NATIONAL POLICY

FOR THE CONSERVATION AND

MANAGEMENT OF WILD ELEPHANTS

IN SRI LANKA

2006

DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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"The forest is a unique being with unlimited compassion and benevolence. It provides security to all worldly organisms and even shelters he who destroys the forest with an axe"

Gauthama Buddha
6th century BC

"O' great king, all birds of the air and all wild animals have an equal right as you to live on this earth and to go about as they please. The land belongs to the people and all other animals. You are only a trustee and not the owner of this land……"

Arahat Mahinda Thero
To king Devanampiyatissa at Mihintale
3rd century BC

Cabinet approval

Based on the memorandum submitted to the Cabinet by the Minister of Environment dated 22nd February 2006, titled "Preparation of a National Policy for Conservation of Wild Elephants-Department of Wildlife Conservation", the Cabinet of Ministers by Cabinet Paper CP06/0367/221/004 dated 16th March 2006, granted approval to prepare a National Policy for Conservation of Wild Elephants, and to appoint a committee for this activity comprising of the members indicated under (2) in the final paragraph of the memorandum. It was also agreed that the representatives of the Ministers of Science and Technology, and Promotion of Botanical and Zoological Gardens should also be appointed to this committee.

Based on the memorandum submitted to the Cabinet by the Minister of Environment dated 5th September 2006, titled "Preparation of a National Policy for Conservation of Wild Elephants-Department of Wildlife Conservation", and with reference to Cabinet decision dated 05.07.2006 on CP06/1207/221/004-I, the Cabinet of Ministers by Cabinet Paper CP06/1662/221/004-II dated 28th September 2006, noted the contents of the draft 'National Policy for Conservation and Management of Wild Elephants in Sri Lanka' attached to the memorandum and approval was granted for its implementation.

Foreword

The task force appointed with the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers initially met at the Ministry of Environment on 5th April 2006 to initiate drafting of a 'National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wild elephants in Sri Lanka'. Henceforth, after 14 sessions, on 8th August 2006, the final document was prepared. This was accepted by all the committee members of the task force.

As required, we have examined all the wild elephant conservation policies, methodologies and management plans currently in existence in Sri Lanka. In addition, all available documents published to date with regard to elephant conservation and management and those that had potential bearing on the above mentioned task have been taken into consideration.

Furthermore, this policy preparation committee has evaluated all methodologies presently used by the Department of Wildlife Conservation to reduce the conflict between wild elephants and humans.

Thus, the 'National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wild Elephants in Sri Lanka' was prepared.

Cyril Pallegedera
Chairman
Committee for the preparation of a
'National Policy for Conservation and Management of Elephants in Sri Lanka'
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources

2006.08.30

INTRODUCTION

The elephant has been so closely associated with Sri Lanka's history, culture, religions, mythology and even politics that it would be difficult to imagine the island without it. To all Sri Lankans, the elephant has an enormous cultural and religious significance. No other animal has had such a close relationship with people as the Asian elephant and still remained wild. Besides its dominant role in the ecosystem, the elephant also highlights many of the ecological, economical and philosophical issues underlying wildlife management as a whole in the island.

Recent estimates based on surveys carried out by the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) put the total number of elephants in the wild at over 4,000. With almost 20 million people, in a land area of only 65,000 km^2 Sri Lanka is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, where a rapidly expanding human population is being maintained essentially by an agriculture-based economy. Given the small size of the island and the high human population density, increased interaction between humans and elephants is inevitable. Expansion of permanent agriculture and human settlements is leading to continuous contraction of habitat available to the elephant. The human-elephant conflict (HEC) in Sri Lanka has reached alarmingly high levels, but in recent years it has been contained through concerted actions of the DWC. The conflict between man and elephant is the major cause of elephant mortality. Unless the problem is resolved or mitigated, it will ultimately lead to the elimination of elephants that range outside the system of protected areas under the DWC, which amounts to a significant proportion of the elephant population.

Wild elephants often kill people and destroy property. Therefore, if elephants and protected areas are to survive on a significant scale, they must be "socio-politically acceptable, economically viable and ecologically sustainable". Development processes and incompatible policy actions have aggravated the HEC. Today, the growing conflict between humans and elephants has become the major conservation problem facing the DWC in Sri Lanka. For elephant conservation to succeed in Sri Lanka, conservation efforts should be tied to the welfare of the people who bear the brunt of elephant depredations. Elephant conservation in Sri Lanka should not simply be a matter of protecting a charismatic species; it should also be about the well being and survival of the people who share land with elephants.

In the past, conservation of elephants in Sri Lanka suffered for want of a consistent policy and institutional linkages, thereby weakening the efforts of the DWC. Actions have also been hindered due to the lack of recognition of the provisions of the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance and other relevant legislation, thus leading to conflict situations and even inaction. Effective Policies thus have to be within the provisions of the Flora Protection Ordinance and other relevant legislation.

Policies need regular revision if they are to be effective tools for management. Policies are based on available information at the time of their formation. They are inherently adaptive in approach. This is specially so when dealing with biological and ecological aspects. They must therefore be subject to regular review. We propose that a constant dialogue be maintained with the public in the implementation of this Policy through the Department's Outreach division. Further, we propose that this Policy be reviewed and revised once every five years.

THE NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF WILD ELEPHANTS IN SRI LANKA

shall be to:

I. Ensure the long-term survival of the elephant in the wild in Sri Lanka

II. Mitigate the human-elephant conflict

III. Derive socio-economic benefits from conserving the elephant

IV. Defray the costs imposed by the human-elephant conflict on communities affected by it

V. Adopt regulatory mechanisms for the removal of elephants from the wild for management reasons

VI. Promote scientific research as the basis for elephant conservation and management in the wild.

Recognizing the National importance of the elephant, the Government of Sri Lanka will implement the above policy for the conservation and management of wild elephants.

POLICY STATEMENT 1

ENSURE THE LONG-TERM SURVIVAL OF THE ELEPHANT IN THE WILD IN SRI LANKA

The above policy means managing as many viable populations of the elephant as possible that the land can support and landholders will accept, both within and outside the system of Protected Areas (PAs) under the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC).

Conservation of elephants requires large areas, but setting aside sufficient habitat as PAs purely to preserve the current population of elephants which comprises large, highly mobile animals, with home ranges covering hundreds of square kilometers, is almost impossible in Sri Lanka, given its small size and high human population density. Furthermore, given that almost 70% of current elephant range lies outside DWC PAs, elephant conservation cannot be limited to DWC PAs. It is imperative that lands other than PAs under the DWC, that could support elephants be integrated into elephant conservation and management plans. This will henceforth be achieved by the establishment of Elephant Conservation Areas (ECAs) and Managed Elephant Ranges (MER).

ECAs will contain PAs under the Wildlife Conservation Department and the Forest Department, and Managed Elephant Ranges (MERs – see Action 1.1.2.). The action of recognizing ECAs will bring a rational land use approach to lands in proximity to PAs and to areas where free ranging of elephants is recognized through this Policy. When it becomes effective, it will help stop or at least reduce encroachments and other inappropriate land use practices that contribute to increased human-elephant conflict (HEC).

STRATEGY 1.1. Establishment of Elephant Conservation Areas (ECAs) and Managed Elephant Ranges (MERs)

An Elephant Conservation Area (ECA) is a term that refers to a landscape where elephants will be conserved in-situ. ECAs will consist of DWC PAs, Forest Department Reserves and other areas to be designated as Managed Elephant Ranges (MER). It is a convenient management terminology. Identification of ECAs and MERs will be done in consultation with relevant agencies and in confirmation with Wildlife and Forest Policies.

ACTION 1.1.1. Identification of Elephant Conservation Areas (ECAs)

The minimum size of an ECA should be based on the best scientific information available, taking into consideration the ranging requirements of elephants and any other factors that will have a bearing on the viability of the area for long term conservation of elephants. Ideally an ECA should be no less than 50 km^2 in extent.

ACTION 1.1. 2. Establishment of Managed Elephant Ranges (MERs)

The establishment of Managed Elephant Ranges (MERs) is proposed in the 2006 amendment of the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance (FFPO). MERs are lands other than PAs managed by the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) and Forest Reserves managed by the Forest Department, where elephants will be conserved *in-situ*. MERs do not indicate any land ownership on the part of the DWC, and areas so designated, maybe owned by any Government or Non-Government Institution, Organization, person or persons. The demarcation of MER boundaries should be based primarily with reference to the presence of elephant herds (either year-round or seasonally). MERs will exclude permanent cultivations and permanent human settlements, but will accommodate areas of shifting cultivation. MERs may include isolated villages within them and in establishing an MER, people living in such villages need to be protected against elephant depredation, and arrangements must be made to ensure their protection.

ACTION 1.1.3. Listing and de-listing of Managed Elephant Ranges (MERs)

The procedures for listing and de-listing of an MER have to be formulated. Such procedures will be established through the regulatory provisions of the FFPO based on scientific information available. Relocation and reintroduction of elephants to an MER should be subject to scientific inquiry.

Any area where elephants become locally extinct will cease to be an MER, if such areas cannot be considered for reintroduction of elephants.

If a decision is made to conduct any development activity within an MER, that results in a type of land use that is incompatible with the presence of elephants (e.g establishment of permanent agriculture or human settlements), the area will have to be de-listed from being an MER.

As part of the de-listing process, elephants in the area developed will need to be removed and measures adopted to mitigate or prevent the human-elephant conflict. The cost of these activities as well as that for subsequent prevention of HEC and management of elephants that are removed, should be borne by the development agency concerned.

STRATEGY 1.2. Containing elephants within ECAs

Having established an ECA, it would be necessary to (a) remove those animals that range outside the ECA, and (b) ensure that elephants stay within the ECA.

ACTION 1.2.1. Removal of elephants from outside ECA boundaries and translocating them to ECAs

Removing elephant herds from outside and translocating them into ECAs shall be done through "elephant drives"; individual animals shall be captured and transported to the ECAs.

Note: If the carrying capacity of an ECA is exceeded through such translocation of elephants from outside, and if the carrying capacity cannot be adequately increased and maintained in perpetuity to accommodate additional animals, then alternative methods for the removal of elephants from outside will have to be considered in the interest of conserving the elephant population within the ECA, and those driven or captured. (Also refer to Strategy 1.3 , Action 1.3.1)

ACTION 1.2.3. Curtailing elephant movement out of ECAs

Establish elephant barriers along the ECA perimeter. Of the different types of barriers, the electric fence has proved to be the most effective (please refer to Strategy 2.1.).

Note: Elephants that break barriers along the boundaries of ECAs and come out, therefore cannot be contained within an ECA should be dealt with according to Policy 4.

STRATEGY 1.3. Management of elephants within ECAs

Once the ECAs have been identified, any existing elephant barriers within an ECA should be reviewed and adjusted if need be, to allow free movement of elephants within the ECA. Both elephants and their habitats within the ECAs need to be managed. Human activities in the MERs will also have to be regulated in such a way as to cater to the needs of the elephants while minimizing the HEC.

ACTION 1.3.1. Introduction of elephants to ECAs

The addition of elephants to ECAs could occur through translocating animals that range outside ECA boundaries (Strategy 1.2, Action 1.2.1) or by the introduction of animals that have been in captivity (at Elephant Transit Home).

Translocation of elephants into an ECA from outside must be done in accordance with Strategy 1.2, Action 1.2.1.

The current practice of introducing elephants to the wild from the ETH needs to be subjected to detailed scientific scrutiny and remedial measures must be adopted to ensure that the resident elephant population, and the incidence of HEC is not affected adversely in the long term.

STRATEGY 1.4. Improvement of habitat management within protected areas under the Department of Wildlife Conservation

Habitat management shall be practiced to maintain optimum conditions for elephants, especially to enhance the availability of food and water.

Note: Any habitat management for elephants within the existing PAs of the Department of Wildlife Conservation, shall be restricted to "successional habitats" and "exotic tree plantations", to ensure that the extent of the natural forest cover is not in any way decreased. Reserves of the Forest Department will be managed according to the prescriptions in their Management Plans.

Plantations inside the PAs identified for elephant conservation, may be manipulated to increase their carrying capacity for elephants, through thinning of vegetation and/or removal of exotic trees, if and when necessary.

ACTION 1.4.1. Identification of areas for habitat management

"Successional habitats" and "exotic tree plantations" may be identified based on the history of land-use and status of current vegetation.

Note: Areas with a history of agriculture (permanent or shifting), or have been clear felled within the last 35 years shall be deemed 'successional habitats' for the purpose of management.

STRATEGY 1.5. Habitat management within Managed Elephant Ranges

Managed Elephant Ranges will require management of ongoing activities within them to ensure that elephants are conserved and the HEC is reduced to a minimum. Among the many options available, one activity in particular needs to be tested on an experimental basis: that of integrating chena cultivation with elephant management outside PAs. It is based on the fact that elephants prefer chena lands (shifting agriculture) to mature forests. Such areas are known to attract and retain elephants at higher densities than mature forests.

ACTION 1.5.1. Implementing a pilot project on habitat management within a MER

It is proposed to initiate an experimental project in the Southern province of Sri Lanka in order to assess the success of integrating land-use management and provision of economic benefits to people, with elephant management. Such an experiment will involve regulating and managing shifting agriculture, determining the spatial pattern of cultivation, establishment of regular rotation cycles, and coordination of agricultural activities.

The envisaged activities under this experiment include:

- Providing agricultural extension services for cultivators in MERs
- Providing access to credit
- Facilitating access to markets

POLICY STATEMENT 2

MITIGATE THE HUMAN-ELEPHANT CONFLICT

The human-elephant conflict (HEC) has been recognized as the most serious problem facing elephant conservation in Sri Lanka and has replaced poaching as the biggest threat to elephant conservation in the island. It is leading to the eventual destruction and elimination of elephants from non-conservation areas, and causes the loss of crops, property and human lives. Furthermore, in the north and east, the almost three-decade long civil conflict has also exacerbated the HEC. Home gardens of the people fleeing conflict areas have proved to be powerful attractants to wild elephants, thereby contributing to the escalation of the HEC in areas where returning refugees are being resettled. The elephant in Sri Lanka is running out of space among the 20 million people. The expansion of human activity has reduced the range once available to the elephants. When elephants lose their range, they die.

STRATEGY 2.1. Reducing the damage caused by elephants

Damage to crops and property by wild elephants is one the most extensive impacts of the HEC. Preventing such elephant depredation will require the adoption of a multi – pronged strategy. A number of different barriers and deterrent methods have been in practice over the years. Their effectiveness has not been properly assessed.

Methods of HEC mitigation such as guarding of crops, seasonal elephant drives, deployment of early warning systems, use of elephant repellants, establishment of live fences, use of acoustic deterrents and the cultivation of unpalatable crops along perimeters, have to be experimentally assessed to determine their success and applicability. Individual methods can be effective in some areas or under certain situations, and as such they cannot be recommended as a general solution.

Elephant-proof barriers are of more general applicability and can be either passive or active. Passive barriers include trenches, moats or ditches that are wide and deep enough to deter elephants from stepping over them. These have achieved limited success.

Of the different types of active barriers against elephants, the electric fence has proved to be the most successful and widely used, however the high cost of construction and maintenance is a concern.

Managing electric fences through community participation would reduce their maintenance cost. However, there would still be a need to employ full time officers to coordinate and supervise fence maintenance by the community.

ACTION 2.1.1. Establishment of elephant barriers

Suitable and effective barriers will be established around communities and croplands to prevent elephant incursions.

ACTION 2.1.2. Promote the "early warning" system for the protection of crops

Limited experimentation has shown that the "early warning" system of protecting crops consisting of simple alarms set up on the boundary to be effective in the case of small farmsteads. The establishment of such systems is relatively inexpensive, and enables farmers to take pre-emptive measures to safeguard crops and property from elephants.

ACTION 2.1.3. Promote traditional crop protection methods

Traditional crop protection methods (e.g. the establishment of "Dandu Wetta") can decrease HEC and involve farmers in protection of crops. Their efficacy needs to be assessed and such methods employed where applicable.

ACTION 2.1.4. Establishment of Elephant Control Units (ECUs)

Adoption of preventive measures by trained personnel can help mitigate the HEC. The DWC should establish Elephant Control Units in each of the areas were HEC has been recognized as high. They will act swiftly to address the issues of chasing elephants, maintain information on elephant movements in the region and also train village members under the "Jana Sahana Udana" Programme (Strategy 2.2).

ACTION 2.1.5. Removal of problem animals

A different approach is needed to deal with elephants that habitually raid crops, and aggressive individuals that cause property damage and attack people. Driving such animals away into forests will not reduce the problem as they will return or create the same problems elsewhere. These animals have to be captured and removed in accordance with Policy 4 and Action 1.2.1

ACTION 2.1.6. Providing alternative options for vulnerable communities

Some isolated human settlements are situated in remote areas, where elephants occur in large numbers. Such communities can be offered shelter and alternative livelihoods in safer areas. Special efforts must be made to provide better education facilities to the children.

STRATEGY 2.2. Minimizing potential for conflict

Preventive measures are cost effective; they require baseline information and planning, and the involvement of trained personnel and civil institutions.

ACTION 2.2.1. Establishment of Village Committees

In areas were the HEC is high, village committees such as "Jana Sahana Udana Committees" shall be established. They can form action teams comprising volunteers from the villages. Such teams should be recognized and authorized by the Divisional Secretaries to carry out elephant conservation actions (other than capture). These teams can monitor elephant movements and chase elephants back into a nearby ECA as and when the situation demands.

ACTION 2.2.2. Provision of thunderflashes

The DWC shall provide sufficient numbers of thunderflashes to authorized village committees to enable them to deal with elephant depredations.

ACTION 2.2.3. Educational initiatives

Awareness programs targeting the villagers living both within and around the periphery of ECAs shall be carried out through schools and community organizations. Developing a comprehensive education program that is targeted towards students and the community at large, and the provision of information in the school curriculum that would expose the students to the issues that concern elephant conservation and enable them to understand the complexity of the problem would be of value.

Note: Many instances of human morbidity and mortality from elephants are a result of people not taking appropriate safeguards, carelessness and drunkenness. A significant reduction in HEC is possible through educational programs that increase awareness, and promotion of traditional agricultural practices that afford protection from elephants.

A certain component of the extreme response to morbidity and mortality of elephants stems from the psycho-social perception of the event. Unlike other animals, even the rural communities do not accept the elephant as part of the local fauna. The elephant is viewed as state property and hence the people hold the Government responsible for any damage caused by it.

STRATEGY 2.3. Reducing loss of elephants

Deaths of elephants from the HEC contribute significantly to elephant mortality in the wild. Reduction of HEC will decrease the loss of elephants, which will be achieved through Policy 1, Action 2.1, 2.2 under Policy 2, Policy 5, and the following.

ACTION 2.3.1. Law enforcement

The law of the land must be strictly enforced and offenders prosecuted in cases of encroachments into ECAs, and the injuring and killing of elephants.

ACTION 2.3.2. Implement education awareness programs

Link with Action 2.2.3.

ACTION 2.3.3. Ensure inter-agency consultation during planning for development

Planning of development activities without proper consultation with other agencies has been one of the major causes for the escalation of the HEC. Even though EIA and IEE processes are mandatory, some development activities seem to ignore or sidestep these regulations. Other agencies must be instructed to liaise with the DWC prior to any development in areas where elephants occur. The DWC on its part must consult with other relevant agencies in the preparation of elephant conservation programs.

ACTION 2.3.4. Implement DWC's regional plans for elephant conservation

Regional Elephant Conservation Plans were prepared by the DWC following extensive consultations with stakeholders. The strategies outlined to reduce the HEC and provide for the maintenance of habitats conducive to elephant conservation differ from region to region. Specific action plans for the South, the Northwest and the Mahaweli regions must be implemented by the DWC as early as possible.

ACTION 2.3.5. Provide adequate veterinary care for injured elephants

While ensuring that the DWC is adequately provided with the services of veterinarians, it should also endeavor to liaise very closely with Regional Veterinary units to ensure prompt action to treat injured elephants. In order to achieve this, the DWC must provide training opportunities in treating elephants to veterinarians in areas close to ECAs.

POLICY STATEMENT 3

TO DERIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS FROM CONSERVING THE ELEPHANT

Elephant conservation in Sri Lanka has come under strong socio-economic pressures. These pressures are building up to such a level as to threaten to engulf the very areas that have been set aside for elephant conservation. Wild elephants are incompatible with peasant agriculture unless the damage they cause can be compensated. The core of the problem lies in the perception of the worth of an elephant to the rural poor. Farmers usually regard the wild elephant as a dangerous and unwelcome pest and would not regret its disappearance from their neighborhood in the absence of incentives for its conservation. Local community attitudes can be changed not by depressing the value of the elephant to that of a dangerous pest, but by enhancing the flow of tangible, sustainable benefits.

Economic issues concerning elephant conservation include an assessment of the Total Economic Value (TEV) of the elephant. TEV approaches are used increasingly for decision-making. This incorporates the cost involved in conserving the elephant in the wild and the assessment of the damage it causes to property and crops. The TEV shall form the basis to analyze the cost and benefit of elephant conservation. In order to ensure the long-term survival of elephants, it is also necessary to develop a mechanism to estimate the TEV of an elephant, and disburse the benefits across the affected communities. To capture the TEV of elephants, research must be undertaken as part of the research agenda.

Institutional arrangements must be set in place to allow people to derive such benefits from the presence of the elephant in their neighborhood. Unless these mounting pressures are recognized and creative solutions taken, elephant conservation areas in the island can survive only by escalating the use of force against a disgruntled rural population.

STRATEGY 3.1. Provide opportunities for affected communities to enhance their livelihood

The management of human-elephant conflict has to be integrated into a proper land-use policy. It must also make the elephant an economic asset to the community. If people do not derive economic benefit but only bear a cost by sharing resources with elephants, they cannot value living with elephants. If the local people could perceive the elephant as an economic asset rather than an agricultural pest, they will tolerate it on their land.

ACTION 3.1.1. Promote community-based ecotourism centered on the elephant

Tourism based on viewing elephants in the wild has a high potential to bring benefits linked to elephant conservation to communities in or near elephant ranges. Most peasent farmers are out of work during the dry season, at which time the elephants are known to use shifting agriculture areas intensively. Therefore community-based tourism centered

on elephant viewing provides an opportunity for such farmers to obtain an income during the non-cultivation season.

ACTION 3.1.2. Promote elephant-based cottage industries

Small scale cottage industries based on elephants such as the production of biogas, the manufacture of paper and mosquito repellents from elephant dung, should be promoted. Such enterprises could be dovetailed with eco-tourism based on viewing elephants.

ACTION 3.1.3. Promoting the participation of affected communities in wildlife management activities

The DWC, as part of its new restructured approach to wildlife conservation, has established an "Outreach Unit", whose role is to link up with communities that are peripheral to the PAs and work together not only for the benefit of conservation but also to offset the lost development opportunities of these communities resulting from being located adjacent to the PAs and subject to HEC.

As such the role of the "Outreach Unit" is to be associated strongly with the proposed activities. The unit can play an active role by involving affected communities in micro-planning and also act as a catalyst in the mitigation of HEC.

STRATEGY 3.2. Promote conservation and environmental awareness through activities associated with elephant conservation

Elephants are an important national heritage and Sri Lankans have a right to enjoy the cultural, religious, aesthetic, environmental and educational benefits of having elephants. Appreciation of elephants in such a manner also facilitates their conservation and conservation of wildlife in general.

A comprehensive education program that is targeted towards students and the community at large should be developed. The introduction of issues related to elephant conservation in school curricula would help promote an understanding of the complexity of the problem among the students at an early age. Activities related to elephant conservation and management involving students in and around ECAs should be developed and formalized.

ACTION 3.2.1. Promote the development of education material for elephant conservation

As part of the education programs, develop materials such as posters, teaching aids, and documentaries etc to be used by schools and conservation organizations to promote an awareness of the importance of conserving the elephant in Sri Lanka.

ACTION 3.2.2. Use the Elephant Transit Home (ETH) as a centre for research and education

Saving abandoned elephant calves and releasing them back into the wild is a high profile exercise that has wide public acceptance and is congruent with the religious and cultural endowment of the country. Therefore its continuation would be of value from the point of view of public relations and can be used to increase awareness among the public of the plight of elephants as well as to foster a love towards them, thereby enhancing elephant conservation. This is an excellent example of the use of the elephant as a flagship species and it has a high indirect conservation value. The ETH provides an excellent opportunity to carry out research and promote conservation education.

STRATEGY 3.4. Maintain elephants in captivity for cultural, religious and socio-economic purposes

Captive elephants are presently used for cultural, religious and socio-economic purposes in Sri Lanka. However, over the years the captive elephant stock has dwindled and aged. Thus there is a social need for replenishing this stock. Animals that have to be removed for management purposes under this Policy could be considered for augmenting the captive population subject to Action 5.2.2.

POLICY STATEMENT 4

TO DEFRAY THE COSTS IMPOSED BY THE HUMAN-ELEPHANT CONFLICT ON COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY IT

Elephant conservation areas should generate tangible benefits to justify their existence politically and economically. If elephants outside PAs can be converted into an asset it would also favor the survival of other wildlife, and the conservation of biological diversity outside protected areas. Intrinsically the mere presence of an elephant in an area enhances the value of other wildlife.

STRATEGY 4.1. Compensate the communities affected by the human-elephant conflict

A major impact of HEC on the people is the economic cost it entails. This can be addressed to some extent through compensation and insurance schemes. The existing schemes need to be strengthened to enable prompt disbursement of funds and towards fostering improved relations with the Department of Wildlife Conservation.

ACTION 4.1.1. Review and streamline the existing compensation package

It is proposed that some of the existing procedures for compensation be further simplified and streamlined for prompt disbursement.

ACTION 4.1.2. Develop an insurance scheme for children of the affected families

The loss of a breadwinner or spouse in a family having children leaves the children destitute and handicapped. In such situations, their future remains gloomy and uncertain. In order to offset this situation every effort must be made to insure them comprehensively so that they will be protected against future vagaries of life, and to ensure that the children receive some formal education to escape from poverty.

ACTION 4.1.3. Instituting compensation and insurance schemes with public–private support

A major obstacle in developing an insurance scheme is that most farmers are unable to afford the premia. Initial research on the willingness to pay for elephant conservation by the public, has shown a positive response. It now is necessary to induce insurance agencies to translate this willingness into reality.

ACTION 4.1.3. Immediate ex-gratia payment to meet the funeral costs in the event of loss of life due to elephants

Compensation payments always take time even if all systems work effectively. Immediate compensation to offset the costs of a funeral should be provided without

seeking prior approval. Therefore, it is mandatory that an outright payment of Rs. 15,000 be made immediately to the family concerned in the event of bereavement.

POLICY STATEMENT 5

ADOPT REGULATORY MECHANSISMS FOR THE REMOVAL OF ELEPHANTS FROM THE WILD FOR MANAGEMENT REASONS

The mitigation and management of the current human-elephant conflict through the capture and translocation of problem elephants to new sites has become a major conservation and scoio-political issue. Similarly the practice of "driving" animals also has had many setbacks. These efforts have had limited success in the past, but in the situations outlined below, capture would need to be considered as an alternative to translocation.

- *Lingering animals following an elephant drive*
  The majority of 'problem animals' that cause crop depredation and human mortality through aggressive behavior are difficult or impossible to drive as they will take cover in small impenetrable patches of forest, act aggressively if confronted, and in general escape being driven.

- *Barrier breakers*
  These are elephants that successfully break through functional barriers. They will need to be captured and either brought into captivity or managed under semi-wild conditions.

- *Limits imposed by carrying capacity*
  Transferring elephants from one area to another may result in social disruption of their lives. Consideration has to be given to the current carrying capacity of a target site before such transfers are affected. In the event such limits are exceeded, alternative actions need to be undertaken to maintain animals below the carrying capacity.

The proposal therefore is to capture and transfer such animals to a Temporary Animal Holding (TAH) or bring them into captivity.

STRATEGY 5.1. Identification of animals for removal

Crop-raiding elephants, which become aggressive and are a danger to the life of farmers must be removed from areas where their continued presence would constitute a nuisance. If such individuals do not break fences, they could be managed in fenced areas under semi-wild conditions. However, those animals that cannot be contained in such areas, would have to be captured.

ACTION 5.1.1. Identification of problem animals

Central to any of these options would be the correct identification of the problem animals. Given that most crop raiding happens after dusk, it would be almost impossible to identify the correct individual even if there were DWC officers stationed at the site. The use of radio darts would help overcome this problem to a certain extent.

ACTION 5.1.2. Identification of other animals

These animals may be the ones that are found outside the ECAs and cannot be accommodated within the ECAs since they would exceed the carrying capacity of the habitat. Such animals may need to be captured and removed (**see Action 1.2.1**). As the impact of translocations on the carrying capacity is not completely understood at present, it would be necessary to obtain the relevant information by monitoring such processes first.

ACTION 5.1.3. Establishment of elephant capture teams

To ensure the successful removal of problem animals on a regular basis the DWC will need to set up Elephant Capture Teams in areas of high human-elephant conflict. At present, the resources of the DWC are woefully inadequate to respond to all the requests for even translocating problem animals. There is therefore a need to establish elephant capture teams that can respond to any emergency in the field. Such teams must include experienced veterinarians, and need to be established in a number of provinces where ECAs are established and the HEC is intense.

STRATEGY 5.2. Management of animals removed from the wild

An option for captured animals will be to manage them in a Temporary Animal Holding until their future management is determined.

In the case of problem elephants which cannot be accommodated as free ranging animals, the best option would be to bring them into captivity, in which case a matter of concern would be the methods used for taming the animals and the associated mortality risks. Most of the animals concerned would be adult males.

ACTION 5.2.1. Establishment of a temporary animal holding

An option for captured animals will be to manage them in a Temporary Animal Holding. Such management involves the construction and maintenance of infrastructure and a commitment to manage the animals as long as necessary.

ACTION 5.2.2. Develop procedures for bringing animals into captivity

Proper procedures and guidelines have to be developed for this purpose with the involvement of relevant parties. The procedures should also cover the issues of auctioning of elephants, the eligibility of potential owners or institutions, and the ethical management and maintenance of elephants in captivity.

ACTION 5.2.3. Promote the use of elephants for patrolling and use in ecotourism

The DWC must seriously consider using trained elephants within conservation areas. They could be used to patrol reserves and to carry visitors within National Parks. Such elephant-back safaris have proved to be great attractions in ecotourism activities in other countries in Asia and Africa. The advantages of using trained elephants over vehicles inside conservation areas are many. The DWC needs to exploit this opportunity to demonstrate the usefulness of the elephant to the public at large.

POLICY STATEMENT 6

PROMOTE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AS THE BASIS FOR ELEPHANT CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT IN THE WILD

Multi disciplinary elephant research should be adequately funded and strengthened. This will enable the DWC to enter into partnership with researchers, universities and research institutions in order to address the HEC and protect the elephant in the wild. Continuation of the existing research procedures of "out-sourcing" would support such an approach.

Note: Scientific studies on wild Asian elephants have been few and far between. The dearth of studies is partly a result of their being forest animals and hence difficult to observe and study, and partly because of behavioral adaptations to the widespread conflict with humans, wherein elephants have become mostly nocturnal and learnt to avoid man. With rapidly increasing human populations across the range of the Asian elephant, the need to actively manage elephant populations has become a necessity, both for their conservation and mitigation of human-elephant conflict. However, the absence of baseline information makes it difficult to formulate sound management strategies and to monitor their effects on elephants. Promoting scientific research to address these issues is therefore a prerequisite for ensuring the survival of the elephant and the successful mitigation of the human-elephant conflict in Sri Lanka.

STRATEGY 6.1. Encouraging scientific research relevant to management

The acceptance of the need for systematic research as a basis for improved management has been a gradual process in Sri Lanka and needs to be further consolidated.

Note: The Department of Wildlife Conservation is essentially a management institution. It must therefore rely on the expertise of biologists and social scientists from the universities and research institutions, to carry out management-oriented research that would enhance the long-term survival of the elephant in the wild.

Most studies of wildlife, especially those conducted by universities appear to management authorities to be of largely academic content, with no obvious relevance to management issues. However, basic research is the foundation for applied research and should be encouraged. This problem is further compounded by a communication gap between researcher and manager, very often the former reports his research findings in a thesis or a journal not easily accessible to the latter and probably in unfamiliar technical jargon.

STRATEGY 6.2. Identify research priorities

Independent research bodies such as universities, NGOs and individuals should be encouraged to take up research projects, which address the research needs of the DWC. Careful quantified observation should remain the basis for sound scientific research.

Note: The main thrust of research should be on providing a more scientific understanding of the elephant, its ecology and behavior, as a basis for improved management of the species in the wild and in captivity. This would entail the establishment of a broad set of research priorities in consultation with the management authorities, research institutions and universities. This is aimed at meeting the needs of managers and planners to fill basic gaps in present knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The prospects for long-term survival for the elephant in Sri Lanka are good. There is already a well-established PA network, which supports a proportion of the elephant population. However, a significant proportion of the elephant population ranges outside of PAs. Ensuring the future survival of elephants that range inside and outside PAs is both central and crucial to the conservation of elephants in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka has an educated and enlightened public, which supports the conservation of wildlife and abhors wanton destruction of all forms of life. This is partly due to the influence of Buddhism and its pacific philosophy. But given the small size of the island, land is at a premium, and it is shrinking under the onslaught of a growing human population. Elephants and people are basically incompatible at any but the lowest densities. As their densities increase, people become more and more intolerant of wildlife that threatens their livelihoods. No amount of legislation and law enforcement will ensure the survival of the elephant outside the PAs, if measures are not adopted to compensate for the losses farmers suffer from elephant depredations. Today, wild elephants are being killed at the rate of three animals per week. These are killed not for their meat, nor hide, nor tusks; they are being slaughtered simply because they interfere with agriculture and threaten the livelihood of people. The core problem here is the perception of the worth of an elephant by the rural people. They bear the total cost of sharing resources with elephants and gain no benefit, leading them to perceive elephants as an unwelcome burden and a dangerous pest.

Elephant conservation, if it is to succeed in Sri Lanka, needs to exercise flexibility in the application of common sense and see that the pest is somehow converted into an asset to the people. If wildlife is permitted to contribute meaningfully to their life, people will not be able to afford to lose it in their battle for survival. If wildlife does not contribute significantly to their well-being, people will not be able to afford to preserve it, except as a tourist curiosity in a few PAs.

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