

2021

ELEPHANT PROTECTION
INITIATIVE FOUNDATION'S

HUMAN – ELEPHANT CONFLICT STRATEGY

“A Path to Harmonious Coexistence”





A note from our Human-Elephant Conflict Lead Greta Francesca Iori

As wildlife habitats continue to shrink and human populations grow, reports of human-elephant conflict (HEC) are increasing exponentially. Threats to elephants are vast and complex, and are changing. Across Africa, elephants are losing their migratory paths, their habitats are under increasing threat, people are being tragically injured and killed, and farmers are seeing their crops destroyed. In countries such as Botswana, Gabon, Kenya and Uganda, newspapers report on conflicts between elephants and humans several times each week. In my home country Ethiopia, people who live near elephants derive few benefits from their presence, but often count the cost in ruined harvests. This erodes political and public support for conservation. If these conflicts can't be resolved with long term solutions that enable harmonious coexistence, then the prospects for elephants are bleak.

It is crucial that all of us come together and reflect on the challenges of conservation, and transform our approach, so that nature and society are better integrated and interrelated. Governments, conservationists and communities are spearheading a variety of mitigation measures, including electric fences, bee-hives, community guarding tactics and trenches. Such measures are vital, but they do not tackle the underlying causes and complexities shaping conflicts between wildlife and people in Africa and the world at large. Competition for land, boundless industrial and economic expansion, overconsumption, growing human populations, severe inequality and, in some cases, long-standing injustices surrounding the establishment of protected areas, will continue to exacerbate these conflicts. How well we manage these challenges will dictate how

successful we are at implementing effective solutions in achieving harmonious coexistence.

The EPI is an African-led response to the elephant crisis and our HEC Strategy is designed to recognise and address the challenges African nations face as a result of wildlife and people being pushed into increasingly unsustainable proximity. The conservation arena is a complex one and the development of an ambitious and forward-looking vision requires the engagement of governments, experts, local communities, the private sector and civil society. Elephants – Africa's iconic giants – are a representation of entire ecosystems, upon which all our lives depend. This is where we believe we have the ability to redefine the future of people and wildlife. We are convinced that through implementing this Strategy we can lay the foundation for a more socially and environmentally just reality for Africans, and for elephants. We are proud of what we have been able to achieve in working with our EPI member states so far, but we acknowledge that we must now do much more. In delivering on our Vision, we seek to bring everybody together to do what is best, for both humanity and the magnificent biodiversity with which we share our planet.

Sincerely,
Greta F Iori
Director of Programme Development
Human-Elephant Conflict Lead

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greta Iori".

“

Human population growth is a reality that conservationists must reckon with. Africa's human population is expected to double by the year 2050, from 1.2 billion people today to an estimated 2.5 billion people. More people will mean increased pressures on land and resources. There will be less space available for all species and not just elephants. Conservationists must think clearly about this challenge and discuss openly how to manage elephants in human dominated landscapes.”



Dr. Winnie Kiiru
Director of Government Relations
EPI Foundation

OUR HEC VISION

To enable 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.

Harmonious Coexistence – As Part of EPIF’s Vision 2030

The establishment of the HEC team within the EPI Foundation is testament to the urgency of the challenge ahead and is a vital priority for our member states. No matter where we work, the HEC crisis increasingly dominates conversations and is a major concern for communities, governments and partners on the ground. It is not a simple task to protect elephants, whilst simultaneously championing the rights of people who live alongside them, but the EPI Foundation aims to build bridges, facilitate solutions and create a supportive platform to encourage and enable the complex and challenging dialogue needed between decision-makers, experts, local communities, and all other stakeholders to develop collaborative, context-appropriate, well-informed and enduring solutions to HEC.

Through the adoption of a holistic strategy on HEC, the EPI Foundation aims to be a bridging institution for its member states and partners in unifying high-level decision makers, promoting site level best practices and solutions, while providing a platform for amplifying and promoting the voices of Africans dealing with the realities of HEC across the continent.

OUR VALUES

The EPI Foundation’s core values are rooted in celebrating and respecting diversity in nature and the partners and communities with whom we work. We recognise that coexistence with elephants can only be achieved through respect, collaboration, and empowering local communities. Across the more than 20 African nations where we work, and within the small secretariat team, we are united by one mission and common set of values, which we believe contribute to the great mosaic of life by building a better world for all living things.



“We are delighted that the EPI is prioritising human-elephant conflict. Together we need to find sustainable solutions, where people can prosper and our remaining elephants are safe. The collapse of tourism revenue as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic makes the challenge all the more urgent. We believe the EPI, with its continent-wide membership, is well placed to help find solutions.”

**Hon. Lee White CBE
Gabon’s Minister of Forests, Oceans, Environment and Climate Change**

THREE KEY PILLARS TO DELIVER OUR STRATEGIC VISION

To deliver our HEC ambition over the next 10 years, we have identified three interconnected strategic priorities, summarised below and explained in greater detail on the following pages.



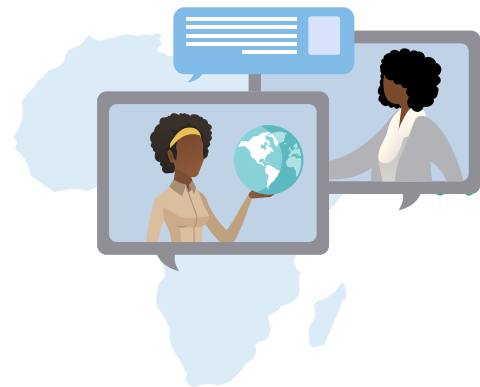
FOSTERING HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE

The EPIF through its close ties with African Leaders, extensive connections with donors, conservation organisations and the international media will create a platform which honours, prioritises and champions the rights of elephants and people, across the range countries, in policy development. We believe that facilitating High-level dialogue between governments, influential institutions, experts and local communities will catapult the systemic changes needed to develop effective, inclusive and just policies that enable context-specific, scalable solutions which mitigate, reduce and prevent HEC and create opportunities for harmonious coexistence.

OUR TRANSFORMATIVE OBJECTIVES:

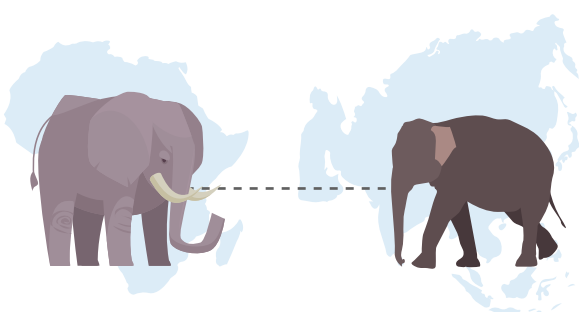
1

Through EPI's member states, Leadership Council and institutional partners, **facilitate global dialogue, debates and discussions** on the socio-cultural, political, economic and environmental realities of HEC. **We will thereby promote understanding of the complexities of, and inform policy on, HEC.**



2

Establish an Africa-Asia HEC intergovernmental platform to share best practices, lessons learnt, resources and capacity building opportunities between nations and continents.



3

Develop **a strong declaration acknowledging the challenges, solutions and opportunities for reducing, mitigating and preventing HEC**, and facilitating the wholehearted commitment of EPI member states to endorse and implement it.



ON-GOING AND PLANNED PROJECTS:

1

Engage with and provide on-going advice, assistance and an evaluation of national HEC challenges, opportunities and priorities for policy to all EPI member states, including outreach and public awareness.

2

Provide inputs, advice and guidance on inter-governmental processes relating to HEC, and intra-governmental processes regarding land-use and spatial planning as a tool for coexistence.

3

Support appropriate interdisciplinary experts, partners, and donors to collaborate with EPI member states in finding solutions for HEC across landscapes.

4

Establish links between African and Asian governments, partners and stakeholders to establish cross-continental partnerships and mutual support for dealing with HEC.

5

Draft a strong declaration to entice political commitment and ongoing advocacy in managing, mitigating and preventing HEC across varied landscapes and contexts.

6

Support and coordinate efforts with global institutions working to tackle HEC for maximum impact, harmonisation and resource mobilisation.

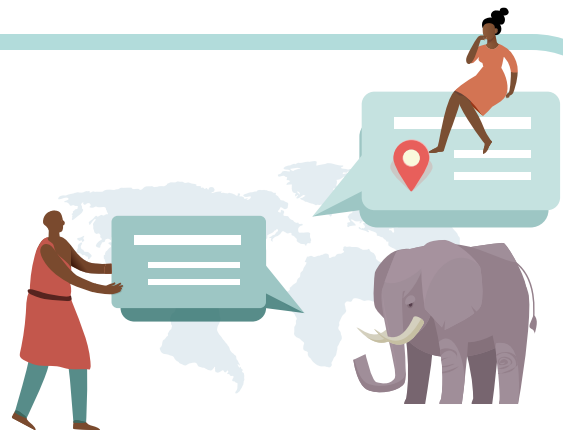
ENABLING LOCAL SOLUTIONS

The EPIF HEC Team is a small interdisciplinary team of experts motivated to help support EPI member states evaluate, manage, and mitigate HEC. Elephants are increasingly coming into conflict with humans over resources and space. In harmony with the work done through our **Fostering High-Level Dialogue** pillar across Africa and beyond, we are creating the foundations for the HEC Team to become key partners to help local, national and regional government authorities to assess, evaluate and implement context specific HEC mitigation and prevention strategies where the need is most pressing. In doing so, we strive to facilitate the use of technology, practical mitigation measures, local solutions, political buy-in and stakeholder collaboration across the board.

OUR TRANSFORMATIVE OBJECTIVES:

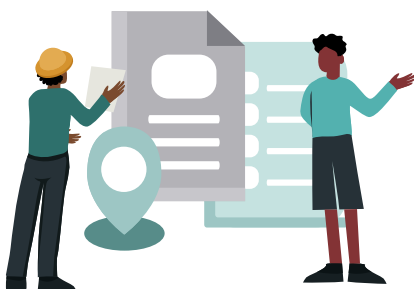
1

Provide timely site specific assessments, evaluation and technical support for EPI member states, to ensure the most effective, holistic and appropriate solutions are considered for EPI member states and partners dealing with HEC issues.



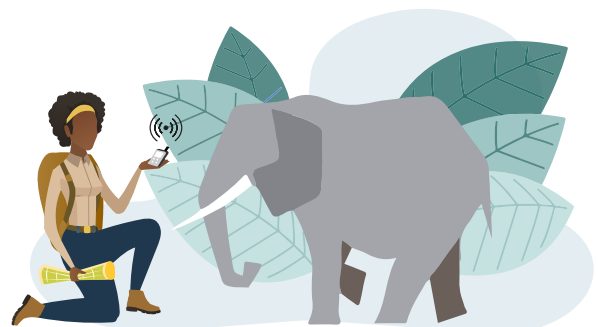
2

Develop an effective and inclusive relationship with government authorities tasked to deal with HEC issues, through a **'National HEC Focal Point'** support programme promoting knowledge exchange and capacity building.



3

Enhance broader human-wildlife conflict (HWC) decision-making and management capacity within wildlife authorities, based on the use of a specific **HWC monitoring and management system**, capable of handling HEC related issues across the entire HEC landscape in real-time.



ON-GOING AND PLANNED PROJECTS:

1

Work with existing government institutions to identify and nominate a National HEC focal point for each of our EPI member states.

2

Develop tailored support and capacity building packages for National HEC focal points together with global partners and HWC experts and institutions.

3

Facilitate and identify collaborations, technical and financial resources for HEC specific support at the site level upon the request of EPI member states and partners (projects are underway in Ethiopia and Tanzania, and will soon follow in Kenya, Malawi, and possibly in Chad and Botswana).

4

Support EPI member states in making best use of existing and emerging technologies, practical mitigation measures, and local solutions, including by promoting the VULCAN EarthRanger system as an effective means of advancing widespread, real-time monitoring and management of HWC.

5

Grow the EPIF HEC Team to include a wider range of experiences and expertise from across Africa and Asia within the HEC arena.

6

Assist wildlife authorities in conceptualising and developing HEC mitigation and reduction projects, including spatial and land-use planning to ensure that buy-in from all levels of government and communities is achieved and wildlife conservation objectives are fully incorporated.

AMPLIFYING AFRICAN VOICES

Articulating and amplifying African perspectives on human-elephant conflict is vital to finding solutions. We need to hear the voices of those living on the margins of wildlife habitats and protected areas, as they are best placed to implement long-term solutions for coexistence. The EPIF must be a platform for African voices on HEC, one of the most critical conservation challenges facing the continent.

OUR TRANSFORMATIVE OBJECTIVES:

1

To help **bring HEC to the forefront of the international conservation agenda**, and as part of our **Fostering High-Level Dialogue** pillar, ensure **African voices** are amplified and listened to first and foremost on African HEC issues.



2

To assist **intra-African co-operation and collaboration on storytelling** of HEC, so that maximum exposure, representation and diversity is achieved.



3

To **raise awareness about specific landscapes/protected areas** (often less celebrated African wildlife landscapes) where we're involved in HEC mitigation and garner support for these.



ON-GOING AND PLANNED PROJECTS:

1

Host high-level events bringing African leaders together to discuss HEC, and promote discussion on HEC through social and traditional media.

2

Develop an unprecedented pan-African survey, 'the Africa Nature Barometer', to gauge opinion across the continent on wildlife issues, including HEC. The Barometer will reveal the degree to which support for conservation exists, and help African governments build strategies for advocacy, policy and communication.

3

Establish and manage a fund to promote African journalism, social media and content creation focused on HEC. By enabling Africans and African media to report on HEC, we will ensure new perspectives enter the debate, and motivate and empower a generation of African journalists, conservationists, activists and social media influencers.

4

Launch an African HEC Experts Network offering specialists from across the continent and varied landscapes exposure to lead, share knowledge and engage in opportunities to partner and effect change in solutions.

5

Make an invaluable addition to the HEC/HWC discussion by facilitating a way for stakeholders to quantify the problem by gathering and sharing open-source data that will become available with the widespread use of novel HWC monitoring systems through our EPI member states. As nobody is currently counting the full cost- in human lives, retaliatory killings of elephants, and economic damage- we and our partners will. Our HEC statistics will become increasingly valuable over time, as we're able to identify trends, and advocate policies for its mitigation/resolution.

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“To reduce human-elephant conflict and save Africa’s environment our governments, conservationists and society at large must tackle the root causes, not only symptoms of our socio-environmental crisis. Above all, we need to be humble, and listen to the people who have long lived with elephants. Because, at the end of the day, it is them, not well-meaning outsiders, who will determine the fate of Africa’s majestic wildlife.”



Greta Francesca Iori
Director of Program Development
EPI Foundation

MAKING OUR STRATEGIC VISION POSSIBLE

We have set out an ambitious vision to contribute towards building a world where humans and elephants can harmoniously coexist. However, articulating a vision and setting direction is not in itself sufficient; we must enable ourselves to deliver it. By enabling we mean continue to foster and uphold our diverse and inclusive workforce, champion transparent, and open processes, manage our finances effectively, and strengthen our commitment to work both responsibly and ethically at all times. We believe our vision can be, with its unifying power, a catalyst for a culture of delivery, collaboration and empowerment of everyone within the conservation and wider community to create sustainable and lasting avenues of coexistence.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1

Take a **holistic approach** to working to resolve complex and sensitive realities, including in our research, engagement with our staff, partnerships and collaborations.

2

Design and deliver pragmatic, scalable, and **effective solutions**, while simultaneously tackling **the long-term shifts** needed to make lasting change.

3

Build on the accomplishments and work of our predecessors and partners to continuously improve and uphold **effective stewardship**.

4

Create an **inclusive environment** where all individuals, irrespective of race, age, gender, and sexual orientation are valued, respected and championed to succeed.

5

Enable and encourage **critical reflection** to always learn from our successes and failures, encouraging adaptation and redirection as needed in order to build better futures for all.

6

Demonstrate **open-mindedness** and **tolerance** in differing views and opinions, accepting that we will challenge and be challenged on our path to advocating for human-wildlife coexistence.

7

Commit to and share our **relentless ambition** to deliver our strategic vision, no matter how challenging the road ahead is.



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“Somehow, we have to find a way for elephants and people to coexist in harmony even if they are competing for spaces and resources. If HEC continues, it is elephants who will surely lose out, at the expense of people. Governments and conservationists must find a solution. Often these solutions are political: the decisions we make in land use planning and how we apply those decisions”



Dr Dolmia Malachie
Regional Technical Adviser
EPI Foundation

THANK YOU

