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Wildlife conflict

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Wildlife conservation continues to face the acute challenges of poaching, habitat fragmentation and human-wildlife conflict.

Environment ministry executive director Teofilus Nghitila said due to Namibia's successful conservation methods, which have led to increased wildlife populations outside national parks, human-wildlife conflict has increased.

"The situation is worsened by the current disparities in rainfall as well as the growing human population," he said in his end-of-year message.

According to Nghitila, co-existence with wild animals - though beneficial in terms of employment creation and income generation - also comes at a cost.

"We continue to record reports of conflict situations leading to crop damage, livestock losses, injuries to people and, in unfortunate circumstances, even death."

N\$31.7m paid

He said the ministry has developed a national policy to guide them in managing recurring conflict situations across the country.

According to Nghitila, the ministry has paid over N\$31.7 million since 2019 to offset losses caused by human-wildlife conflict.

He noted that in May, it hosted a national conference on human-wildlife conflict management, bringing together stakeholders to seek solutions to address the conflict, which has resulted in the formulation of a plan to guide them moving forward.

With regards to poaching, Nghitila said Namibia has lost 48 rhinos to poaching thus far this year.

Last year, 92 rhinos were killed by poachers, and in 2021, this total stood at 50. In 2020, 47 rhinos were poached, 61 in 2019 and 84 in 2018.

Meanwhile, eight elephants were poached this year to date, compared to four last year.

In 2021, poachers killed 10 elephants, 12 in 2020, 13 in 2019 and 27 in 2018.

The executive director said in 2013, when poaching in Namibia started to surge, the ministry put in place measures to reduce poaching, including increased law enforcement and intelligence activities, and investment in human and other resources to ensure sufficient capacity.

“We have also forged collaborations with other law enforcement agencies as well as the private sector. To bring poaching under control, we need to work together as stakeholders.”