



Darwin Initiative, Darwin Plus and Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund Covid-19 Rapid Response Round - Final Report

Project reference	CV19RR11
If linked with an ongoing project, please include that project reference here (e.g. IWT001)	IWT063
Project title	Sustaining Law-Enforcement Efforts and Sustainable Community Interventions Impacted by COVID-19
Country/ies	Zambia
Lead organisation	Conservation Lower Zambezi
Partner institution(s)	N/A
Start/end date of project	01/01/2021 – 31/03/2021
Which fund was this project relevant to?	Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund
Grant value (£)	£33,699.12
Project Leader name	Ian Stevenson
Report author(s) and date	Nikita Iyengar 31/05/2021

1. Project Summary

COVID-19 has had a significant socio-economic impact on Conservation Lower Zambezi (CLZ) and the livelihoods of people in the Chiawa Game Management Area (GMA) of the Lower Zambezi (Figure 1), putting a severe financial strain on both.

Tourism in the area plays a vital role to providing jobs and revenue to the very low-income community members that live in the Chiawa GMA, and due to most tourism operators either closing down or operating at minimum capacity, many people were let go and had no means to provide for themselves and their families.

Through emergency COVID-19 relief grants secured by CLZ in 2020, the organisation was able to support communities with urgent needs during this difficult time, as well as continue law enforcement efforts, however for 2021, annual donors of the organisation had already stipulated their inability to support CLZ at the same level or higher as previous years due to their own financial struggles faced due to the pandemic.

In 2020, there was a 200% increase in snaring of wildlife compared to 2019, as well as an increase in Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) of 50% from 2019 to 2020. While elephant poaching in the Lower Zambezi National Park (LZNP) was the lowest on record in 2020, elephant poaching in the Chiawa GMA went up by 40% in 2020 from the previous year, where the carcasses were being found with fresh drying racks near them and elephants were being found stripped of their meat before their ivory was taken. The increase in these poaching activities can be attributed to the fact that communities were facing a crisis having no jobs or income and were therefore relying on subsistence poaching to sustain themselves and their families.

In addition, aerial surveillance over the Lower Zambezi National Park has indicated an exponential increase in illegal mining resulting in a rise in habitat loss. Anecdotally it is believed that a contributing factor to the increase in mining in 2020 has been due to COVID-19 and more community members being involved due to lack of other options.

This emergency grant from IWTCF is linked to a current IWTCF grant secured by CLZ (IWT063), as it brings an added level of support to two main projects that are already being supported through the IWT063 grant: community scout patrols and community livelihood interventions.

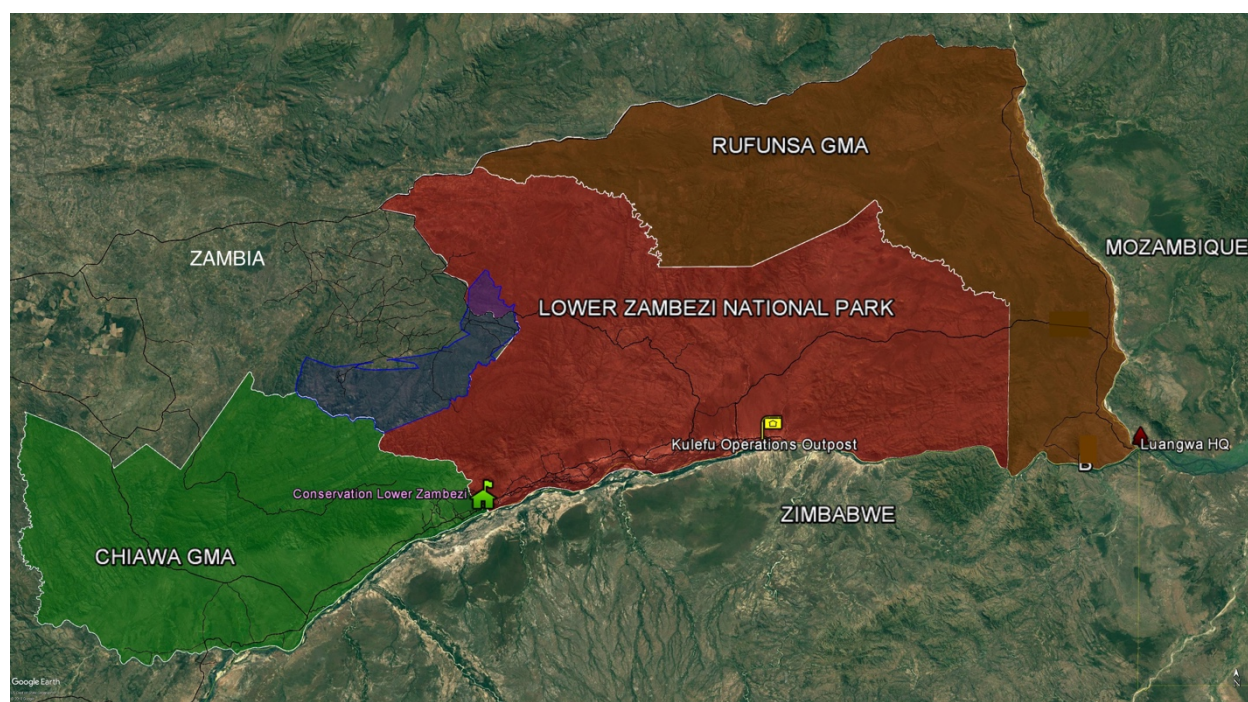


Figure 1: This project focuses on the Lower Zambezi Area Management Unit in Zambia which is in close proximity to key bordering countries Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The focus of the activities conducted by this project are concentrated in the Lower Zambezi National Park (4,092 km²) and the Chiawa Game Management Area (2,344 km²) to the west of the LZNP, which is inhabited with communities affected by IWT, and where the community work through this project is focused. The Conservation Lower Zambezi Basecamp is based right outside the Lower Zambezi National Park in the Chiawa GMA.

2. Project Achievements

The intended outcome of the project was: Sustained law enforcement will contribute to protecting the wildlife being targeted for bushmeat leading to a reduction in wildlife crime in the Lower Zambezi, while simultaneously strengthening sustainable community alternatives/livelihoods.

The objectives of this project were to tackle IWT and encourage economic development within communities heavily affected during COVID-19, with the intention that it will lead to fulfilling the aim of building capacity within community members affected by COVID-19 and IWT in order to live sustainably, while also strengthening law enforcement to reduce IWT. This objective was worked towards through the project activities outlined below.

This project supported two main activities:

1. Support to Community Scout Patrols

CLZ facilitate an average of 8 Community Scout patrols per month, and for the first quarter of 2021, all 24 CS patrols were supported through this emergency grant. From January to March 2021, the Community Scouts conducted 717 man-days and each 5-man 10-day patrol received:

- Food rations water drums and first aid kits;
- Deployment and pull-out transport and movement during patrol;
- VHF radio handset, batteries and 24/7 communications with CLZ's control centre;
- GPS devices for monitoring and data collection (Geographical coverage of patrols is recorded and managed by CLZ with GPS data downloaded and analysed in a Geographical Information System (GIS). Locations of illegal activities will be plotted onto GIS to better manage the effectiveness of patrols. All data is shared with DNPW);
- A brief before patrol and de-brief at end of patrol for data and information collection and management;

- Support from CLZ's aerial patrols and emergency rapid response assistance.

The Community Scout Unit patrols complement the work of, and works in collaboration with, the DNPW patrol teams as well as the K9 Unit, Rapid Response Unit and the Investigations and Intelligence Units in order to bring a high standard of protection to the area. From January to March 2021, through combined efforts from all the units, there have been no elephants poached in the Lower Zambezi National Park or surrounding Game Management Areas. In addition, 22 poachers and illegal miners have been apprehended, and two firearms, 17 pieces of illegal ivory (trafficked from outside the area), five rounds of ammunition and 17 snares have been confiscated. During this time period, CLZ was also able to secure funds to support the CS patrols for the remainder of 2021.

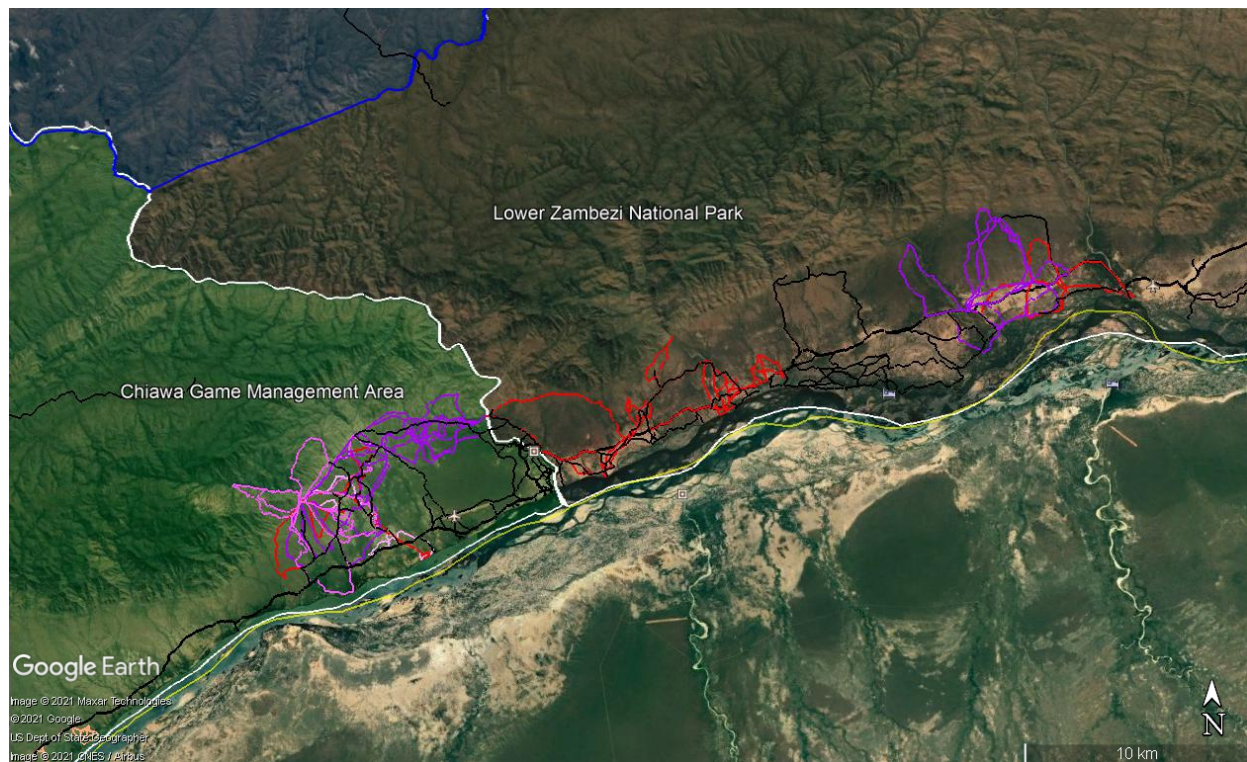


Figure 2: Community Scout Patrols in the Chiawa Game Management Area and the Lower Zambezi National Parks from January to March 2021.

2. Support to Community Livelihood Interventions

Subsistence farming remains a very strong method of income within Chiawa communities and farmers have invested in sophisticated fencing in various villages in order to keep wildlife out of their fields. These farmers however are still facing HWC issues, especially with regards to bringing in water for their fields and encountering elephants, hippos and crocodiles at the Zambezi River as they do so. Following a needs assessment that was conducted in the Chiawa GMA through IWT063 funding in 2020, it was identified that access to safe water was a high priority, therefore in order to support these farmers, funds from this IWTCF grant were used to purchase solar pumping equipment and water tanks for community farms, thus eliminating the threat of wildlife from the river and making the farm more viable and profitable. The equipment provided to the community members was accompanied with a training session on how to maintain and use the solar pumping system, as well as an irrigation course to further enhance the farmers skills and provide higher crop yields and returns. In the original proposal, two water systems (systems include a tank stand, tank and solar pump) were budgeted to be erected in the communities, however with the fluctuation in the exchange rate, CLZ was able to set up a total of five water systems within the Chiawa GMA (figure 3).

These five tank stands have supported a total of 54 farmers (66% of which are women), who have farms ranging from 2.5 acres to 8.6 acres. These farmers have a range of methods to keep wildlife from their fields, such as thorny branches and bushes, wire fencing and polytape fencing (through IWT063), and while there is a level of protection to their crops using these methods, the installation of the tanks and solar pumps to enable them to draw water from the river for their

fields without having to go there, has reduced their exposure to HWC from wildlife encountered by moving back and forth from the river.

From January to March 2021, there was a 57% decrease in snaring incidences compared to the same time period for 2020, while a 43% increase in HWC incidences from January to March 2021 compared to the same time period for 2020 was seen. In 2020 due to COVID-19 causing severe financial stress to the communities, snaring and HWC were high, and while it is still hard to see the impact of the five water systems that have been erected within the communities, a pre and post questionnaire has been developed and ongoing monitoring will be conducted to show their effectiveness over the years.

Women are an undermined group within the Lower Zambezi communities and therefore through all community activities conducted by CLZ, the organisation ensures there is inclusion of women and other minorities in order to empower and give them opportunities to support themselves and their families. Through the installation of these water systems, five communities were selected based on areas where HWC is high and where a number of farmers are based. All five locations are farms where majority of the farmers are women.

Through this project, these farmers have been provided with opportunities to increase their crop yield and therefore their sales and profit, while also adding another level of protection and reducing HWC by cutting out the need to walk distances to the river to get water to their fields. The idea is that this activity would reduce illegal behaviour, thereby decreasing the security risk for all – especially vulnerable groups within communities that may otherwise be encouraged/coerced to be involved in illegal undertakings to make a living (especially during COVID-19 where many have no other options). This ties into the bigger picture of achieving the outcome defined in CLZs IWT063 grant where improved capacity and equipment will ultimately lead to a reduction in wildlife crime in the Lower Zambezi.



Figure 3: Five water systems (tank stands, tanks and solar pumps) installed at five community farms in the Chiawa Game Management Area where Human-Wildlife Conflict reports are high.

3. Lessons learnt

In the original application to IWTCF for this emergency funding, CLZ requested funds to put up two tank stands with solar pumps within community farms. Through the process of obtaining three quotes and speaking to different vendors, including local vendors in order to give more community members opportunities during this difficult time, the cheapest vendor was selected and two tank stands were built and paid for. However, during the process of installing the tank Covid-19 Rapid Response Round Final Report Template 2021

stands, there were a number of issues which led to one stand collapsing and the tank on it being completely broken. Due to this being done by vendors from the community they were unable to compensate for the failed tank stand or to make a replacement one without further payment, thus CLZ did not take any further action with the vendor as they were already in a very vulnerable situation. The second tank stand that they made was therefore not trusted or used either.

Instead, the organisation obtained quotes from vendors in Lusaka for their services and a trusted vendor was secured and the tank stands were ordered. Due to the fluctuating exchange rate from when the application was sent in to when the activity was being conducted, and by going with the cheapest vendor originally, there was an under expenditure on this budget line, therefore using the funds that were pledged to CLZ from IWTCF within this grant, instead of putting up two water systems within community farms, CLZ was able to put up five. While a total of five tank stands, each with tanks and solar pumps have been put in, this grant has paid for seven tank stands and six tanks (two tank stands and one tank which are unusable). The failure of the first two tank stands and one tank was extremely unfortunate and sadly while the organisation was trying to support more community labour (especially during a time when they needed it most) this process showed that going with the cheapest vendor is not always the correct decision and ends up being more expensive in the long term in terms of maintenance or failures. CLZ will however continue to seek community members for labour, however with added caution and now more awareness on reviewing quality of works and capabilities of vendors.

4. Other comments and feedback



Images of one of the five water systems set up in the community. These pictures were taken during the training session which was also an official “opening ceremony” for the five water systems.

Left Image: Tank stand and tank at the community farm with CLZ’s Education and Community Manager (left) and the Chieftainess (right) who was invited as a guest speaker for the opening ceremony.

Right Top Image: Solar panels for the solar system.

Right Bottom Image: Inverter for the solar system.