Guidelines for Crowd Management in Human—Wildlife Conflict-Related Situations

Taking a Harmonious-Coexistence Approach

Acknowledgments

Government of India

Ministry of Environment,
Forest and Climate Change,
Government of India

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Abbreviations

BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development		JFM	Joint forest management
CWLW	Chief Wildlife Warden		MoEFCC	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
CZA	Central Zoo Authority		NDRF	National Disaster Response Force
DBT	Direct Benefit Transfer		NGO	Non-government organisation
DFO	Divisional Forest Officer		NHAI	National Highways Authority of India
ECG	Electrocardiogram		NTCA	National Tiger Conservation
EDC	Eco-Development Committee		NTFP	Non-timber forest product
EIA	Environment Impact Assessment		NTG	National Technical Group
EWRR	Early Warning and Rapid Response Team		NWAP	National Wildlife Action Plan
FD	Forest Department		OPs	Operating procedures
GIS	Geographical information system		PA	Protected area
GIZ	*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit*		PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
GSM	Global System for Mobile Communications		PRT	Primary Response Team
HWC	Human-wildlife conflict		PWD	Public Works Department
HWC-MAP	Human Wildlife Conflict Management Action Plan		RRT	Rapid Response Team
HWC-NAP	National Human Wildlife Conflict Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan		SDRF	State Disaster Response Force
			SFD	State Forest Department
HWC-SAP	State-level HWC Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan		SHG	Self-help group
			UAV	Unmanned aerial vehicle
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature		VFC	Village Forest Committee
			WII	Wildlife Institute of India
			WLPA	Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972

Contents

1. ABOUT THE GUIDELINES

1.1 THE OVERALL CONTEXT

- These guidelines on 'Crowd Management in Human–Wildlife Conflict related situations' get the overall context from the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, advisory to deal with human–wildlife conflicts (HWC) (MoEFCC 2021) and the National Human–Wildlife Conflict Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan 2021 (HWC-NAP)[1]. These guidelines take into consideration the existing policies, guidelines, advisories and good practices issued by the Government of India and various state governments in relation to crowd management.

- The advisory to deal with human–wildlife Conflicts (MoEFCC, 2021) recognizes that in HWC situations, dealing with a large number of people who quickly gather at one place to view wild animals or to prevent wild animals from entering their farms/habitations becomes a challenging task that hampers safe passage of wild animals or rescue work. The advisory recommends that state governments/UT administrations may review the situation, devise administrative mechanisms to ensure efficient coordination and cooperation of the law enforcing agencies to ensure the smooth handling of such situations. The advisory also highlights the fact that providing safe passage to the wild animals involved in HWC in human habitations is as important as taking care of the safety of the people present at the rescue site. This should be the topmost priority, and the local administration should ensure better crowd management during such circumstances.

- HWC-NAP provides the overall conceptual and institutional framework for implementing the guidelines. Specific supplementary frameworks to the HWC-NAP[2] provide further details on key issues.

- The following species-specific guidelines are to provide guidance on species-specific mitigation measures guidelines for mitigating human–Elephant, –Leopard, –Gaur, –snake, –crocodile, –Rhesus Macaque, –Wild Pig, –bear, –Blue Bull and –Blackbuck conflicts.

- The following guidelines on cross-cutting issues are to provide guidance on selected issues: Guidelines for Cooperation between the Forest and Media sector in India: Towards effective communication on Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation; Occupational Health and Safety in the Context of Human–Wildlife Conflict Mitigation; and Addressing Health Emergencies and Potential Health Risks Arising Out of Human—Wildlife Conflict Situations: Taking a One Health Approach.

1.2 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- The guidelines aim to facilitate a common understanding among key stakeholders on what constitutes effective and efficient crowd management during HWC-related situations and provide a framework for inter-agency communication and coordination in related crowd management operations.

- These guidelines provide measures to prevent and mitigate the negative impacts on people, property and wild animals that may arise due to crowd-related incidents during HWC situations.

- These guidelines further provide details on the roles, responsibilities and joint tasks of key stakeholders for effectively mitigating and responding to crowd-related incidents during human–wildlife conflict situations.

- The guidelines are advisory in nature, and their purpose is to guide the management of crowds in HWC situations in a coordinated manner. The users of these guidelines, therefore, can use other methods or means –the ones most appropriate in their situation if a new situation arises that is beyond the existing scope of these guidelines, provided they are competent and trained to implement such measures.

- In general, the guidelines apply to all stakeholders relevant to crowd management in HWC mitigation operations and HWC mitigation measures including but not limited to various departments and agencies, viz., the district administration, state forest department, police, disaster management department, rural development department, Panchayati Raj Institutions, the railways, the agriculture, animal husbandry and urban development departments, municipalities, the health department and civil defence volunteers. These guidelines are meant to be used by the officers of SFDs for long-term planning.

- These guidelines may to be translated into a district-level Emergency Response Plan by the district administration in the context of HWC situations.

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1   National HWC Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan of India (2021-26), available from https://moef.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/National-Human-Wildlife-Conflict-Mitigation-Strategy-and-Action-Plan-of-India-2.pdf

2   Supplementary frameworks to the HWC-NAP: https://moef.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/National-Human-Wildlife-Conflict-Mitigation-Strategy-and-Action-Plan-of-India-2.pdf

1.3   APPROACH

- The development and implementation of these guidelines is driven by a harmonious- coexistence approach[3] to ensure that both humans and wildlife are protected from negative impacts of human–wildlife conflict.

- The development of these guidelines and their intended implementation are driven by a participatory approach. These guidelines are intended to facilitate participatory planning, development and implementation of crowd management measures.

- While the overall planning and coordination of human–animal conflict mitigation operations will be the responsibility of the state forest department, all other concerned key departments and agencies participate in and support the operations and carry out their functional responsibilities in coordination with the forest department to implement these guidelines.

- Departments other than the forest department that are involved in crowd management during HWC mitigation operations are expected to provide feedback about the challenges faced during such interventions and about the gaps to be addressed before carrying out such operations in the future so that the necessary actions can be taken well in time.

- Taking a capacity development approach, the guidelines facilitate the implementation through provision of Implementer's Toolkit, which includes Operating Procedures (OPs), formats, checklists, and other field implementation aids.

- These guidelines may be provided to each forest range, RRT, PRT and police station at HWC hotspots and to the district administration, district disaster management authorities, panchayats, wildlife experts and other key stakeholders as mentioned in these guidelines.

- The guidelines may be translated into local languages by the respective SFDs for the field teams.

- The guidelines will be able to bring in the required effectiveness and efficiency in mitigation measures only when the guidelines are fully integrated into the division-level HWC Management Action Plans (HWC-MAP) and state-level HWC Mitigation Strategy and Action Plans (HWC-SAP) of the forest department and into the departmental plans of the police department, district administration, disaster management department and panchayats.

1.4   LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTING THE GUIDELINES

- The guidelines are developed in line with the existing legal framework and laws dealing with

    - the environment, biodiversity conservation and wildlife protection

    - prevention of cruelty to animals

    - crowd management

    - disaster management

- These guidelines may read in conjunction with the existing relevant legal and regulatory frameworks, especially the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. The supplementary framework to HWC-NAP 'Legislative Framework for HWC Mitigation in India' may be referred to for more details on the specific legal provisions for HWC mitigation.

- In the country, there are standard legal provisions to regulate and manage crowds that have been put to use when handling situations involving the assembly/ gathering of people in typical human–wildlife contexts as well. Effective crowd management in this context will involve coordinated action by the forest department, police personnel and the district administration in line with the powers vested in them under the various laws of the country.

1.5   INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM FOR IMPLEMENTING THESE GUIDELINES

- The institutional mechanism outlined in the HWC-NAP will followed for implementing these guidelines.

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3   'Harmonious coexistence' is defined as a dynamic but sustainable state in which humans and wildlife adapt to living in shared landscapes, with minimum negative impact of human-wildlife interaction on humans or on their resources and on the wildlife or habitats. The mitigation measures designed using this approach maintain a balance between the welfare of animals and humans in which both are given equal importance. Overlap in space and resource use is managed in a manner that minimizes conflict.

2. CONTEXT AND SITUATION

- Human–wildlife conflict (HWC) and its mitigation are complex, multi-dimensional and dynamic processes. Thus they require an integrated and holistic approach to finding solutions for prevention and mitigation.

- One of the critical areas of concern is the crowd-related incidents in HWC situations that are reported regularly from different parts of the country. There are various causes and triggers for the uncontrolled and retaliatory behaviour of the crowd gathered at the conflict site, including an element of curiosity and a limited understanding of the behaviour and ecology of wild animals. Crowd behaviour can be unpredictable. It can vary from displaying a curiosity to see large animals (to see mega-mammals) to demonstrating irresponsible behaviours (getting too close to wild animals to click pictures or shoot videos to cover such incidents) and very aggressive behaviours (frenzied mobs trying to lynch an animal in retaliation). Sometimes, the crowd is hostile and can even harm forest officials/property and wild animals, due to panic and stress, especially if there is human death or injury caused by the wild animal.

- Negative behaviour of a crowd/mob impacts the effectiveness of HWC mitigation measures. It can disturb/irritate the animal, which may result in the animal attacking the people in panic, resulting in human injury or even death. On the other hand, this may injure the wild animal or lead to severe stress to the animal. It can hamper rescue operations, especially if the wild animal is to be tranquilized. The animal is usually under severe stress in these situations, and additional stress poses further difficulties for the animal in coping with the drugs used to immobilize it chemically. The severe stress caused to the animal may hamper the induction process of immobilization and may disturb the tranquilization protocol. Sometimes the animal may also die due to shock or become more agitated during failed tranquilization efforts. In addition, situations of an uncontrolled or mismanaged crowd may lead to negative reporting by the media that highlights the situation of chaos and poor management.

- Crowd control continues to be a major challenge in HWC mitigation efforts, and therefore once the wild animal enters a human-dominated landscape, crowd control becomes the most important aspect to deal with. In such situations, where wild animals themselves feel insecure and threatened, their actions/reactions are largely as per their survival instincts. Prudent local community behaviour can avoid crowding and ensure that the human beings as well as the animal in conflict are safe. A quick and well-coordinated response from law enforcement agencies can address the issue of HWC and crowd control effectively. In the forest fringe areas with a high population pressure and conflicting social interests within the community, timely action can avoid any mishaps in the field.

- Effective crowd control and management is critical during HWC mitigation as it will allow the response teams to focus exclusively on their work and carry out the mitigation operation smoothly and efficiently. The immobilization and capture of the animal will be quick, and the possibility of stress in the animal will be minimized. Moreover, the media will also be able to cover the mitigation process properly without disturbing the rescue team or the wild animal.

- Depending upon the situation, the crowd behaviour and availability of resources, various measures are being implemented in different states/ locations, some of which have led to successful crowd control initiatives/endeavours. There are some good practices to indicate that sensitization of local communities and training of community volunteers in crowd control have assisted in minimising the impact of the conflict situation on the ground. However, effective crowd management in human–animal conflicts still remains a challenge for most of the situations in the country, primarily due to limited coordination between the forest department, police, district administration and other relevant stakeholders over role-clarity and standard response procedures, limited capacities among rescue team members and other stakeholders to manage such situations and non-existence of common agreed protocols among key stakeholders.

3. PLANNING FOR CROWD MANAGEMENT DURING HWC SITUATIONS

3.1 THREAT, VULNERABILITY AND RISK ASSESSMENT (TVRA)

Key actions under TVRA include:

- Identifying the kind of threats/risks related to crowd control in HWC situations

- Identifying the geographical areas/zones where the risk/threat of HWC exists

- Understanding the extent of resources (both human and material) available for dealing with such situations

Hazard zonation and mapping

- Preparation of standard criteria/framework for classification of risk-prone areas related to crowd control in HWC

- Classification of the risk-prone areas on the basis of the threat perception (including occurrence of past incidents)

3.2 DEVELOPMENT OF CROWD MANAGEMENT PLANS BY EACH DISTRICT

- The increasingly unpredictable behaviour of the wild animals during any conflict situation, coupled with the presence of a large crowd nearby, poses a grave danger not only to the animal and people but also reduces the efficiency of HWC mitigation response teams. The situation may also become volatile and grow into a law and order problem in the area. Therefore, crowd management measures are essential for directing or limiting the behaviour of groups of people through proper planning, multi-stakeholder support and inter-departmental coordination.

- Advance planning for crowd management and control for crowd-related HWC impacts can prevent avoidable losses. Considering that the principles of crowd management and control are common for all types of crowd, it will be effective to develop a common plan across key relevant sectors and stakeholders at the division/district levels to facilitate role-clarity and to facilitate knowledge and experience sharing.

- As there are differences between the jurisdictions of the district administration and forest division, it will be efficient to maintain institutions, viz., District-Level Coordination Committees, as the anchors for implementing these guidelines since a DLCC will be able to bring together the respective Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs) along with the district-level officials and personnel.

- It would be essential to formulate a comprehensive plan at the district level for dealing with crowd-related incidents in HWC situations. The plan may include the specific roles and responsibilities of each of the identified stakeholders and the key set of actions that need to be implemented, stakeholder-wise, for prompt responses and mitigation during such situations. This will in turn promote a multi-stakeholder-driven implementation approach and prompt sharing and deployment of resources available with different stakeholders such as the forest department, police, other emergency services and the district administration.

- To develop a holistic and inclusive crowd management and control plan, it is essential to adopt an integrated multi-risk and multi-stakeholder approach. This requires that the plans be developed with full coordination and cooperation amongst all the relevant stakeholders in the division/district. These plans may be aligned with and implemented in conjunction with the respective division-level HWC Management Action Plans.

- The plan will involve identifying various stakeholders and enhancing the capacities of the first responders and the specialist responders for rapid responses during crowd management, defining the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder clearly and integrating each stakeholder into the national, state and district-level plans for seamless coordination and synergy.

3.3 PLANNING OF COMMUNICATION AND EMERGENCY OPERATION CENTRE

- This step involves setting up/integrating early warning and operational communication systems, emergency operation centres/control rooms, GIS-based monitoring systems, etc.

- Effective implementation of this step will lead to enhanced information gathering and analysis and timely dissemination of information.

3.4 INTRA- AND INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION: ROLE OF VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS IN CROWD MANAGEMENT

- The management of any emergency is a core responsibility of the local administration; however, it is also a collective responsibility of various stakeholders affected by the incident. In an HWC crowd-related situation, the community plays a major role, and its integration in all stages of plan formulation and activation is essential. Clarity about the role of each of the stakeholders is a must to avoid confusion and mismanagement at the incidence site. These guidelines are a step forward to promote a well-coordinated multi-stakeholder engagement approach and a more standardised structure to the management of crowd-related HWC emergencies.

- A coordinated approach to emergency management planning will strengthen the capacity of the Government to prevent, protect against, respond to and recover from major crowd-related HWC emergencies. As per the MoEFCC advisory and HWC-NAP, a district-level HWC Coordination Committee (DLCC) may be established in all HWC hotspots, chaired by the District Magistrate/Collector/Deputy Commissioner. The DLCC will ensure inclusive coordinated action by key departments and agencies to ensure better crowd management, apart from performing other roles and responsibilities.

- The roles of the various stakeholders in crowd management may be clearly indicated in the detailed standard operating procedures (SOPs), and these may be agreed to by all the stakeholders. These roles may be in alignment with the roles and responsibilities of the DLCC as defined in the advisory and in the HWC-NAP.

- Similarly, the roles of the community-level Primary Response Teams, range-level Rapid Response Teams and division-level Rapid Response Teams may be defined, in line with the Supplementary Framework to the HWC-NAP on Establishment and Capacity Development of HWC Mitigation Response Teams.

- SOPs indicating the specific roles and responsibilities of the forest department officials, District Magistrate/administration, police department, fire department, emergency services (NDRF, SDRF, paramilitary forces), health department, animal husbandry department, relief/revenue Department; first responders, specialized responders and other volunteers may be laid down clearly.

- The police have a critical role to play in crowd management planning and implementation. The primary role of the police in such situations is law enforcement for crowd management and providing protection to the forest staff during rescue operations. The police also have a legal role to play in incidents involving human death in conflict situations. In cases of wild animals entering human-dominated landscapes, sometimes the police department is the first responder due to their wide communication network.

- The fire brigade have tools and skilled manpower that may be useful in some emergency situations.

- SDRF/NDRF have human resources, equipment and the capacity to help in emergency situations.

- In places where paramilitary forces are stationed, they may assist with maintaining law and order and may also support the forest staff with patrolling and maintaining a vigil as well as with the rescue operations.

- The support of the health department is required in cases where individuals are critically injured and require priority attention.

- The forest department has a limited number of veterinary doctors deputed in various protected areas (PA) and zoos, and at times they may not be immediately available. In such situations, the services of veterinary doctors serving at the animal husbandry department would be helpful. Therefore, building the capacity of veterinarians working in the animal husbandry departments for managing HWC mitigation operations is also very important.

- Involvement of state and local training institutions for sustaining the training efforts and bringing innovation in the training initiatives is a central role to ensure effective coordination and capacity development of key stakeholders.

- Augmenting the HWC mitigation efforts through public–private partnerships will be desirable. Engagement of resources such as NGOs, religious groups, CSOs, RWAs and PRIs/Village Committees may be planned for community development, specialised training programmes and operational engagements.

3.5 FACILITATING CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OF ALL RESPONDERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Capacity need assessment based on competency framework

- The relevant competencies development needs may be discussed at state-, landscape- and district-level fora, as recommended in the advisory from MoEFCC and HWC-NAP, including the state-level coordination committee, landscape-level HWC Mitigation Forum and District-Level Coordination Committee (DLCC)

- An annual plan of joint training programmes focusing on crowd management competencies may be prepared in each district.

Strengthening the system of training programmes and other capacity development measures for inter-agency cooperation

- It would be essential to establish, train and equip the first responders, specialist responders, community-level Primary Response Teams and other stakeholders for crowd management and other identified threats.

- Crowd control and management in HWC situations may be suitably integrated into the training curricula and training plans of state- and district-level training institutes.

Sensitization, awareness and training interventions

- Joint training sessions on crowd control and management strategies may be organised for decision-makers and senior administrators by the district administrations

- Basic training in crowd control and management (CCM) strategies may be organized for the local community at HWC hotspots by the zila panchayats as part of their regular training plans, with technical support from the police and forest department.

- Sensitization and awareness measures may be implemented together by the forest and police departments. Awareness programmes may be developed in and around the targeted areas. It would be essential to sensitize and educate all relevant stakeholders on the behaviour and ecology of wild animals to ensure that their own behaviour during an HWC mitigation-related situation is appropriately aligned with the safety requirements. Awareness measures may also focus on providing information on legal provisions related to wildlife, especially the legal penalties arising out of driving away/teasing such wild animals, apart from the penalties related to section 144 of CrPC.

- It may be essential to sensitize the media fraternity/stakeholders on the do's and don'ts of crowd management and control during HWC situations.

Competencies-development of the response teams and field personnel

- Joint simulation and mock exercises in crowd control in HWC may be held at regular intervals for forest officials with other stakeholders.

- Training of personnel: refresher training programmes may be organised at a frequency adapted to the district-level HWC situation.

- Joint inter-agency training sessions in crowd management in each district in an HWC hotspot may be organised periodically.

- Such training programmes may be integrated into the state- and district-level training institutes of Panchayati Raj Institutions, the forest department, the disaster management department, the police, the district administration, etc. to ensure that the training programmes are implemented on a regular basis and all the stakeholders receive the required competency-development training.

- Recognition/acknowledgment of efforts may be an integral part of capacity development efforts to secure the overall motivation of the response teams and other key stakeholders.

4. PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS MEASURES

4.1 OVERVIEW

- 'Prevention measures' refer to the set of actions/measures carried out to eliminate or minimize the probability of occurrence of crowd-related incidents in human–wildlife conflict situations.

- 'Preparedness measures' refer to the set of actions/measures carried out to be able to control crowd-related incidents effectively in HWC situations.

4.2 PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS FRAMEWORK

Surveillance

- Monitoring and surveillance by Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) (equipping them with appropriate public address systems) at regular intervals of forest department, supported by the community-level Primary Response Teams (PRTs) will assist with quick tracking and reporting of any crowd-related incident. The constitution of such teams and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for activation of such surveillance may be formulated in detail.

- Information about the movements of animals in conflict and the exact timing and venue of the planned capture site may only be shared with the concerned people/staff/officials.

- Enhanced public address systems may be made available for RRTs and community PRTs.

- Identification and sanitation of safe passages and alternative routes may be worked out.

- Leveraging local knowledge to track animal movements may be included in the preparedness phase.

- Identification of various exit routes and formulation of an exit plan may be undertaken in the case of any situation of uncontrolled/aggressive crowds.

- Drones could be used as part of the surveillance mechanism.

Deployment of effective barriers

- Natural barriers (rivers/small streams, lakes, hills, thick bushes, etc.) may be identified.

- Wherever necessary, structural barriers (fences, barbed wire, gates, any type of construction that prohibits or prevents access) may be used.

- It would be better to cordon off the conflict area before carrying out the response operation.

Use of equipment

- A check list may be prepared for the equipment and other resources required for suitable responses at incident sites (including equipment used for monitoring the status at the incident site and nearby), and a logbook may be maintained in this regard.

- Regular cleaning and/or inspection of the equipment, drugs and other consumables are necessary to maintain them in the functional mode.

- After inspection, faulty/malfunctioned equipment may either be discarded or repaired. Otherwise, it might be the cause for a misadventure during future response operations.

- The availability of enough accessories for the equipment may be thoroughly checked, and expired or damaged ones may be discarded.

- The functionality and accuracy of the critical health monitoring devices may be thoroughly checked to ensure timely management of any health complications of the captured wild animal.

- Modern forms of technology such as radio and satellite telemetry, GIS and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (drones) may be deployed for tracking and better monitoring of wildlife.

- A specialised training programme in the use and maintenance of equipment may be conducted before every potential crowd management incident.

4.3 CONTAINMENT MEASURES

Crowd management intervention and control strategies

- Crowd management may be integrated into state and district action plans for human–animal conflict.

- Crowd management in HWC situations may be integrated into the state and district disaster management plans. (The criteria for the threshold/magnitude of the incident may be detailed.)

- Standard operating procedures (SOPs) may be formulated for identified crowd-related incidents.

- Crowd management coordination may be part of the review of ongoing stakeholder meetings at the forest department and district administration.

Reporting and documentation

At the end of the response operation, a detailed incident response report may be made that includes the following:

- Execution details: Step-wise details of information flow, response actions taken (including tasks performed by stakeholders) and challenges faced

- Further insights into the conflict and its future management

- Key follow-up actions that need to be taken, if any, to resolve the issue (incident)

Media engagement

- The forest department, with representation from the district administration, police and other related emergency services, may regularly hold interactions with the media (especially joint press briefings) to foster better understanding about issues pertaining to crowd control and management in HWC situations in the event of the occurrence of any such incident.

- Interactions with the media may be aimed at shifting from "sensationalizing" to a sensitization approach. Press conferences may be periodically organized to disseminate key messages on the efforts being made by the forest department and other stakeholders to tackle matters related to crowd management in HWC situations.

- From time to time, it may be useful to send short press releases about ongoing work to keep the media positively engaged. Efforts may also be made to engage with the media through social media (WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, etc.).

- Calls from the media may be responded to during crowd-related incidents, and as far as possible, the media may be kept informed of developments so that biased/counterproductive narratives are not disseminated to the public.

- Media workshops may also be organised that provide a useful platform for media professionals, forest officials and other stakeholders for interacting on issues of this nature in greater depth, leading to factual reporting of such incidents in the future.

"The Guidelines for Cooperation between the Forest and Media Sector in India" may be referred for details when interacting with the media personnel.

5. EXECUTION OF CROWD MANAGEMENT PLAN IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

5.1 INDICATIVE SITUATIONS WHERE CROWD MANAGEMENT MAY BE REQUIRED

- A person is killed outside the forest/protected area by a wild animal in an HWC incident, and when attending the case, forest officials are either attacked or their vehicle is damaged/burnt by unruly mob.
- A wild animal is electrocuted/shot dead/killed outside a forest/protected area in an HWC-related incident, and while taking action against the accused/booking the case, forest officials are attacked by a crowd.
- In forest fringe areas, where there are incidents of human/cattle killings, there is some delay in capturing the wild animal involved, and a crowd targets officials/ properties of the forest department.
- When a wild animal involved in a human killing is captured and is being shifted to a rescue centre, a crowd tries to harm it.
- Protests are organised against the HWC incidents, and they turn unruly/violent.
- When crop-raiding wild animals are driven by forest officials/response teams, a local crowd swells up and endangers the safety of everyone.
- Due to an HWC issues, there is retributive action of a crowd in the forest fringe area on a wild animal and the forest department.

5.2 ACTIVATION OF DISTRICT PLAN IN THE EVENT OF OCCURRENCE OF AN INCIDENT

- As soon as the first information on the occurrence of a crowd-related incident is received by the designated forest officials, the district plan on crowd management may be activated and response actions may get initiated in accordance with the SOPs as mentioned in the plan.
- Key actions may include prompt dissemination of information to concerned stakeholders; activation of response teams at various levels; joint stakeholder (forest, police, district administration, etc.) deliberations/meetings to address the issue in the most effective manner; deployment of rescue teams, equipment and other resources for on-site operations; and suitable response actions undertaken as per the nature and type of incident. These may lead to effective and prompt crowd control at the site.

5.3 KEY ACTIONS IN DIFFERENT SITUATIONS

- Creating security cordon at the incident site
- Maintenance of public order and tranquillity: During the HWC scenario, it is very essential to maintain public order and tranquillity through effective crowd management. Therefore dispersal of unlawful assemblies and public nuisances (including urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger) is important.
- Dispersal of unlawful assembly: A capturing and rescue operation will take some time. Till then, crowd management and the safety of the wild animal as well as of the concerned officials will remain a challenge. Curious onlookers can be controlled with some effort, but to deal with the hostile crowd, stringent measures and trained force will be needed.
- Use of chemical immobilisation (forest, veterinary and animal husbandry departments)
- A transportation and traffic management plan may be developed together with the police, the fire department and allied emergency services.
- Plans for administration of first aid and handling medical emergencies at the incident site may be developed together with the health department/nearby hospitals.
- In case of any conflict situation, a system to ensure that the public can get information on helplines and related communication channels, requiring the support of the SFD, is established.
- The role of the media. before, during and after HWC situations may be discussed to ensure they participate effectively in crowd management.
- Adequate arrangements may be made to provide first aid to the person facing a health emergency condition, and then his/her quick transfer to the nearest available equipped hospital may be facilitated.
- All the team members may be given mandatory basic life support training, including CPR. Availability of a well-equipped ambulance with an oxygen supply, defibrillator, etc. and a trained nurse/medical officer (MO) may be available near the incident site.
- A well-equipped animal ambulance with a stretcher, critical health monitoring devices (pulse-oximeter, capnograph, blood gas analyser, multi-parameter monitor with B.P. cuff, etc.), an oxygen supply, life-saving drugs, etc. may be parked near the incident site. The Guidelines on Occupational Health and Safety as well as Health Emergencies may be referred to for further details on the foregoing.

6. USE OF LEARNINGS FROM THE GUIDELINES TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK ON CROWD MANAGEMENT IN HWC SITUATIONS IN INDIA

These guidelines are expected to serve as a capacity development instrument, given that a robust and structured feedback mechanism will be put in place to document the feedback on them.

- The feedback from the use of these guidelines may, therefore, be consolidated to form the basis for finetuning these mitigation measures and for understanding the capacity needs for effectively implementing the mitigation measures.

- In the long term, the consolidated feedback may also be used in further reviewing the capacity development strategies, HWC-MAPs, HWC-SAPs and HWC-NAP.

7. PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT, PILOT TESTING OF THESE GUIDELINES AND CONSULTATION PROCESS

- A dedicated framework of experts (Annexe 1) was formed, with the core team consisting of representatives from Government agencies, SFDs, research institutions, civil society institutions and international organisations and independent wildlife policy experts. The experts were a mix of scientists, wildlife managers, policy experts and capacity development experts.

- A common understanding was developed on the overall purpose, scope, approach and methodology[4]. The experts had different roles in the drafting and editing process, viz., Coordinating Lead Authors, Lead Authors, Contributing Authors and Review Editors. The Author Group worked on developing these guidelines between July 2019 and August 2021, during which period they consulted a larger group of experts and stakeholders via workshops, meetings and consultations. The authors reviewed the documents and guidelines available from the MoEF&CC and different states, and relevant information and recommendations were brought into the new document. The National Technical Group (NTG), consisting of experts from MoEF&CC, Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and independent wildlife and policy experts, was formed for the overall steering and facilitation of the process. A 'Working Group on Pilot Implementation of Guidelines and HWC-NAP' was formed to facilitate the planning and implementation of the pilot testing, consultations and final editing of the draft guidelines and HWC-NAP. Detailed terms of reference were provided for each category, and meetings and workshops of the Author Group were facilitated under the Indo-German Cooperation Project on Human–Wildlife Conflict Mitigation.

- The draft guidelines and HWC-NAP were pilot tested at selected HWC hotspots in India to receive feedback on the feasibility and acceptability of the recommendations expressed in the guidelines, using a structured process and tools. On the basis of the feedback received during fortnightly meetings and one-to-one consultations with managers, the draft of the guidelines was revised.

- A Committee was constituted by MoEFCC in December 2022, consisting of officials from MoEFCC, and the state forest departments of Bihar, Haryana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal to review and finalize the guidelines.

8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF GUIDELINES

- This set of guidelines is not a static document; rather, it is a living document. It will keep abreast of the various developments in field implementation methods and wildlife research. For this, the feedback from field practitioners and other wildlife experts may be analysed to assess the specific elements and sections that need to undergo changes. A review of the guidelines is planned to take place every 5 years from 2023 onwards. However, a mid-term review process in 2024 may be desirable. In the long term, the review cycle of these guidelines can be aligned with the review cycle of HWC-NAP.

- Detailed mechanism, templates and guidance used for collating information and feedback on the use of these guidelines may be developed.

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4   Approach paper: https://indo-germanbiodiversity.com/pdf/publication/publication19-04-2021-1618808050.pdf

ANNEXE 1

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