



**Final Report 2020**

**Conservation Lower Zambezi**

**Project title:** Expansion of the DNPW/CLZ Detection and Tracking Dog Unit to Provide Additional Law Enforcement Support to Elephants and Other Wildlife in the Lower Zambezi.

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**Project Start Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020

**Project completion date:** 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021

**2. Conservation needs this project addressed:**

In response to a surge in wildlife crime and trafficking from 2014 – 2016, DNPW and CLZ recognized the potential law enforcement successes from the use of specialized units and began the process of establishing a K9 Unit and Rapid Response Unit (RRU), as well as developing partnerships with Investigation and Intelligence Units (IIUs) in order to have a more proactive approach and be better informed when conducting operations to ensure a higher success rate.

In 2016, CLZ set up a four man – two dog CLZ/DNPW Detection and Tracking Dog Unit for the Lower Zambezi. The Unit, based at the CLZ Basecamp moves between trafficking ‘hotspots’ in the areas surrounding the LZNP, with the intention to strangle the channels of movement of illegal wildlife products and to act as a deterrent.

Sadly, in June 2019, one of CLZ’s dogs from the K9 Unit died of suspected poisoning when on operation, causing the K9 Unit to be severely saddened and putting stress on the remaining dog in the Unit. In light of the successful track record exhibited from the K9 Unit’s results and having experiences learnt from the previous three years of operation, CLZ determined that the next steps were to source funding to implement another two dogs (trained in detection only) and continue to build capacity within this specialized unit. Thanks to funding from IEF and the Berry Family Trust, this K9 Expansion has been possible.

### **3. Summary of goals and objectives:**

Through funding from IEF and the Berry Family Trust, CLZ was able to support the expansion of the K9 Unit Kennels from a center that was able to house two dogs, to now being able to house four dogs. Through this funding, the procurement of two Belgian Malinois' that were hand selected by Invictus K9, the training consultant that was selected, were brought to Zambia and the Lower Zambezi in March 2020. Equipment was also purchased for the new and old dogs and center as well as the new and old personnel in the Unit. A selection was held to identify another Handler for the Unit and a Kennel Keeper and after the week-long selection process the established expanded Unit began their four-month long training with their instructor. The training included obedience and detection training, environmental acclimation, aircraft and boat familiarisation, and being able to work around distractions such as livestock. The end of the long training process also included low risk operations where the Unit was able to patrol with the guidance from the trainer to help them build their informer network and to understand the dogs' abilities in the field through practical demonstrations. From July 2020 onwards, the newly expanded K9 Unit were fully trained and commenced their full-time operations in the field once more.

In the past, the K9 Unit has patrolled with DNPW officers, but none were designated to them and they always worked with different officers. This brought up issues as some of the officers were scared of the dogs as well as anxiety for the dogs working with unfamiliar faces. Through the re-design of the K9 Unit when planning the expansion, CLZ approached DNPW to request if permanent Attachments could be placed with the K9 Unit as part of the Unit in order to overcome this issue. This was approved by DNPW. From the candidates that were not selected as Handler or Kennel Keeper during the selection, three candidates were selected as Attachments to the K9 Unit, who have become the DNPW/CS officers that patrol with the Unit on every operation. In addition, two more Attachments were selected to join the Unit, making it a 9-person operational team and 10 including the Kennel Assistant. These five selected Attachments were also given a familiarizing training where they learnt how to interact with the dogs and the dogs were given the chance to smell them and remember them. They now patrol with the K9 Unit and having the officer's familiar with the dogs and the dogs comfortable with the officers, have ensured better operations, more trust and less distractions.

### **4. Changes in activities:**

Originally there were supposed to be two instructors from Invictus K9 conducting an 8-week training course, however due to the second instructor not being able to come into Zambia due to the pandemic, it was decided that the one instructor would conduct a 16-week course to ensure quality training.

### **5. Conservation outcomes:**

- K9 Kennel at the CLZ Basecamp expanded to fit four dogs.
- Number of dogs in the K9 Unit increased from one to three through the purchase of two new detection dogs.
- Number of handlers in the K9 Unit increased from three to four and an additional kennel keeper through the selection and hiring of one new handler and kennel keeper.
- Number of permanent Attachments to the K9 Unit increased from zero to five.
- More equipment purchased to build capacity within the K9 Unit through the procurement of more equipment for the kennels, dogs and handlers.
- New dogs being trained in detection and original dog undergoing refresher training. New handler, Kennel Keeper and Attachments being trained and original handlers undergoing refresher training.
- Increased number of operations due to more personnel and capacity within the Unit. From July to December 2019 and 2020, 407 man-days were conducted and 980 man-days respectively.

- The unit have increased their geographical coverage. From July to December 2020 they averaged 3,000km per month which was a 7% increase from the same period in 2019.
- Increased number of arrests as a result of increased capacity. From July to December 2019 and 2020, the K9 Unit arrested 18 and 22 people respectively.

The Handlers of the K9 Unit believe that the expansion of the Unit has made their job in the field simpler. With three dogs, they are able to conduct operations starting strong every time, because while two dogs are out on operation, one is in camp being rested and trained, so when the next operation is conducted, that dog is fresh and ready to work and will keep up a high standard during the operation, while another dog gets the chance to take a break. Attachments have also enabled more efficient operations, as it allows the Handlers to concentrate on the dogs fully while conducting searches, and the Attachments are able to focus on the security of the handlers and observe the environment. This is for situations such as vehicle check points, where the Handlers and dogs are searching vehicles and the Attachments are ensuring other cars are not driving off or people running away etc. the Attachments are also there to ensure that if anything happens during an operation there are more law enforcement people to support the dogs and Handlers.

### **6. Communities and elephants impacted by this project:**

Through the expanded K9 Unit, there are a total of 10 local Zambian people employed by CLZ and DNPW. 4 people employed by CLZ (1 Handler, 2 Attachments and 1 Kennel Keeper) and 6 people employed by DNPW (3 Handlers and 3 Attachments). The training they have undergone through this funding has enabled them with advanced skills and knowledge, which has built capacity within the local people. One of the biggest impacts to communities through the K9 Unit was the ability for them to retain jobs during an extremely difficult year when most of their family members and friends from the communities did not have jobs due to COVID-19 affecting tourism and businesses significantly. Thus, these community members from the K9 Unit were able to continue to help provide for their families during a difficult 2020.

While it is difficult to directly relate this funding to an exact number of elephants impacted, the main goal of the K9 Unit is to combat poaching and put a stop to the illegal wildlife trade, thus protecting all the elephants and other wildlife in the Lower Zambezi. Lower Zambezi has a stronghold population of elephants that roam freely between Zambia and Zimbabwe. According to the most recent census of the elephant population (DNPW 2016), the Lower Zambezi National Park alone, an area of around 4,000km<sup>2</sup> is home to an estimated 1,125 elephants.

### **7. Problems:**

*COVID-19:* While COVID-19 suspended or slowed down a number of CLZ's activities, the K9 Unit expansion continued due to being able to bring in a trainer and dogs before travel bans were enforced. The handlers and trainer were all operating with standard operating procedures in place to protect themselves during this time. As mentioned in Section 4 above, only one instructor was able to come into Zambia in time to conduct the training and therefore it was extended to a 16-week course. In addition, some of the equipment ordered was not delivered as it was supposed to come in with the second trainer. This was resolved as the trainer sent the equipment through the postal system, however with shipping and receiving costs involved.

*Staff Rosters:* Originally, CLZ had two dogs and four handlers, and at any given time there were three handlers on duty and they would all three leave the CLZ Basecamp with the two dogs that had fitted kennels in the back of the vehicle, and go out on operation. Challenges came in through the growth of the Unit when, after the training was done and it was time to start operating, the rosters had to change significantly to incorporate the increased capacity. With the expansion of the Unit to three dogs, this now meant that while two dogs would be taken on operation, there would always be at least one dog remaining at the CLZ Basecamp and thus a person in

the Unit would also be required to stay behind in order to take care of and train the dog. This issue was resolved by creating a staff roster where monthly, people's time off are considered and that operations can be conducted with two dogs and the appropriate number of Handlers and Attachments, as well as ensure that there is always a caretaker for the remaining dog at the CLZ Basecamp continuing to do training with the dog. It is also ensured that while the different dogs have their various strengths that are assessed before deciding which dog should go out due to the plans of that operation, that each dog gets an opportunity to go on operation and work.

*Unforeseen differences between the new and the old dogs:* One of the new dogs (Hammer) is a taller dog than the others, therefore he has trouble fitting into the already built-in crates in the vehicle. CLZ is addressing this by customizing one of the crates to be bigger in order to make it more comfortable for Hammer. For the time being, he is only in the crate when being transported somewhere and the Handlers are ensuring that he is kept outside as much as possible. In addition, the two new dogs Hammer and Kalo are a lot more excitable and energetic than the other dogs, therefore new customized and more durable tents were ordered for the dogs as the two kept ripping through and damaging the tents they slept in while on operation. Hammer also eats much more than the other dogs as he is a younger, higher energy and larger dog and therefore more food is now carried on operations and planned for during procurement.

While all these things may have been unforeseen issues, they have not hindered the overall impact of the project as solutions have been put in place to ensure the health of the dogs and good conditions to carry out their work.

**8. Success of the project (short and long-term goals):**

The K9 Unit have been operating throughout 2020, however from March to June 2020 they were mostly training. Since being deployed in the field after training in July 2020, the newly expanded K9 Unit have been working hard and their efforts have been seen through their successes:

Patrol Statistics for the K9 Unit from January – December 2020						
Month	Man-Days	Suspects	Firearms	Illegal Ivory	Ammunition	Bush Meat
January	43	6	5	0	2	50.72 kg
February	55	0	0	0	0	0
March	98	0	0	0	0	0
April	94	0	0	0	0	0
May	93	0	0	0	0	0
June	94	2	0	0	0	2 kg
July	190	6	0	0	0	110 kg
August	167	43	0	1	0	100 kg
September	142	0	0	0	0	0
October	179	3	0	0	0	23 kg
November	133	6	4	0	10	134.8 kg
December	169	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1457</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>420.52 kg</b>

*Short-term Goals*

- Improved geographic law enforcement coverage of LZNP and Chiawa GMA deterring poaching;
- Increased ability to predict poaching incidences (through informers) and respond to them proactively;
- Increased illegal activity encounters and recoveries of weapons and/or meat and ivory;
- Increased numbers of arrests;
- Increased detection of poacher's camps and snares.

## *Long-term Goals*

- Long term reduction of illegal activities;
- Increase in successes in the field;
- Decrease in elephant poaching.

### **9. Next steps:**

In 2021, the K9 Unit will continue to operate in the field and with the added personnel and capacity, the goal is to see higher results contributing to curbing the illegal wildlife trade.

### **10. Human interest story:**

To quote Adamson Phiri, the Lead Trainer and Handler of all the dogs in the K9 Unit on his experience with the expansion of the Unit and the most exciting discovery: "The new dogs work differently from the previous dogs we have had and that has been very exciting and has also made the job more interesting for me and the other handlers. It is amazing to learn about the dogs and the way that we can train them to be able to help us in the field. We love them!" The bonds that have formed between the dogs and the handlers and how they work together in such an important job is what leaves everyone fascinated about the K9 Unit. The connections are priceless and the fact that the Unit take pride in their canine companions and their jobs makes them stronger and more successful.

### **11. Organisations associated with this project:**

Lion Recovery Fund (LRF) – Donor (36% of grant total)

IUCN Save Our Species Rapid Action Grants, Co-funded by the European Union – Donor (33% of grant total)

Adrian Scripps Ltd – Donor (7% of grant total)

### **12. Financial report:**

Please find attached excel spreadsheet with financial expenditure for January 2020 - January 2021.

### **13. Photos:**

To be sent separately. See below for credits and captions:

1. Michael Hensman – The newly expanded Kennels
2. Michael Hensman – Handler Sunday Kaonga and K9 Hammer outside the Kennels with the donor plaques
3. Michael Hensman – Handler Peter Tembo and K9 Kalo at the Vet
4. Michael Hensman – Handler Sheleni Phiri and K9 Bar during target training
5. Michael Hensman – Handlers Sunday Kaonga and Sheleni Phiri, Attachements Lydia Banda and Noria Mafuta and K9 Bar in the field confiscating snares.

### **14. Video clip:**

To be sent separately.

**15. Publishing/presenting project findings:**

No, these findings will not be presented at any conferences or symposia.

**16. Media coverage:**

No, this project has not received any media coverage.

**17. Websites/social media:**

CLZ Website - [www.conservationlowerzambezi.org](http://www.conservationlowerzambezi.org)

CLZ Facebook – [www.facebook.com/CLZAfrica](http://www.facebook.com/CLZAfrica)

CLZ Twitter – [www.twitter.com/CLZAfrica](http://www.twitter.com/CLZAfrica)

CLZ Instagram – [www.instagram.com/conservation\\_lower\\_zambezi](http://www.instagram.com/conservation_lower_zambezi)

CLZ Stories – <https://www.conservationlowerzambezi.org/working-dog-wonders-and-its-continuity/>

CLZ Stories – <https://www.conservationlowerzambezi.org/training-an-effective-specialised-k9-unit/>

CLZ Stories – <https://www.conservationlowerzambezi.org/a-specialised-k9-unit-in-action/>

CLZ Newsletters – <https://www.conservationlowerzambezi.org/newsletters/>