Project

ENCOSH
ENHANCING COEXISTENCE THROUGH SHARING

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https://encosh.org/en/

1. Definition of the project

1.1 Context

People in diverse environments have to deal with similar problems related to wildlife, such as carnivores attacking their livestock or herbivores raiding crops. Numerous approaches to dealing with these issues have been tried around the world, for example warning systems, scare devices, guard animals, fences and damage compensation schemes. There is rarely a single solution and it is often necessary to combine several measures in order to address negative interactions between humans and wildlife effectively. Many actions implemented locally might be applicable elsewhere if stakeholders were aware of them. However, published information is often unavailable, incomplete or unintelligible to stakeholders. There is thus an opportunity to inspire and empower people to better cope and coexist with wildlife through information sharing.

1.2 Scope

The ENCOSH project, ENhancing COexistence through SHaring, is a collaborative project set up by the HISA Association (www.hisaproject.org) aiming to establish an online platform to facilitate exchange of knowledge, skills and experience among stakeholders around the world. The platform targets anyone seeking to prevent, reduce or offset the impact on livelihoods of wild mammals, in particular large carnivores, ungulates, elephants and primates, as well as for those who are willing to share their experience and expertise. It aims to become a worldwide tool to promote capacity building and international solidarity among people and organizations confronted with similar challenges in order to enhance human-wildlife coexistence.

1.3 Objectives

The main objectives of ENCOSH are:
1. To establish an international network of diverse stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in issues of coexistence with mammalian carnivores, herbivores and primates;
2. To promote sharing of knowledge, skills and experience of any initiatives supporting sustainable coexistence with these animals;
3. To enhance stakeholders' capacity to cope with local coexistence issues.

1.4 Design and features

The international exchange platform developed by HISA is intended to complement other projects fostering information exchange, such as the People and Wildlife Initiative (www.wildcru.org)[1], the IUCN SSC Human-Wildlife Conflict Task Force (www.hwctf.org)[2] and the LIFE EuroLargeCarnivores project (www.eurolargecarnivores.eu)[3]. EN-

COSH is innovative in its collaborative approach, which seeks to:

- Connect stakeholders with diverse and complementary knowledge and expertise (e.g. herders, managers, researchers, politicians, consultants) belonging to various organizations dealing with different animal species globally;
- Foster collaboration and co-development of the platform for and by a team representative of this international network, adapted to the needs and expectations of stakeholders.

The platform will consist of several features:

- A worldwide database of local initiatives addressing human–wildlife coexistence issues, easily accessible to users through search filters and menus;
- Practical instructions to help people adapt and apply solutions in their own local situation, notably with technical guidance for each initiative presenting key information on its implementation and use. Authors will be asked to share available information about the effectiveness and efficiency of each initiative, in order to underline the pros and cons for different socio-ecological contexts. Other supporting information will include testimonies and tutorial videos based on field experience.
- A free pedagogical platform presenting information in an accessible and intelligible format: popularized and illustrated information with multiple language versions. The platform will initially be available in English, French and Spanish. Other languages may be added later according to stakeholders' stated needs and support. Pictograms will be used for general information as far as possible.
- Through the collaborative approach of ENCOSH, users will be encouraged to act as mediators, notably to spread information to the illiterate or those with limited or no Internet access. An updated version of the platform, which does not require Internet access, will also be developed.

ENCOSH is a participatory project: beneficiaries are involved in its development. They can contribute in three ways:

1. co-developing the platform to ensure that the format is tailored to their needs and preferences;
2. co-creating new technical sheets (guidance) to present initiatives on the platform; and
3. testing new initiatives and sharing feedback from their own experience.

A review of literature and other existing tools and media (e.g. *Carnivore Damage Prevention News*) will also be considered in order to improve and optimize the ENCOSH platform. As it grows, we expect the platform to produce a 'snowball effect' on a worldwide scale (export/import of initiatives and local adaptations) and support self-sufficiency of beneficiaries in the long-term (decision-making, self-training and setting up their own initiatives).

2. Implementation and results

The project began in June 2015 and is being implemented in four main phases, each with respective tasks and outcomes as detailed below.

2.1 Preliminary work

The first phase of the project (till September 2016) mainly aimed at assessing the expected benefits of the ENCOSH platform for a wide variety of stakeholders' objectives and issues and contributed to the project design before implementation of the platform. A pilot study was realized in the Alps, where livestock farming is challenged by the return of wolves.

The main tasks realized were:

- Networking and meeting with various stakeholders in the Alps (France, Switzerland and Italy) to discuss and exchange ideas for the project;
- Preparation of videos that illustrate diverse local initiatives in the Alps to include on the platform (a full documentary on YouTube[4] and an example of a web documentary of a local initiative.

The preliminary phase concluded with the elaboration of a thorough strategic plan to define and implement the project.

2.2 Prototype

The objective of the second phase (October 2016 to June 2017) was to obtain the basic requirements to create a platform prototype:

- Reviewing extant initiatives worldwide that contribute to human–wildlife coexistence, mainly through research papers, a literature review and Internet search tagging key words (e.g. livestock protection, human–wildlife conflict, coexistence, deterrent, etc.), in both French and English;
- Designing a model technical sheet to present key

Fig. 1 Participative workshop held in Montpellier, France, in June 2017 to enhance the development of the prototype and platform. *(Photo: HISA)*

information on local initiatives to be included on the platform;

- Holding a workshop in Montpellier in June 2017 (Fig. 1) with project managers, researchers, students and experts in the management of human-wildlife conflict and/or creation of collaborative tools. Participants were invited to share their experience in dealing with coexistence issues as well as their particular skills, e.g. development and design of collaborative platforms.

This phase resulted in the creation of an international database of local initiatives dealing with issues related to wild mammals. A prototype platform was developed including examples of technical sheets de-
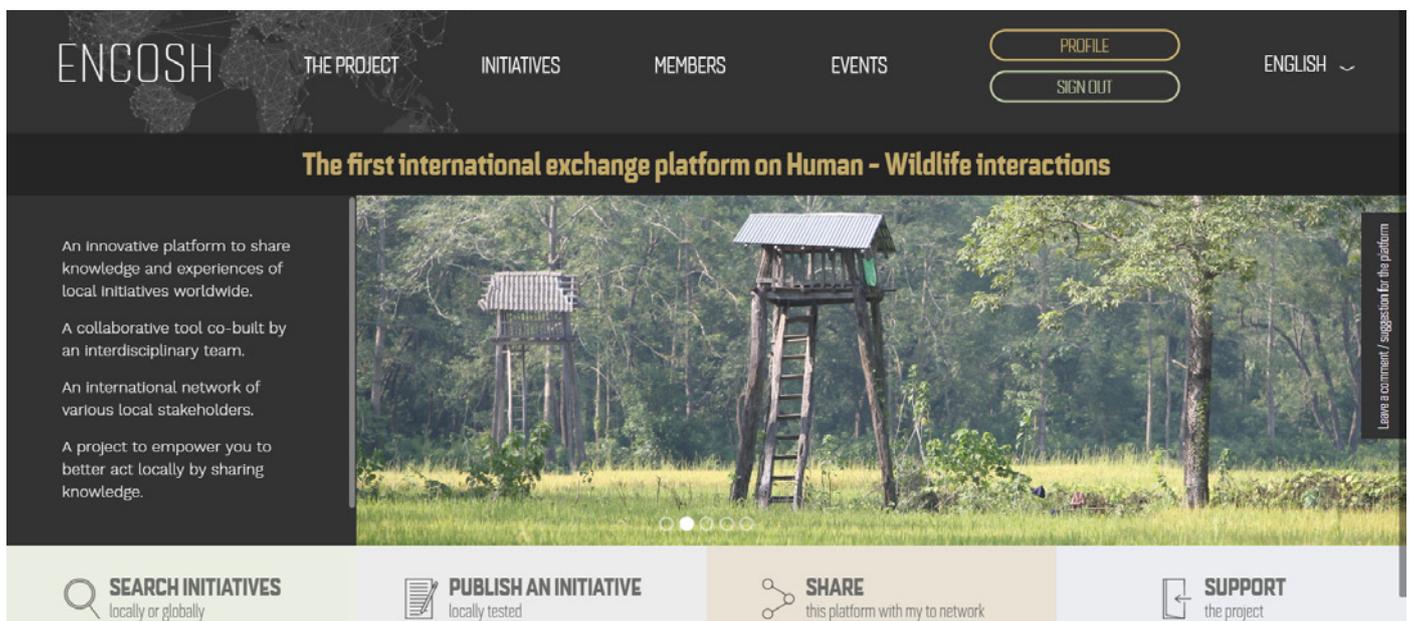
scribing local initiatives. Detailed recommendations aiming to develop the first version of the platform were also collected.

2.3 Developing the platform

Building on the prototype, we began developing a first free version of the platform from July 2017 through a collaborative approach:

- Creating a website to introduce the project to various stakeholders worldwide and collect their feedback;
- Establishing a group of active and motivated members to contribute to the co-creation of the platform, including researchers, managers, hunters, herders, mediators and independent consultants;
- Co-development of the platform in collaboration with a webmaster: after exchanges and validation of the main components among active group members between October 2018 and March 2019, development started in March 2019 and is finalized by July 2019.
- Preparation of web documentaries by the EN-COSH project coordinator supported by association members. The first videos concerned local initiatives in South America (e.g. Night Guards, "felid-proof" electric fencing) and will be added to the platform as examples.

Feedback was mainly collated from the group of active members (see above) to co-create the platform step by step. By the end of this activity, we expect to

Fig. 2. Homepage of the platform under development.

have established a first version of the platform appropriate and adapted to our target users (Fig. 2).

2.4 Operation and expansion

Beginning in 2019, we aim to expand the platform by increasing the number of members and included initiatives by:

- Promoting the platform to local stakeholders through dissemination of documents to existing networks, publications in journals and radio broadcasts;
- Enhancing the platform to facilitate its use and increase its audience worldwide;
- Encouraging members to become active users (e.g. creating technical guidelines for their own initiatives based on an online template and providing feedback about their experience of adopting initiatives presented on the platform);
- Preparing more web documentaries to illustrate local initiatives that contribute to tackling issues of coexistence with large carnivores and other mammals.

We expect this phase to result in the platform being used by an increasing diversity of local stakeholders leading to more knowledge, skills and experience shared among stakeholders worldwide. The platform will include: a contact list of stakeholders involved in the project, details of all the initiatives included on the platform, printable technical sheets of existing initiatives and downloadable videos or web documentaries illustrating local initiatives.

We are currently searching for funding to secure development of the project (translation, maintenance of the platform, workshops, etc.). The coordinator, responsible for animation of the platform and fundraising, is supported by a group of active members to co-create and populate the first version of the platform, which should become more or less autonomous in the long-term thanks to participatory involvement. The HISA team, composed of volunteer experts in wildlife management or human-wildlife interactions (managers, engineers, researchers, reporters), will provide continuous support for improving the platform, contacting more experts and stakeholders worldwide and searching for funds to maintain the current coordination of the tool in the long term.

[1] https://www.wildcru.org/research/people-and-wildlife-initiative/

[2] http://www.hwctf.org/resources/document-library

[3] https://www.eurolargecarnivores.eu/en/

[4] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQCLr4K1fv0