

# THE FUTURE OF RESOLVING THE HUMAN ELEPHANT CONFLICT (HEC) THROUGH HUMAN ELEPHANT CO-EXISTENCE (HEC)

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The current situation of the Human Elephant Conflict (HEC) require a deeper inquiry to ensure its prevention and mitigation. Some very fundamental facts are being currently ignored in the pursuit of trying to resolve the problem. The actions taken so far at an exorbitant cost with no regard to the large volume of scientific information generated, appear not to be bringing a resolution but increasing the conflict. A few back-ground information will make this clear.

- As part of the strategy to curtail the movement of elephants close to 2000km of electric fences have been erected. What is the cost of this? the cost of erection of 01 km of fencing is at the lower end Rs 500,000.00 per km. Accordingly for the 2000 km of fencing we have spent Rs 1,000,000,000.00 or one billion.
- Despite the erection of 2000km of fencing the HEC intensity has not reduced over the past years. In fact the events have become more riotous and unmanageable.
- Further to the fencing troublesome elephants have been translocated, despite radiocollared scientific information clearly show that it is not a successful strategy. In fact, it has resulted in the transfer of the problem to new areas, death of animals and or return to original location.
- The other strategy of large scale drives have also, on post drive inquiry and study shown that none of the drives conducted in the recent years since monitoring have got rid of the problem. Once again it has clearly shown an increase.
- The Department has spent millions (at least Rs 90million in 2014) every year to provide Thunder flashes to keep away elephants with no positive change.
- The overall cost of these action in monetary terms though diffused, collectively would easily come close to Rs 2 billion over the last five years. Not taking in account the maintenance cost of fences, compensation and social costs.
- The Department of Wild Conservation (DWC) strategy to confine elephants to PA system has resulted in, many places bifurcating the elephant populations thus exacerbating the

problem.

- It is a known fact of the distribution of elephants in the country that around 70% of the elephant population is found outside the DWC PA system. Yet much of the 2000 km fences are along the DWC Pennsylvanias, thus keeping out much of the animals to continue to raid and cause havoc.
- The fenced area ecological capacities does not equate with the scientific evidence of elephant densities in diverse habitats. It is know from the science that good tall forests harbour an elephant density of less than 01 per sq km. The main reason why the elephants are outside the DWC PA system is this. the forest reserves been tampered have much richer secondary vegetation in which the density is around 2-4 per sq km.
- The evidence of malnourished starved elephants within fenced areas has been recorded and substantiated in the recent studies of the South East and Udawalwe populations. This is again exacerbated by driving some animals from outside in to PAs, increasing the density and thus resulting in habitat destruction and starvation.

ALL THE FACTORS ARE CLEARLY INDICATIVE OF THAT, THE PRESENT STRATAGY ARE NOT WORKING EITHER IN THE INTEREST OF ELEPHANTS OR HUMANS. In the light of the following background, inquiry into the information available of the elephant ecology, background to the conflict, analysis of present strategies, will be discussed. Concluding with some radical future directions if the country with the highest human density, largest conservation land scape and the highest wild elephant density is to remain without CONFLICT in COEXISTENCE.