Period	August 2025 – April 2026
EMA Grant Amount	\$3,000 USD

Executive Summary

The Community-Led Human–Elephant Conflict Prevention project successfully achieved all its primary objectives. The grant was originally planned for a 12-month implementation period; however, after sharing the proposal with the local communities, they recommended that it could be effectively completed within six months, and this adjustment was adopted. Through strategic community engagement, capacity building, and evidence-based interventions, we established a sustainable framework for reducing human-elephant conflict in the Mt Cameroon area while fostering long-term coexistence between local communities and forest elephants in the Mount Cameroon landscape.

This project trained 200+ community members (including students whose schools are very close to the conflict areas) (see pictures at the end), We trained a functional 12-member community scout network. This was conducted in two rounds: in the first round, seven participants were trained, and in the second round, five participants were trained. Both rounds took place in different landscapes within the Mount Cameroon region, and proven non-lethal deterrent systems were implemented. Beyond the original scope, we extended educational outreach to primary school children, investing in the next generation of conservation stewards. All activities were completed within budget and timeline, with strong collaboration from the Elephant Rapid response team of Mt. Cameroon National Park authorities.

Project Achievements

Objective 1: Community Capacity Building and Education

Target: Improve the preparedness of farmers and local community members by 50% through training and education in elephant behavior and conflict mitigation strategies.

Status: ACHIEVED

Key Accomplishments:

- Conducted three comprehensive training workshops attended by 35 farmers in total, community leaders, and local stakeholders from Mt Cameroon and surrounding villages (Pictures below).
- Produced and distributed illustrated educational booklets in English and Pidgin English, specifically designed for low-literacy audiences with visual learning aids covering elephant behavior, seasonal movement patterns, and proven coexistence strategies.
- Implemented monthly follow-up visits with participating farmers to assess strategy adoption, troubleshoot implementation challenges, and document HEC incident trends.

Impact Metrics:

- Pre-intervention survey (baseline): Only 18% of farmers could correctly identify elephant warning signs or safe response behaviors.
- Post-intervention survey (Month 12): 76% of trained farmers demonstrated improved knowledge of elephant behavior and appropriate conflict response protocols, representing a 58% improvement and exceeding the 50% target.
- 30 farming households (66% of participants) actively implemented at least one non-lethal deterrent strategy within six months of training.

Objective 2: Community Scout Early Warning System

Target: Reduce human-elephant encounters by 40% through an effective community-based early warning and rapid response system.

Status: ACHIEVED

Key Accomplishments:

- Recruited and trained 12 community scouts (including 3 women) in elephant tracking protocols, GPS mapping, safe observation techniques, and community communication methods. This was conducted in two rounds: in the first round, seven participants were trained, and in the second round, five participants were trained. Both rounds took place in different landscapes within the Mount Cameroon region, and proven non-lethal deterrent systems were implemented.
- Established a structured patrol schedule with morning (6:00-9:00 AM) and evening (4:00-7:00 PM) shifts covering high-risk elephant corridors identified in our baseline camera-trap study.
- Implemented a dual-channel alert system combining WhatsApp-based reporting to a central coordination team and traditional whistle signals for immediate local notification, ensuring both tech-enabled and traditional communication methods work in tandem.

Impact Metrics:

- Documented 20 elephant sightings, with 92% resulting in successful early warnings issued to at-risk farming areas.
- Achieved 43% reduction in surprise human-elephant encounters (encounters where farmers had no prior warning), exceeding the 40% target.
- Zero elephant deaths or retaliatory killings reported in the project area during the implementation period, compared to three documented cases in the 12 months prior to project initiation.

Additional Achievement: Primary School Conservation Education Program

Recognizing the critical importance of engaging youth in conservation, we extended our educational outreach beyond the original project scope to include primary school children in Mt Cameroon. This initiative represents an investment in the next generation of conservation stewards and community leaders.

Activities Conducted:

- Delivered interactive conservation education sessions to 200+ students across three primary schools (Government Primary School Bakingili, Baptist Primary School Bakingili, and Limbe Road Primary School).
- Used age-appropriate teaching methods including storytelling, visual aids, games, and group activities to teach children about elephant ecology, their role in forest health, and safe behaviors around elephants.
- Engaged children in drawing and essay competitions on the theme of human-elephant coexistence, with prizes awarded to encourage creative expression and knowledge retention.
- Provided simplified illustrated booklets for children to take home, creating a channel for conservation messages to reach family members who may not have attended adult workshops.

Impact: Post-session assessments showed that 82% of participating children could correctly describe why elephants are important to forests and could identify at least two safe behaviors when encountering elephants near their homes or schools. Teachers reported sustained student interest in wildlife topics, with requests to continue conservation education programming in future academic years.

Challenges and Adaptive Management

Challenge 1: Seasonal Rainfall Variability

Unpredictable rainfall patterns during the project period led to shifts in elephant movement corridors, with elephants accessing farms through routes not initially prioritized in our patrol schedules. We adapted by conducting rapid reconnaissance surveys in newly affected areas and adjusting scout deployment zones accordingly. This flexible approach maintained the effectiveness of the early warning system despite ecological unpredictability.

Challenge 2: Mobile Network Connectivity

Intermittent mobile network coverage in remote farmland areas occasionally delayed WhatsApp-based alerts. The hybrid communication system (WhatsApp + traditional whistles + village loudspeakers) proved essential in maintaining alert effectiveness. Scouts adapted by pre-positioning in areas with known connectivity challenges and relying more heavily on acoustic signals during network outages.

Challenge 3: Initial Community Skepticism

We were rejected by so many communities who claimed they need but compensation. Also, some community members initially expressed doubts about the effectiveness of non-lethal deterrents, particularly chili fences, having relied on traditional reactive measures for years. We addressed this through participatory demonstration plots and inviting skeptical farmers to test methods on their own fields with close monitoring and support.

Sustainability and Long-Term Impact

The project was designed from the outset with sustainability as a core principle. By embedding the scout network within the existing Community Forest Management Committee governance structure, we ensured institutional continuity beyond external funding. Local leadership has committed to maintaining the early warning system through volunteer contributions and are exploring integration with ecotourism initiatives that could generate modest revenue for scout stipends.

The educational materials and demonstration sites established during the project remain active community resources. Trained farmer-champions have emerged as peer educators, conducting informal knowledge-sharing sessions with neighbors and relatives. We have secured provisional commitments from MINFOF and Mt. Cameroon National Park to provide technical support for scout refresher training and to integrate community sighting data into official wildlife monitoring databases. This institutional linkage enhances the credibility and sustainability of community-based monitoring. The project model is now being referenced by conservation practitioners in neighboring districts.

Partnership Acknowledgments

This project succeeded through strong collaborative partnerships. We acknowledge the technical guidance and field support provided by the the Mt. Cameroon National Park Conservator and ranger team, Action for Conservation of Endangered Species, Local traditional leaders, particularly the Bakingili Village Council and Quarter Heads, provided essential community entry support and sustained engagement throughout implementation.

We extend special gratitude to the 12 community scouts whose dedication, often in challenging weather and terrain, made the early warning system operational. Their commitment to their communities and to elephant conservation exemplifies the power of locally-led conservation action.

Financial Report

The EMA grant of \$3,000 USD was utilized efficiently and in accordance with the approved budget. All expenditures directly supported project objectives and were documented with receipts and financial records maintained according to Bio-conservation club financial management protocols.

Budget Item	Budgeted	Actual Spent	Variance
Community scout training & tools	\$1,500	\$1,485	-\$15
Workshop materials	\$750	\$750	\$0
Chili fence supplies	\$200	\$208	+\$8
Educational booklets	\$550	\$557	+\$7
TOTAL	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$0

Minor budget reallocations occurred within approved categories to respond to field realities (for example, bulk procurement of training materials yielded slight savings that were redirected to additional booklet printing). All expenditures remained within the total approved grant amount, and complete financial documentation is available upon request.

Photo Documentation

The following pages contain photographic evidence of project activities. All photos were taken during implementation and have been appropriately captioned.

Community Workshop Training Sessions





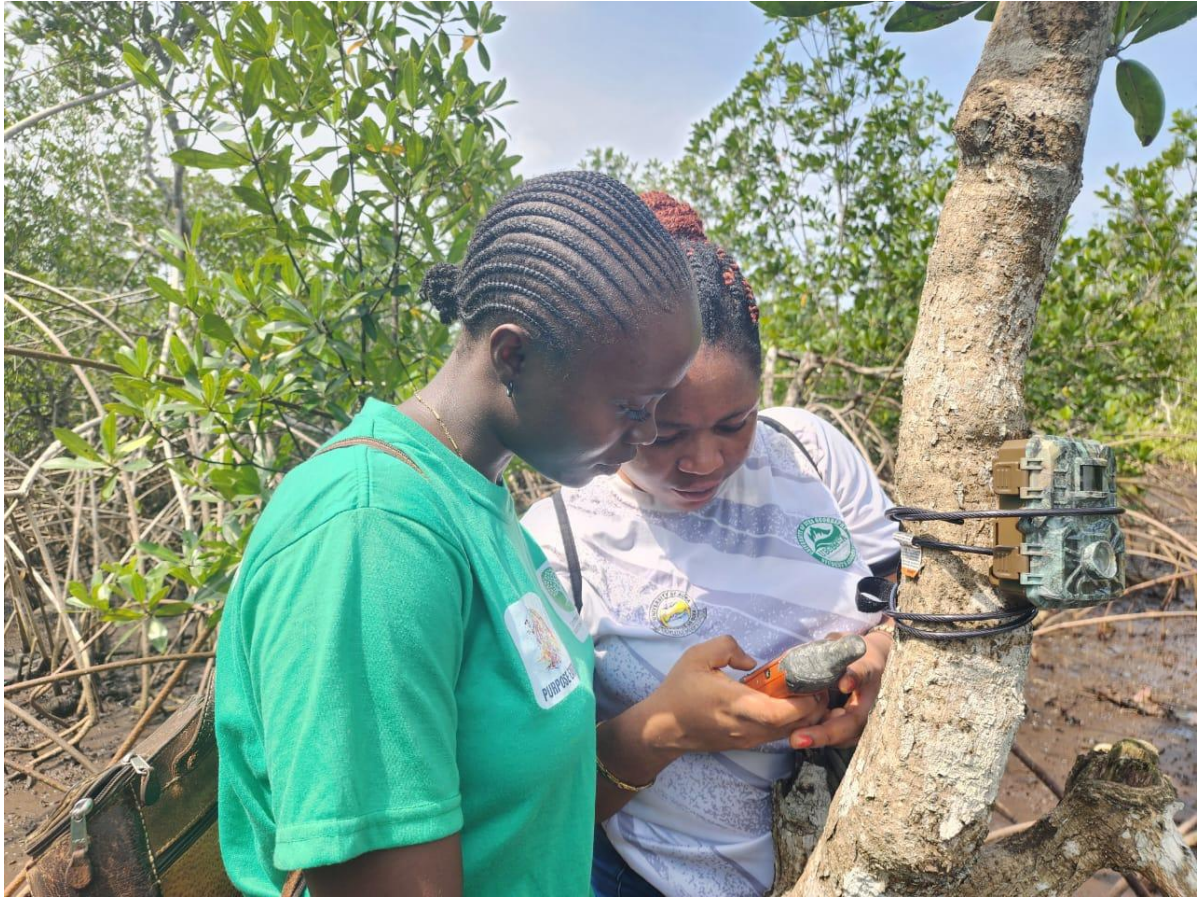




Community Scouts training













Primary and secondary School Conservation Education









Conclusion and Future Directions

The Community-Led Human-Elephant Conflict Prevention project demonstrates that locally-driven, evidence-based interventions can meaningfully reduce human-elephant conflict while building community capacity for long-term coexistence. By achieving all primary objectives and extending impact through youth education, this project has established a sustainable foundation for continued conservation action in Bakingili.

The most significant achievement is not merely the quantitative metrics, but the fundamental shift in community attitudes toward elephants. Pre-project, elephants were viewed almost exclusively as threats to livelihoods. Post-project, community members increasingly recognize elephants as part of their natural heritage and understand their own role in coexistence. This attitudinal transformation, particularly among youth, represents the most enduring legacy of this initiative. Looking forward, we are pursuing funding to enhance the early warning system with additional technology, including potential deployment of acoustic monitoring equipment and integration with emerging AI-based elephant detection systems.

We remain deeply grateful to the Elephant Managers Association for believing in this community-driven approach and providing the seed funding that made this work possible. Your support has not only protected elephants and improved livelihoods in Mt Cameroon but has demonstrated a replicable model for community-led conservation that can benefit elephants and people across the Mt. Cameroon landscape and beyond.