

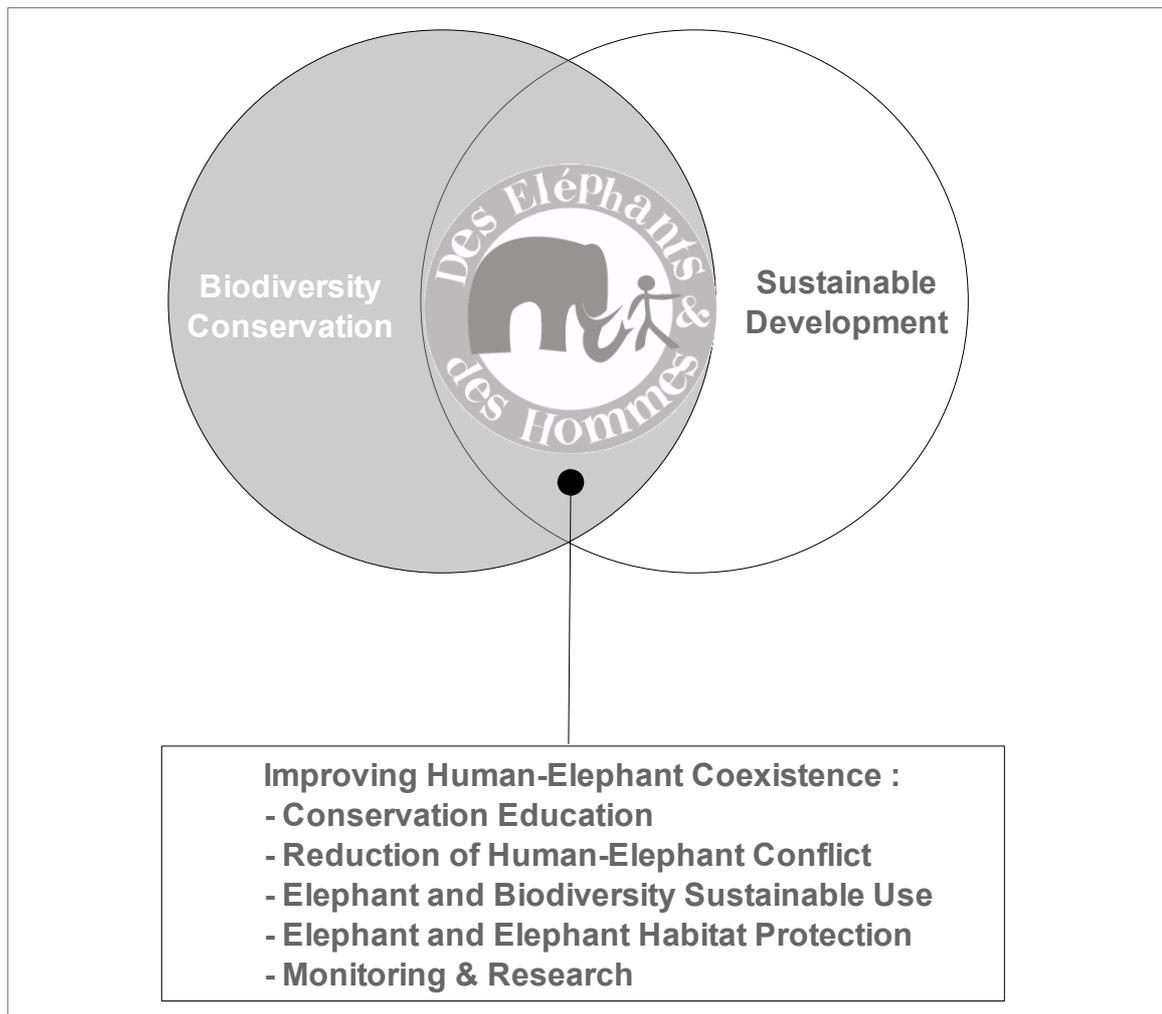


"My Elephant Neighbor" Program

Education towards our harmonious coexistence with elephants

March 2012

Des Éléphants & des Hommes is a French not-for-profit NGO, founded in 2003. Its action aims at improving Human-Elephant coexistence. As its name suggests, roughly translated as *Of Elephants & Humans*, our NGO focuses equally on both elephant conservation and human development. In the broader picture, our action stands in the crossroads of Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development.



Human-Elephant Coexistence is a challenge, symbolic of our coexistence with the Wild and our balanced life on Earth. We need to have as many people involved as possible in order to achieve conservation and sustainable development goals.

Indeed, long-term solutions for elephant conservation require that we collectively choose to preserve enough space and natural resources for elephants in their home-range. Over the past several centuries, the number of elephants has decreased tremendously due to habitat destruction and ivory trade. As the human population continues to grow, we must ask ourselves whether we will be able to share the land with elephants and other wildlife? Will we be able to make the right decisions to coexist harmoniously with our pachyderm neighbors?

These decisions cannot be made by a few. By 2050, it is very likely that there will be over 9 billion people on Earth. These decisions have to be made in a democratic way by a vast majority. Elephant conservation cannot be seen as the responsibility of only elephant specialists, it is the responsibility of each one of us. Every one needs to know the issues at stake and understand the challenges that lie ahead for elephant conservation.

To conserve elephants, we must protect their natural habitats. Conserving their habitats benefits the elephants and the biologically diverse community that shares those ecosystems. However, it also benefits us by preserving our global environment and the numerous services that natural ecosystems provide freely every day. Essentially, protecting elephants is in our own best interest because these conservation measures provide long-term environmental protection necessary for our well-being.

Elephants are also part of our natural and cultural heritage, both locally and globally, and therefore, need to be preserved.

We protect what we appreciate, and we appreciate what we know. Elephants are among the largest and most iconic animals on Earth. But we have learned through our educational program that a large majority of the children living in elephant-range countries have not been exposed to elephants. In the Mouhoun Region, Burkina-Faso, where we have been working since 2006, over 80% of the primary schools children have never seen an elephant, even the ones living less than 10 km away from the nearest elephant population !



Without this exposure, it is very unlikely this younger generation will choose to conserve elephants in the future. In 2050, the children aged 10 today will be 50 and will hold decision-making roles. In order to make decisions that will promote elephant conservation, these children need to learn about the important role elephants play within their ecosystems and their importance to us.

Therefore, we think that conservation education is the first step forward to achieving a long-term harmonious coexistence with our elephant neighbors. The first mission of the "My Elephant Neighbor" program is to address this issue through education and sensitization, especially among the children living in elephant-range countries.



We need to share a common and balanced vision of our coexistence with elephants. For this challenge will require decades of effort, it is of primary importance to involve the children, especially the ones living in direct neighborhood of elephants, so that they can grow up with this challenge in mind and come up with long-terms solutions.

It is also very important to reduce the negative side of our coexistence and to avoid conflicts that make victims among humans and elephants. In these conflicts, farmers, often unprivileged community members, face the frightening risk of seeing their annual crops destroyed by elephants during one single night, leaving them in absolute poverty for the rest of the year. In this situation, revenge killing of elephants occurs and negative attitudes towards wildlife conservation reach their peak.

As having elephant as neighbors will probably always have a cost, we need to foster benefits of living with elephants and wildlife so that they can out-weigh the costs. Today, habitat loss and ivory trade are the two main threats upon elephant conservation. Both threats are linked to human profit making activities. So elephant conservation, without associated development, goes against local interest. Elephant neighbors will become their protectors if they see them and the rest of wildlife as an asset and not as a constraint. Developing sustainable activities utilizing elephants and biodiversity is a relevant challenge that should be addressed with creativity.

Improving human-elephant coexistence also requires the reinforcement of elephant protection and elephant-habitat preservation. It contributes greatly in preserving our environment.

Finally, we need to support monitoring and research to more accurately understand all aspects of human-elephant coexistence and to develop innovative solutions.

Des Eléphants & des Hommes, through its program "My Elephant Neighbor" promotes the idea that elephant conservation can not occur without sustainable development of neighboring communities. In a context of increasing demographic and socioeconomic development, long-term elephant conservation will not be achievable if the inhabitants, living every day with them, are not their first protectors, and if they do not see themselves as the main beneficiaries of their preservation.



Our NGO has been active since inception in Botswana and Burkina-Faso. We are currently planning to work in other elephant range countries. In 2011, we successfully managed a significant budget in close collaboration with our burkinabé partners (Deux Balé National Park, Primary Education authorities, local NGOs). We have developed and we are still busy developing the five major activities of our program : Conservation Education, Reduction of Human-Elephant Conflict, Elephant and Biodiversity Sustainable Utilization, Elephant and Elephant Habitat Protection, Monitoring & Research.

Our mission is to contribute to the improvement of human-elephant coexistence.

On simple request by e-mail at contact@deselephantsetdeshommes.org, we can send you more information about our "My Elephant Neighbor" program.

For this year, we are still looking for additional partners to reach our objectives. As Program coordinator, I am available to answer your questions if you want to know more about our action and support it. Please consider joining us as the organizations presented below.

Julien Marchais
program coordinator



Our NGO is fortunate enough to have been supported since inception by several organizations and individuals, among whom some support our action annually. Their generous donations are absolutely vital to conduct our program. We warmly thank them !



We need your support for this program. Any individuals or organizations with the capacity to provide financial support for the development of this program could be of critical assistance - For organizations and individuals based in France, a donation to our NGO is tax-deductible (article 238 bis du Code général des impôts & loi du 1er août 2003 publiée au Journal officiel du 2 août). For corporate companies, a donation is 60% profit tax-deductible, within the limit of 0,5% of turnover. Thus, a donation of 2,000 Euros costs actually 800 Euros.

Join-us !

Mon Voisin Éléphant, a program by

www.deselephantsetdeshommes.org

