

COMMUNITY WORK TO ASSIST WITH HUMAN–WILDLIFE CO–EXISTENCE

THE ZAMBEZI SOCIETY – July 2022

In April 2022, we introduced The Zambezi Society’s team of [Human Wildlife Co-Existence \(HWC\) Officers](#) who are working among rural communities on the southern boundary of the Charara Safari Area to help reduce loss of livelihoods caused by conflicts between these people and the wild animals they live next door to.



The team was joined, in May 2022, by **Chrispen Chakanaka** (pictured above) who holds a First Class Honours Degree in Tourism and Hospitality and who, after teaching for a while, has worked since 2016 with conservation organisations undertaking HWC work adjacent to Gonarezhou National Park, in Zimbabwe’s SE Lowveld. Chrispen is employed by Zamsoc as the Project Supervisor of our team of HWC Officers, to organise, facilitate and oversee all in-field activities (workshops and implementation of human-wildlife conflict mitigation methods) and to further train the HWCOs in mitigation methods.

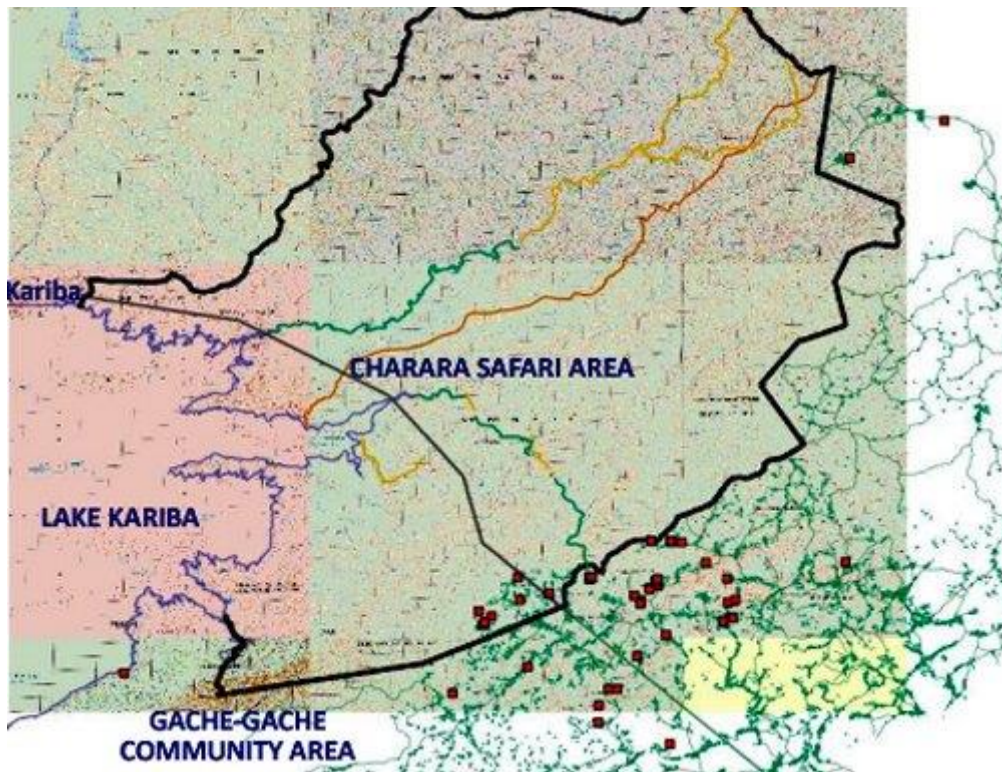
A good deal of progress has been made.

Motorbikes have been purchased for the HWC team with funding from the [Lion Recovery Fund](#) and the [Elephant Crisis Fund](#). These will greatly assist with response time to HWC incidences and will also help to increasing monthly coverage of the area.

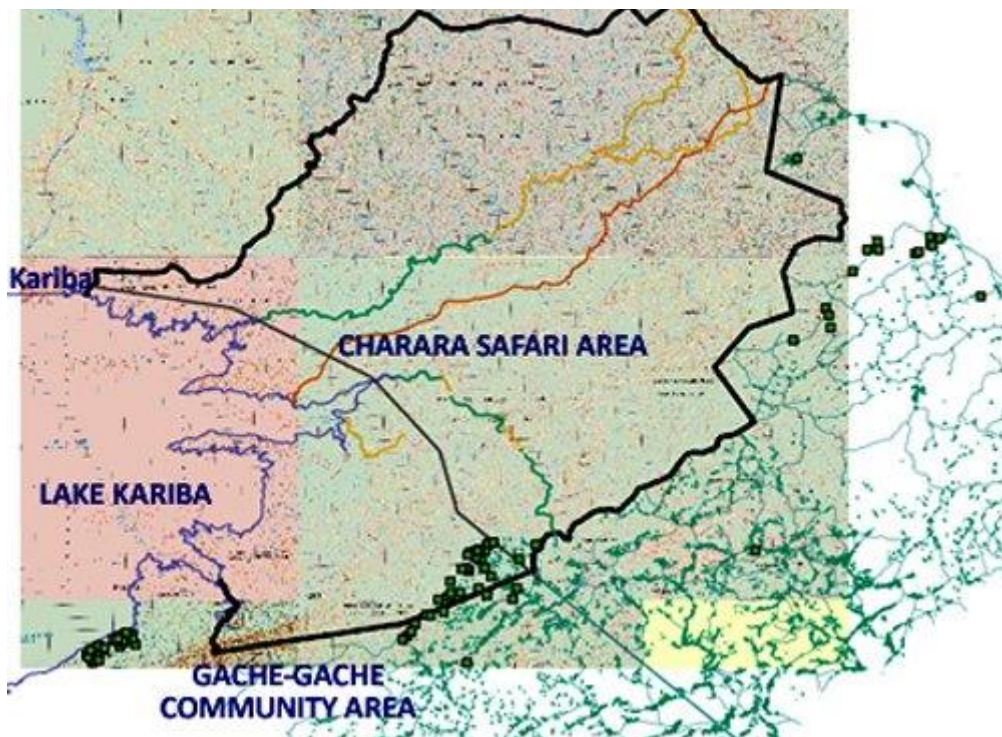
In the meantime, here is what they have achieved in the past few months:-

HISTORIC AND CURRENT DATA COLLECTION

The team has continued to collect historic as well as current (2022) human-wildlife conflict incidents. The data collected has allowed us to map the historic distribution and amount of conflict along the southern boundary of the Charara Safari Area, and within the Gache-Gache Communal Area. We are grateful to the [My Trees Trust](#) for allowing us to work closely with them in this area.



Map showing human-lion conflict (red squares) across the project area since January 2019



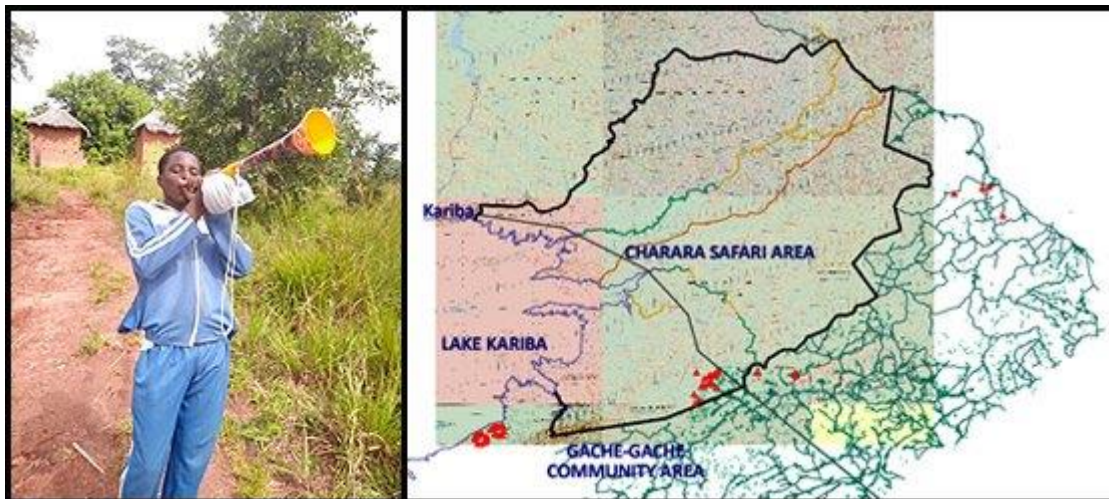
Map showing human-elephant conflict (green squares) across the project area since January 2019

Crop raiding by elephants and buffalo continue to be a key cause of conflict in some areas along the southern boundary. This escalated in April/May, but has been curbed entirely in Gache-Gache due to the erection of an elephant-proof fence around the communities by the **My Trees Trust**. Continuous monitoring of conflict in Gache-Gache will provide useful insights into the

effectiveness of the fence as a conflict mitigation method. Fishermen who use unsuitable fishing vessels that endanger their lives are continuing to be lost in Gache-Gache due to attacks by hippos and crocodiles. Hyenas and, in a few cases, lions continue to be the main cause of conflict along the Charara southern boundary.

PROBLEM ANIMAL RESPONSE

When HWCOs receive information of a current incident, they immediately travel to the area to complete an assessment of the conflict scenario. The project has put in place HWC response protocols which ensure data is collected about the species, age, sex, number of animals, nature of damage, number of households affected, and over what timeframe. In cases where Problem Animal Control (PAC) is requested by the community member, the information that has been collected from the HWCO is relayed to the Rural District Council and ZimParks to provide them with accurate, on the ground information about the case. No PAC has taken place in the first half of 2022.



Vuvuzelas for scaring off crop-raiding animals have been distributed in the project area (red dots) from April 2022

DEPLOYMENT OF VUVUZELAS

Due to the large amount of crop raiding in some areas, and the loss of 2 elephants to PAC last year, 200 Vuvuzelas were purchased in March as a rapid response to combat crop raiding and serve as an alert mechanism for villagers. To date, 60 Vuvuzelas have been distributed to affected households throughout the project area, and specifically to households in Gache-Gache that live near fence gates (see map above). Vuvuzelas are distributed according to a specific Zamsoc protocol, which requires the HWCO to assess the severity of the conflict, the type of animal in question and whether the household has made reasonable efforts to protect their livestock and crops. If the household is suitable, a Vuvuzela is given to the head of the household and their contact details and GPS location are recorded. After a Vuvuzela has been distributed, the HWCO is tasked with returning to the household for a follow-up visit two weeks after distribution and every few months thereafter, and to report back accordingly.



COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

In June 2022, Zamsoc facilitated eight community Human Wildlife Co-Existence Awareness workshops in the area – two in Gache-Gache and six along the southern boundary of the Charara Safari Area. In preparation for these, Crispen, the Project Supervisor, held a three-day training workshop with the HWCOs to assist them in addressing communities, answering difficult questions, and introducing methods of mitigation. Attendance for the HWC workshops was far greater than anticipated, ranging between 70 – 130 participants per workshop, and included community members, village heads, councillors, scholars, schoolteachers, and social workers. The workshops were conducted by Crispen and the HWC responsible for that particular operational area, and focused on the importance of wildlife, myths, and truths about problem animals (specific to that area) and self-help animal-wildlife conflict mitigation methods. This was then followed by an interactive question and answer session and a group discussion which assessed community attitude towards wildlife and what they perceive as the benefits thereof.

WHAT'S NEXT?

In the next few months, Zamsoc's HWCs will be focusing on establishing demonstration sites to assist villagers with methods of mitigating human-wildlife conflict. These will be specific to the current conflict each community is facing – e.g. predator-proof kraals in areas affected by hyena and lion, and the use of chillis in various ways (bombs and bricks) for areas affected by elephants.



Examples of a non predator-proof cattle and goat kraal in the project area.

Zamsoc will also be conducting a chilli growing viability study using an agronomist, to ascertain whether a chilli growing project would be viable within the project area. If viable, this would serve as a source of chillis for mitigation methods as well as providing income benefits for community members.



Chilli bricks made with elephant dung and set alight to provide an acrid smoke are a practical deterrent to crop-raiding animals like elephant and buffalo.

Further workshops are planned to target different villages and revisit areas that have been hit hardest by conflict.

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