

Government of Nepal  
**Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation**  
Singhdurbar, Kathmandu

## Domesticated Elephant Management Policy, 2060 (2003)

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Approval on 16 September 2003 (2060/5/30 BS)  
Un official Translation from Nepali Language

### 1. Background

The elephant, being endangered due to illegal hunting and habitat destruction from various reasons, is being included in Appendix 1 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Because of its inclusion in the above said Appendix, activities including hunting and trading of elephant have been prohibited and regulated. Nepal is a Party to this Convention. In Nepal, this Convention has entered into force since 16 September 1975. According to the provisions of the Nepal Treaty Act 1990, the provisions of this Convention are equally enforced as the national law within the Kingdom of Nepal. Similarly, at the national level, hunting of elephant has been prohibited as it is included as a protected animal in the Schedule 1 of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1973.

Even if some species were included in Appendix I of the CITES, its Article 7 (4) provisions that the second generation animals produced through captive breeding of the animals in Appendix 1 shall be considered equivalent to the animals included in the animals in Appendix 2 of the Convention. Trade of products (hides and skulls - Aakhetopahar) obtained from captive breeding is possible (being done) by following the specified processes and procedures. International trade of domesticated elephants and their products is being specified within the broader framework of the Article of the Convention.

Because of its giant size, deterioration of the quality of forest products and food availability in the area due to domestication of elephant is unavoidable. It has been felt necessary for an appropriate policy as the domesticated elephants are commonly used for ecotourism, and unregulated movement of a large number of elephants in the ecologically sensitive areas would create ecological imbalance in the Protected Areas (PA) leading to the threats to the natural habitat of other endangered wild flora and fauna.

The domesticated elephants kept by Government () in the elephant camp (hattisars) are being primarily used to rescue from disasters, capturing the rhinoceros and tiger, ceremonies and other essential functions. It seems essential that continues its involvement in elephant domestication for some years to come, as it would be inappropriate to use the elephants, domesticated at the private sector, in such activities. It is equally desirable to enhance private sector's involvement in a competitive way for the use of elephants to promote ecotourism, income and employment opportunity. It is also necessary to look carefully and to avoid unwanted monopoly of some individuals or institutions over the benefits from elephant domestication under the government protection. In this connection, a separate policy has been felt necessary to maintain an appropriate balance between the roles of the government and the private sector, and to optimise ecological and economic benefits by

creating healthy and competitive environment, taking into consideration the national and international law.

## 2. Existing Arrangement

In Nepal, the government and private sector have made various efforts since long ago for the management of domesticated elephants. Historically, private individuals have been domesticating this animal as a hobby or a symbol of economic status, while the government effort has been for its use in ceremonies, movement of very important persons, and/or other uses. In spite of these efforts, the Elephant Management Rules, 2022 was enforced in B.S. 2022 to start with regulating and managing the domestication of elephants. The said Rule was enforced, primarily, for the overall proper management of elephant camps, maintain and improve health of elephants, and also properly use elephants without compromising on their health status. In B.S. 2042 (1985/86), the Inspection Centre (Janchbujha Kendra) of the Royal Palace, taking into account the gradual decline in the number of domesticated and wild elephants in the Kingdom of Nepal, established a Task Force to study and recommend on necessary arrangement for the gradual increase in the number of elephants, effective usage of elephants, and for making staff working in the hattisars further competent and efficient. The Task Force within its prescribed working order prepared and submitted an Elephant Management Plan.

As a result of increasing use of elephant for activities such as promotion of ecotourism, and protection of PAs, elephant husbandry has been practised for economic activities. Elephants domesticated at the private sector have been used primarily for ecotourism. To date, Nepal has recorded 174 domesticated elephants. Out of them, a total of 86 elephants are in the government-owned 6 hattisars, and at the hattisar managed by the King Manhendra Trust for Nature Conservation. Remaining 88 domesticated elephants are kept by the private sector. Out of the total domesticated elephants at the private sector, 66 elephants are kept by the hoteliers operated within the protected areas and are dependent within the resources of such areas (Source: Hattisars, Managing Domesticated Elephants in Nepal, DNPWC & WWF, 2003). For keeping the elephants within the protected areas, the hotels have been paying an annual fee of NRs. 1,000/elephant or Rs. 3/elephant/day to Government while an average annual expenditure of NRs. one hundred and fifty thousand has been calculated for each elephant kept by in its hattisars. Nepal has not yet any legal instruments in relation to the trade of elephants and its Tran boundary movement.

In general, elephants are used for about four hours a day for ecotourism purposes, i.e., tourists riding on elephants for roaming, from 7 to 9 a.m. and 4 to 6 p.m. Elephants do spend over 6 hours a day of their time within the protected areas for activities such as browsing, playing in the dust, and muddying the water bodies (ponds), and hence, they spent very little time in sleeping. These activities have negatively affected the biological diversity and ecological condition of the protected area. At present, miscarriage of elephants, untimely death of infants, and weak health condition of the infants (calves) have been the major problems in the Elephant Breeding Centres due to unavailability of adequate resources and nutrients (see following table).

### Elephant Birth in captivity

Age group (Year)	Miscarriage	Still birth	Died young	Surviving	Total
10 - 20	1	1	0	4	6

21 - 45	0	9	1	14	24
46 - 60	0	9	0	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>32</b>

Source: Hattisars, Managing Domesticated Elephants in Nepal. DNPWC and WWF, 2003.

The above statistic clearly shows the miserable health condition of the elephant in captive breeding. It is necessary to think scientifically in order to control this situation and to promote activities related to elephant domestication and breeding. Also taking into consideration the policy regarding the management of domesticated elephants, at the international level, and in various countries, it is felt urgent to develop a separate policy to update records on elephant's birth and death, health and nutrient status, and make necessary arrangement for their registration. It is also felt necessary to have an appropriate policy to managing efforts in a timely and beneficial manner taking into account the significantly increased number of domesticated elephants - a listed endangered wildlife - in both the government and the private sector.

### 3. Procedure Adopted during Policy Formulation

Understanding the values and benefits of extensive discussion and consultation with the stakeholders for the development of any policy, the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation brought the drafted policy in public discussion right from its formulation stage. In accordance with the declared policy in the Tenth Plan to promote the participation of the private sector on the breeding and domestication of high value wildlife, there is also a possibility to farm the elephant as a domesticated animal.

After the preparation of a draft policy on the management of domesticated elephant, a preliminary discussion was held with the officials of the Buffer Zone management groups and wardens. The draft was revised based on the inputs received from these discussions. In accordance with the decision of Government on 2060.2.30 (13 June 2003), comments and suggestions were called upon from the government institutions such as the ministries of finance, tourism, population and environment; national and international non-governmental organisations such as King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, World Wildlife Fund, Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists; and other relevant professional organisations such as Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN), and Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) on the revised draft policy. An interaction programme was organised on 16 Shrawan 2060 (1 August 2003) with the journalists aiming at making the draft policy public and also to provide maximum information for the public at large. Similarly, discussions and interactions were encouraged in the print and electronic media with the objective of creating public awareness, and generating and sharing ideas in the context of the said policy.

In the current situation of breeding and domestication of elephants primarily at the government sector, a separate policy is urgently felt necessary to promote private sector's participation and enhance government's role, in this area, as a promoter, facilitator and regulator rather than a controller. In this context, this Domesticated Elephant Management Policy, 2060 (2003) has been formulated with the participation of relevant stakeholders to enhance species conservation, its scientific management and practical utility, encourage commercialisation potentiality by regulating, promoting breeding, and domesticating the elephant.

### 4. Objective

- 4.1 To maximise the economic and environmental benefits through proper management of domesticated elephant by promoting the conservation of nearing to extinction animal - the elephant;
- 4.2 To conserve and sustainably use biodiversity by minimising negative impacts in biodiversity and nature conservation from elephant domestication, and through the participation of organised institutions and private sector; and
- 4.3 To improve living condition of the local people through equitable distribution of economic benefits arising from the management of domesticated elephants.

## **5. Policies**

- 5.1 The involvement of government in conservation, breeding and management of domesticated elephant will be maintained for research, mitigation of natural disasters and other essential services. Participation of private sector for the expansion and commercialisation will be encouraged while government involvement in these aspects will be gradually reduced.
- 5.2 Partnership approach between Government and the private sector will be encouraged in order for proper conservation, breeding, management, and utilisation of domesticated elephants. The role of private sector while doing such activities outside protected areas will be encouraged and promoted.
- 5.3 Necessary policies and legal infrastructures will be developed to promote the domestication of elephants, and promote their commercial and beneficial usage through private sector;
- 5.4 Policy for the close integration of relevant activities with eco-tourism in order to enhance economic usefulness of ex situ conservation of elephants will be adopted.

## **6. Working Policies**

- 6.1 Government shall ensure policy linkage, coordination, and revision by playing a role of facilitator, regulator and promoter to enhance the participation of the private sector in conservation, breeding, domestication, and commercial and economic usage of elephants;
- 6.2 The Elephant Breeding Centre and hattisars, so far maintained at the government level, shall be upgraded as a Centre for providing scientific and technical services, information and training with regard to the domestication, breeding, conservation, and utilisation. Similarly, these Centres shall be developed as Centres for scientific study and research, and as a gene bank for the conservation of genetic resources of elephants. Seed of elephant or seed animal may be provided from these centres.
- 6.3 The Hattisars maintained under the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation shall be developed as a training centre to train elephants with due consideration on providing useful essential services such as capturing rhinoceros and tiger, controlling illegal hunting and disaster relief.
- 6.4 Considering the carrying capacity of the potential areas for elephant camps and farming by private sector, a policy shall be adopted to fix the number of elephant so as to minimise negative impacts in the environment.

- 6.5 Registration and tagging shall be done to set-up numbers, and condition of the domesticated elephants of Nepal. The record of tagged elephants shall be sent to the CITES Secretariat, and made available to the concerned agencies.
- 6.6 Emphasis shall be given to develop an appropriate mechanism for the promotion of participation and equitable sharing of benefits amongst Government, private sector, concerned community forestry user group, and buffer zone forestry user group for habitat conservation and feed management for elephants.
- 6.7 Elephants owned by the private sector shall be prohibited to keep within the protected areas. Activities related to keeping and rearing of privately owned elephants within the Royal Chitwan National Park - a World Heritage Site - shall be discouraged. An arrangement shall be made gradually to camp the government owned elephants outside the protected areas and within the buffer zones and the area where the availability of elephant forage exists.
- 6.8 Browsing of the domesticated elephants shall be prohibited within the protected areas. Even if grazing has been allowed in the past, under certain agreement, in such areas, grazing fee for elephant shall be revised so as to compensate the loss of plants due to elephant browsing.
- 6.9 Activities related to elephant breeding, domestication and conservation shall be promoted in the potential areas of the Kingdom of Nepal in order to ensure the existence of elephants from habitat loss, unpredicted disaster and/or diseases. In addition, regular inspection and monitoring shall be made to ensure effective arrangement for medicines, feeds, and sheds for the health and security of the elephants.
- 6.10 An arrangement shall be made towards using also the permitted domesticated elephants for tourism purpose within the protected areas based on the designated route, time, and fee. Certain amount of fee generated from such activities shall be made available for breeding and management purpose of the elephants kept under the government camps.
- 6.11 The Elephant Management Rules 2022 shall be revised and amended as necessary for the implementation of procedures related to issuance of permit for private elephants carrying tourist, fee thereof, monitoring and control, designated areas for tourists, and number.

### **Task Forces for the Implementation of the Policy**

The following two Task Forces shall submit suggestions within the conceptual framework of the approved policy to on procedures and institutional improvement for implementation of the Domesticated Elephant Management Policy 2003.

#### **(a) Related to Elephant Safari**

- (1) With regard to elephant safari in protected areas, the following Task Force has been constituted to fix the movement route, time, number of elephants to be permitted, fee thereof, etc.

(a) Joint-Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation	Coordinator
(b) Deputy Director General, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation	Member
(c) Chairman, Hotel Association of Nepal	Member

**(b) Related to the Management of Elephant Breeding Centre**

(1) The following Task Force has been constituted for the purpose of regular inspection and monitoring to ensure effective and scientific arrangement of medicines, feeds, and sheds for the health and security of the domesticated elephants mobilised at the government level in Elephant Breeding Centre, and for appropriate management of hattisars, and elephants kept at hattisars and private sector.

(a) Director General, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation	Coordinator
(b) Representative, National Planning Commission	Member
(c) Representative, Ministry of Finance	Member
(d) Livestock Health Specialist (one) nominated by the department	Member
(e) Coordinator, Buffer Zone Development Forum	Member

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