



INTERNATIONAL ELEPHANT FOUNDATION.ORG

Interim Report July 2022
Conservation Lower Zambezi

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

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Anticipated completion date: 31st December 2022



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 continued efforts to ensure the protection of wildlife while simultaneously supporting the communities is essential.

DNPW remains critically underfunded which has led to severe shortages in manpower, limited mobility and limited access to funds for operational costs. This severely restricts DNPW in effectively fulfilling its mandate as the local wildlife protection authority, and negatively impacts on the morale and dedication of its officers and staff. DNPW relies heavily on support received from CLZ and its donors, this partnership was initiated over 20 years ago. This support is multi-faceted and includes: support to foot patrols and scout equipment replacement, aerial patrolling, support to specialized anti-poaching units (canine, rapid response and intelligence gathering), 24/7 radio communication, database management of patrol and law enforcement data, court case tracking, and hosting of the Annual Operations Meeting. CLZ employs and manages a Community Scout unit, a Rufunsa Community Scout Unit and a Female Community Scout Unit, these units add manpower to DNPW scout teams. These efforts have led to significant reductions in poaching over the last 5 years: 28, 21, 11, 11, and 17 elephants poached in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 respectively. Sustained efforts are required to ensure that poaching levels are managed.

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 in and around the Lower Zambezi National Park, combining boots on the ground K9 Unit patrols with other specialized units such as the Rapid Deployment Team (RDT) and the Investigations and Intelligence Units (IIU), to intercept the movement of the illegal wildlife trade along major known trade networks in the Lower Zambezi Management Area Unit.

In the reporting period January – June 2022, CLZ supported a total of 1,041 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 RDT, and 4-days spent training in camp.

In March, the K9 Unit went through a two-week refresher training course and DNPW Wildlife Police Officers and CLZ supported Community Scouts attended a Basic Refresher Course. DNPW and CLZ have engaged with Resolve Wildlife to conduct these trainings as part of the new long-term and holistic training programme for the Lower Zambezi. This programme provides trainings for specialised units while also increasing skills and capacity for rangers on the ground. All were put through various physical fitness and performance-based tests, including realistic scenarios in the field. This type of training helps teams learn how to make the right decisions under pressure to ensure the safeguarding of all people and animals.

In addition to the training in March; DNPW, CLZ's K9 Unit, and the Rapid Deployment Team conducted a joint special operation to address the rising threat to the Lower Zambezi National Park from illegal mining in the escarpment. Small-scale mining in the escarpment continues to be a major threat within the region (including Malawi and Zimbabwe), and efforts are being made to address this problem, although this is a socio-economically complex issue. This practice threatens wildlife, ecosystems, and the environment through habitat degradation, erosion, and increased illegal activities such as bushmeat poaching inside the park. During the special operation in March, 83 miners were arrested with the goal of stopping this encroachment. CLZ is exploring ways to provide alternative livelihood solutions for local communities who need more sustainable and legal opportunities as a long-term solution to this problem.

In April 2022, CLZ had a special helicopter operation involving the K9 Unit. This combined operation played a critical role in the continued monitoring of small-scale mining in the area. During the mining infiltration through the helicopter operations, a further 3 suspects were apprehended, and mining equipment confiscated with support from the K9 Unit. The dogs are now familiar with the helicopter ensuring they are comfortable travelling in and being around the chopper. Furthermore, in April, 36 wire snares were recovered in the Rufunsa GMA in a combined operation with the RDT.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
K9 Unit	137	159	203	165	197	180	X	X	X	X	X	X

3.2 Activities differing from original proposal

No activities have changed from the original proposal. However, Zambia continues to experience the effects of COVID-19 which has affected CLZ staff and the communities within the Lower Zambezi. 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 Project 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 Problems and Outcomes

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-born 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 June, Bar was diagnosed with trypanosomiasis, which is caused by tsetse flies, it was detected and treated early, and he has made a full recovery. The K9 Unit have multiple protocols 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 with a fly deterrent.

3.6 Evaluation and Accomplishments

Number of poached elephants

4 elephants were poached during the first 6 months of 2022, 3 of these animals were poached in the LZNP and 1 in the GMA. CLZs aim, as always, is for zero poached elephants, however, the vast area of the LZNP and surrounding GMAs in combination with a growing human population and increased human encroachment make this extremely challenging. CLZ continue to work alongside DNPW to mitigate these incidences wherever possible.

Number of successes

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

- 79kg of bushmeat recovered during K9 Unit operations in February and a further 156kg recovered when the K9 Unit combined with an organization wide chopper operation in April.
- 83 illegal miners apprehended, and mining equipment confiscated in a combined effort between the K9 Unit and the Rapid Deployment Team.
- 3 suspects apprehended in May for the illegal possession of firearms and 1 further suspect apprehended in May for the illegal possession of one live baboon.

Table 2: Summary of illegal activity incidents in the LZNP and surrounding GMAs from January-June 2022

Month	Suspects	Illegal Miners Arrests	Firearms	Amunition	Snares	Poachers Camp	Bushmeat (Kgs)	Other Recoveries
Jan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Feb	3	0	0	0	1	0	79	0
Mar	2	83	3	1	0	0	0	391
Apr	2	3	2	3	40	12	156	4
May	4	0	8	0	0	0	0	0
Jun	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	11	86	13	4	41	12	235	395

4. Conclusion

The K9 Unit continue to grow in both practical experience and learnt knowledge. Continued training is a key element of this growth, improving results in the field, and leading to improved wildlife protection and law enforcement in the Lower Zambezi.

5. Budget

Please find attached excel spreadsheet with financial expenditure for January-June 2022

6. Deliverables

Photos sent separately. See below for credits and captions:

1. Michael Hensman – K9 patrol in the escarpment (sunset)
2. Michael Hensman – K9 Unit
3. Francois D’elbee – K9 Unit being led by Bar
4. Pie Aerts – Sunday & Adamson conducting a training drill with Hammer
5. Scott Ramsay – K9 Bar and handler training

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