

Background Information-The Elephant Pepper Development Trust (EPDT)

The Elephant Pepper Development Trust was established in November 1997 then as the Mid Zambezi Elephant Project (MZEP) specifically to study elephant ecology through radio-collaring and monitoring programmes that sought to provide information on seasonal elephant movements and crop damages in Zimbabwe's communal lands. Since then, the Trust has gone through major transformations for it has ceased to be a mere research "elephant project" but a more versatile combined conservation and community development institution promoting chilli pepper production in areas of high conflict between rural farmers and wildlife. The Trust, through the World Bank's Development Marketplace initiative, managed to go regional replicating its Zimbabwean model in two other southern African countries: Mozambique and Zambia.

The problem

Rural farmers in many parts of Africa suffer acute conflict with wildlife. Wildlife species such as elephants and buffaloes may destroy crops and severely reduce the potential for farmers to feed their families and generate income. Often the conflict occurs in marginal farming areas where poor soils, erratic rainfall and plant disease already reduce the agricultural potential. The project's sites are a typical example where human settlements abut protected and non-protected wildlife home ranges. Current farming practices serve to increase the risk of crop damage, as most crops are grown in areas highly palatable to wildlife such as elephants. The crop protection methods currently employed are ineffective and killing of problem animals has proven to be ineffective as well as further fostering antagonism between humans and wildlife. These were some of the issues addressed by the project establishing a set of effective tools that communities can administer themselves profitably.

Major achievements during project implementation

The project's achievements are as follows:

1. Farmer capacity building-the project provided a framework for participatory farmer oriented capacity building through a series of training and assessment workshops that focussed on the core issues of the problem the project sought to address.
2. Developing community-managed crop protection systems that reduced wildlife crop damage and increased food security.
3. Improved the livelihoods of rural farmers in the project areas by expanding the farmers' sources of income through chilli pepper production.
4. Encouragement and promotion of participatory research, experimentation and or diversification in natural resources use and management.
5. Facilitating international market linkages for fairly traded prices for the farmers' produce.

Anticipated new steps and involvement of new partners

The Elephantpepper now aims at building on the success of the project attained to date and strengthening the ties forged with new partners. The organization has already begun testing other new ideas in human wildlife conflicts, is exploring other new markets for chilli peppers and has been in close contact with some other potential partners who want to replicate the project's ideas. It is hoped that such goals will be realized in the near future.