Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation in India (HWC)

Situation

Biodiversity plays a fundamental role in sustaining ecosystem processes and in the continuous delivery of ecosystem services. These services are the foundation of livelihood security, health, and well-being of human societies. Conservation of biodiversity—including wildlife —is essential for India because the consequences of biodiversity loss and the resulting loss of ecosystem services will have a far-reaching impact on livelihoods. In addition, it will affect the overall well-being of human communities and their cultural heritage where coexistence is the natural way of living.

The situation in India, however, is changing with increasing human population and subsequent demand for natural resources. This is leading to degradation and fragmentation of natural habitats, creating a situation where humans and wildlife are competing for the same resources. This shift from 'coexistence' to 'conflict' has the potential to undermine the existing and future conservation efforts and also hinder achievement of both Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Biodiversity Targets. Mitigation of human-wildlife conflict is emerging as one of the key issues of concern. It is crucial to address this issue holistically and co-create mitigation solutions by engaging all relevant stakeholders.

India's National Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation Strategy
and Action Plan and 4 supplementary **frameworks** have been **developed**

Objective

The Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation (HWC) project aims to provide technical support at the national level, and effective implementation of HWC mitigation measures in three pilot sites: Madikeri and Virajpet Divisions at Kodagu (Karnataka), Rajajji-Haridwar and adjoining landscape (Uttarakhand), and Gorumara Wildlife Division and adjoining landscape (West Bengal). The main objective of the project is that the rural population in project areas, where agreed guidelines and tools are applied, is better protected against it. The project takes the harmonious coexistence approach, by ensuring that both—human and wildlife—are protected from conflict. This approach follows the modern wildlife conservation principles to balance the needs of people with the conservation of nature. The project focuses on three outputs:

- A national strategy and action plan to mitigate HWC is operationalised for implementation of the pilot measures in selected states.
- Pilot application of newly developed instruments for mitigation of HWC in selected states.
- Institutional and individual capacities for mitigating HWC are strengthened.

Approach

The project takes a holistic approach to addressing HWC by considering the thematic triangle of driver-prevention-damage mitigation. To address the drivers, macro planning tools, framework guidelines and Implementer's Toolkits are being developed; to promote preventive measures Early Warning and Rapid Response system is being developed, along with landscape-level planning, and competencies-based training for field response teams.

The project follows a multilevel approach with mutual learning feedback loop (national, selected states, pilot sites) by engaging the key stakeholders with a focus on the wellbeing of the rural poor and women. It supports cooperation among the key sectors and stakeholders by setting up cross-sectoral working groups for developing and implementing national and state strategies and action plans, guidelines and division-level HWC-Management Action Plan (HWC-MAP) to ensure alignment at national, state and division level.

A focus area of the project is facilitating competencies-based capacity development of key stakeholders. This will be effectively achieved by using the holistic approach and developing a nationally-standardised yet locally-customised curriculum and training material. To ensure sustainability, training institutions are engaged in the planning and implementation of these courses.

The project is also supporting farmers and plantation owners at the pilot landscapes towards achieving food security by ensuring that the crop choice, cropping pattern cycle, guarding methods and other prevention measures enable farmers to reduce the crop damage caused by HWC.

Progress

- Developed HWC-NAP and draft of 14 guidelines including 10 key species-in-conflict (Leopard, Elephant, Wild Pig, Crocodile, Rhesus Macaque, Snakes, Sloth Bear, Gaur, Bluebull, Blackbuck) and cross-cutting issues such as forest-media cooperation, crowd management, health emergencies and health risks, and occupational health and safety.

- Operationalised the holistic approach to HWC mitigation at four pilot divisions through six HWC mitigation instruments, which are being consolidated in the form of division-level HWC-MAP.

- Facilitating establishment of State and District-level

Coordination Committees at the pilot sites to further inter-departmental cooperation.

- Facilitating capacity development of over 100 field response teams at the pilot sites, including the forest department Rapid Response Teams and community-level Primary Response Teams with training and equipment support for an effective and coordinated approach between the department and communities.

- Facilitated the establishment and organisation of the first two meetings of the 'Forum of Eastern and North-Eastern States on HWC Mitigation' steered by the MoEF&CC and the West Bengal Forest Department (2018-20).

- Developed and integrated a competencies-based curriculum for a 5-day training on 'Holistic Approach to HWC Mitigation' into the curriculum of key national training institutions such as the Wildlife Institute of India, Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy, CASFOS Dehradun and Burnihaat.

- Designed a curriculum on 'Media Strategies for effective and efficient HWC Mitigation' for media students and professionals which was tested and included in the media course curriculum at St Xaviers' College, Mumbai and AJK Mass Communication Research Center at Jamia Milia Islamia, Delhi.

- Developed a strategy to operationalise the One Health (OH) approach in HWC mitigation measures and a curriculum on OH for key stakeholders which is currently being pilot tested.

Contribution to 2030 Agenda

The project contributes to SDG 1 (Poverty Reduction), 2 (Zero Hunger) and 15 (Life on Land).

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