# Human-Wildlife Conflict Collaboration (HWCC)

## *From Conflict to Coexistence: Benefits for Conservation and Development*

When human-wildlife conflict occurs, both human welfare and wildlife conservation interests are adversely affected. People lose valuable resources and property, income from cash crops or livestock, and sometimes their lives. Conservation goals are not met because wildlife is further endangered, while habitat and the support of local communities for conservation programs are lost. However, the challenges presented by human-wildlife conflict also represent unique opportunities for conservation and development to work together for the benefit of people and wildlife. The Human-Wildlife Conflict Collaboration (HWCC) offers a platform for partnership upon which we can facilitate positive social change and advance conservation more effectively.

As a first step, human-wildlife conflict may be prevented if conservation and development interests communicate, cooperate and plan ahead by developing guidelines that ensure conflict is avoided where possible and effectively mitigated where not. There have been many examples where a failure to collaborate resulted in increased conflict with costs to both conservation and development. One of many illustrations of this scenario is ongoing in farming communities in Uganda, where poverty alleviation projects introduce sugar cane as a cash crop to improve the livelihoods of farmers living outside protected areas with chimpanzees. The parties involved fail to explore the potential for conflict and thus fail to foresee the resulting dramatic increase in crop raiding by chimpanzees. Sugar cane that should put money in the pockets of farmers, instead encourages chimpanzees to leave the forest for the farms, putting them in harms way. The conflict that results and the costs incurred could be avoided if stakeholders work in cooperation with one another to first understand the potential for conflict and then develop conflict prevention strategies to incorporate into development plans. The HWCC is bringing together conservation and development interests to ensure that the aforementioned scenario is not repeated and that decisions taken result in win-win solutions for people and wildlife.

Field practitioners also recognize time and again that what happens at the field level is often influenced by the legal and policy decisions made at the national, regional or international level and that government programs in development and agricultural often work at cross purposes to the conservation efforts of another branch of government. National or international level interests are often not coordinated, links are not explored, and opportunities are not seized upon. Different sectors may work at cross-purposes because they fail to either realize the value of coordinated efforts in policy and program decisions or they neglect to assess the potential for harmful impacts to the other's mission by their actions. For instance, a well-intentioned policy in East Africa had disastrous results for people and wildlife when the initiative encouraged the settling of agriculturalists along the migratory pathways of elephants. By coming together and using our collective understanding of these challenges, HWCC will help its partners gain greater insight and influence at these higher levels of decision making so that conservation and development efforts are mutually supportive where possible and costs are minimized in all regards.

HWCC values innovative, practical solutions that result by bringing diverse partners to the table to share lessons learned, best practices, and develop new and innovative approaches to old problems that may yield new and greater benefits for conservation and development. Conservation today needs to be supported by other sectors of society who can sustain conservation in new and positive ways. Development efforts need to achieve a balance between what can be improved for people today and what is desired for the generations of tomorrow. Each can benefit from the tools and strategies developed by other disciplines. There is much hope that common ground exists between these sectors of society and HWCC is working with its partners to find and build upon that common ground.

*To participate or for more information on HWCC, visit us at www.humanwildlifeconflict.org*