

# Establishing and Executing Care Centres for Captive Elephants



## Opinion, Experiences and a Concept Note

Surendra Varma, Suparna Ganguly and Shiela Rao

Elephants in Captivity: CUPA/ANCF- Occasional Report 7



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## **Preface**

The welfare status of elephants endowed with social abilities, comprehensive learning skills and ability in captivity to interact closely with humans, needs to be critically reviewed. Using our intellect, technological advancement, resource power, we need to collectively provide better welfare standards for the management of elephants in captivity, keeping in mind that elephants are primarily wild animals and their needs are complex and varied. They have evolved over the millennia to live in a natural environment and have never been domesticated.

Relevant empirical evidence suggests that many captive elephants in Asia are in a negative physical-psychological state. As our experience shows, most of the elephants, except the ones kept in forest camps, appear to have lost their reproductive status; some are infected with chronic diseases. If released into the wild, they may contaminate an already fragmented and unviable wild population. These categories of elephants need to be kept in an environment with reduced human influences, in a specifically created care and rehabilitation centre. Being intelligent, elephants may quickly learn and adapt to a wild existence even when they have been born in captivity. However, they cannot be returned to the forest immediately, since most of them have lost the ability to forage in the wild, drink or bathe in natural water bodies or interact normally with wild and other captive elephants.

How do we define a proper captive environment? What kind of knowledge, expertise or experience would be required to run such a centre? After 4000 years of captivity, the definition of ideal conditions of captivity has become diffused. More than establishing a care centre, there is need to develop a concept and create a vision document. There is an urgent need for the development of varied expertise and critical review of the success and failure of the care centre initiative.

We assume at least some part of this document may provide some vision or concept that has emerged from a combination of experience, failure, excitement and disappointment. The purpose of this document is not to criticize any agency or institution but to learn lessons from these experiences and move towards creating better life systems for elephants in captivity.

The document has five sections. Section one may appear premature, but it traces aspects of purpose, location, area, manpower planning and facilities. This section was developed based on our discussion with the Co-Chair, IUCN Asian Elephant Specialist Group with regard to the Indian government's initiative to establish an elephant rescue centre.

Section two may have some overlap with the above, but is dedicated to identifying the type of animal that may be forced to seek shelter at the care centre. There is a critical need to identify appropriate animals for the care centre.

Section three provides the experience of dealing with many abused elephants. Though deeply abused and displaced at infancy from their natural environment, these elephants taught us how ill-equipped we are to manage the animals when one lands at our doorstep.

In section four, with empirical data, we try to understand the concept of space provided by different management regimes. Space is not just the shed or shelter provided for the animal - it is the entire physical environment provided for the animal's feeding, bathing, exercise, interactions and other necessities.

Section five describes the initiative of the Elephant Aid and Rescue (EAR) as defined and presented to the Forest Department in 2006-07. However, the idea has not yet been carried out. Though appreciated by concerned officers, it seemed too complex to execute at the time that it was conceived.

In addition, the document has three appendices; appendix 1 reflects the role of the State government in formulating some welfare friendly laws that were formulated as Govt. orders. The purpose of inclusion of these would be to strengthen the knowledge, both legal and official, that has been encoded in the last decade. Also, these would be the very reasons why elephants would continue to get sheltered in designated rescue centres, since there are laws to protect them in India.

Appendix 2 is the chronological history of the rescue and confiscation of an abused adult male elephant in captivity.

Appendix 3, a tentative proposal and draft plan of Proposed Mysore Elephant Park of the State Forest Department (Wildlife), Karnataka, southern India was included to show the stand of the SFD on the care centre and the understanding and knowledge that it incorporated. This document was circulated for discussion on a care centre for elephants and there was a proposal to initiate an exclusive care centre in Karnataka for Captive Elephants.

We sincerely hope that this document is evaluated critically and the concept of care centres encouraged, thus providing at least some direction or vision towards the welfare of elephants that may require special care. .

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**Section 1:**  
**Concept Note on Establishing Elephant Care Centres**

## Abstract

India's 3,500 to 4,000 captive elephants reflect a culture that has evolved around elephant-keeping over centuries. However deterioration in the quality of life of captive elephants in recent years emerges from many factors. The welfare of the elephants that are abused can be accomplished by creating or developing a vision for rehabilitation or care centres for them. It is expected that the care centre can house aged, sick elephants that cannot be used for other purposes or elephants that are orphaned or rescued from abuse or under court advice. The Elephant Care Centre's priority is to see that these elephants are subjected to as little negative handling as possible by mahouts, so that the animals have a choice of indulging in their activities with little human interference. It would also train, educate, and make the public aware of an elephant's needs and social behaviour and provide critical information needed for their survival in the wild.

The care centre should be located in areas with ample foliage, water accessibility and other needs that meet the elephant's ecological and behavioural requirements. The extent or area of the centre may depend on the objective or vision of a large or small care/ rescue centre. It however, should aim for at least 1% (i.e. 1.25 acre/animal) of space the animal would get in the wild. The need for space for exercise, water, shade, interaction can be as effectively planned out in a smaller model with more potential for giving individual care to an animal's needs. Such space could provide freedom to move around without shackles or chains or ropes in a natural, protected, forest-like space and freedom to indulge in social interaction with other elephants. The minimum or maximum number that could be housed is to be firmly dictated by the availability of resources like manpower, funds, space, and other components for comfort and safety of the animals. Ideally, it should be the minimum number of elephants that can be cared for, in a given area for a particular period of time.

We envisage the direction of rescue centres to gradually reduce dependence on a system which uses one or more mahouts per individual elephant. Mahouts are to be well trained, well paid and well accommodated so that the few that are in charge are totally motivated to spend the rest of their lives attached to such centres. There is a need for dedicated, knowledgeable veterinarians who would be motivated to spend a considerable portion of their time at these centres. The centre could have capacity and capabilities for training courses for veterinarians and mahouts. Carefully managed and monitored tourism may be acceptable to keep it functioning from a funding standpoint.

The centre needs to be equipped to deal with layers of stake holders like owners, mahouts, officials, legal officers, public, journalists, etc. Elephant care centres may be run by a committee committed to the welfare of elephants. The committee may constitute a resource team with experience in dealing with abused animals or animals that are under stress. Long term manpower planning is expected to be important to ensure that centres are not beset with disgruntled, underpaid, unhappy staff who then become the source of other problems, compromising the health and life of the animals. There would be a potential to market activity of the centre by a number of initiatives that would encourage people to donate and spend money on this project.

## **Introduction**

India's 3,500 to 4,000 (Bist et al., 2001) captive elephants reflect a culture, which has a long tradition of taming, training and working with these magnificent animals. Initially, captive elephants were owned and kept by kings and emperors, with enormous resources and manpower invested in this occupation. Elephants were used in wars, were state symbols, led ceremonial processions and in time got associated with temples and gods. Special Ministers of State were appointed to oversee and personally supervise their care, cater to their needs and look after their welfare.

However, deterioration in the quality of life of elephants in recent years emerges from lack of adequate and appropriate food, healthcare, shortage of potable water, trained mahouts and knowledgeable owners (Namboodiri, 2008). Elephants are made to beg in cities amidst traffic on hot tar roads, forced to beg in temples by lifting their trunks to salute several times a day, beaten for not obeying orders and sometimes just tied up in temple compounds for years for being aggressive and undisciplined. Sustaining economically unviable elephants, caring for incurably ill, aged and abused ones, rehabilitating rogue elephants, can be accomplished by creating or developing a vision for rehabilitation or care centres for captive elephants (Namboodiri, 2008).

The Forest Departments of India have traditional forest camps where captive elephants are housed (Varma, et al., 2009). These have been acquired from the wild and have been born in the camps when captive females have bred with their wild counterparts, and from the past practice of the infamous "khedda" operations (Kalaivanan, 2009). Our survey results (Varma, et al., 2009) clearly indicate that elephants kept in forest camps are in relatively better condition than those in other captive environments. However, there is a need to have a comprehensive plan for other elephants that are kept under different management systems (zoos, temple, circus or under individual ownership) that have unfavorable environmental conditions and apply harsher treatment towards elephants. Lack of compassionate, competent mahouts is also the cause of many elephants being neglected and ill-treated.

The establishment of care centres for elephants will prove that the concerned authorities are deeply committed to the cause of this valuable Schedule 1 animal and would provide invaluable resources for assisting and caring for those elephants that suffer abuse for various reasons. The Forest Department has to sometimes take into custody elephants from different sources: elephants that are kept and used in captivity without proper permits, elephants that have been abandoned by their private owners, elephants that are diseased or in very bad condition (Varma, et al, 2006; Varma, 2007), and also elephants that have been brought under the department's control by orders passed by the Honourable Courts (see appendix 1 of extracts from government order as the role of forest department in alleviating abuse and cruelty to captive elephants).

According to Project Elephant (PE), Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), the only conveniences currently available to the State Forest Departments to care for elephants are the zoos. These are not always ideal or suitable for the task, given the fact that zoos already have elephants within their limited space. A meeting conducted for

establishing care centres in India, by the Chief Wildlife Wardens from different States and representatives of NGOs (Anon, 2006) suggests that there is requirement for specific facilities in order to manage these elephants realistically and prevent random or spontaneous administration (Anon, 2006).

In Asia, there are rescue centres for elephants in Thailand, and elephant orphanages in Sri Lanka. Similarly, Africa has such centres and orphanages. These centres are government supported and are funded and managed by NGOs. India has a wealth of expertise, talent and dedication, and given its vast experience of managing captive elephants, the country can surely initiate a care centre for abused elephants and give life to this long overdue concept. The Director Project Elephant, Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has proposed funding under the 11<sup>th</sup> Plan for captive elephants for establishing Elephant Rescue Centres under the Project Elephant Scheme (Anon, 2006).

### **Goals**

It is expected that the care centre should house aged, sick and captive elephants who cannot be used for other purposes (Anon, 2006). It should also have arrangements to house young and older male and female elephants, if circumstances dictate- eg., rescued from abuse/court advice, etc., and therefore should have space for all these categories. As for males, there should be a plan to keep them during musth period with minimal reduction of welfare status; this plan should prevent them from being tied or being exposed to minimal food and water; for instance, steel pipe corrals can be constructed if elephants cannot not be left chain-free in the forest.

An elephant Care Centre's priority should be to see that the elephants are subjected to as little violence and harshness as possible by mahouts, to keep shy or stressed animals away from interacting with public, to give the option of choice to these intelligent animals to indulge in their activities with little human interference. It would also be an important objective to train, educate, and make the public aware of an elephant's needs and social behaviour and provide critical information for their survival in the wild.

Old, diseased, physically disabled elephants that are no longer economically viable to its owners can be shifted to exclusive rescue centres built to cater to their specific needs: expert veterinary care, scientifically planned stall feed with opportunity to forage, supervised efforts to form socially cohesive groups among the elephants; in other words, given the constraints of age/health/disability, provisions for expression of species-typical behaviours will have to be made.

A centre focussing on young abandoned elephants from the wild can be set up when immediate release of such young elephants back in the wild is not possible. Elephants which are physically injured and heavily traumatised need to be kept separate. Mixing orphans with compatible adults can provide a valuable support structure for both. Adult elephants are far better teachers of baby elephants than humans are (Mann, per. comm.). An orphanage will have very different functioning from a rescue centre and should be planned separately.

An exclusive centre can function as a rejuvenation camp where private owners can keep their elephants for fixed periods on payment of a fee. However, when elephants are constantly exposed to changes in herd dynamics, social bonding may be an issue in managing such animals. Elephants need a fairly constant social environment in order to rehabilitate and the introduction of new individuals should not affect already established social bonding. In India, rehabilitating animals that are abused is a fairly frequent request. Given this, one needs to consider another option, like keeping them in exclusive rejuvenation camps. The viability of this approach needs to be carefully investigated. However, the idea of an exclusive rejuvenation camp should not be combined with the rescue centre objectives.

While it is important to cater to the specific needs of captive elephants in care-centers depending on their disabilities/ requirements, care should be taken not to disrupt existing social relationships among the elephants. In other words, if a group already exists in captivity with a multi-tiered age structure, the group should not be broken up into old elephants and elephants needing rejuvenation/retraining. The entire group could be maintained as one unit in a suitable rescue center.

### **Proposed landscape for care centres**

The care centre should be located in areas with ample foliage, water accessibility and other aspects that meet the elephant's ecological and behavioural needs. If the centre is situated near a protected area or reserved forests, it should not be connected to the protected area or reserve or any other forested region, to prevent the potential spread of disease from captive elephants to wildlife, including wild elephants (Anon, 2006). If the concern is spread of diseases it should be stipulated that diseased elephants should be kept separate from healthy ones – wild or captive (Mann, per.comm.)

Often, substantial stall feeding may be required and therefore rescue centres should plan for this and not depend totally on grazing, browsing and foraging for nutrition. Accessibility through good network of roads is important, as moving elephants needs heavy transport. Good access to roads can also be helpful for moving elephants in and out of the centre in a less stressful way.

### **Extent of the centre**

The extent or area of the centre may depend on the objective or vision of a large or small care/ rescue centre. The area and the probable number of elephants that will be kept in such centres may vary with place and circumstances. There was an opinion that it should be at least 50 ha (117 acre) with availability of area for future expansion (Anon, 2006). This figure is extremely misleading. The Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) and others (WWF-World Wildlife Fund for Nature -, IUCN etc) recommend 2.25 acres as a minimum per elephant.

However, one would suggest that an elephant should at least have an acre and a half of land. There are opinions that even with large areas, the effective area used by elephants is only 1 acre or less than an acre. The argument is that elephants need large spaces, but only when they are allowed to free range. Given these opinions, we would like to

suggest a model. If elephant densities in the wild is of 2 elephants/km<sup>2</sup> (Varma, et al., 1995) in high elephant density areas, with large zones under preferred habitats– say deciduous and scrub forests (Sukumar, 1986), then considering limited free ranging space is allowed at the centres and the animal is stall fed, these centres should aim for a space of at least 1% (i.e. 1.25 acre/animal) of space the animal would get in the wild.

Such a minimum area (for small rescue centers) would be necessary to ensure adequate exercise, opportunity to explore and imply free-ranging opportunity to be provided to the elephants. Usage of the land should be planned to make it viable for the animal's needs. Small rescue centre models can also be a source of learning and experience for authorities, before embarking on larger ventures. The need for space for exercise, water, shade, interaction can be as effectively planned out in a smaller model with more potential for giving individual care to an animal's needs.

However, as suggested by an expert (Buckley, per. comm) there could be problems associated with the rationale about space. Experience shows that elephants will become bored, stand in one place, pace, bob, sway and engage in stereotypical behaviour if forced to live in a the restricted space suggested here. There is a minimum of land required to stimulate an elephant to be active. Tens of acres is the minimum space in which one could expect one elephant or a herd of five to engage in species specific activity without human intervention. Keeping elephants in a few acres is problematic for additional reason; grass will become trampled and uprooted leaving elephants living in a contaminated dirt environment. Any vegetation in the area will soon be damaged and killed by the pressure of elephants in the confined space. Vegetation will not have the opportunity to regenerate in such a small space.

Zoos in Europe and the US keep elephants in multi acre enclosures, provide behaviour enrichment and supplemental feedings. These elephants are reported to be suffering from foot disease, necrosis and restricted response to aggression due to the confined space (Olson et al., 1994; Clubb and Mason, 2002). Creating care centers of insufficient space will result in the same health problems for elephants that modern day zoos experience.

For any care centre, the backdrop of forest or mixed forested species based plantation forest is essential, where foraging can happen. As discussed above, the main care centre or camp area, over a period of time may get bare and resemble a dirt field. Here, the camp-structure and Bannerghatta zoo model may work, as elephants get to walk and choose their food, indulge in species-specific behaviour, interact with or avoid their colleagues, and have conditions for natural breeding (which in a rescue center should be prevented through female contraception).

Depending on the objective, for centers catering exclusively to old, infirm, physically disabled elephants, a forest landholding of 8 acres with 5-6 rescued elephants can be a more successful and care-oriented centre than large camp-like (run by the state forest department in forest areas) structures. Evidence suggests that elephants need to be in medium sized family groups and any centre interested in keeping elephants with optimal

welfare, needs to be able to cater to at least 5 elephants (Mann, per. comm.). A number of sheds should be constructed for feeding them with a special diet, which can give them an opportunity to come inside to facilitate handling for a medical check or treatment. For centers catering to orphaned elephants or those undergoing rejuvenation, the space required would have to take into account their ability/need to walk and forage as observed for wild elephants. Treating elephants in such centers can be done in the field and is accomplished quite easily.

The space could have a natural depression for a lake or be close to a water source with deep borewell facilities, which can supply adequate amounts of water in an artificial tank, if necessary. Ample provision would need to be made to ensure water remains fresh and does not stagnate.

Commands using treats should be given by experienced, trained and welfare oriented mahouts, who should do this exercise daily, in order to keep the elephants minimally trained through positive approach rather than negative handling like beating, prodding or ankush jabs. Harsh handling may not be acceptable, but, negative reinforcement like applying discreet pressure to certain key points, need to be used at a minimum level. Overall, space for elephants is envisaged to be a place where a given number of elephants can be kept in an environment conducive to the display of natural behaviours (Clubb and Mason, 2002) and interaction with other animals (Poole and Moss 2008). This should include:

- Freedom to move around without shackles or chains or ropes (at least for significant period of time) in a natural, protected, forest-like space
- Freedom to indulge in social interactions with other elephants
- Freedom to play in water or indulge in dust-baths or other activities
- Freedom to sleep, walk, play or bathe under a watchful, benevolent human presence
- The freedom to leave an area at will

## Protection

Fencing the area around the centre may have many advantages- it may prevent the centre from being encroached upon, act as boundary demarcation or prevent the entry of wild animals or elephants (if it is close to protected or wildlife areas). There is an opinion that the centre has to be fenced with solar power fencing with adequate number of strands (Anon, 2006). However, elephant proof trenches (EPT), along with solar power fencing and planting of agave, commonly called blue agave (*Agave tequilana*) as outer rings of the EPT could be good models.



Figure 1: Example of the usage of Agave plant for protecting forest boundary

This may also depend on the location, rainfall and other factors.

### **Number of elephants**

A care centre for elephants needs to be very clear on the number of elephants that can be accommodated in a defined space and the composition of adults, sub-adults, juveniles, infants, etc. Each category also needs to have, likewise, a minimum and maximum number, which in turn would be firmly dictated by the availability of resources like manpower, funds, space, and other components of comfort and safety of the animals. Ideally, the number of elephants should be restricted to the minimum so that they can be cared for an extensively long period of time. After fixing appropriate numbers as per space availability in various locations, elephants can be kept as close to their group and family structures as possible, in many care centres in a state.

### **Age of the animals cared and duration of stay**

Some of the protocols of such care centres may have to focus on the age of elephants housed, the rate at which they come to the centre for permanent or temporary stay, resource mobilization for the life span of an elephant that can range from a minimum of 20 years to more, optimum numbers envisaged, depending on the revenue and resource constraints of the centre.

### **Facilities for mahouts**

The direction of rescue centres should be to gradually reduce dependence on a system of one or more mahouts per individual elephant. Mahouts in the centre should be well trained, well paid and well accommodated, so that the few who are in charge, are genuinely motivated to spend the rest of their lives attached to such centres.

However, experience shows that a turnover of staff is expected. Mahouts should be expected to stay involved in the centre for a number of years but not necessarily their whole lives. Elephants should be made to link up with mahouts only during bathing, feeding and veterinary procedures, if any. The mahouts should oversee the animals' movements and not dictate it.

### **Veterinary facilities**

Having primary treatment facilities would be of utmost importance for minor complaints or emergencies at the centre (Anon, 2006). Like the mahouts, there is a need for dedicated, knowledgeable veterinarians who would be motivated to spend a considerable portion of their time at these centres.

Factors such as number of veterinarians available and specialised training for these veterinarians are also to be taken into consideration. The centre could also help in providing more elephant specialised veterinarians for future care centres across the country. Tie-ups with local and international veterinary institutions for specific internships could be considered. This kind of arrangement could also be beneficial as a revenue source for the centre.

### **Facilities for training and capacity building**

The centre could have the capacity and capability to run training courses for veterinarians and mahouts. The training should not only be focused for the veterinarians or mahouts who are associated with the centre, or centres elsewhere. Specific training programmes for other mahouts or elephant handlers could happen in collaboration with the existing forest department elephant camps.

### **Facilities for Tourism**

We need to keep in mind that these centres are primarily for elephant welfare. If given authorities have no money to run centres, but have to depend solely on tourism and other commercial activities, they should not consider the concept of care centres at all. However, tourism, carefully managed and monitored, may be acceptable, to keep centres functioning from a funding standpoint. Anon., 2006, suggests that tourism managed by the State Tourism Department could be permitted close to the Care Centre. However, if a tourism centre is located close to or at the centre, then it would need to come under the same authority managing the elephant centre at the field level, to be able to control numbers, etc.

### **Management of different categories of animals:**

#### **Permanent or temporarily confiscated animals**

These may be from Forest camps for special recuperation or confiscated elephants brought in till the formalities of ownership and other details are sorted out by the state. The centre needs to be equipped to deal with layers of individuals like owners, mahouts, officials, legal officers, public, journalists etc. in the handling of such cases.

#### **Elephant calves**

These may be brought in as orphans and may or may not be permanent residents. If the calves came directly from the wild and a view of rehabilitation and release is proposed, their management may need the least exposure to humans, thus minimizing risk of infections, imprinting and familiarity.

#### **Diseased adults/juveniles/sub-adults**

The medical team may assume primary responsibility to recommend treatment, or depending on the stage of the problem and whether it's incurable or infectious, euthanasia. This category may require special set of protocols, which may include checks, quarantine, position of resident veterinarian or veterinarian on call, distance of veterinarians from centres, committee of local or outside state veterinarians. Tie-ups with diagnostic laboratories or universities with high-end facilities should be also planned. Once a disease is confirmed, then protocols need to be evaluated and difficult decisions taken e.g. – if a disease is worth the expense of treatment or not. Ideally, the diagnosis of the animal in situ is carried out prior to bringing the animal into the centre.

In the long term, it may be suggested to have a satellite centre a few km away where elephants with health issues are first brought for diagnosis. Experts caution (Riddle, per.com.) about quarantine facilities at the initial planning level of the centre—elephants

are very social animals and quarantining them may not always be in the best interest of their welfare. Separating elephants through quarantine measures may increase their level of stress, and if the given animal is diseased, that may lower the immune system which would increase the risk of any treatment taking longer or not being as effective as it should be. If a formal disease-monitoring process is in place, then there is no need to quarantine elephants.

### **Feral or newly captured wild elephants**

Feral or newly captured wild elephants have no experience of being in captive conditions. Therefore, till their futures are decided, they may also need care and housing at the shelter. These animals are already under stress of being captured, exposed to human environment, uncertainty and other factors. They would be, predictably, very dangerous to handle or even approach. Such elephants need extreme care and support and such situations warrant a specific or different approach which may redefine the space, food, water and concept of the care centre itself.

It should be the philosophy of the care centre that a recommendation to capture wild rogue elephants should be a last resort – instead the centre should provide expert guidance in resolving the situation in situ. A specific, well-supervised basic training method/protocol should be used when dealing with wild caught elephants– the training should only go as far as basic stop/go commands and demonstrating humans aren't to be feared.

### **Human Resources and responsibilities**

Elephant care centres would have to be run by individuals committed to the welfare of elephants. The project has to be supported and approved by the State Government through its Forest Department. However, an agency or an NGO that has shown deep and abiding interest, or has the experience or access to skilled technical resources could be in charge of the day-to-day running of the centre.

The centre(s) need(s) to be owned / managed by an agency or NGO which is supervised by a high level committee. The committee should meet quarterly to discuss policy. The committee should appoint a general manager and executive team that have the responsibility and autonomy to run the centre(s) dynamically and efficiently with out unnecessary bureaucratic delays. An independent audit committee that regularly conducts welfare audits on the centre(s) is recommended.

All decisions would have to be approved by a committee that needs to be constituted by the State Forest Departments. The committee may constitute a resource team with experience in dealing with abused animals or animals that are in stress (from wild and captive categories). There would be need for qualified, dedicated and experienced veterinarians, Government officials and members of the public, to be part of this venture.

The committee would need to have an overview of welfare conditions, best practices, sensitive issues that may need to be handled as per committee directions and economics

of the centre. Lacunae like indecision, fear, political interference, will affect the management and thereby put the welfare of the animals in question. The committee needs to design and envision the plan for animals in terms of space and funds.

Management of elephants should be done on a case by case basis by the executive team located at the centre and should not be the role of a high level committee. The centre manager, in consultation with veterinarian and mahout, could decide which elephants could be maintained as free-ranging if free of disease, and which may need provision for stall feeding.

### **Manpower resource planning**

There are many business practices that can be utilised to help reduce the problem of acquiring appropriate manpower. Long term manpower planning is important to ensure that centres are not hampered by disgruntled, unpaid, unhappy staff, which in turn could compromise the health and life of the animals. Most care centre and elephant camps are plagued by a shortage of people who are knowledgeable, good administrators and committed to elephant welfare. This is often combined with shortage of funds, creating disastrous consequences for the animals.

### **Standard operating procedures (SOP)**

The SOP of such a centre needs to be made for all activities – routine or otherwise - being taken care of – for all categories like healthy and free-ranging, diseased and confined, calves and special cases. These should be based on the elephant's background, food habits, ease and familiarity with natural a water body, relationship with mahout, morning exercise, morning and evening bath, feed, opportunity for interaction, etc.

There is a need for written guidelines to outline the SOP of any centre. These guidelines need to be reviewed periodically to ensure that all aspects are still relevant to the management of the centre.

### **Resource Generation**

Being a novel concept in India, there would be a potential to market the centres activity with a number of initiatives that would encourage people to donate and spend money on this project.

1. Volunteer positions in this rescue centre can be made into an attractive learning proposition for professionals such as veterinarians under the supervision of the assigned veterinarian.
2. Experienced elephant keepers should be invited to come from other countries to learn and share experiences about the concept of limited but free ranging rehabilitated elephants.
3. Education programs linking in with national and international schools would help generate awareness and interest. Qualified and experienced researchers should be encouraged on full time or part time basis.
4. Programs for visitors on elephant observations and interaction for a better understanding of the animal.

5. Elephant Gift Shops with T-shirts, bags, paintings and unique handcrafted items could be sold in the Elephant Conservation Gift Shops.
6. Interactive websites with updated information and news concerning wild and captive Asian elephants can be developed.

Depending on the situation, all these activities can be charged for and that would generate revenue to support the centre.

### **Suggested locations of care centres in India**

Depending on welfare issues and other factors associated with it, priority has to be given for establishing care centres in areas where they can most influence elephants needing assistance. However, to begin with, efforts should be made to create four centres in different parts of the country (i) one for the Southern Indian States, (ii) one for the Northern States, (iii) one for the Central Eastern States, and (iv) one for the North Eastern States (Anon, 2006). For the centres to be a success, unique collaborations between government, business and non-profit sectors are required – i.e. a multi-organizational effort. .

These guidelines are suggestions towards better welfare for certain states like Rajasthan/Haryana, where the requirements may be different. If so, the State Government should be free to make the necessary changes, keeping elephant welfare as the predominant foundation. Adequate scope should be given to NGOs at all levels to support the government in such a novel concept. Rescue centre concepts may evolve further and smaller centres should also be encouraged, in order to take care of the many elephants that require assistance. A state may find it worthwhile to have 3-4 such small centres instead of one large facility. Landholding and other resources may need to be in direct proportion to each elephant with viable use, rather than a figure that may not reflect any need except land availability.

### **Conclusion**

Care centres should effectively take care of the natural needs of the animals. The need to forage, access to water as an instrument for thermo-regulation, social interaction and reproduction are part of the welfare concerns for care centre animals. Lack of exposure of young animals in captivity, to natural stimulus such as social interaction results in a loss of natural, instinctive behaviour. This affects oestrus cycling and reproduction and goes against the welfare needs of the animal. Individual elephants isolated from others and con-specifics, develop poor skills for independent living. An ideal care centre would then naturally incorporate specific and general needs of each elephant.

Additionally, the care centre should have a clear policy on whether elephants will be allowed to breed in the centre. If the vision is towards reproduction, then the fate of the calves needs to be considered. If the vision is not for reproduction, then handling the process of reproduction without compromising the animals' welfare needs to be addressed. As resources are a very important concern for the rescue/care centre, there may be shortage of funds to support an active breeding programme. The main objective

would be to maintain minimum family-sized herds and take in needy animals, without having to face the problem of excess animals that are born at the centre.

This may also have more complexities e.g. – though natural dirt floors may be the traditionally best option for a captive elephant to be housed on, unless there are at least 3-4 separate tethering sites or the animal has the option to move around freely, dirt floors may cause severe hygiene problems if they are not properly cleaned and allowed to dry. However, concrete floor must be avoided as they cause unnatural wearing off of pads, and irreversible joint and foot problems. A care centre also needs to design the triggers to motivate an elephant to move and be physically active. With comfort levels being high and consequently a lack of interest in exercise, it may cause disastrous health problems. For actual welfare conditions to reign supreme at a care centre, there should be no compromise of available knowledge, resources or manpower.

In spite of having a sizeable number of privately owned elephants, India appears to have failed in its implementation of existing welfare laws for elephants. Rarely can atrocities be prevented from being committed on elephants by some of their owners or commercial establishments. With a sharp decline in the rapidly changing dynamics of a market economy, there are few mahouts available who have the experience, dedication or desire to look after elephants in modern India. It is neither an economically viable nor a desirable activity any more.

There is an immense and urgent need for a Rescue Centre for elephants that need housing and care for those which have been exploited, hurt or badly treated in an unacceptable environment. There is also an urgent need to build the capability of staff (veterinary and mahout) for this type of facility.

Eventually, as experts suggest: 1) the centre should be planned primarily to house only orphaned, unwanted, abused or confiscated elephants; 2) it will function to raise capability within staff by hosting training courses and/or internships for veterinarians, mahouts, managers, who are directly involved with elephants 3) The centre could be used to conduct relevant studies by scientists who will be asked to present proposals to the committee managing the centre 4) the centre should not act as motivation to capture problem wild elephants from their natural homes.

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**Section 2:**  
**Elephant Care Centre – likely entrants as envisaged**

## ABSTRACT

A care centre may first need to categorize the layers of elephants from differing backgrounds seeking entry. An elephant care/rescue centre can become a dumping ground for all unwanted or difficult elephants that institutions/individuals may want to get rid off. However, it is expected that various types of elephants may be admitted into the care centre. Some of the expected categories for the care centres are: elephants seized due to illegal entry into some states, confiscated for reasons of abuse or lack of legal papers from institutions like temples, mutts and private ownership, wild calves rescued due to death of mother, falling into a pit and abandoned by herd, wild elephants brought into sheltering because of severe handicap, or inability to live a normal life in the wild and wild elephants that are captured due to the intensity of the man-animal conflict from certain areas.

Among these categories, travelling elephants taken into custody at the rescue centre, need sheltering in the centres till their fates are decided. Like traveling elephants of other states, elephants from temples, circus and private ownership within the state, that are in greatly compromised space, care and welfare conditions are likely candidates to the centre. It's suggested that the orphaned calves should go through minimum interaction with humans as they may keep returning to the centre or lose their fear of humans. Primarily calves should not be picked up in the first place if there is even a slight chance of their being united with their herds, but only if all the options of doing so have been exhausted. For injured or diseased animals from the wild also, minimum human intervention is recommended. The care centre should guard itself against becoming a stocking centre for wild elephants that may be captured, due to severe public pressure and conflict.

The vision of selecting elephants is important as this would take care of many aspects, primarily space, resource and welfare of the animal itself. The resources that are saved through not admitting wild calves, injured animals and captives from the wild as conflict mitigation measures, could be used for those animals that really need it and that have lost their natural environment and natural behaviour.

## **Introduction**

A care centre may first need to categorize the layers of elephants from differing backgrounds seeking entry. The complexities and issues surrounding each may need to be understood before guidelines for the same can be initiated (Namboodiri, 2008). Due to their individuality it would be very difficult to define the needs of the elephants by purely categorising where they have come from. However, for management purposes, some clarity is needed. For example, source of the animal could be from institution or region or in any condition.

Experience shows that most of these animals would have been rescued from temples or private ownership. The former may voluntarily hand over difficult or old animals, once they are aware that such a centre exists, if they no longer have the resources or will to maintain them. Some animals may need to be confiscated from owners who violate Section 42 of the amended Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, or whose ownership licenses the Chief Wildlife Warden may cancel, if sufficient evidence of cruelty or mistreatment is brought against them. Circus elephants may fall into either category.

## **Categories**

An elephant care/rescue centre can become the dumping ground for all unwanted or difficult elephants that institutions may want to get rid off. Depending on the issue and the status and management of captive elephants in a given state, it is expected that the various types of elephants that may be admitted into the care centre are as follows: (some example have been given below and may vary from state to state – new categories could be included depending on the state-wide population and problems faced)

- A. Elephants in captivity from other states that are seized due to illegal entry into some states, like the begging elephants or the timber elephants that are smuggled across state borders for tree felling in estates.
- B. Elephants in captivity from institutions like temples, mutts and private ownership, that either want to hand them over or are confiscated for reasons of abuse or lack of legal papers
- C. Wild calves that may need to be rescued due to a variety of reasons like death of mother, falling into a pit and abandoned by herd, etc.
- D. Wild elephants that need to be brought into sheltering because of a severe handicap or inability to live a normal life in the wild
- E. Wild elephants that are captured due to the intensity of the man-animal conflict from certain areas

## **Vision for selecting elephants among these categories for care centres**

### **Travelling elephants across states**

Very often, travelling elephants from other states come without proper ownership and health documents. These animals too, are not in good condition (Varma, et al., 2007; Varma, 2007), being made to walk on roads for long distances. These animals need to

be taken into custody at the rescue centre, since their very nature categorises them as contraband and in illegal possession by individuals. The “owners” fall into the category of poachers and dealers in wildlife trade. This would also mean that the rescue centre includes a pro-active committee who would be willing to take such cases up to the High Court for resolutions, if necessary. A resolution committee would ideally be well practised in mitigation measures so that amicable resolutions can be sought, without needing the courts. In effect, volunteering the release of the elephant into the care centre would be the objective of this activity. The elephants would need the protection of rescue centres till their fates are decided.

### **Elephants from temples, circus and private ownership**

Elephants in captivity in temples, ashrams (Varma, et al., 2009), mutts, etc., which are doing reasonably well in terms of upkeep and maintenance in the private institutions should be kept under regular surveillance on site itself. Elephants which may be confiscated for a variety of reasons need good quarantine facilities before they are allowed to mix with other animals, forage in the forest or interact with wild herds. Only animals that are in greatly compromised space, care and welfare conditions, should be considered likely candidates for the centre.

### **Orphaned calves**

The vision for keeping orphaned calves needs to be specified. If the Govt. wants to keep such animals, they may have to provide resources for them for the next 60 years. However, if the objective is to return them to the wild, the effort must be undertaken rapidly, without loss of time. There needs to be minimum interaction with humans, especially with the general public. Once imprinted with human memories, animals may keep returning to the centre or lose their fear of humans.

The options would be to either re-unite with the natal herds, or as is currently attempted in Sri Lanka and Africa (Udanawale Transit Home or Amboseli Park in Kenya), establish a group of sub-adults with radio collars and track their progress. Primarily, calves should not be picked up in the first place if there is even a slight chance of their being united with their herds, but only if all the options of doing so have been exhausted.

### **Injured or diseased animals from wild**

For elephants that have a severe handicap in the wild, the first impulse would be to rescue them and put them inside a rescue centre. Again, this aspect must be deliberated upon, since minimum human intervention is recommended for all animals in the wild. Elephants, detected with such problems need to be tracked and then a committee may decide on the outcome which would address the welfare of both the animal and the centre. Until a centre is well established and everybody truly knows what they are doing, it would be impossible to deal with an elephant that has not been conditioned or used to captivity. The emphasis on such animals, if possible, should be on treatment and release.

## **Captured elephants**

The care centre should guard itself against becoming a stocking centre of wild elephants that may be captured due to severe public pressure and conflict (Sukumar, 1990; Nath and Sukumar, 1998). Also, the Government should not get lulled into more captures by the existence of such a place, since this would mean the gradual end of wild herds. Taming of elephants, especially adults, is a most unpleasant task and rescue centres should not become another camp substitute. The process could be much more pleasant than the current process of training. Captured adults should be relocated to other ranges and if that is not possible, appropriate steps according to the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (WLPA) need to be initiated.

## **Conclusion**

Once the concepts are clear regarding the necessity of the rescue centre and the likely entrants that may be given priority, the holding space of the facility and other factors need to be addressed. It would be the committee's responsibility to establish protocols for such a centre to function effectively. The vision of selecting elephants is important as this would take care of many aspects, primarily space, resources and welfare of the animal itself.

For example, if we prevent capturing elephants from the wild or have the protocol of releasing rescued calves immediately into the wild, these would, by default, be provided natural environment, reducing stress that animals go through while in a human milieu. The resources that are saved through not keeping these categories of elephants can be used for those animals who really need it and have lost their natural environment and natural behaviour, as in elephants rescued from years of captivity in circuses and temples, private ownerships, etc.

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## **Section 3: Confiscated captive elephants and care centres**

Lessons learnt from case studies for the vision and design of  
care centres

## **ABSTRACT**

Concerned departments may be unable to take care of confiscated or rescued animals due to lack of money, resources and manpower. The abuse of such animals therefore continues unchecked. The purpose of presenting unique case studies is to help us to practically define a successful care centre – in principal – against the species background and in relation to the individual needs of the animals.

The elephants that were exposed to such conditions were from different age and sex classes, with varied conditions of abuse. One fifteen year old male elephant was the victim of abuse from a temple; a sixteen year old female was confiscated from another temple on grounds of abuse by temple authorities. A 40 year old female was confiscated from a circus due to a public complaint against the elephant owner for lack of care and abuse of the animal. A 35-40 year old female elephant was confiscated on grounds of faulty and non-existent documents pertaining to her ownership. A 40 year old circus elephant was confiscated and sent to the Bandipur elephant camp for rehabilitation.

In all these case studies it was found that the government did not have any resources or plan of action and no experience of handling such crises. Except one NGO, no support or assistance came from any other NGOs or experts. The department was forced to accept animals due to public outcry, pressure from the NGOs and media reports of abuse/misuse that led to criticism of the government.

These experiences brought out distinct issues regarding handling, caring and developing a concept for keeping confiscated elephants in care centres. Some of the issues highlighted are management of mahouts who come along with the animal and replacement of those who leave, designing shelter or space for the animals, specific or infectious disease management, behaviour of animals and the influence of change of environment and lack of experience with the rescued animals. The Care Centre concept is a bridge for the departments to continue their work of implementing laws and gives a safe zone for such animals to be housed until their futures are decided by the law courts or negotiations.

## **Introduction**

Records of experience with animal management and with the network of owners, mahouts, authorities and others has laid the basis for a vision Concept of the issues the proposed centres of the future need to deal with. Practical insights are offered, in this section, of handling and dealing with some elephants brought into provisional care as the animals had been deserted by the owner, confiscated due to bad upkeep, infected with disease (Varma, et al., 2007; Varma, 2007) or other associated factors. There may be inability (by the concerned Forest Departments) to take care of confiscated or rescued animals due to lack of money, resources and manpower. The abuse of such animals therefore continues unchecked. Since 2004, the Karnataka Forest Department has had different experiences in dealing with many captive elephants, particularly those owned by temple or private owners and circus companies. Such cases can help to throw light on the requirements of a rescue centre.

The elephants exposed to such conditions were from different age and sex classes, with varied conditions of abuse. Girija Prasad, a fifteen year old male elephant, was the victim of abuse from a temple, Menaka, 16 years old female was confiscated from another temple by the State Forest department (wildlife wing) on grounds of insufficient resources and abuse by the temple authorities. Vanashree, about 40 years old was confiscated from a circus in Anekal, due to a public complaint against the elephant owner for neglect and abuse. Lakshmi, a 35-40 year old female elephant was confiscated by the Forest department on grounds of faulty and non-existent documents pertaining to her ownership details. Circus Rani was a 40 year old circus elephant, confiscated by the State Forest Department of Maharashtra, and sent to the Bandipur elephant camp for rehabilitation.

## **Objectives:**

The purpose of presenting these unique case studies is to help to practically determine the requirements of an effective care centre taking into account the nature of the species and the individual needs of the animals. Elephants have well defined social and emotional needs (Vidya and Sukumar, 2005; Poole and Moss, 2008) with many parallels to human needs. The actual care that the animal requires can best be sourced from the natural lives of elephants in the wild. Developing the knowledge would greatly help to develop effective welfare protocols.

Lack of knowledge of the species and lack of practical guidelines can lead to long term damage of the animal – physical, physiological and emotional. The welfare of the species in the wild is determined by the set of natural rules that the animals are guided by – their long distance ranging for food, the mud baths, the water needs, etc. This is in stark contrast to the scenario in captive conditions. Captivity represents forced confinement in small areas for many hours, lack of water, excessive heat, and insufficient food - all ingredients for disaster.

## Confiscated animals and the management problems encountered

### Girija Prasad

Fifteen year old male elephant, victim of abuse (Figure 1a and b) at the Aiyappa Swamy Temple at Jalahalli, Bangalore, Southern India, was confiscated on various



Figure 1a: Power behaviour to force elephant to perform at temple premises



Figure 1b: Wounds on trunk inflicted as punishment for disobeying commands

grounds by the Forest department of Karnataka. He was immediately sent to the Dubare Forest Camp, Coorg District, Karnataka for housing purposes. The animal, from a totally urban environment was transferred, without a transition time to a totally forested area (Figure 2a and b). Compounding the animal's confusion was that his mahouts, as expected, abandoned the situation and him.



a



b

Figure 2a and b: Confiscated from temple and housed in natural surrounding at the BBP lake and forest area

The elephant was managed as best as possible but had to undergo hugely unlearned experiences

- Camp routine was alien to his repertoire of learned temple behaviour
- Commands were currently in the Jena-Kuruba tribal language instead of Malayalam, which he was familiar with.
- Food was totally different from his diet of cooked grains and stall feeding
- He was unaccustomed to foraging in forests and scared of wild elephants
- The elephant had never seen a lake in his life and was scared of water
- He was unable to interact with other camp elephants
- Stress may have reduced his immunity and the foot-rot, which had already started in the temple, became more serious at Dubare Forest Camp.

Since the Girija Prasad case was the subject of litigation in the Hon'ble HC and also the lower courts, the department thought it prudent to transfer him, after one year, to the Bannerghatta Biological Park (BBP) Bangalore, where it could be under consistent veterinary care.

Here his management differed again –

- Resources were constrained in terms of man-power, food and money.
- The change in mahouts disturbed him further.
- He was tied for long hours
- He had to adjust to live in the close-knit family herd of BBP, which consisted of grandmothers, daughters and calves
- Since he never had a natural family upbringing, where social hierarchies and conduct are learned in the herd, he was isolated and at a loss to deal with the other older male at BBP.

Girija Prasad became intractable and started attacking his mahouts, who were mostly inexperienced youngsters. After 4 long years at BBP, where he was managed as best possible with meagre resources, the Court resolved the issue and the CWW placed him permanently at the Sakrebyle Camp at Shimoga. Here, too, he is termed aggressive and kept mostly confined in the forest area (see appendix 2; for the chorological details of the legal story of Girija Prasad).

### **Menaka**

At the age of sixteen this female elephant was confiscated from the Gayathri Temple at Yeshwanthpur, Bangalore, Karnataka, by the Forest department of Karnataka, on grounds of abuse by temple authorities and insufficient resources. Since then (July 2007) she has been housed at the BBP.

Her problems, in essence were the same, but being a female elephant, she has been much easier to control:

- As expected, her old mahouts abandoned her and so did the temple. With limited resources, BBP had a problem locating and paying a mahout for her. NGO assistance helped in locating a person with the appropriate background in elephant keeping and underwrote the salary of the mahout.
- She had an enormous fear of foraging in the forest and of wild elephants, especially males.
- She had no experience of drinking water from a lake since she had been only used to taps.
- She was scared of the lake and bathing was a torture for her.
- She had difficulty in interacting with the BBP family herd, since she was an outsider



a



b

Figure 3a and b: Maneka housed in a disused car garage in a city area in conditions ripe for disease and infection



Figure 4: Housed later in the forest zone of BBP

- When her condition began deteriorating rapidly, a neutrin test was conducted on her
- She had a serum based TB positive report
- She was isolated from whatever little interaction she had with others and was fed and kept separately
- She needed a good, nutritious diet and personalized care, which was not possible at BBP

## Vanashree

She was about 40 years old (Figure 4a), when confiscated from a circus from Anekal. She was housed at BBP. Her problems were many:



Figure 4a and b: leased to circus by owner since upkeep of elephant was difficult; Vanashree riddled with infections and starvation

- Her body condition was skeletal.
- She had serious health issues (Figure 4b) she had staved off starvation by feeding on plastic, glass, paper, etc.
- Medical expenses and nutrition were unaffordable by BBP
- She was returned to the owners after some penalties were levied
- It was discovered that she was a Tamil Nadu temple elephant who was leased out to a circus for commercial purposes.

## Lakshmi,

A 35-40 year old female elephant (Figure 5a), she was confiscated by the Forest Dept. from Chikkaballapur Taluk on grounds of faulty and non-existent documents pertaining to her ownership. She was housed at the Bannerghatta Rehabilitation Centre (BRC) premises (a joint sector undertaking between the State Forest department and the Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre, WRRC-a NGO ), for a month and a half of custody. Her entire expenses for upkeep and maintenance were met by the WRRC.

Lakshmi had a unique set of issues that needed to be handled:

- She came with a group of 4 mahouts who lived and travelled with her, in her capacity as a begging and blessing elephant.
- Her owner used her for commercial purposes, with costs and profits being shared by the temple as well as the mahouts.
- Her feet were in bad condition on account of walking on tarred city roads and being constantly chained, she was tied using spiked chain (5b)
- There was no infrastructure, assistance or support from any official quarter to keep her healthy and well maintained
- The State Forest dept. had no resources to sustain her in any way.

- Funds were raised for her upkeep by private donors, so that her feeding and maintenance was not affected
- Since the forest department had made clear that though they had officially confiscated her, she was not their responsibility, mahout expenses were borne by the NGO so that they would not abandon her,



Figure 5 a: Later she was housed at the WRRC-BRC center at Bannerghatta  
 Figure 5 b: Lakshmi's keepers managed her in crowded areas by using illegal implements like the primitive spiked chain, banned by law.

- Much energy was spent in keeping her mahouts interested in her welfare, since they were upset and angry that they had lost their commercial earnings.
- She was not used to the forest environment or bathing in lake water
- As she was in a wildlife zone, where wild elephants would visit at night, the NGO employed forest watchers to keep vigil after dusk.

### Circus Rani

She was a 40 year old circus elephant, confiscated by the State Forest Dept. of Maharashtra, and sent to the Bandipur camp for rehabilitation.

She lived for almost 8-10 years in the forest system but was unable to adapt.



Figure 6: Circus Rani, too old for foraging in forest, eventually fell down and died in a gully

- She could not adjust to foraging and jungle fodder
- She could not live effectively in the wild since she was very scared of wild herds.
- Lack of resources at the camp meant that she was always hungry, yet scared to venture far for grazing purposes, as the camp elephants did.
- Rani died at the forest camp while foraging in unfamiliar terrain

## **Overall management problems in handling confiscated animals**

In all these case studies it was found that the government did not have any experience in handling a crisis had no plan of action and had inadequate resources. Except for a single NGO, no support or assistance came from any other NGO/s or expert/s.

The department was forced to accept animals (Varma et., 2007; Varma, 2007) due to public complaints, pressures from NGO or because accounts of abuse and misuse appeared in the media and the government was severely criticized. Although there was support from one NGO and individuals, it was inadequate and short term. The many deficiencies in the proper care of confiscated elephants were not only related to resources, but to man power, the absence of point persons and knowledgeable decision making.

The NGOs which came forward to support the animals, the mahouts whose futures depended on the decisions, the elephants whose lives would change and the owner/s were all victims of ill-informed and delayed decision making. In one case due to the delay, the elephant Laxmi was eventually returned to her owner.

These experiences brought out five distinct issues and experiences in handling and caring for captive elephants or developing a concept for keeping confiscated elephants in care centres:

1. Management of mahouts who came along with the animal and replacement of those who have fled
2. Designing shelter or space for the animals
3. Specific or infectious disease management
4. Aberrant behaviour of animal
5. Influence of lack of experience in a natural landscape and change of environment
6. Poor management coordination with no clear line of responsibility or authority to act by field staff who in theory were responsible for the elephant's welfare

### **Experience of managing mahout.**

All the elephants were accompanied by their mahouts, who had good knowledge of the animals. Unfortunately, in a hostile environment, where they were held responsible for the owner's legal and management transgressions, these men also suffered along with the animals. The atmosphere where they were housed with the elephant was one of hostility, suspicion and resentment. The officials, more often than not, treated them as common criminals. Being unable to earn any money or garner any resources to support themselves, they fled the scene. Consequently, the elephant suffered at the hands of an indifferent keeper who did not know her/him and would have to be harsh to get her/him to obey.

Having witnessed this disruption, the attitude towards and treatment of the mahouts was modified with respect to other confiscated elephants that followed. When elephant Lakshmi came to the BRC shelter, her four mahouts were given explanations of the

rules and the act under which her owner was charged. However, there was constant fear the all four might run away. If this happened the department had no manpower resources or the confidence to allocate a caretaker for her. Not only would she suffer, but it would be physically dangerous to control such an animal.

As a consequence almost on a daily basis, time was spent in monitoring the mood and well being of the mahouts. A room was given to them next to the elephant shed, cooking vessels were provided and a daily monetary allowance was given to them. Their tension was palpable since their future was uncertain.

Lakshmi's earnings from begging on roads and public functions had helped to support 4 men and their families. It was not surprising that her physical condition was not good. Her feet had the beginnings of cracks and wounds from walking on tar roads and her blood profile showed the presence of chronic infection. Though peaceful by nature, she was tied with a spiked rusted chain which had caused the infection. However, she was attached to the mahouts and vice-versa. For the well being of the elephants, the attitudes of the mahouts was accepted, their drunken brawls tolerated and efforts were made to foster a spirit of camaraderie and community.

At the end of 6 weeks, when the elephant was returned to the owner, the men had become close friends of volunteers and the forest staff and actually handed over the ankush and spiked chain, promising never to use it. They had observed the forest officials efforts to support them, the interest they had shown in Lakshmi's well-being in the monitoring of her food, walks and her bath and the strict ban against the ankush and spiked chain.

Her food was ordered after discussions with them and keeping a view of her likes and dislikes. She was wholly stall fed during these 6 weeks, since she had grown up in the city and was unaware of forest foraging. Also till her blood profile was tested and evaluated and she was declared free of TB and herpes, there was no question of her mixing with other elephants, wild or captive.

### **Designing or providing appropriate shelter**

Lack of infrastructure by the BBP prompted WRRRC to build an elephant shed for confiscated elephant Menaka and any other needy elephant for the future. This gave rise to the choice of flooring material. Despite knowing that a concrete floor was detrimental to an elephant standing on it for long hours, the decision was made in favor of concrete on the grounds that it would be difficult to maintain hygienic conditions with mud flooring. On the other hand, the animal could always be tethered at different outdoor sites or kept free in an enclosed space. The shed with concrete floor would only offer some protection at night and could be cleaned and disinfected daily, especially if the animal was sick.

### **Disease management**

#### **TB**

Subsequent to the deterioration of her body condition, Menaka was diagnosed with TB (see Abhram et al, 2008, for details) and her medical report became a matter of grave

concern to all those who were associated with her welfare and management. For the concerned authorities, it was critical to first isolate her, then to get all animals that interacted with her and all the handlers tested for TB and thirdly, to devise a management plan for her. With many administrative matters and 1,200 animals to take care of, it was not possible for a general institution like a zoo to do what a care centre is designed to undertake. Attempts were made to manage the situation by offering to move Menaka from BBP to the BRC. But there are no quarantine measures available at BRC either; to compound the situation, BRC has wild animals and includes an elephant movement zone. In order to quarantine her from wild animals and captive elephants and to give her focused care and medical attention, negotiations are underway to shift Menaka to the Palace Grounds, Bangalore through a multi-agency support.

### **Other medical problems**

Lakshmi had a nervous attack one day when she sensed wild elephants in the vicinity of the BRC. She was restless, scared and started purging frequently. A senior veterinarian with experience of elephant treatment was contacted and based on his advice the elephant was medicated for stress relief and given antibiotics after which she improved.

### **Behavioural problems**

All these animals displayed behavioural problems with the new management, this being especially true of Girija Prasad. This was a result of transfers between various centres, uncertainty about his future in the Forest Department and, lack of infrastructure to deal with his needs. Eventually housed at BBP, Girija Prasad's increasing frustration and aggression were a matter of concern.

His interactions with elephant Menaka (both being of similar ages) and typical adolescent boisterousness made everyone fearful of him. His chains were made heavier and eventually used on all four legs. Young mahouts were injured by him, in rough behaviour if not in acts of pre-meditated aggression. The animal often ran and did not obey any commands. Being a city zoo, masses of people were present at BBP on most days. Girija Prasad's unruly and unpredictable behaviour was potentially threatening to visitors. Soon, he was tied in a remote corner of the Park and was subsequently shifted to the Sakrebyle Elephant Camp at Shimoga, Karnataka.

### **New environment and influence of learning behaviour**

Although all these animals offer good case studies for problems related to the new environment, Circus Rani, at the Bandipur Elephant Camp, could probably be taken as a model example. The management she was familiar with came in to conflict with the camp management. She was left with camp residents, without any interim stay or acclimatization.

While other elephants of the camp fulfilled their needs using the forest where they were left to graze, Circus Rani suffered from ill health, old age, inability to forage effectively due to losing her teeth and also her great fear of wild male elephants. Since there is very little top-feeding at any camp, many offers to help her situation were presented to the department. Lastly, green fodder was supplied to the camp by a well-wisher, so that

some of her hunger could be allayed. Circus Rani died a year ago when she fell into a ditch while trying to get to a bamboo grove at night, in unfamiliar forest terrain.

### **Conclusion:**

As more and more insights emerged from knowing individual elephants and handling them and their mahouts, it became imperative to understand that an elephant rescue /care centre would need to have special facilities and management skills. The biology, physiology and more importantly, their psychological complexity demands that each elephant be handled in a unique manner and not as a simple component of a group. Therefore it is important that previous mahouts, even when there has been evidence of chronic abuse, should accompany a rescued elephant. They will be best equipped to both instruct and reassure the elephant in its new surroundings and to work with the care centres welfare officers in devising an individual care plan for the elephant.

There exists a gross inability in the Forest Department to manage confiscated or rescued animals because of lack of money, resources, expertise, will and direction. The abuse of such animals therefore continues unchecked. However, there may be solutions for both the department and the elephants. The Care Centre concept is the bridge for the departments to continue their work of implementing laws (See Appendix on some related insights from Wildlife (protection) Act, 1972) and provides a safe zone for such animals to be housed until their futures are decided by the courts or through negotiations.

Lack of such centres in and around urban-rural zones resulted in the ridiculous situation of elephant Menaka, parked at the Forest Department's urban office centre for 24 hours, after she was confiscated at the city temple for violation of norms by her owners! These centres need to be a combination of public participation, government lands and NGO energies and interest.

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**Section 4:**  
**Appraisal on space and space related parameters**  
**for captive elephant welfare**

## ABSTRACT

Space is one of the most important factors that determine the welfare of elephants. We define space as area available not only for shelter, but also for a diversity of conditions required by elephants including running water (drinking and bathing), exercise area, sleep or rest and interaction with other elephants. To assess the status of space provided to the captive elephants, we selected 3 different management regimes such as forest camps, temples and zoos in Karnataka, southern India. We considered 12 different parameters, that defined space, for data processing. The parameters include size (area) of enclosure, type of flooring, chaining of animal (chained/not chained and duration), water availability (source and distance), bathing (source, distance, interval and number of times), walk (distance and terrain) and interaction with other elephants (number and duration).

The results show mean area available for elephants, as space in forest camps was 1256.0 (Se = 0.00) ha, 0.27 (Se = 0.21) ha in temples, and 1.6 (Se = 0.00) ha in zoos. Mean space provided by individual temples for elephants varied widely (coefficient of variation, CV 77%). Mean area provided for housing by temples was only 0.02% of that of forest camp and 17.3 % of zoos, and zoos provide only 0.12% of area of forest camp as space. There were correlated differences in housing substrate and access to water as well. All (100 %) elephants in forest camps were exposed to earthen flooring, whereas in temples 81 % were exposed to concrete floor and only 19 % got earthen floor. In zoos, 88 % of the elephants got earthen floor while 12 % were exposed to concrete floor. All (100 %) elephants in forest camp drink and bathe in rivers whereas temple and zoo elephants were drinking and bathing in tanks and small water holdings.

Overall, if space is assigned through a rating value (10 being the best and 0 being the worst), forest camp elephants get a mean rating of 8.64 (Se = 0.40); temple elephants as low as 3.56 (Se = 0.85) and zoo elephants 6.49 (Se = 1.34). Although temples studied in Karnataka are fairly representative of all southern Indian temples, the zoos studied are not and they rank among better zoos in the country. The conditions of zoos are state and site-specific.

## **Introduction**

In captivity, a scenario commonly observed is that animals are confined with little physical space for movement, kept on unsuitable substrates, sometimes simple postures such as sitting/sleeping are also restricted. The other scenario is equally disturbing—availability of vast space, but with ill-suited vegetation (which the elephant cannot feed on) and social isolation. Concurrently, irrespective of occurrence of physical space for the animal, restriction imposed through chains will determine the options for the elephant in expressing species-typical behaviours. Maintaining elephants in large enclosures does not ensure that the animals' biological needs in terms of species-specific activities have been provided for. Even with availability of large area of suitable vegetation and occurrence of conspecifics with unlimited freedom of movement, the elephants may be deprived of a crucial feature of their life in the wild— access to suitable water-sources.

We define space as the physical area available not only for shelter, but also for a diversity of factors required by elephants including running water (drinking and bathing), exercise area, sleep or rest and interaction with other elephants. The space provided for captive elephants when considered in this perspective may provide a more complete picture of the well-being of the animal/s. Unrestricted opportunity to indulge in species-typical activities in near-natural conditions may improve the mental and physical well-being of the animal/s. This investigation provides scope for understanding the space (and other associated parameters) provided to elephants in three different regimes in Karnataka.

## **Methods**

To assess the status of space provided to captive elephants, we selected three different management regimes such as forest camps, temples and zoos in Karnataka, southern India. Long-term studies and observations on wild elephants have been used as a reference to highlight the different factors associated with space as being essential to elephant welfare. We considered 12 different parameters, among a number of possible alternatives, which define space for assessing the status of captive elephants. The parameters include: size (area) of enclosure, type of flooring, chaining of animal (chained/not chained and duration), water availability (source and distance), bathing (source, distance, interval and number of times), walk (distance and terrain) and interaction with other elephants (number and duration). These factors form the basic framework on which captive elephant welfare may be built. In a scenario where captive elephants are left free to wander in a large area, it may be unadvisable to restrain their movement so as to curtail their bathing activities or the rigid quantity of water consumed. The choice of available resource should be left to the elephant/s.

## **Results**

The results are presented in terms of each of these parameters, comparing across institutions:

- a. **Physical space:** The results show mean area available for elephants as physical area was: forest camps 1256.0 (Se = 0.00) ha, 0.27 (Se = 0.21) ha, in temples, and 1.6 (Se = 0.00) ha in zoos. Mean physical space provided by individual temples for elephants varied widely (coefficient of variation, CV=77%). Mean area provided for housing by temples was only 0.02% of that of forest camp and 17.3 % of zoos, and zoos provided only 0.12% of area of forest camp as space.
- b. **Chaining:** 55% of Forest camp elephants were chained for varying durations. The figure was 100% for the temples observed.
- c. **Floor type:** All (100 %) elephants in forest camps were exposed to earthen flooring, whereas in temples 81 % were exposed to concrete floor and only 19 % got earthen floor. In zoos, 88 % of the elephants got earthen floor while 12 % were exposed to concrete floor.
- d. **Water:** There were correlated differences in housing substrate and access to water. Most (75 %) elephants in forest camp drank water and bathed in rivers, with all having access to river/ lake whereas temple and zoo elephants were drinking and bathing in tanks and small water holdings. 73% of temple elephants were provided with lake/ tap water, 88% of zoo elephants were given tank water. Mean distance to water source was highest in temples (>600m) followed by comparable distance for zoos and forest camps (250-300m).
- e. **Social interaction:** All (100%) forest camp and zoo elephants had opportunity for interaction, only 47% temple elephants had this opportunity. Maximum duration was observed among zoo elephants (23h), with camp elephants said to be allowed 16h and temple elephants only 4h. While none of the zoo elephants (0%) exhibited stereotypic behaviours, 16% camp and 73% temple elephants showed stereotypic behaviours.
- f. Took part in processions, blessing people, performing pooja, or standing in front of the temple. Forest camp elephants were used in providing rides for tourists/ timber operations. Zoo elephants were used in safaris or were given no work.
- g. **Food:** All (100%) camp elephants free ranged to browse/ graze. None (0%) of temple elephants were allowed to free range for feeding, while only 11% of zoo elephants were given this opportunity. Mean number of food types were more for zoo elephants (9) followed by temples (5) and camps (3). Poole Taylor (1999) write about the difference in diet of captive elephants (temperate zoos) and their wild counterparts with the maximum range in diet being only one-fifth of the variety observed in wild elephants.

The summary of the observation on space and related factors suggests that, the forest camps have more shelter area, and other factors also suggest (Table 1) that the forest camps have provided natural space and other factors associated with it. The standards provide by temple for space and related factors are very poor.

Table 1: Status of space and related parameters provided by three different management regimes in Karnataka, southern India

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Forest camps	1256	55	100	75	100	100	85.6 (8.2)
Zoo	1.6	100	88	0	100	0	64.6 (22.5)
Temple	0.27	0	19	0	47	11	17.3 (8.0)

1: Regimes, 2: Shelter area (ha, 3: Not chained (%),4: Earthen floor provided (%),5: River as water source (%), 6: Social interaction (%),7: Free ranging (%),8: Mean (SE) (%)

Overall, if space is assigned through a rating value (10 being the best and 0 being the worst), forest camp elephants get a mean rating of 8.64 (Se = 0.40); temple elephants as low as 3.56 (Se = 0.85) and zoo elephants 6.49 (Se = 1.34). Although temples studied in Karnataka are fairly representative of all southern Indian temples, the zoos studied are not and they rank among the better zoos in the country. The conditions of zoos are State and site-specific.

### Discussions:

Considering the vast distances travelled by wild elephants, physical space by itself is important (Harris, et al., 2008). However, with the absence of features integral to physical space— proper substrates, suitable vegetation, water-source and presence of companions exacerbated by restriction on movement of these animals, mere space will not help in providing a welfare enhancing environment. Temples with the enclosure size 0.27 ha and zoo elephants with exposure to 1.6 ha area cannot be considered adequate for the expression of species-typical behaviours as 100 % elephants in temples and 88% of the animals in zoos are not allowed to free range and not given any kind of work. Hence, the activities performed by their wild counterparts cannot be expressed by these animals. Even if they are not chained, they are limited by their inability to move in a confined space and express species-typical behaviours.

Foraging is an important part of an elephant's life as it occupies nearly 12-20h of a day in the wild. As a consequence, learning occurs among herd members regarding what to eat/ how to eat it/ where to find it. Socializing, playing, bathing in water-sources deep enough to immerse itself/ wallowing, together form a complete repertoire. While food may not be a limiting factor for captive elephants, long duration of standing in one place with little to do may not be conducive to physical or psychological health. Poole and Granli (2009) stress the biological need of elephants to move as a consequence of adaptation to their environment. The observed zoo elephants did not exhibit signs of stereotypy, but continuous monitoring over a longer duration may yield greater insights.

Availability of space allows for the elephant to be itself. When we provide elephants with the right resource like land, food and companions, the possibility of expression of species- typical behaviours may be enhanced. Conversely, the inability to express itself in captivity, as seen in temples which inhibit the animals by restricted physical space, absence of companions and compulsory performance of alien behaviours, may have

negative consequences on the elephant/s state of well-being. Most elephants were observed to show stereotypic behaviour.

Further study might indicate the kind and intensity of such behaviour, as also effects on physical health from poor captive conditions. Stereotypies have been associated with poor welfare conditions such as impoverished environments/ social stressors (Veasey, 2006). Restrictions imposed on movement as a consequence of chaining or using for work- related activities results in depriving elephants of the resources needed by them that are integral to their welfare. Forest camp elephants were provided with a large area, with forest vegetation, availability of rivers/ lakes and presence of conspecifics. The drawback was provision of limited period of interaction with companions. When animals are used for work, the duration of time available to the animals to choose “what-to-do” is limited. In conjunction with chaining, this deprives the animals of engaging in physically and psychologically stimulating activities, thereby affecting their mental/ physical health.

Irrespective of the purpose for which captive elephants are maintained, space as a resource is inextricably associated with good welfare. Normal growth and development of elephants is linked to space: poor welfare and the resultant stress/ ill-health may result in abnormal reproductive functioning. This will add to the stress of an elephant-holding location as new entrants (transferred/ bought/ rescued) may have to be introduced. Even for reproductively active individuals, the absence of physical space and increasing numbers of a captive population will add to a centre’s problems.

The advantage of using a concept of space made of constituent features is: it is multi-functional, i.e., while considering physical space it also focuses on free-ranging opportunity to forage, thereby reducing dependence on stall-feed. It takes into account optimal availability of resources external to the elephant. Mere presence of specific features of space; land, vegetation, water source and companions will not ensure that the well-being of the elephant is taken care of. Availability of and unrestricted access to these resources are keys to maintaining good welfare. In cases where their past negative experience inhibits them from expressing their normal behavioural repertoire, regulated positive exposure under expert guidance may improve the psychological state of the animal.

## **Conclusion**

The three institutions illustrate a spectrum of deficiency in availability of and access to space as a resource. From little resource availability (temples) to restricted availability (zoos) to restricted access to available resources (Forest camps), space use can be improved upon to provide better living conditions and enhance welfare. For institutions/ individuals interested in maintaining elephants, space use needs to be brought to a level where the differences between wild and captive conditions are minimal. Such living conditions may bring down the diseases/ disorders prevalent among captive elephants in present conditions.

The role played by rescue/care centres can be invaluable in educating the public about the importance of wildlife. Places which keep elephants in unnatural conditions will provide a wrong perception of the role of wildlife in our lives.

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## **Section 5: Elephant Aid & Rescue (EAR)**

An effort to establish care centres for elephants and clarification of the prevailing confusion on launching initiatives towards captive elephant welfare through care centres.

## ABSTRACT

Bannerghatta Rehabilitation Centre (BRC) is a joint sector undertaking by the Forest Department of Karnataka and the Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre (WRRC) Trust for the housing, upkeep and care of all rescued wildlife. With experience of investigating captive elephant status and also of supporting the government in taking care of some of the elephants rescued in 2006, the WRRC proposed to launch a Project - Elephant Aid and Rescue (EAR). It's expected that the EAR will empower the State Government to develop a system for the enforcement of national laws to protect captive elephants. This would include a specific area to house confiscated animals, and bring the animals to a designated care centre, thus delegating responsibility to knowledgeable experts and enabling owners of ailing elephants to afford health care and medical attention where in the past they had nowhere to go.

The EAR was proposed to be located in Anekal Taluk, Karnataka State on approximately 7 acres of acquired land initially, owned and in possession of the SFD and WRRC and contiguous with the Bannerghatta National Park. To ensure that these animals are placed in a protective, rehabilitative and nurturing environment, Project EAR needed resources to develop and establish the Sanctuary. These included personnel and staff to be deployed at the Sanctuary, providing capital expenditure for infrastructure, support sanctuary Operating Expenditures and creating an organizational structure of joint venture. It was expected that initial capital expenditure would be funded by WRRC. If there was a shortfall, private individual donors had committed to contribute to complete the Phase I construction.

The project was to be divided into 2 phases initially, which included securing the centre, creating waterproof natural depressions for conversion into water collection area, construction of mahout quarters, planting of trees, vegetation and grass, and construction of bamboo and wood based raised enclosure as visitor's area and viewing platform. Income and revenue was to be raised for the initial housing and maintenance of elephants and staff. Entry fee was to be fixed by per day visits or short duration stays by donors, wildlife enthusiasts and conservationists. Floating an Elephant Mutual Fund to encourage members of the public to support the EAR through a donation scheme, inviting schools to visit the centre as part of their club activities and charging for the same were some proposed fund generation activities.

EAR was accepted in principal, subsequently the area was confirmed as being unsuitable for a variety of reasons including the need to be close to a river with shade and forage for the elephants. The department created a specific team and proposed that the team identify suitable land in some other locations. Later it was found that their concept was focused more towards a site for captured, so-called rogue elephants. Due to this, the original and novel concept of the elephant care centre became diffused, and was losing its vitality as an alternative to existing dismal conditions for these much loved and iconic Indian wildlife, some of who continue to be kept in sub-standard captive conditions.

## **Introduction**

The Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre (WRRC) is a public, charitable trust engaged with the rescue, rehabilitation and release into friendlier habitats and sanctuaries of displaced, urban wildlife. Bannerghatta Rehabilitation Centre (BRC) is a joint sector undertaking by the Forest Department of Karnataka and the WRRC trust for the housing, upkeep and care of all rescued wildlife. The project is based on 8 acres of land which is situated at the northern most tip of the Bannerghatta National Park, where all such wildlife is housed, prior to their release.

The land is owned by the BBP and is a part of their acquired lands for extending the scope of the National Park. Among its many achievements, WRRC has worked towards creating awareness on the plight of wildlife in trade, orchestrated the release of innumerable birds, raptors, mammals, and reptiles saved from illegal captivity and rapid urbanization in and around the city of Bangalore, conducted successful legal cases and campaigns to save captive elephants from illegal transfers to foreign zoos and private institutions, commissioned a book on captive elephants (Ghosh, 2005) and has recently undertaken a collaborative project with the State Government and Asian Elephant Research and Conservation Centre (AERCC) on the study and management of captive elephants in Karnataka (Varma, et al., 2008).

Apart from this investigation, WRRC and AERCC have been actively involved in supporting and developing a concept note for some of the captive elephants rescued by the Karnataka State Forest Department. With this experience of investigating the status of captive elephants and also of supporting the government in taking care of some of the elephants rescued since 2007 (Varma, et al., 2007; Varma, 2007; Abraham, et al., 2008), the WRRC proposed to launch a Project - Elephant Aid and Rescue (EAR). The proposal involved targeting vulnerable captive elephants that may be inappropriately employed, misused, abused and therefore confiscated, abandoned or orphaned during the course of their capture, training, preparation and servitude to their owners.

Complementing the State Forest Department's (SFD) initiatives to identify, transport and house these animals and carry on their ongoing care and protection, WRRC's Project EAR proposes to work in cooperation with the Karnataka State Forest Department, elephant experts, veterinary doctors, field biologists, etc., to ensure the provision of proper nutrition, medical and health care. They also propose welfare initiatives such as allowing elephants to express natural behaviours by providing them with space, opportunity to interact with other elephants, wallow in mud, dust bathe and a host of behaviours that may be denied to them in some inappropriate captive environment.

These elephants are proposed to be sheltered in a sanctuary complex – the Elephant Aid and Rescue at the Bannerghatta Rehabilitation Centre (BRC). Over the longer term, it is expected that WRRC will develop supplementary project components to build an institutional, mission-specific and advocacy - related infrastructure, based on lessons learned and experience drawn from the EAR project.

## **The WRRC and Project EAR**

In 2007, the state of Karnataka, southern India was home to 6,000 elephants (AERCC, 2007) in total, of which 115 were 'domesticated' or captive elephants. The rationale for partnership and joint venture is driven by the belief that in the immediate term, the establishment of the EAR will empower the State Government to (i) develop a system for the enforcement of national laws to protect captive elephants, and include a specific area to house confiscated animals; (ii) Bring the animals to a delegating care centre thus devolving responsibility to knowledgeable experts; (iii) Enable owners of ailing elephants to afford health care and medical attention where in the past they had nowhere to go.

Clearly, the WRRC is filling a need that has been identified as critical for the effective implementation of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, in India. There would be two aspects to the envisaged EAR project: One would purely provide Sanctuary Space to animals brought in as permanent inmates and these would remain at the Centre. The second would be to act as an Elephant Abuse Correction Centre, whereby animals confiscated on various grounds of abuse, improper housing, lack of documents, illegal entries into the state and various other causes would be housed and cared for. These animals could be released on proper inspection, verification, stipulating conditions to be met by owners and any other conditions set by the Committee, headed by the Chief Wildlife Warden, including reimbursement of expenses to the elephant rescue centers.

If owners cannot satisfactorily meet conditions, the elephants may need to remain at the EAR till the situation is resolved, perhaps even by legal intervention. This would give added significance to the concept of a Rescue Centre, since keeping track of captive animals even outside the boundaries of the Sanctuary may well become the nucleus and model for an effective Outreach Programme where the welfare of elephants that have gone through the EAR will remain on the national radar.

In the long term, this would set a precedent and a model for other NGOs and public entities to follow. Additionally, the Centre would be a useful and important resource for developing a strategy for an alternative model to traditional systems of management, studies on captive elephant behaviour, elephant calf management with possibilities of release into the wild and the collection of relevant data. Indeed, the experimental aspect of this Centre focuses on the humane treatment of elephants; researchers will study behavioural responses to positive reinforcement techniques replacing traditional methods of control.

The Elephant Aid & Rescue (EAR) was proposed to be located in Anekal Taluk, Karnataka State initially on approximately 7 acres of acquired land, owned and in the possession of the SFD and WRRC and contiguous with the Bannerghatta National Park. The EAR will share administrative and technical resources with the Bannerghatta Biological Park. The terrain, which has been mapped recently using GPS technology, reveals that it is ideal elephant habitat. There is natural grassland without any damage to the eco-system combined with tree & foliage coverage, access to shade and sun, and possibility of more natural cover beyond. Elephants can browse and graze on a variety

of plant species, which may require some element of basic land management. There is a natural quarry lake in which elephants would be free to bathe and remain cool and there could be opportunity to create a lake in a natural depression that already exists on the premises.

The team working on captive elephants, in the course of their data collection, also compiled information on the physical state of the captive elephants. It was found that at least 40% in private ownerships were in urgent need of veterinary attention and others required immediate nutritional supplementation because of the constraints imposed by the conditions of their servitude. To ensure that these animals are placed in a protective, rehabilitative and nurturing environment, Project EAR needs resources to develop and establish the Sanctuary.

These include: (as relevant in the year 2005-06)

**Personnel and Staff to be deployed at the Sanctuary:**

One Veterinary staff @ Rs.10, 000/- each

One Management and Administrative staff (a Manager, office/administrative assistant) @ Rs. 10,000/- each

Two Elephant Mahouts @ Rs.3000/- each

Two Security & cleaning staff @ Rs.2500/- each (since some of these will stay on site, separate security staff may not be needed)

One Kitchen/Cook @ Rs.3000/- each

An indicative cost of manpower has been placed at Rs. 35,000/- per month/ Rs. 4.20 lakhs annually.

**Sanctuary Capital Expenditure will provide for:**

A solar fence around the perimeter of the acreage

Side-open holding areas or covered shelter for night tethering

Add-on staff quarters

Medical/Vet rooms

Add-on Office space

Dining and Living areas

Other physical infrastructure like water, sewage facilities

Machinery & Office Equipment

Vehicle

Bore well

An indicative cost of capital expenditure has been placed at 25 lakhs

**Sanctuary Operating Expenditures will support:**

Staff activity of project manager, mahouts etc

Utilities (gas, electricity, phone, water)

Animal feed - diet charts of individual animals as recommended by veterinarians.

Medical Supplies - as recommended

Communication expenses

Travel expenses

Miscellaneous

An indicative cost of operating expenditure has been placed at Rs. 20,000/- per month/ Rs. 2.40 lakhs for 1 elephant per year.

### **Organizational Structure of Joint Venture**

There is an existing MOU, and a joint Managing Committee, currently functioning for BRC. The scope of this existing Committee and MOU will be enlarged to include Project EAR. The Committee will meet once in a quarter, as a minimum requirement. There could be more meetings convened, if the need arises.

The meetings will be chaired by the Chief Wildlife Warden of the State, and in his absence by the Executive Director (ED) and DCF, Bannerghatta Biological Park. The number of Committee members will be 2 from the SFD, 2 from WRRC, 2 from the funding agency or institution and 1 external member, from an Asian elephant specialist group. Day-to-day management will remain the responsibility of WRRC. The KFD, by providing land and technical assistance to Project EAR will be overall in charge of the project.

Organizationally, the BRC and EAR will be responsible to this Committee chaired by the Chief Wildlife Warden. The formulation of duties and responsibilities of this Committee is still being worked out as a supplement to the existing MOU.

### **Funding Pattern and Utilization of Resources**

Initial capital expenditure will be funded by WRRC. If there is a shortfall, private individual donors have committed to contribute to complete the Phase I constructions.

The project will be divided into 2 phases initially.

**Phase I** will envisage the following activities, which are currently in the process of cost estimation.

1. Securing solar fencing for 7 acres.
2. Installation of metal gates at the entrance of the facility.
3. Sinking of 2 Bore wells.
4. Re-doing housing of wildlife rehabilitator, living on the premises with a basic bathroom and an I C U.
5. Waterproofing natural depression for conversion into a water collection area.
6. Construction of 2 mahout quarters with bath/toilet near the outer boundary.
7. Planting of trees and grass like bamboo/elephant and buffalo grass.
8. Bio gas facility near mahout housing for conversion to fuel and cooking gas.
9. Construction of night tethering holding areas (as per CZA guidelines).
10. Construction of "musth" management enclosure.
11. Construction of bamboo and wood raised enclosure as visitor's area and viewing platform.

## **Resource Generation**

Income and revenue will need to be raised for the initial housing and maintenance of 2 elephants and staff. This will be accomplished by:

1. Having visitors to stay at the centre but not exposing them directly to elephants. Entry fee can be fixed after Committee discussions of charges for per day visit or short duration stays by donors, wildlife enthusiasts and conservationists.
2. Floating an Elephant Mutual Fund to encourage members of the public to support the EAR through a donation scheme.
3. Inviting interested organizations to be a part of this precedent setting project by donating towards upkeep and running costs.
4. Inviting schools to visit the centre as part of their club activities and charging for the same – here visitors would not be directly exposed to elephants, but could observe them from tree tops or machans erected within the centre.
5. Selling well-designed T-shirts and other items in a gift shop facility.
6. Presenting proposals to software and other companies to support the unique wildlife, welfare venture as their conservation initiative.

## **Current status of the EAR:**

EAR under the project titled “Elephant Care Centre and Nature Park” was accepted in principal by the Zoo Authority of Karnataka at their Governing Council Meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2008. Subsequently, the area was confirmed as being unsuitable for the project since it had some sections in the centre which had not been acquired and therefore could pose a potential source of contention between the Forest department and the surrounding villages. Additionally, the rubble and stone wall being constructed by the BBP as part of its Master Plan to render the whole BBP zone safe from wild elephants was left incomplete due to contractor litigation.

The venue then proposed by the WRRRC members and the captive elephant team was that this space needed to be near a river, with shade and forage for the elephants. The CWW proposed that the team identify suitable land near the Bandipur Forest zone. The site near Nugu Dam was researched and found to be suitable for the purpose, by the DCF, Bandipur and the WRRRC team in March 2009. In April 2009, a meeting was called by the CWW of the State of various elephant experts and NGOs to assess the identified spot. However, at the meeting there was an element which had not emerged earlier - The FD was keen to find a site for captured, so-called rogue elephants from Hassan district for a Maharaja Elephant Park (see appendix 3) and was proposing to house the captured elephants in the rescue centre.

## **Conclusion**

The distinction between captured and captive elephants became the source of much debate at the committee meeting and little was accomplished by taking the actual concept forward of providing relief and sustenance to existing abused animals! At a later date in May 2009, the CWW then proposed the site of the Cauvery Fishing Camp in the Cauvery WLS for such a centre. However, with the prevailing confusion, the

concept became diffused and the Expert Committee could not resolve the confusion or consider the advice regarding suitable sites for such a project. The fact that “capture” of wild elephants was itself questionable was an entirely different issue.

The fall-out of this entire exercise has been that it is now in question whether such a concept will ever be achieved in the state. The transfer of existing officials who had been involved with the project has thrown it into further uncertainty. The Institutions involved have to deal with new officials who may or may not agree with the ideas discussed for the last 3 years. Apart from demotivating and demoralizing the teams, the priority of capture is gaining precedence over abuse and the monitoring of existing captive elephants in temples and private institutions, wherein abuse continues unabated. The original and novel concept of the elephant care centre has become diffused and is losing its vitality as an alternative to the existing dismal conditions for these much loved and iconic Indian wildlife, some of who continue to be kept in sub-standard captive conditions.

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**Appendix 1:  
Role of forest departments in alleviating abuse and  
cruelty to captive elephants- extracts from  
Government Order**

## **Introduction**

Almost all experiences with the captive elephant abuse cases have revealed that the position of the Forest department's wildlife wing is rather fragile and is coupled with both lack of experience and lack of knowledge of their role and responsibilities in the matter. This inability is in direct contrast to the prevailing laws in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (WLPA) of India, which clearly states that all Indian wildlife is the sole property of the State and owners are at best, only guardians of the said animals, provided that the "owner" has requisite permissions from the CWW of the state.

There are some little known facts:

1. Captive elephants are not allowed to be taken in procession, religious ceremonies or otherwise, in Karnataka.

The State Government of Karnataka banned the use of elephants during processions vide Government Order bearing No. FEE/57/FWL/99 dated 27-03-2000.

The State Government, vide Government Order No. FEE/171/FWL/2001 dated 08-01-2002 relaxed the above ban for Dasara and other Government functions only.

The CWW and the respective DFOs need not give permission based on this Order to any temple or ministers.

The CWW also can cite public safety as an important reason for refusing requests for elephants to be taken out to public places. On these very grounds of safety, Section 42 of the WLPA, which cites appropriate housing, maintenance, and upkeep as basic conditions, the CWW can refuse to give permission and Ownership Certificates to temples and institutions for acquiring, keeping, using and owning elephants.

There is also a Court order which bars the selling of elephant calves to temples, on grounds of abuse and cruelty, by any Forest Dept. elephant camp in Karnataka, to prevent abuse to them in such places.

The State Government of Karnataka vides Government Notification No G.O. No PJ223/FWL/99 dated 28-06-2000, banning the transfer of elephants to religious institutions, individuals and other institutions within and outside the State of Karnataka.

All captive elephants in India (99.9%), barring the ones with Forest Depts. are illegally held, as those owned by private ownerships. This is because in spite of having a basic initial Ownership Document, all owners have failed to comply with the Wildlife Stock Declaration Rules 2003, extended till 2004, to reapply to their respective state CWW, who would take a decision on their final Ownership Documents based on Section 42, of the Amended WLPA.

If they have failed to do this, their possession of trophies, tusks or live animals can be deemed totally illegal and can be equated with possession of contraband!

All alleged "owners" are therefore only holders of an illegal Schedule 1 animal.

The terms of Section 42, has been elaborated in the workshop in May 2008, in Bangalore, at the direction of Project Elephant titled "Welfare of Captive Elephants and their Mahouts in India".

The problems surrounding captive elephants can be resolved only by the exercise of strong will and vision, by the State Forest Dept through a combination of knowledge, counselling owners and a sound grasp of the law in this matter and how to use it effectively to protect the animal.

Until 1972, Legislative Acts of 1879, (the Elephant Preservation Act IV), 1912 (the Wild Birds and Animal Protection Act VIII), and 1927 (the Indian Forest Act XIV) under the British Raj were the protective legal umbrella under which Indian Elephants enjoyed their rights to life. [i] In 1972, the Republic of India enacted the Wildlife (Protection) Act No. 53 (Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972) with separate provisions at the level of the States which are headed by the state's Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW) and at the level of the Central Government by a Director of Wildlife Preservation, along with Section 66 which repeals and overrides all other wildlife laws in India, to become the principal legal instrument for protection of India's fauna.

Under the original Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, it was permitted to both hunt for sport as well as commercially trade the elephant under a properly obtained license, because domesticated elephants were classified as "cattle". However on July 20, 1976, India became an effective signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and substantially amended the WPA-1972 with special implications for the elephant. In 1977, the elephant was transferred to Schedule-I of the Act (i.e. the most protected species) recognizing the domesticated animal as both a "captive" [Section 2(5)] and a "wild" [Section 2 (36)] animal. In the former capacity they fall under Forest Acts that ensure their protection in Reserved and Protected Forests while in the latter, they are subject to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act of 1960 (although acts of cruelty are not defined while various acts of omission and commission are enumerated), the Prevention of Cruelty to Draught and Pack Animals Rules, and the Performing Animals Rules, enacted in 1973.

## **Appendix 2:**

# **The legal story of Girija Prasad**

**The legal story of Girija Prasad is almost a saga of litigation history –**

**25-02-2002:** Certificate of Ownership dated 25-02-2002 was issued by The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, (PCCF) Wildlife & Chief Wildlife Warden (CWW), to the Jalahalli Sree Ayyappan Temple Trust, as an “owner” of the male Elephant “Girija Prasad” (GP) alias “Manikantan”.

**30-04-2004:** On receiving reports of ill –treatment meted out to GP, the Chief Wildlife Warden seized the elephant from the Jalahalli Sree Ayyappan Temple Trust on grounds of public safety and to prevent further distress and ill-treatment to the animal. Thereafter the said elephant has been housed in forest camps where he was provided with the natural environment that provided a scope for exhibiting natural behavior

**13-12-2004:** The Jalahalli Sree Ayyappan Temple Trust filed a writ petition in W.P.No.49209 / 2004 before the Hon’ble High Court of Karnataka against the Chief Wildlife Warden and others to quash the aforesaid seizure order dated 30-04-2004.

**16-02-2005:** Compassion unlimited plus action (CUPA), Bangalore, filed a writ petition in W.P.No.7276 / 2005 before the Hon’ble High Court of Karnataka against the Chief Wildlife Warden and others to cancel aforesaid ownership certificate dated 25-02-2002 issued in favour of the Jalahalli Sree Ayyappan Temple Trust on the grounds that the said Jalahalli Sree Ayyappan Temple Trust did not have the space and facilities to maintain an elephant as is mandatorily laid down in Section 42 of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972.

**28-08-2007 :** The Hon’ble High Court of Karnataka passed an order on 28th August 2007 in the above petitions W.P. Nos.49209 / 2004 and 7276 / 2005, directing the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Wildlife and Chief Wildlife Warden ( Third Respondent herein ) to take a decision in the matter on the continuity of custody of the elephant with the State Forest Department or handing it back to the Jalahalli Temple. Further, the Hon’ble High Court had observed at page 13, para 15 line 17 of the order “ What is paramount in a case like this is the best interests of the animal and certainly not its owner or any other party”.

**13 – 03 - 2008:** The Chief Wildlife Warden cancelled the ownership certificate of the Jalahalli Temple in respect of the Elephant “ Girija Prasad alias Manikantan”, on the grounds that the said Temple lacked adequate facilities to house the elephant and in the interest of public safety.

**19 -06 -08:** The Chief Wildlife Warden, Karnataka, passed an order on 19.06.08 granting permission to transfer the Elephant Girija Prasad on the basis of a representation made by the Temple and Sri Jacob Abraham seeking custody of the

elephant on the ground that Sri. Jacob Abraham was the previous owner of the said elephant and entitled to the custody of the elephant on the basis of Alleged Agreement between Temple and Sri Jacob Abraham.

**27-06-2008:** Aggrieved by the said order transferring GP to Eighth Respondent, CUPA wrote a letter dated 27-06-2008 to the Third Respondent objecting to the transfer of the elephant to the donor, Shri Jacob Abraham, Eighth Respondent, as the same was in violation of Wildlife Protection Act and against the interests of the elephant which was in the custody and the care of the forest department and housed in a forest environment.

**02-07-2008:** On the objections raised by the Petitioner, the Chief Wildlife Warden issued an order suspending the earlier order of transfer of the Elephant to Shri Jacob Abraham until further orders.

**04-08-2008:** The Jalahalli Sree Ayyappan Temple Trust and Sri Jacob Abraham filed a writ petition before the Honble High Court of Karnataka in W.P.No. 10662 / 2008 against the Chief Wildlife Warden ( Third Respondent herein ) and others for the issue of a writ of mandamus directing the Executive Director, Bannerghatta Biological Park ( BBP )( Second Respondent in W.P.No. 10662 / 2008 ) to hand over possession of the said elephant “ Girija Prasad” alias “ Manikantan “ to Sri. Jacob Abraham in terms of the earlier order passed by the Third Respondent dated 19-06-2008.

**17-06-2009 :** The Hon’ble High Court of Karnataka in its order dated 17-06-2009 in W.P. No. 10662 / 2008 - directed the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Wildlife at page 5 , para 5 to “ afford reasonable opportunity of hearing to the Petitioners 1 and 2 and Third Respondent before passing any further orders in the matter and decide the same in accordance with law, specifically, with reference to the relevant provisions of the Act and Rules “.

**07-09-2009:** The Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests - Wildlife and Chief Wildlife Warden ( Third Respondent herein ) passed an order granting custody of the said elephant to the said Sri Jacob Abraham ( Eighth Respondent herein). The said impugned order at page two reads as follows:

“It is established beyond all reasonable doubts that (the Temple) 1st Petitioner has not taken care of welfare of the elephant “Girija Prasad alias Manikantan” nor he has facilities for the upkeep. The Second Petitioner ( donor, Shree Jacob Abraham) who has donated the animal to 1st Petitioner, no doubt has lost the certificate of ownership, and import of elephant to Kerala is banned, one has to be careful in awarding the custody of elephant to 2nd Petitioner. Since the gift of the 2nd Petitioner is conditional, and the 1st Petitioner was under obligation to treat the elephant decently, in my view, the gift is held null and void and the second petitioner is entitled for the custody of the elephant”.

**15-09-2009:** The Petitioner, CUPA, appealed to the Chief Wildlife Warden (Third Respondent) to recall the aforesaid order dated 07-09-2009 on the ground that transferring the said elephant from tranquil and most suitable forest surroundings to a

city area with no facilities for upkeep of an elephant amounts to cruelty to the elephant. There was no reply from the Third Respondent.

**30-09-2009:** Aggrieved by the aforesaid impugned order granting custody of the said elephant to eighth Respondent, CUPA filed writ petition in W.P.No. 28798 / 2010 for quashing of APCCF's order transferring GP to the donor in Kerala, Shree Jacob Abraham.

**02-02-2010:** High Court quashed APCCF's order transferring GP to Jacob Abraham & directed GP remain with Forest Department.

**May 2010:** The Temple & Jacob Abraham appealed against above HC order to Division Bench HC.

Taking into consideration many years of trauma, uncertainty and torture for the elephant, GP was directed by the Hon'ble High Court to be permanently housed at the Forest Camp. However, a new twist to this was that CUPA would have to pay for his upkeep if there was a shortfall in the Forest Department's budget and not only for this elephant but for all elephants ( 30 or so) in the Sakrebyle Camp and also for the wildlife in the forests of the region !

**August 2010** – CUPA is preparing to go on Appeal before the Hon'ble High Court of Karnataka against paragraph 13 of the Order dated 02.02.10, in WP. No. 28798 / 2010 (GM (FOR) against a potentially dangerous order that, if implemented, can ruin the charitable organization financially and to defend Girija Prasad's right to stay in a forest home rather than in an urban commercial life of exploitation in Kerala.

This legal story is important to reveal the extent of damage that can be caused to a precious animal like the elephant, Schedule 1 WLPA 1972, due to interpretations of law and other factors. The torture of uncertainty and doubt that CUPA had undergone coupled with the anticipation of torture the elephant, Girija Prasad would undergo in Kerala has been a long learning experience.

It has been our firm belief that an elephant's place is on the soft floors of a forest and not on the concrete floors of a temple and the demand for them in such institutions have to cease.

**Appendix 3:**  
**Proposed Mysore Elephant Park**  
(Tentative proposal and draft plan of the State Forest  
Department (wildlife), Karnataka, southern India-circulated for  
discussion on care centre for elephants)

## **Distribution of wild elephants**

Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) are found in thirteen countries in South and South East Asia. The estimated wild population of the species in these countries is approximately 35,000 to 50,000 (Ref: IUCN/SSC Asian Elephant Specialist Group). In India there are 25,000 to 30,000 elephants in the wild (Project Elephant Directorate, GoI). The elephant population in Karnataka is currently estimated (2007) to be around 4000 – 5000 distributed mostly in the southern part of the State with a small population of elephants in Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary and Anshi-Dandeli tiger reserve.

The belt of forest (Mysore-Nilgiri-Wyanad landscape) at the trijunction of Karnataka, Tamilnadu and Kerala has estimated population of about 8000 individuals (Ref: Data from coordinated Forest Department census, 2007). This constitutes the **largest single population of wild Asian elephants** found in any country.

Elephants are extreme generalists, found from semi-arid areas with rainfall less than 600 mm. to tropical rain forests with rainfall exceeding 5000mm. They are both grazers and browsers. Human – elephant conflict in Karnataka has assumed alarming proportions and has to be tackled immediately, to contain this problem.

The Mysore elephant park is an attempt to help in the reduction of the conflict situation in the field. It is a novel idea not tried anywhere in the country. It proposes to enclose an area of nearly 500-1000 Ha, with good water facilities to house both domestic and captured wild elephants. The domestic and wild elephants would be separated with a proper barricade and open to the public. The elephant park will be modeled on a sustainable revenue model wherein tourists would be asked to pay and experience the elephant habitat.

## **Mission Statement**

The Mysore elephant park will have the following objectives:

1. **Sanctuary for endangered species:** It will provide a home for these animals as well as contribute to their welfare and development. By liaising with like minded Animal Welfare Organizations like CUPA and other NGO's (Non Government Organizations) and other interested parties, we are able to keep abreast of the latest techniques in health care and resource management.
2. **Habitat Restoration:** An important component would be planting local species with the help of tourists, volunteers, and students etc., who visit the elephant park. A programme will be initiated over a period of 5 years with proper baseline data.
3. **Cultural Preservation:** As far as possible, the cultural integrity of the local community will be preserved and show-cased. Employment will be created for the local people and products locally produced will be sold.

4. **Visitors Centre:** To educate visitors, individuals, study groups, schools and interested parties, emphasis on the plight of the endangered local species including the conflict situation will be presented in a constructive manner. Future phases will include audio / visual equipment and other modern educational aids. It is anticipated that small conferences and workshops will be organised at the park.
5. **Research Centre:** Interested Institutes and individuals will be encouraged to do studies on captured as well as wild elephants, their interactions and habitat requirements.

### **Elephant Experiences**

The aim of the Elephant Park is to provide the best home possible to the elephants. A free-range controlled environment, which means that the elephants get to walk and browse in the fields as they would do in the wild, will be provided. However they would need handlers and guides with them constantly as they would be living amongst and interacting with humans every day. The experience of the elephants would therefore be as natural as possible. The elephants will not perform tricks or behave in a manner that is not natural to them.

In order to cater to all interests, a range of inspiring experiences will be provided. The Daily Tour would provide the shorter experience of meeting, feeding and interacting with the gentle giants. For longer experiences, Rides or Walks and, Exclusive Sunrise/ Sunset Safaris and Sundowners for more private and intimate encounters could be organised.

### **Visitors Can:**

1. Ride elephants through the forest
2. Touch and hand-feed elephants
3. Watch elephants bathing rituals
4. Have photos taken with elephants
5. Witness live educational shows and Elephant Painting
6. Enjoy & learn amazing facts from our information centre, museum and from park staff
7. Participate in Children's mini rides

### **Activities to be carried out:**

1. Identifying an area of 500-1000 Ha. close to the Mysore – Bandipur high way with proper water facilities.
2. Master plan to be prepared showing the location of various activities.
3. Barricading the entire area with proper internal barriers to separate wild and domestic elephants.
4. Housing master plan locating tourist huts and staff quarters with proper power back up as well as solar powered energy.
5. Designing and constructing an imaginative reception centre.
6. Designing and constructing an interpretation information centre.

7. Construction of a Veterinary clinic.
8. Raising of fodder plots.
9. Restaurant, gift shop and gardens to be created.
10. A museum, painting area and feeding area to be built.
11. Proper tariff and linking with the tourist circuit.



**Compassion Unlimited Plus Action (CUPA)** is a non-profit public charitable trust registered in 1991 that works for the welfare of all animals. Since 1994, CUPA has worked in close collaboration with government departments and agencies on various projects. CUPA's mission is to protect animals from abuse and violence and do what may be required to alleviate their suffering at the hands of humans. CUPA does not differentiate among pet, stray or wild animals, since all of them require assistance and relief from cruelty, neglect and harm. The organisation's objective has been to design services and facilities which are employed fully in the realisation of these goals.

**Asian Nature Conservation Foundation (ANCF)** is a non-profit public charitable trust set up to meet the need for an informed decision-making framework to stem the rapidly declining natural landscape and biological diversity of India and other countries of tropical Asia. The Foundation undertakes activities independently and in coordination with governmental agencies, research institutions, conservation NGOs and individuals from India and abroad, in all matters relating to conservation of natural resources and biodiversity, endangered flora and fauna, wildlife habitats and environment including forests and wetlands. It participates and disseminates the procured information, knowledge and inferences in professional, academic and public fora.

**World Society for Protection of Animals (WSPA)** With consultative status at the United Nations and the Council of Europe, WSPA is the world's largest alliance of animal welfare societies, forming a network with 910 member organisations in 153 countries. WSPA brings together people and organisations throughout the world to challenge global animal welfare issues. It has 13 offices and thousands of supporters worldwide.

Photo credits: Front cover, (section 3): 1a,b,c, 2a,b, 3a,b,4a,b, 5a and b Savitha Nagabhushan, back cover, (section 1), Figure 1, section 3, figure 6: Surendra Varma



The necessity of centres arises from the fact that the Forest Department has to sometimes take into custody, seized illegal captive elephants, elephants that have been abandoned by their private owners, elephants that are diseased or in very bad condition and also elephants that have been brought under the department's control by orders passed by the Hon'ble Courts. In addition, sustaining economically unviable elephants, caring for incurably ill and aged ones, rehabilitating rogue elephants, can be accomplished by creating or developing a vision for rehabilitation or care centres for captive elephants. This document provides insights on establishing care centres for captive Asian elephants.

