



## Human-Wildlife Conflict

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### Why in News

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A report '**A Future for All – A Need for Human-Wildlife Coexistence**' was recently released by **World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF)** and **UNEP**.

- It examined **increasing human-wildlife conflict (HWC)**.
- HWC-related killing affects more than **75% of the world's wild cat species**, as well as many other **terrestrial and marine carnivore species** such as polar bears and Mediterranean monk seals, and **large herbivores** such as elephants.

### Key Points

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- **About:**

Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) refers to struggles that arise when the presence or behaviour of **wildlife poses actual or perceived direct, recurring threats to human interests or needs**, often leading to disagreements between groups of people and negative impacts on people and/or wildlife.

- **Causes of Human-wildlife Conflict:**

- **Lack of Protected Area:** Marine and terrestrial **protected areas** only cover **9.67% globally**. About 40% of the African lion range and 70% of the African and Asian elephant ranges fall outside protected areas.

In India, 35% **tiger** ranges currently lie outside protected areas.

- **Wildlife-borne Infections: Covid-19 pandemic** – sparked by a zoonotic disease is driven by the close **association of people, their livestock, and wildlife** and by the unregulated consumption of wild animals.

With closer and more frequent and diverse contact between animals and people, the probability of animal microbes being transferred to people increases.

- **Other Reasons:**

- **Urbanization:** In modern times rapid urbanization and industrialisation have led to the diversion of forest land to non-forest purposes, as a result, the wildlife habitat is shrinking.
- **Transport Network:** The expansion of road and rail network through forest ranges has resulted in animals getting killed or injured in accidents on roads or railway tracks.
- **Increasing Human Population:** Many human settlements coming up near the peripheries of protected areas and encroachment in the forest lands by local people for cultivation and collection of food and fodder etc. therefore **increasing pressure on limited natural resources** in the forests.

- **Impacts:**

- **Impact on Wildlife And Ecosystems:** HWC can have detrimental and permanent impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity. People might kill animals in self-defence, or as pre-emptive or retaliatory killings, which can drive species involved in **conflict to extinction**.
- **Impact on Local Communities:** The most evident and direct negative impacts to people from wildlife are injuries and the loss of lives and of livestock, crops, or other property.
- **Impact on Equity:** The economic and psychological costs of living with wildlife disproportionately **fall to those who live near that wildlife**, while the benefits of a species' survival are distributed to other communities as well.
- **Impact on Social Dynamics:** When a HWC event affects a farmer, that farmer may blame the government for protecting the perpetrator that damages crops, while a conservation practitioner may blame industry and farmers for clearing wild habitats and creating the HWC in the first place.
- **Impact on Sustainable Development:** HWC is the theme in conservation that is strongly linked to the **SDGs** as biodiversity is primary to sustain the developments, even though it is not explicitly mentioned as one.

- **Solution:**

- **Moving From Conflict To Coexistence:** The goal of HWC management should be to enhance the **safety of people and wildlife** and to create mutual **benefits of coexistence**.
- **Integrated and Holistic Practices:** Holistic HWC management approaches allow species to survive in areas where they otherwise would have declined or become extinct.
  - All species on our planet also are essential for maintaining ecosystem health and functions.
- **Participation:** The full participation of local communities can help reduce HWC and lead to coexistence between humans and wildlife.



## Indian Scenario

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- India faces an increasing challenge of human wildlife conflict, which is driven by **development pressures** and an **increasing population, high demand for land and natural resources**, resulting in loss, fragmentation, and **degradation of wildlife habitats**.
  - These pressures intensify the interactions between people and wildlife because they often share living space without a clear demarcation of boundaries.

- In India, data from the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change shows that **over 500 elephants were killed between 2014-15 and 2018-19**, most related to human-elephant conflict.
- During the same period, **2,361 people were killed as a result of conflict** with elephants.
- **Some Initiatives:**
  - **Advisory for Management of HWC:** This has been issued by the Standing Committee of **National Board of Wildlife (SC-NBWL)**.
    - **Empower Gram Panchayats:** The advisory envisages empowering gram panchayats in dealing with the problematic wild animals as per the **WildLife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
    - **Provide Insurance:** Utilising add-on coverage under the **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna** for crop compensation against crop damage due to HWC.
    - **Augmenting Fodder:** Envisages augmenting fodder and water sources within the forest areas.
    - **Take Proactive Measures:** Prescribes **inter-departmental committees** at local/state level, adoption of **early warning systems, creation of barriers, dedicated circle wise Control Rooms** with toll free hotline numbers, Identification of hotspots etc.
    - **Provide Instant Relief:** Payment of a portion of ex-gratia as interim relief within 24 hours of the incident to the victim/family.
  - **State-Specific:**
    - In 2018, the Uttar Pradesh government had given its in-principle approval to bring **man-animal conflict under listed disasters** in the State Disaster Response Fund
    - The Uttarakhand government (2019) carried out **bio-fencing** by growing various species of plants in the areas.
    - The Supreme Court (2020) affirmed the **right of passage of the Elephants** and the closure of resorts in the Nilgiris elephant corridor.
    - Odisha's Athagarh Forest Division has started casting **seed balls (or bombs)** inside different reserve forest areas to enrich food stock for wild elephants to prevent man-elephant conflict.

**Source: IE**