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Learning to Co-Exist with Wildlife

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ABSTRACT

The world looks aesthetic when the resources provided by the nature work out in a balanced way, and if the equilibrium is not maintained, conflict arises, this conflict between human-wildlife has attracted a large section of society and even the governments of several countries. Around the world, the challenge is being faced when there is competition for resources between humans and wildlife, sometimes the negative impact on humans and other times on the animals and this has led to a reduction in the tolerance level of humans. Human-wildlife conflict calls for a proper allocation of adequate resources and forming of a wide range of partnerships so that no more animals are defined in the extinction list or the vulnerable list. The process must work symbiotically otherwise it can be a big threat to achieving the sustainable development goals of the UNEP.

Keywords: *human-wildlife conflict, symbiotically, natural resources, equilibrium*

I. INTRODUCTION

The strife between humans and the wildlife has become one of the threats for the viability of many varieties of animals around the world, it is also a menace to the human population locally situated. For the local support of conservation, the solutions should be adequate.

‘Human-wildlife conflict 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.’² It is a difficult task to share landscapes with wildlife when humans and wildlife both are at risk. Deforestation and other climatic changes are disrupting biodiversity and now this would lead to another factor responsible for the extinction of species. Human-wildlife conflict also impacts Sustainable Development Goals, but it is not yet mentioned explicitly.

‘Human-wildlife coexistence refers to people and wildlife existing in proximity to each other, whether in contentious, neutral, or beneficial coexistence.’³ In order to achieve co-existence between wildlife and human beings, the stakeholders must work efficiently to resolve the matter of HWC and at the same time highlighting the benefits of living with wildlife outweigh the

¹ Author is a Student at Amity University Lucknow, India.

² A Future for All: The Need For Human-Wildlife Coexistence., https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/a_future_for_all_the_need_for_human_wildlife_coexistence.pdf (last visited Sep.11, 2022).

³ *Id.*

costs. Human wildlife conflict is a developmental as well as a humanitarian issue besides being conservative. 'HWC include: crop destruction, reduced agricultural productivity, competition for grazing lands and water supply, livestock predation, injury and death to human, damage to infrastructure, and increased risk of disease transmission among wildlife and livestock.'⁴ At world stage level all the countries are making efforts to include human- wildlife conflict and there co-existence with their powerful strategies for management of wildlife and poverty alleviation.

'Human behaviour toward wildlife is framed as rational calculus of costs and benefits, sidelining emotional and cultural dimensions of these interactions. Coexistence is less studied due to unfamiliarity with relevant methodologies, including qualitative methods, self-reflexivity and ethical rigor, and constraints on funding and time. These challenges are illustrated with examples from fieldwork in India and Africa.'⁵

II. ZONOSSES AND HUMAN WILDLIFE CONFLICT

According to a report, during the covid-19 pandemic which did spread throughout the world was a zoonotic disease, 'Zoonoses, diseases transmitted from wildlife to humans and vice versa, can be considered a subset of HWC.'⁶ These diseases spread because of the interaction between the humans and the animals for livestock and feeding, it gets transmitted and leads to an outbreak which eventually gives rise to a pandemic. Due to illegal 'trade and consumption of wildlife as a delicacy or as alternative protein,' the humans become vulnerable to animal pathogens and hence increased risk of zoonotic diseases; agricultural intensification can result in negative environmental consequences including change in climate and loss of biodiversity.

'The majority (70%) of emerging diseases (e.g., Ebola, Zika, Nipah encephalitis) and almost all known pandemics (e.g., avian influenza, HIV/AIDS, COVID-19) are zoonoses that have spilled over due to contact among wildlife, livestock, and people'⁷. It is because of the increasing anthropogenic changes which has led to a surge in the count of zoonoses. 'While wildlife serves as hosts to a number of diseases, it's important to note that such disease emergence is caused by human activities and the impacts of these activities on the environment'⁸. Many studies have

⁴ Human and wildlife conflict, <https://www.fao.org/forestry/wildlife/67288/en/> (last visited Sep. 10, 2022).

⁵ Rethinking the study of human- wildlife coexistence, <https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/cobi.13653> > (last visited Sep. 10, 2022).

⁶ P.J. Nyphus, "Human- Wildlife Conflict and Coexistence" Annual Review of Environment and Resources

⁷ K.E. Jones, N.G. Patel, M.A. Levy, A. Storeygard, J.L. Gittleman, "Global trends in emerging infectious diseases" (2008)

⁸ IPBES, Workshop Report on Biodiversity and Pandemics of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

shown that keeping domestic animals on a large scale and intensive handling of wildlife can create an atmosphere for spread of diseases which can develop into super viruses, the time calls for reassessing the relationship between the humans and the wildlife to ensure their safe coexistence. '80,000 to 1,38,000 people killed annually by snake bites in Africa and Asia.'⁹

III. DRIVERS OF HUMAN WILDLIFE CONFLICT

Biodiversity includes living with variation in our surrounding and this must be maintained as without one another can extinguish which is called as habitat loss. The existence between human and wildlife can be made possible by implications of various policies and checking on what drives this conflict. Looking at the causes sitting at the driver's seat, we get that it results from anthropogenic ('habitat loss, changes in land use, livestock management, expansion of agricultural practices, climate change, resource extraction, infrastructure development, and urbanisation, increase the potential for HWC') and ecological means ('seasonal changes, natural calamities, and animals' life cycles, as well as the movement patterns of animals'¹⁰) that puts pressure on the landscape that is equally shared by the human and the wildlife.

Each negative impact on the biodiversity result from a complex of web interactions, for instance, if forests are cleared for settlements or agriculture, or roads are cut into previously inaccessible areas, habitat loss and fragmentation result¹¹ forcing wildlife and people into closer proximity to each other. This problem may be further compounded by the degradation of wild habitat caused by suburbanisation and the expansion of livestock grazing¹². These changes become the main cause for the species to shift their territorial and movement behaviour and if the habitat is once lost, wild species invariably come into touch with the people. These pressures and drivers cause habitat loss and result in loss of lives of humans and the behaviour of humans also impact the living of animals thus resulting in a conflict and which can only be resolved after looking into each of the drivers and only then can we think of a peaceful co- existence.

Illustrations of the Conflict around the World

'Africa being a biodiversity hotspot it is significantly the region of highest human wildlife conflict, and it can be evident from the human- predator (lions, leopards, cheetahs, etc.) and human) and human elephant conflict. Often African elephants clash with the humans as they enter the farm and destroy the crops, infrastructure and at times people and this leads to killing

⁹ World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/snakebite-envenoming> (last visited Sep. 11, 2022)

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

of elephants by the humans.’¹³ ‘In 2017, more than 8 000 human-wildlife conflict incidents were reported in Namibia alone (World Bank, 2019). Hyenas killed more than 600 cattle in the Zambezi Region of Namibia between 2011 and 2016 and there were more than 4 000 incidents of crop damage, mostly caused by elephants moving through the region (NACSO, 2017a)’

Antarctica is the place where the first exemplary of human wildlife conflict was seen in 2003 as it resulted in the death of a British Marine biologist, she was dragged by the leopard seal.

Europe is the region where the conflict arose between the people and both the herbivores and carnivores, a variety of non- predators were shown such as deer, wild boar, rodents and starlings were shown causing harm to the crops and the forests.¹⁴ Even less apparent cases of human-wildlife conflict can cause substantial losses; 500,000 deer-vehicle collisions in Europe (and 1-1.5 million in North America) led to 30,000 injuries and 200 deaths¹⁵ countries like North America, South America and Oceania have also seen this conflict resulting in the death of animals by man and vice versa.

Asia has the largest population as well as biodiversity and hence the percentage here is high as compared to other regions. The interactions are becoming more and more prevalent, alike Africa, the interaction and the tussle between the tigers, the people and the livestock is common. In Sri Lanka, for example, each year as many as 80 people are killed by elephants and more than 230 elephants are killed by farmers. The Sri Lankan elephant is listed as endangered, and only 2 500–4 000 individuals remain in the wild (IIED, 2019)¹⁶

IV. MILESTONES ACHIEVED ACROSS THE WORLD IN HUMAN WIDLIFE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

It has been pointed out by many conservationists and researchers that the HWC issue must be addressed so that there can be peaceful co-existence. Before it is becoming a global issue the International Bear Association and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Bear Specialist Group started to focus on the issue in 1987. In 1990, the elephant specialist group found the conflict between the people and the elephant, and they addressed this issue. In 2004, the IUCN World Park Congress held in Durban, South Africa, brought the issue to the global stage for the first time.¹⁷ Recommendations were made in the conference including

¹³ Graham, D. Maximilian, “Patterns of crop- raiding by elephants, *Loxodonta African*, in Laikipia, Kenya, and the management of human- elephant conflict.” (2010) 435, 445

¹⁴ Andraz Kranz, Klenke, R. “Human – Wildlife Conflicts in Europe” (2011)

¹⁵ Nyphus, Philip J. “Human -Wildlife conflict and coexistence” (2016) 143, 171

¹⁶ World Health Organization, *Supra* at 8.

¹⁷ F. Madden, “Creating Co existence between Humans and Wildlife: Global Perspectives on Local Efforts to Address Human- Wildlife Conflict” (2004).

strengthening HWC management through the establishment of a national forum, capacity development, national and international cooperation, and national and international funding. In 2005, a book was published named “Book People and Wildlife: Conflict or Coexistence?” it opens the discussion on HWC. In 2008, “the Pathways Conference discusses the need to better integrate the human dimension into HWC management”. The IUCN HUMAN WILDLIFE TASK FORCE was formed is a global think tank that supports all those working for the HWC management. The task force helps the researchers, scientists, policymakers, communities across the world to connect and work for the HWC management.

Despite the efforts made we are still struggling to reduce HWC and create mutual co-existence between the humans and the wildlife. The most significant lead must be taken by the people who live with animals and interact with them on daily basis to come forward and help in improving the situation, there should be a willingness on the part of humans, each one of them to live peacefully and beneficially with wildlife.

V. THE INDIAN SCENARIO

‘India is a country with diversity with animals and humans sharing the landscape, it has become a place of cauldron of conflict between the man and the beasts.’ “As a result, humans and wildlife compete for the same diminishing resources. In the heart of Delhi monkeys attack women and bite off their noses, but if you strike them back with a stick and the monkey is injured you are liable to be prosecuted as a criminal.”¹⁸

The expansion of human lands and the conversion of protected areas into conservation islands surrounded by human-dominated landscapes leads to increase in the negative interaction between human and wildlife species, particularly large mammals.¹⁹ The leopards and the tigers attack are considered as the incidents that are reported regularly and this results in crop damage, animal deaths, loss of human life, injuries to people, injuries to wildlife and livestock depredation.²⁰

The measures taken by the government include the “Wildlife Protection Act, 1972” that prohibits hunting, protects wildlife habitats, establishes protected areas, controls trade and products derived from wildlife and management of zoos. The Indian Forest Act and Forest Act of State Governments, this act gives exclusive powers to the state government over forest areas,

¹⁸ Research Gate, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360805846_Pitting_people_against_nature (last visited Sep. 11, 2022)

¹⁹ Legal Services India, <https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-6910-an-analysis-of-measures-taken-to-resolve-human-wildlife-conflicts-in-india.html> (last visited Sep. 11, 2022)

²⁰ *Id.*

and these include, reserved forests, village forests and protected forests. “The Biological Diversity Act, 2002” also provides for conservation of diversity of India and is not contrary to the provisions of any other law.” National Wildlife Action Plan 2002- 2016” as it provides for community reserves and is one of the effective plans for wildlife sustenance that focuses on reinforcing of the protected areas.

Operations such as Operation Thunderbird and Operation Olivia were undertaken to resolve the conflict as well as protect the vulnerable species. Wildnet was launched to investigate the illicit trade that occurred through e-commerce platform.

The Gujarat Forest Department has taken several mitigation measures such as ‘compensation scheme for livestock predation have been formulated, ex- gratia damages provided due to wildlife.’ National Tiger Conservation Authority had formulated a standing operating procedure to deal with the carnivores straying in the human landscapes.

In India, human wildlife conflict is an endemic. In March 2021 Mr H S Pabla, former Chief wildlife Warden of Madhya Pradesh and Dr A J T Johnsingh, the well-known conservation biologist submitted a note to the Government, in which they stated: ‘Human-wildlife conflict is a humongous problem for conservation of wildlife in India. Nearly a thousand people are killed by wild animals like elephants, leopards, tigers and sloth bears while tens of thousands are injured each year. Losses of crops and property at the hands of elephants, wild pigs, blue bull, blackbuck, gaur etc. runs into thousands of crores. People are not free to defend themselves against marauding animals as even driving them out of their homes and crop fields needs official permission.’ Other initiatives include Advisory Management of HWC and it has been issued by the National Board of Wildlife, under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna crop compensation is provided if they are damaged by HWC. The State government of specific states have also taken the initiatives such as in 2018, the Uttar Pradesh Government decided to bring the human-wildlife conflict under the listed disasters of the “State Disaster Response Fund”, ‘the Supreme Court in 2020 affirmed the right of passage of the elephants and the closure of resorts in the Nilgiris elephant corridor.’

Major Programs in Different Regions of India

Wild Seve, Seve means service in Kannada is a conflict mitigation and response program, this program conducted a survey and found that even though the government has money set aside, people do not file claims for their damages get rejected, hence a lot of frustration builds around people and they tend to retaliate if no help comes. Hence, Wild Seve has provided toll- free number to 600 villages and helped the family file a claim.

“Shaale means school in Kannada” is another program revolving around the school- going children living around the wildlife reserves. It builds foundational knowledge about local wildlife, ecosystems and conservation issues and fosters tolerance for wildlife and nurtures these children as future stewards of conservation²¹.

The third program is the Wild Surakshe, surakshe means safety and protection, and this aims at working with community leaders, front- life forest and health department staff. The above-mentioned three programs are run by Krithi Karanth, IWCN coexistence council member and chief conservation scientist, and director of the Centre for Wildlife Studies. Krithi says, “ We need a generation of people to really take action to ensure that we don’t lose whatever we have.” These programs have sown the seeds of peaceful co-existence and accepting the challenges and facing them.

Rocha is another international organisation that has been working for the human and wildlife peaceful co-existence and its base in India is in Bengaluru, near the Bannerghatta National Park where the team works to solve the conflict between the elephants in the National Parka and the people living in the nearby areas.

VI. CONCLUSION

The problem of benevolent co-existence between wildlife and human beings not only in India but also in the world has shown negative interactions. A living of both the *Homo Sapiens* and the different species of animals can only be made when we start living symbiotically as is done by the fungi and the roots in the Mycorrhizas. It is becoming an issue of the “lack of resources with the authorities to compensate” the residents, to manage this conflict is a great challenge in front of the wildlife managers in India.

²¹ International Wildlife Coexistence Network, <https://wildlifecoexistence.org/blog/living-alongside-wildlife-in-india/> (last visited Sep.11, 2022).