



## IEF INTERIM REPORT 2022

PEACE Project Eastern Area Conflict Mitigation Program



**Project duration: June 2022 to January 2023**

### **PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR**

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## CONSERVATION NEEDS

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The human-elephant conflicts in the Kunene/Erongo Regions are a result of competition between wildlife, humans, and their livestock for resources such as water, food, and space. Most of the conflicts have led to the decline in elephant numbers which has been a cause for concern. The people in the area around the Omatjete settlement have been very vocal on the removal of elephants from their villages since 2010. We realized that people react the way they do towards elephants because they are frightened and frustrated by elephants. Elephants moved into the area around five years ago due to suspected draughts in the western areas (Garstang et al, 2014). And when they did, fear quickly spread like a wildfire. Stories of how vicious elephants are, went around and this was mistakenly proven “to be true” when elephants destroyed people’s homes in search of water and food. As problem elephant permits are issued depending on conflict intensity, education and training have a direct impact on the lives of the elephants. The more people are empowered to help themselves and avoid conflicts, the fewer elephants get destroyed. Our two Elephant Guards in the Omatjete area have been working non-stop since April this year, conducting safety trainings and attending to conflict needs. At a recent Elephant Management Plan meeting organised by the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT), the traditional leadership in the area expressed gratitude for all the work that EHRA and the PEACE Project has been doing in the area.

### **Goals and Objectives**

Our goal is to secure the long-term survival of Namibia’s desert-adapted elephants by alleviating human-elephant conflict and promoting a mutually beneficial relationship between people living in communal areas and their elephants.

Objectives:

1. Equipping 150 community members in rural villages with the essential knowledge to prevent HEC.
  - Trainings with a total of 55 community members from 3 HEC-affected villages in our project area on HEC mitigation tools including tested elephant repellents (e.g. chili-based solutions, flashing lights) and physical protection methods (e.g. walls) as well as basic elephant behaviour and safety principles. Elephant education safaris have been conducted to replace fear with understanding that elephants are sentient and calm animals.
2. To train 50 rural women who run households to apply HEC methods and safe defence strategies during 1-day practical mitigation workshops.
  - 1-day practical HEC mitigation workshops have been conducted with 80 women that are key figures in their households and that cannot attend the 3-day courses. The workshop is designed to teach elephant safety basics, and prepare and apply affordable HEC methods (same as above).
3. To engage 150 school learners and teachers from elephant conflict-affected areas in conservation-based learning programs.
  - In April, we held a 3-day Elephant Safety course for 20 learners and teachers at Okongwe Primary School which offered thought-provoking workshops about conservation, the importance of it and how to start conserving elephants from a young age. Learners also

learned how to stay safe during elephant encounters at their schools and hostels, how to react when elephants come to their homes and how to avoid elephant conflict in their villages.

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## **PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED**

There were no problems regarding the technical aspects of the project. The only issue is a delay in the start date of the project because EHRA had received other funding from IEF last year, which was also delayed in completion. This cycle of delay has put our current PEACE project under pressure to spend the money on time so that further delays will not be caused.

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## **IMPACTS ON HUMANS AND ELEPHANTS**

Most people, especially women, in the Omatjete area have come to realise the benefit that living with elephants can have. Most of them take advantage of the tourist driving by on the main road to Damaraland in the west. Many families have started small vegetable gardens, and sell things like jams, tomato pastes and chilli sauces. Also, in villages surrounding Omatjete, people have benefited from EHRA's other projects like the solar water pumps and elephant extension dams. People understand that if it wasn't for elephants in the area, they wouldn't have had these financial benefits.

Due to the trainings, people no longer angrily demand the removal of elephants in the area. Rather, they want to start a conservancy in the area which would encourage conservation and the generation of income from wildlife tourism and sustainable hunting.

### **MAJOR FINDINGS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

We found that women prefer to be trained separately from men and prefer the one-day courses to the three-day trainings. Here, they attended with children and were free to ask questions and express themselves.

- Three one-day courses for women and goat herders which 12 training sessions with 123 participants.
- 80 women trained and empowered through the one-day trainings.
- 98 chilli cakes made and 3 vegetable gardens protected with chilli fence during trainings.
- 20 school learners were trained on how to behave around elephants and how to protect themselves from elephants during a safety school weekend.
- 12 community members were trained during a three-day safety and conflict mitigation seminar.

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## **HUMAN INTEREST STORY**

In early March during our 8-day Elephant Guard training, we were observing the young female elephant Carissa who had just given birth to our first surviving baby elephant since 2014, called Fiori. Carissa was standing with her mom, Duchess, and grandma was very protective of baby Fiori. While

observing them, Taiwin, one of our Elephant Guards (who took a keen interest in Duchess) mentioned that Duchess' mammary glands looked swollen, and asked if she was pregnant (this was a great observation and not one untrained people make quickly. We were proud of his ability to identify potential pregnancy so swiftly). A week later, EHRA's patrol team reported that Duchess had given birth. Taiwin had the honour of naming the calf /Namtani, which in the local Damara language means "I will love". During our second Elephant Guard training, Taiwin observed that /Namtani was limping and didn't look too well. We continued monitoring him, and every day Taiwin expressed his concern for the elephant calf. Once the PEACE training came to an end, the patrol team continued observation and a vet was called in. She concluded that it was best to not intervene because /Namtani was drinking and playing with Fiori. Sadly, a week later, /Namtani was no longer with the herd, reason to believe that he had died. When I called Taiwin to tell him the sad news, he was clearly heartbroken and his response was "whom will I love now"?



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## ASSOCIATE ORGANISATIONS

- Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism – governing environmental body, partners with EHRA in mitigating conflict and finding solutions to HEC.
- Otjimboyo conservancy, Sorris Sorris conservancy, Ohungu conservancy, Khoro Goreb conservancy – Partner conservancies, help with picking participants for training and assist financially or in kind towards trainings.

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## PROJECT SUCCESS AND FUTURE OF PROJECT

Project success is evaluated based on community demand for trainings and the response after the training. The demand for the one-day trainings have gone up immensely, and we currently have 6 booked trainings for the next coming three months. For as long as funding is available and Human-Elephant Conflict exists in North-Western Namibia, the PEACE project will continue to foster mutual beneficial relationships between people and elephants by empowering community people through education and working to conserve the desert dwelling elephants of Namibia.

## FINANCIAL BREAK DOWN

DESCRIPTION		QUANTITY	UNIT	AMOUNT (U\$)
<b><i>One day safety training.</i></b>	Food	12	50	600
	Fuel	3	100	300
	Chillie	12	15	180
	Wages project leader	3	180	540
<b><i>Three-day community training.</i></b>	Food	1	260	260
	Fuel	1	200	200
	Wages project manager	1	100	100
<b><i>School weekend seminar.</i></b>	Food	1	300	300
	Printing	1	40	40
	Fuel	1	100	100
TOTAL				<b>U\$2620</b>
AVAILABLE FUNDS				<b>U\$2370</b>