# UPSC Preparation

# Human - Wildlife Conflict

Human-Wildlife Conflict refers to the negative interaction between humans and wildlife that result in losses in terms of life, property or resources.

Due to an expanding human population, it is almost inevitable that humans will encroach into the natural habitats of the animal kingdom. As a result, many nations have included mitigation of human-wildlife conflict as part of their national environmental team.

## Definition of Human Wildlife-Conflict

Human–wildlife conflict is defined by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) as "any interaction between humans and wildlife that results in negative impacts of human social, economic or cultural life, on the conservation of wildlife populations, or on the environment.

The IUCN SSC Human-Wildlife Conflict Task Force describes human-wildlife conflict as struggles that emerge when the presence or behaviour of wildlife poses actual or perceived, direct and recurring threat to human interests or needs, leading to disagreements between groups of people and negative impacts on people and/or wildlife.

## Factors leading to Human-Wildlife Conflict

The factors leading to Human-Wildlife Conflict are the result of humans coming in close proximity to natural habitats of wildlife. For instance crops are raised by herbivores and livestock by carnivores leading the farmers that depend on both to take extreme measures in preventing loss of wildlife.

- With a rapidly increasing human population and high biodiversity, interactions between people and wild animals are becoming more and more prevalent.
- Habitat disturbance is destruction of the home of the wild animals. Humans kill or chase wild animals by digging, cutting, sealing by stones and smoking in their natural habitat.
- Other factors include large scale habitat destruction through deforestation overgrazing by livestock and expansion of human settlements and agriculture.

## Steps to Mitigate Human-Wildlife Conflict

There are many steps that can be taken to mitigate human wildlife conflict, but the most successful one are those that involve local community members in the planning, implementation, and maintenance.

Still, there are other examples of Human Wildlife conflict mitigations

**Translocation of problematic animals:** Relocating supposed "problem" animals from a site of conflict to a new place is a mitigation technique used in the past, although recent research has shown that this approach can have detrimental impacts on species and is largely ineffective.

**Erection of fences or other barriers:** Building barriers around cattle bomas, creating distinct wildlife corridors, and erecting beehive fences around farms to deter elephants have all demonstrated the ability to be successful and cost-effective strategies for mitigating human-wildlife conflict.

**Compensation:** in some cases, governmental systems have been established to offer monetary compensation for losses sustained due to human-wildlife conflict. These systems hope to deter the need for retaliatory killings of animals, and to financially incentivize the coexisting of humans and wildlife.

**Predator-deterring guard dogs:** The use of guard dogs to protect livestock from depredation has been effective in mitigating human-carnivore conflict around the globe. A recent review found that 15.4% of study cases researching human-carnivore conflict used livestock-guarding dogs as a management technique, with animal losses on average 60 times lower than the norm.

## A Future For All report, 2021

It is a report jointly published by World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It was released on July 8, 2021. Title of the report -  **A future for all - the need for human-wildlife co-existence.**

## Highlights of the report

- More than 75 per cent of the world's wild cat species, and also many other terrestrial and marine carnivore species such as polar bears and Mediterranean monk seals, and large herbivores such as elephants globally, are affected by conflict-related killings.
- Threats to wildlife according to the report are:
    - Effects of climate change,
    - Loss of habitat from deforestation,

- o Illegal wildlife trade,
- o Infrastructure development
- o Conflict with humans
- The report suggests an approach of coexistence between humans and wildlife, and involvement of local communities, as it is not possible to wholly suppress human-wildlife conflict.
- Successful example - Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area in Southern Africa; the local communities installed fixed and mobile lion-proof corrals for night-time protection in risk-prone areas, which led to 95% reduction in livestock killings in 2016, and there were zero retaliatory killings of lions in 2016 (compared to 17 killed in 2012 and 2013). This approach allowed previously threatened lion populations to recover.
- The report highlights that reducing human-wildlife conflict can benefit biodiversity, local communities, and society, contributing to sustainable development and production.

## Call to Action

The report asks the international communities, national and regional governments and also private sector to integrate few approaches as mentioned below to achieve peaceful coexistence of humans and wildlife.

- International Communities
  - o To integrate human-wildlife coexistence as a goal/target in Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD)2050 vision of 'living in harmony with nature' and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Framework.
- National and regional governmental authorities
  - o To provide financial support to the programmes related to mitigation of Human-Wildlife Conflict.
  - o To develop transparent and inclusive local and regional institutions to manage land use and human-wildlife conflict.
  - o To roll out nationwide human-wildlife conflict information programmes, that include monitoring and education on impacts and solutions.
  - o To develop laws and regulations, in order to control the human-wildlife conflict.
- Private sector
  - o To demonstrate the benefits of human-wildlife conflict minimisation in value chains.

○ To rethink developments or projects that will result in the worsening of the conflict situation, especially in places where human-wildlife conflict can't be managed, while ensuring that all development complements the needs of local people.

○ To develop innovations and adopt management practices that restore natural habitat connectivity and mitigate the human-wildlife conflict.

# Frequently Asked Questions Related to Human-Wildlife Conflict

## Is Human-Wildlife conflict restricted to terrestrial animals?

Human–wildlife conflict is not limited to terrestrial ecosystems, but is prevalent in the world's oceans as well. As with terrestrial conflict, human-wildlife conflict in aquatic environments is incredibly diverse and extends across the globe.

## What other methods can be adopted to further mitigate human wildlife conflict?

Protecting key areas for wildlife, creating buffer zones and investing in alternative land uses are some of the solutions. Other include:

Community-based natural resource management.

Compensation / insurance.

Payment for Environmental Services.

Wildlife friendly products.