



INTERNATIONAL ELEPHANT FOUNDATION.ORG

Interim Report July 2021 Conservation Lower Zambezi

Project title: Support to DNPW/CLZ K9 Unit Operations in Lower Zambezi, Zambia

Investigators, affiliation and contact information:

Ian Stevenson
Chief Executive Officer
Conservation Lower Zambezi
PO Box 30972
Lusaka 10101, Zambia
ian@conservationlowerzambezi.org
www.conservationlowerzambezi.org

Nikita Iyengar
General Manager
Conservation Lower Zambezi
PO Box 30972
Lusaka 10101, Zambia
nikita@conservationlowerzambezi.org
www.conservationlowerzambezi.org

Project Start Date: 1st January 2021

Anticipated completion date: 31st December 2021



2. Abstract:

While law enforcement efforts within the Lower Zambezi have increased significantly over the years, resulting in a notable reduction in the number of elephants poached, sustained efforts to maintain wildlife protection are essential in order for elephant and other species' populations to remain strong. Similarly, while demand and value for certain wildlife products such as ivory have decreased, other wildlife products have increased and there is still an urgent need to disrupt these networks and ensure convictions of wildlife traffickers.

In addition, during these unprecedented times of COVID-19 when communities are facing extreme hardships, there has been a rise in poaching and it is imperative to continue efforts to ensure the protection of wildlife while simultaneously supporting the communities.

Funding from The Berry Family Trust through IEF is being used to support the K9 Unit, ensuring continued conservation of elephants and other key wildlife species in the Lower Zambezi.

3. Narrative

3.1 Actions taken to achieve objective

The overall goal of this project is for the K9 Unit to continue their operations around the Lower Zambezi National Park, so that while boots on the ground patrols protect the park from the inside, the K9 Unit, working with specialized units such as the Rapid Response Unit and the Investigations and Intelligence Units, will intercept the movement of the illegal wildlife trade on major known road networks.

In the reporting period January – June 2021, CLZ supported a total of 937 patrol man-days for the K9 Unit (Please see Table 1). During this period, the K9 Unit have been provided with equipment, rations, incentives, communications, fuel and transport costs for their monthly operations. On average, they have conducted three 10-day operations per month, 6-days around the LZNP, setting up roadblocks and searching vehicles on known trafficking routes, as well as following intel and conducting Village Sweeps and doing joint operations with the IIUs and RRU, and 4-days spent training in camp.

In March 2021, the K9 Unit underwent a refresher training. An instructor from Invictus K9 visited the CLZ Base Camp for two-weeks, which was aimed at building upon their existing skills, identify areas of further training on the dogs and communicating those training methods to the handlers. The refresher course involved both classroom discussions as well as majority of the time spent on practical demonstrations and field work. The Unit were able to learn various tactics from the instructor while on operation during this time. One notable activity during this training period was the two newer dogs (Kalo and Hammer) were introduced to night tracking where they were taught to track a scent in the dark. This has equipped the dogs and handlers with the skills to be able to respond to information at any time of day or night.

Also in March 2021, CLZ had a special helicopter operation where the K9 Unit were involved. Small-scale panning in the escarpment has become a major threat within that region (including Zambia and Zimbabwe), and continued efforts are being made to address this problem, although it is being uncovered as a political issue. This helicopter operation played a key role in continuing to monitor the illegal small-scale mining in the area, and a trip was used to showcase to the DNPW Area Warden and Senior Warden the extent of the mining in order to shed light on the severity of the threat for further management decisions. During the mining infiltration through the helicopter operations, 7 suspects were apprehended and mining equipment confiscated with support from the K9 Unit. The dogs have been familiarized with going into the helicopter and are have become comfortable with it.

In April 2021, K9 Unit and the Rapid Response Unit underwent further training covering topics such as values and standards, leadership, operational planning, basic fitness, and close target reconnaissance, to ensure the teams continue to operate at the highest standards possible.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
K9 Unit	49	165	227	186	160	150	X	X	X	X	X	X

3.2 Activities differing from original proposal

No activities have changed from the original proposal. However, Zambia is currently experiencing its third and most deadly wave of COVID-19 which has affected CLZ staff and the communities. Therefore, while operations are ongoing, protocols for health safety are being enforced. Due to the nature in which they operate, the K9 Unit have their own vehicle as well as accommodation when at the CLZ Basecamp, therefore it has made it possible for them to continue operating while still isolating from other members of staff.

3.3 Conservation outcomes for wildlife and humans

- Continued operations despite COVID-19 financial shortfalls;
- Sustained manpower to cover a wide geographical range;
- Improved law enforcement efforts around the LZNP and strangling the illegal wildlife trade routes.

There are approximately 1,125 elephants in the Lower Zambezi National Park and surrounding areas, this number is impacted by our project however, the entire Lower Zambezi ecosystem (spanning Zimbabwe and Mozambique) is said to be home to over 20,000 elephants, one of the last population strongholds in Africa. IEF support is ensuring the protection of these elephants including all other wildlife in the LZNP and GMAs.

3.4 Meeting goals

The goal of this project as outlined in the grant application is to increase support and activities around Lusaka Province to deter poaching and trade in hot spot areas, by proactively increasing coverage of major transit routes while simultaneously improving intelligence led operations for the K9 Unit. This reporting period, the K9 Unit not only continued to weave informer networks and proactively operate based on intel, they also attended trainings that re-emphasised these skills as well as showed them new ways in which to efficiently operate. The K9 Unit is on target to continue meeting these goals for the remainder of the grant.

3.5 Major findings

While the K9 Unit have continued to operate within the reporting period, it is clear from Table 2 below, that their successes have been lower than average for this length of time. This can be attributed to the K9 Unit being on annual leave for most on January, as well as them being out of the field during the various training courses that they were involved in. Other contributing factors include the issues faced in terms of the dog's health as well as well as the man-power problems within the unit as described in section 3.6 below.

3.6 Problems occurred

While working with the dogs have proved extremely beneficial and their capabilities are exposing new ways in which to bring down poachers and the illegal wildlife trade, one of the biggest risks faced when operating a K9 Unit is the health of the dogs. Unfortunately, during this reporting period, all three dogs have faced health issues. Kalo had a tick-borne disease Ehrlichia in February, which was hard to establish and took a while, but he has fully recovered now. The K9 Unit already have a rigorously regime of Drontal, Bravecto and Advocate which are given to the dogs for ticks and fleas, as well as them being sprayed with a fly-spray every time they leave the kennel or the crate (which is protected with netting). In addition, the handlers are instructed to check the dogs even more thoroughly for ticks. In order to increase efforts on this however, multiple discussions have been had with the vet on the procurement of special collars for the dogs to help protect them further from fleas and ticks.

In May, Hammer had trypanosomiasis, which is caused by tsetse flies, which was detected and treated in time and he has now fully recovered. The K9 Unit have a number of protocols to follow to keep the dogs protected from tsetse flies, including tsetse targets put up all around the CLZ basecamp (which are re-sprayed every 10 days) as well as ensuring the dogs are always in their kennels or tents or vehicle holds which are protected with screens to keep out tsetse flies, and when they are brought outside, they are sprayed first. Both times the vet in Lusaka has been amazing in being ready to see and treat the dogs at any time of the day any day of the week.

Lastly, Bar, one of CLZ's oldest dog was experiencing major health issues. He had been vomiting violently and the vet could not find the reason for it. For weeks it went on at random times (luckily not every day) and he was sent back and forth to the vet in Lusaka multiple times, but nothing was found. Finally, after doing x-rays, digital x-rays, scans and even an MRI on the dog, it was identified that he had a piece of wire in his abdomen which could have been causing the vomiting. In June, Bar was operated on and the piece of wire was found and removed, and since then he is recovering well and improving daily. From his vomiting however, he seemed to have remained with a herniated disc in his back which is being worked on through exercises and physiotherapy rather than putting him through an operation on his back which would need to be done in South Africa.

During this reporting period, the K9 Unit have also experienced some staffing and man-power issues between the Unit members. At the start of January (beginning of the grant), the K9 Unit consisted of 3 dogs, 4 handlers, 5 attachments and 1 kennel keeper (who is non-operational). During this period, due to personal reasons, one of the female attachments is now out of the Unit, leaving them one person short, but still with enough people to fully operate. However, there have been a number of trainings outside of CLZ that the Unit members have been involved in, therefore removing them from the K9 Unit roster and causing a few man-power issues. Regardless of these issues, the K9 Unit has still been able to ensure enough handlers and attachments are available and have continued their operations.

3.7 Evaluation

Number of poached elephants

Over the first six months of 2021 the number of poached elephants recorded is at an all-time low, where no elephants have been poached in the LZNP or GMAs. CLZ aim to continue efforts in order to keep this level.

Number of Successes

Over the grant period, despite problems faced, the K9 Unit continued to operate and some notable successes include:

- K9 Kalo finding bushmeat hidden underneath a number of bags in a trailer

- Illegal miners apprehended and mining equipment confiscated
- Suspect apprehended in possession of 3 pairs of ivory

Month	Suspects	Illegal Miners	Firearms	Illegal Ivory	Snares	Poacher's Camps	Bushmeat (kgs)	Other Recoveries
Jan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Feb	0	0	0	0	12	0	5	0
Mar	0	7	0	0	0	1	0	0
Apr	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	26
May	1	28	0	6	0	0	0	0
Jun	0	27	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	1	71	0	6	12	1	5	28

4. Conclusion

CLZ will continue to encourage the Unit to perform at their highest standard. Through the various trainings that the Unit underwent throughout this reporting period, the Unit are confident they will use their learnt skills in the field to continue to grow their results and will work hard to protect the wildlife in the Lower Zambezi.

5. Budget

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

6. Deliverables

Photos to be sent separately. See below for credits and captions:

1. Francois D'elbee – K9 Unit on patrol
2. Francois D'elbee – K9 Unit on patrol
3. Francois D'elbee – K9 Hammer and Hander Sunday
4. Francois D'elbee – K9 Bar and Handler Adamson
5. Francois D'elbee – K9 Kalo and Hander Peter

7. Acknowledgements

These findings will not be presented at any conferences or symposia.

This project has not received any media coverage.

CLZ Website - www.conservationlowerzambezi.org

CLZ Facebook – www.facebook.com/CLZAfrica

CLZ Twitter – www.twitter.com/CLZAfrica

CLZ Instagram – www.instagram.com/conservation_lower_zambezi