

Project *Eco Maximus* Sri Lanka

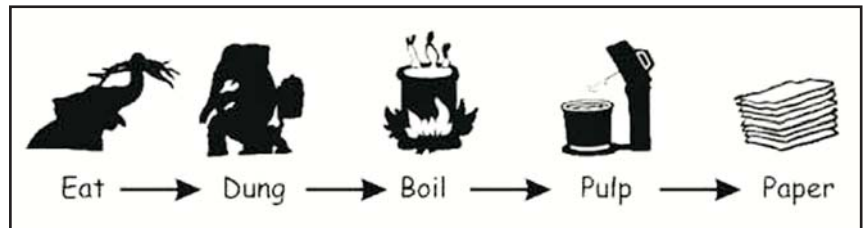
Winner - BBC World Challenge 2006



About ECO MAXIMUS

Maximus (Pvt) Ltd was established in 1997 by Managing Director Thusitha Ranasinghe. Thusitha unsurprisingly comes from a printing background, the family trade for three generations.

Originally Maximus (company name was derived from the zoological name for the Sri Lankan Elephant - *Elephas Maximus Maximus*) was set up to Recycle waste printing paper. Soon after entering into this venture we realized that many more waste products, that were often just thrown away, could also be used and recycled.



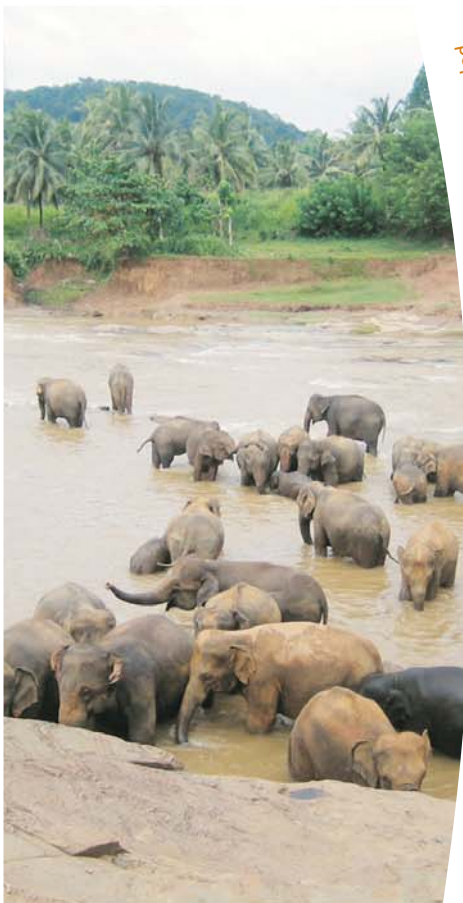
For example rice paddy straw, cinnamon and banana bark are all used to add flavour and colour, thus enhancing the products. The original Maximus operation is located next to the "**Millennium Elephant Foundation**", near Kegalle in Sri Lanka.

We started with just seven employees producing paper from a small factory on site. It did not take long however to realize that the six resident elephants are a living, walking natural material source. We soon established that elephant dung was a perfect material to produce paper with.

Hence the introduction of our signature "**Elephant Dung**" paper range. Operations soon started to increase and the operating centre was moved to a new head office in Dam Street Colombo. The existing factory at Kegalle has been expanded to handle the increased production. We now employ over thirty-five staff located between the two sites. At Maximus we use a number of value adding sources but key competitive advantage comes from our flexibility. We can vary colour, texture and thickness to suit individual needs. Despite being registered as a Limited Liability Company, our company objectives and mission are very clear.

At Maximus we strive to enhance conservation and as a result make it profitable and sustainable. The stakeholder theory is adhered to and influences business thinking, our key stakeholder is the Elephant. In other words, the foundation on which Maximus rests is based Conservation, primarily that of the Sri Lanka elephant. **Maximus aim to use the "Elephant Dung" paper to create and then further raise awareness to the tragic circumstances that surround the Sri Lankan Elephant.**

We are also developing strategies aimed at improving the socio - economic situation that currently restricts under privileged people living in rural areas. Conflict between man and wild elephants over land are severely detrimental to both. **Our vision is to bring these two together by implementing Project "Peace Paper"**. In conflict areas we hope to create autonomous and self-sustaining re-cycling plants that make Elephant dung paper from wild elephant dung. This we hope will create a mutual and beneficial relationship between man and beast rather than the conflicts that currently exist.



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Why ECO MAXIMUS Exists

Sri Lanka is home to about a tenth of the estimated global total of 40,000 Asian elephants in the wild, elephants are not being killed in Sri Lanka for their tusks, as tuskers are rare; they are not being killed for meat, since no one eats elephant meat; they are not being killed for their hide, since there is no market for elephant hide in the leather industry. Instead elephants are being killed simply because they interfere with agriculture.

Since 1950, it is likely that more than 4,000 elephants would have been lost as a direct consequence of the conflict between man and elephant.

the protected areas inhabited by elephants are small, less than 1,000 sq. km in size, nevertheless elephants, especially the bulls, may range over hundreds of square kilometers in the course of a season. Their sheer size and gargantuan appetite mean that elephants and people cannot live together where agriculture is the dominant form of land use, unless the damage they cause to farmers can be compensated. There are no easy solutions for resolving the human elephant conflict in Sri Lanka.

Much will depend on how rural people perceive the worth of the elephant. To stop the wanton killing of elephants requires changing the perceptions of the farmers who suffer constant depredations from the animals.

Many are now convinced that the only way elephants and human beings can exist successfully in the same environment is through finding ways to use the elephant as a sustainable economic resource. Elephant dung is an end product. It provides a way of converting a liability into an asset in conflict areas. It is also a commodity that is freely available at anytime. On average an adult elephant produces about 180-200 kg of dung per day. Until now, no one had any use for it. However, project Maximus designed to manufacture paper from elephant dung may help change the perceptions of the farmers of the economic value of the elephant in conflict areas.

The project started in 1997, has successfully produced and marketed what is known as "pachyderm paper" made out of 75% elephant dung. The dung of the elephant takes form as note-books, cards, badges, boxes and bags etc. where the only limitation is one's imagination.

These products have proved extremely popular among varied segments of the local population and foreign tourists.

Even though elephant dung cannot resolve the on going human-elephant conflict in Sri Lanka, its use for the benefit of the farmers who suffer from elephant depredations will certainly go some way towards raising the tolerance of the farmers towards the elephant. We believe that if the elephant is used as an economic asset so that it contributes meaningfully to the welfare of people, then the people themselves will not like to see it disappear from their area. In the final analysis, all of our conservation efforts would be futile, if we do not have the support of the local communities.

The elephant dung can play an important role in the conservation of its provider.



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