



Looking beyond ivory – the EPI Foundation to 2030

Vision 2030

Harmonious coexistence of people and elephants with herds able to travel across their range.

Thereby protecting a diverse range of wild animals and plants, combating climate change, and supporting local livelihoods.

The Elephant Protection Initiative (EPI) is a unique alliance of 21 African countries dedicated to conserving their elephants. Most of Africa's remaining 400,000 elephants are in EPI countries, which are Anglophone, Francophone, and Lusophone. The EPI is led by African governments, guided by its Leadership Council, and supported by a small and innovative secretariat, the EPI Foundation.

The EPI was founded in 2014 with four objectives, namely to:

- Maintain the 1989 international moratorium on ivory trade for ten years or until elephant populations recover,
- Close domestic ivory markets,
- Place ivory stockpiles beyond commercial use, and
- Implement the 2010 African Elephant Action Plan ([AEAP](#)).

The first three objectives were the focus of Stop Ivory, the predecessor to the EPI, and good progress has been made. The legal trade in ivory, and domestic ivory markets, have largely disappeared, and it is difficult to envisage their return. Meanwhile the recent UN World Wildlife Crime Report 2020, from UNODC, reported a decrease in elephant poaching and ivory smuggling. Despite this we know we cannot be complacent, and there are troubling signs of an increase in elephant poaching for ivory in specific parts of Africa.

The EPI Foundation will continue to support member countries with ivory stockpile management and achieving gold standards in the management of ivory and other wildlife products. These are fundamental pillars of the EPI. But if we want to secure the future of Africa's elephants, we must do much more.

Looking across the horizon to 2030 or to 2050, it is Africa's rapidly growing human population and economic growth, with new and expanding human settlements, related infrastructure, and conversion of land to agriculture, that loom as the largest threats to elephants. With these comes an

ever-increasing risk of escalating human wildlife conflict, as people and elephants compete for land and dwindling natural resources.

These long-term challenges are only exacerbated by the immediate crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is having a devastating impact upon people, economies, and societies across the world. In Africa it has brought wildlife-based tourism to a sudden stop, thereby undermining a fundamental pillar of the business model for wildlife conservation on much of the continent.

The next one to three years will be critical in determining the fate of Africa's elephants, and indeed all its wildlife. Now that the economic benefits and job generation of elephants and wildlife conservation have all but vanished, will poaching and human wildlife conflict increase, and habitat be converted to other uses? How will countries manage the downturn in conservation revenue?

And even if we can navigate our way through this crisis, the more fundamental questions remain. How will Africa manage the growth in population, infrastructure, and expanded agricultural in a way that takes elephant movements into account? How will countries deal with local overpopulations of elephants? How will they manage and avoid human wildlife conflict?

In recent years we have witnessed a dramatic growth in human elephant conflict across Africa. If existing conflicts are not resolved, and future conflicts avoided, the prospects of Africa's elephants thriving across their range in 2030 are bleak. In the absence of sound planning, countries will be confronted with a never-ending stream of escalating confrontations between people and elephants. These will have to be resolved in the heat of politically charged environments, and elephants are likely to come off second best.

The EPI Foundation believes there is a desperate need for an open, frank, and honest conversation amongst African elephant range countries on all these challenges, along with an enhanced exchange of experience, mutual technical and political support. African elephant range countries will benefit from agreed positions to advance their common policy objectives, including on how to increase international investment into nature conservation.

The EPI, with its continent-wide membership, Leadership Council and supportive Foundation, is uniquely placed to be the platform through which Africa can articulate its needs and meet its goals in elephant conservation.

Much of the international debate on elephant issues is led by well-meaning sentiment, but range countries are grappling with local economic and political realities. The EPI Foundation, through its extensive connections with donors, conservation organisations and the international media, can act as a conduit between Africa and the rest of the world. African countries are responsible for managing their elephant populations, in line with international obligations, and solutions to these challenges must be African led if they are to succeed.

African countries will, however, require external investment and support for many years to come, especially given the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and a balance needs to be struck between sentiment and realities on the ground. The EPI can provide a mutually supportive African-led forum to strike this balance.

The EPI Foundation will galvanise support for all EPI countries, including those experiencing a downturn in wildlife-tourism revenue, to help them manage and avoid human wildlife conflict and ensure the harmonious coexistence of elephants and people to 2030 and beyond. The resolution of human wildlife conflict is an integral part of the African Elephant Action Plan (AEAP) and the related

National Elephant Action Plans (NEAPs). The EPI Foundation will pursue two inter-related strategies to achieve this objective:

- managing existing human wildlife conflicts, by deploying the best available technologies and techniques, and
- avoiding the conditions that could lead to future conflicts, through spatial planning and, again, the best use of available technologies and techniques.

The EPI Foundation will attract core expertise on human wildlife conflict, just as it has done for ivory stockpile management. This will include a toolkit on available techniques and technologies for addressing current conflicts and avoiding future conflicts, for deployment across the continent.

There are already human wildlife projects in many parts of Africa, but the continent needs a more coordinated and mutually supportive approach. The EPI offers this opportunity. It will encourage the deployment of existing and new technologies and techniques across the continent to address human wildlife conflict, and to support spatial planning. A possible increase in overall poaching, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, makes the deployment of advanced technology and other means of resolving conflicts more important than ever.

Some African countries have managed to attract significant conservation financing. They have built successful models based on public-private partnerships and community conservancies. Others have developed stronger and more transparent national agencies.

These models are now experiencing challenges, especially due to the loss of tourism revenue. What models will be most successful in attracting conservation finance looking ahead to 2030? Should multilateral donors reconfigure their financing models to better respond to Africa's needs after COVID-19? The EPI Foundation will advance this discussion between African range countries and facilitate agreement amongst its members.

Successful conservation management models must address concerns over good governance, effective implementation, and accountability for performance. The EPI Foundation will analyse all successful models, and possible future models, and support member countries in considering, and utilising, the approach that is best suited to their own circumstances.

If we can deliver on these objectives, we can ensure that elephants will still be able to travel across most of their historic range. We will also protect a diverse range of wild animal and plants, mitigate the impact of climate change, and support the livelihoods of millions of people.

The Vision for the EPI Foundation to 2030 is 'the harmonious coexistence of elephants and people with herds able to travel across their range. Thereby protecting a diverse range of wild animals and plants, combating climate change and supporting local livelihoods'.

The EPI Foundation will help African range countries with coherent, creative, and effective management and financing solutions to protect elephant populations to 2030, under the umbrella of the AEAP, which forms a central part of the EPI.

This Vision and its specific objectives will be achieved by supporting EPI member countries advance the objectives of the EPI by:

General support:

- Convening member countries in addressing common challenges and facilitating the adoption of agreed policy positions.
- Sharing knowledge, experience, technologies and techniques on dealing with common challenges across range countries.

Technical and Policy new:

- Supporting the deployment of measures to manage existing human wildlife conflict and to avoid the conditions that could lead to future conflicts.
- Facilitating short and long-term resource mobilisation, including through advancing successful conservation governance models.

Technical and Policy ongoing:

- Advocating for maintaining the international ban on trade in elephant ivory, for the closure of remaining domestic markets and supporting ongoing and effective stockpile management.
- Continuing to support the development and updating of NEAPs.