

MEET OUR HUMAN-WILDLIFE CO-EXISTENCE OFFICERS

THE ZAMBEZI SOCIETY – April 2022

We are delighted to introduce The Zambezi Society's team of Human Wildlife Co-Existence Officers (HWCOs) who are working among rural communities on the southern boundary of the **Charara Safari Area** and in the **Gache Gache** communal area, to help reduce loss of livelihoods caused by conflicts between these people and the wild animals living next door.



Rumbidzai Bukuta (above left) grew up splitting her time between Gache Gache, near Kariba and Bonda in the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe. As a recent graduate in Public Administration, this is Rumbidzai's first job. She applied because of her interest in cultural diversity through community engagements and because this position gave her the opportunity to travel. In her free time, Rumbidzai travels to Bonda to visit her mother and extended family. She loves being a HWCO because it allows her to travel and camp and engage with her community, making a direct positive difference in the area where she grew up in.

David Tatenda Nyirenda (above right) is 30 years old and grew up in the Magunje area - the largest growth point along the southern boundary of the Charara Safari Area. He lives in Magunje with his three-month old baby and wife. He studied agricultural economics and development and his love for fauna and flora made him apply for this position. David enjoys his work as a HWCO because his travels through the communities along the southern boundary allow him to discover new places and discover the natural beauty of the area. He chose to apply for the position as a HWCO because it allows him to stay close to his family while interacting with his community and seeing new places.



Isaac Siakakaye (pictured above left) grew up and lives in the Chiufe Area in Hurungwe District, along the southern boundary of the Charara Safari Area. He is married and has three children - two girls and a boy. Isaac studied Business Management at the University of Zimbabwe. As a HWCO, he enjoys interacting with the community members in his operational area, promoting awareness about human-wildlife conflict, mitigation and co-existence. In his spare time, he enjoys watching soccer. He chose this position to help contribute to the conservation of wildlife resources and help local community members gain insight into co-existence with wild animals, motivated by his own experience living along the Safari Area boundary.

Tafadzwa Kajoto (above right) grew up and lives in the Kajekache area in the western section of the Hurungwe District. Tafadzwa has a teaching background and taught at the Kajekache Primary school. He was also previously employed as a marketing officer. He is married and has two young girls. As a HWCO he finds the aspect of human-wildlife conflict management interesting and likes actively engaging with the community. He enjoys visiting the households and finds the positive response he is getting from the community very rewarding. In his free time, Tafadzwa enjoys watching Nat Geo World and soccer.

In the first quarter of 2022, the four members of this HWC team were tasked with surveying and recording households in the area, to understand perceptions and knowledge of wildlife.. They are also collecting information on historical and current human-wildlife conflict events to identify these incidents within the community (spatially and species-specific). All information has been captured using the SMART data-capture system.

With data already showing a large amount of conflict in some areas, the HWCOs have recently introduced the concept of using trumpet-like Vuvuzelas to alert fellow villagers about wildlife moving through their areas. This helps to raise the alarm and to give advance warning so that livestock can be kraaled and any problem-causing wild animals can be chased away. The Vuvuzelas have been well received, and 40 of these instruments have now been distributed in key conflict areas to the most affected households.

Moving forward, the HWCOs will use motorbikes to patrol their area more effectively and to reach more households. With further training, they will begin to work with community members in affected areas to mitigate further conflict situations - by constructing predator-proof kraals, securing livestock effectively to prevent predation, and making use of chilli bricks and bombs) to deter wildlife.

We will continue to report on the work of the HWC team as this very important community project progresses.