

SOUTH-SOUTH CAPACITY BUILDING FOR HUMAN-ELEPHANT CONFLICT MANAGEMENT



IIED, IRDNC and Honeyguide partnership

Honeyguide – Tanzania to IRDNC – Namibia, HEC mitigation knowledge exchange

Honeyguide to Namibia Second visit report

March 2024



IRDNC



HONEYGUIDE

Activity	Assessing the progress of HEC Mitigation Toolkit implementation and usage in Namibia
Implementer	Kateto Ollekashe , Lemuta Mengoru
Program	Human and Wildlife Conflict (HWC)
Activity Dates	20th June 2023 - 26th June 2023
Activity name	Assessing the Scope for HEC Mitigation Toolkit Usage in Namibia
Partners	The Honeyguide Foundation (HGF) and Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC)
Country	Namibia

Introduction

Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) poses a significant challenge for both conservation efforts and livelihoods. Wildlife often threatens the lives and livelihoods of people living in close proximity to it, leading to retaliatory actions that can harm rare endangered species. Elephants, in particular, can cause substantial damage to property as well as pose risks to human lives.

Honeyguide Foundation has made significant progress in Tanzania experimenting with new, low cost, innovative tools that are used by community to scare away wildlife (particularly elephants).

In response to these challenges, IRDNC and Honeyguide collaborated to exchange mitigation strategies and enhance capacity in managing human-elephant conflict (HEC). In mid-2023, IRDNC and Honeyguide visited each other and exchanged their mitigation strategies on how to provide support to develop Namibia's capacity to manage human-elephant conflict (HEC) using experiences of similar approaches successfully used by Honeyguide in Tanzania. IRDNC thus took staff, rangers, and community influencers from Communal Conservancies in Namibia to have first-hand experience of how the Honeyguide approach works to enhance their understanding of and capacity to manage elephants in their own sites better. This report details the progress made during the assessment visit to Namibia by the teams led by Lemuta and Kateto from Honeyguide - Tanzania.

Trip objectives

1. Review the training conducted in Tanzania, focusing on the retraining of the Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) toolkit and elephant behavior.
2. Monitor the deployment and effectiveness of the HEC toolkit in Namibia's conservancies
3. Provide training to communities or farmers on how to deter elephants from their gardens

Section 1: Trip activities and observations

Day One (19/03/2024)

Kateto and Lemuta arrived at the campsite in the Omatendeka conservancy in Kunene with Pehii from IRDNC after a long drive up from Windhoek that morning and were first greeted by Russel Vinjevold and John and Katrina Kasaona from IRDNC and Chiefs from the neighboring conservancies, the honeyguide team were then shown ten of the crop protection tool kits which were put together in Namibia. These included an electric megaphone, several roman candles, chili powder, firecrackers, condoms, and a flashlight. The differences between Namibian equipment and the Tanzanian equipment were discussed and some of the challenges this may bring. There were also plans for trials of an SOS flare and pepper spray.

Main differences:

- Roman candles sourced in Namibia produced a dimmer and less powerful shot.
- Firecrackers sourced in Namibia were slightly smaller and without waterproof fuses.
- Flashlight had a smaller range than the ones used by Honeyguide but included a multicolored strobe feature.
- The electric megaphone could be spoken through and used to play pre-recorded audio such as bee sounds. However, it was battery powered, so it could be less reliable.

“We were not able to find the exact tools used by rangers in Tanzania, but we will just have to be creative.” - Russel IRDNC.



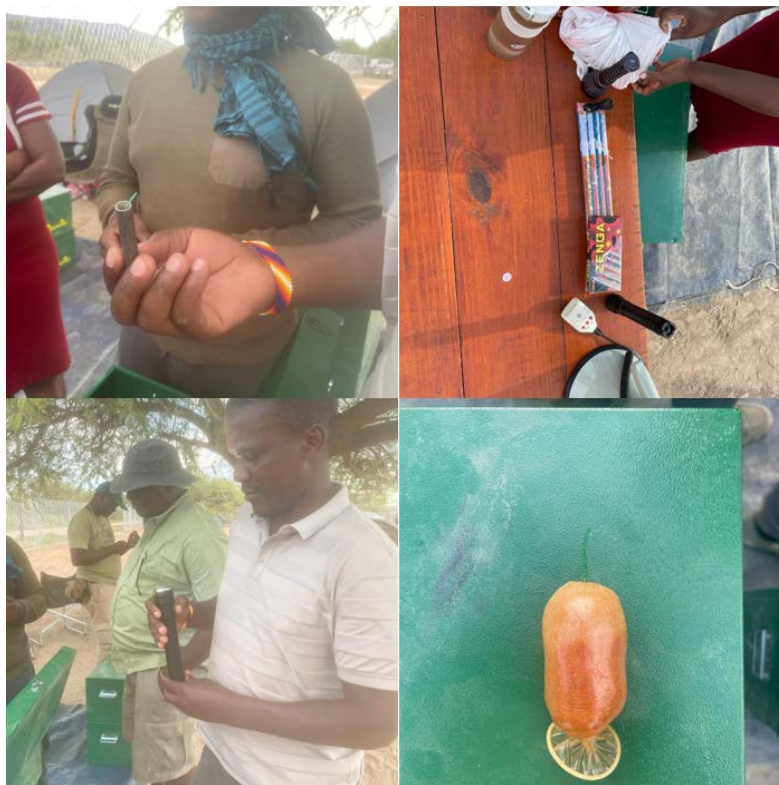
Photo 1: Lemuta and Kateto being introduced to the Kunene Elephant Walk Rangers.

Twenty-five rangers from several conservancies known as the Kunene Elephant Walk Rangers (whom a few were volunteering) and the IRDNC, Honeyguide and Kunene elephant walk teams then gathered for a briefing and introduction, this started with a welcoming from the chief and an introduction from everyone attending. Lemuta and Kateto were the last to introduce themselves and went on to explain how to use each piece of equipment and the risks associated with using them. The value of these tools was made clear and that they must be treated with respect.

“The torch must be treated as a weapon, only use it for wildlife conflict.”

Lemuta, Honeyguide.

The group of rangers then split into two groups, one led by Lemuta and one group of around fifteen rangers, led by Kateto formed a close circle and watched as Kateto gave a practical demonstration on how to make a chili cloud. Each of the rangers then made at least two chili clouds each with little difficulty. One of the rangers was then instructed to explain to the rest of the group how to assemble the chili clouds, giving Kateto an idea of whether they understood or not. The remaining rangers, led by Lemuta were taught how to cut up and prepare traditional Nyama Choma. The group then reassembled for a mock elephant conflict. This helped them to understand the order in which to use the tools for the best results, as well as how to use the roman candle and factors that need to be considered such as wind direction and speed. That evening, after eating plenty of Nyama Choma, two cars, each with a team of rangers and a crop protection tool kit led by either Kateto or Lemuta departed to areas at risk of being raided by elephants that night.



Day Two (20/03/2024)

The next morning two cars with four Kunene Elephant walk Rangers as well as Russel, John, Pehii, and four rangers on motorbikes left camp to meet Kateto and his team of rangers who had slept the night in a garden at otjiyapa kehii (18°19'30.61"S 13°39'30.41"E) where an elephant had died in a field. On arrival we met Kateto and his team as well as a team from MEFT and Namibian police from the protected resources unit investigating the death.



News spread quickly of the dead elephant and soon around fifty villagers had gathered outside the field, that we were told were waiting to take the elephant meat. It came as a surprise to the honeyguide team that the meat of a poached elephant was allowed to be eaten by the community.



"It gives an incentive for farmers to kill elephants as it provides the whole community with food."

Kateto's response to villagers being allowed to eat the meat of poached elephants.

The rangers learnt quickly how to investigate the incident without disturbing the crime scene. They assisted MEFT with their investigation, flipping the elephant, searching for bullet holes and the bullet tip. Later, MEFT said that the rangers were extremely helpful in

assisting with the investigation, and two rangers were able to provide written statements for the investigation. There was some difficulty with the local villagers as they believed that the rangers were going to take all the meat for themselves, and the police were having trouble keeping them away from the crime scene. Following the incident, it was explained to the rangers that they could not take the meat of an elephant that had been poached and a policy was implemented to prevent this from happening in the future.

By the end of the day, there was little left of the elephant carcass.



Day Three (21/03/2024)

As it was Namibian Independence Day it was a slow start. At around 11am everyone gathered for a debriefing of the previous day.

- Debriefing started with a lineup of the rangers; they were then asked to inspect each of the crop protection tool kits, purchased by Russel, as a test of what they had learned the previous days.
- One of the crop protection tool kits was handed over to the chief of the Okangundumba conservancy.
- Kateto and Lemuta then advised the rangers on improvements from the day before, particularly the importance of teamwork as some of the rangers had started eating before the rest had returned from the field.
- As a team building exercise the rangers were given a group punishment of running to the waterhole around 400m away.

After a short break, the rangers sat in a circle and Kateto and Lemuta explained to them some of the vital things they must learn to become wildlife rangers, while also remaining positive role models in the community. This included.

- **Discipline and chain of command** – The importance of listening to your group leader.
- **Teamwork** – The rangers seemed to understand the importance of teamwork after their group punishment from earlier.

- **Reducing operating costs** – How to decide if a patrol is necessary or not.
- **Uniform** – The different types of uniform and how and when to wear them, and the importance of looking presentable.
- **Fitness** – The level of fitness of the Rangers was a concern. They were shown a few exercises to complete daily, as well as running, to maintain fitness.

“They are not awakened; they are still sleeping.”

Kateto’s response after seeing the ranger’s fitness.

The camp was then packed up and moved to a new campsite in the Kachanja conservancy (18° 16’03.39’’S 13°44’05.03’’E) which had farms very near by it.

That evening, after setting up camp, a call came in from a farmer who was hearing elephants raiding his field nearby, so three cars went out to investigate, two of the cars had around five rangers in the back and a crop protection tool kit consisting of two torches, roman candles, chili clouds and an electric siren. After driving around all the fields in the area, they were only able to see a cow in one of the fields and it was expected that this was what caused the disturbance. The cars went on to patrol another area that commonly has conflict with elephants. However, no evidence of elephants was found. There was some difficulty navigating around the fields due to tricky terrain, but the rangers seemed confident with using the torches from the back of the cars.



One of the three cars being used by

Day Four (22/03/2024)

After breakfast, the rangers were arranged into four groups and tasked with walking to farms in the area to investigate the movements of elephants. They returned after several hours ready to present their findings. During this exercise they interviewed farmers from each of the farms in the area about how they can best assist the community, and what they discovered was.

Firstly, they reported that the farmers had a very positive response to seeing them and were very pleased to hear the night patrol from the previous day. Secondly, they were able to identify that most of the damage to crops was happening from April to May. Also, that the elephants seemed to be coming and going from the same direction, which could suggest that the farms were built on a wildlife corridor. Further research could be done on this to work out when and where the elephants are moving, which could be used to create a designated pathway for them to pass through, avoiding conflict with farmers. Furthermore, they discovered that some farmers had begun protecting their farms by pouring a mixture of chili powder and engine oil on their fences, although they could not say how effective this method was.

The meeting then went on to discuss how to improve the team's effectiveness in the field. One way of doing this was to ask farmers to build pathways around their fields so that patrol cars could easily navigate around them, as well as watch towers so that fields could be monitored from a safe location. Additionally, a phone number could be given to farmers to call when a field was being raided by elephants so that the ranger's response could be faster.

Two of the rangers were given rank; First Ranger - Sem Kasaona and Second Ranger - Rhody Rutjani, who had both previously been in the military, to function as supervisors. They are also able to issue punishment and give feedback to the management team on the Rangers' performance.

To close the meeting, Kateto made each of the rangers name an elephant behavior they had observed to improve the team's understanding of elephant behaviors.

That evening, a patrol car was sent to a farm around five kilometers from the camp with a team of rangers. They soon returned, saying they had seen an elephant headed in the direction of some farms. Three cars, two of which had a team of rangers and their equipment in the back, were then sent out to meet some men that had been left behind on foot to keep an eye on the elephant. The elephant had continued moving towards the farms but had been lost in the darkness, so we followed it in the growing darkness towards the farms. The rangers seemed confident with tracking the elephant and we picked up a farmer who said it had entered his field. While searching the farms, the rangers used the electric

siren to try to scare the elephant out of any of the fields. This may have been effective as the elephant was not seen again. On the way back to camp, the cars patrolled around some other farms in the area, but there were no disturbances.

Day Five (23/03/2024)

In the morning, Sem had the rangers form up and complete some group exercises such as jogging on the spot and frog jump. This finished with some competitions such as running while carrying another ranger and a final relay race. The honeyguide team were impressed with the morale and fitness of the rangers. Five crop protection tool kits were then handed out to representatives from each of the conservancies in the wider community. And a meeting began by designating one of the rangers as the camera man, Rhody Rudjani, from the Otuzemba Conservancy who was given a GoPro Hero 10 to be used to document the groups activities. This was followed by designating two safety officers, Ishmael Kaveteruakaveterua, from the Anabeb Conservancy and Pious Kabuki Tjiraso, from the Otjiu West Conservancy. Next, Lemuta demonstrated to the Rangers and some community members on how to construct chili bricks and how to use them, including explaining how to strategically place them for maximum effectiveness. It was discussed then that farmers could be advised to grow chili plants as an alternative to buying chili powder.

After an early meal, a final meeting and debriefing took place. John Kasaona opened by discussing the rangers next plans to move to a conservancy where they believed the elephants were heading, they would still remain together and were reminded that they must keep learning and building relationships with the community by giving them feedback on what works and what doesn't. He mentioned that he would be interested in another exchange with Kateto and Lemuta for at least a month, as he believes there is lots they can still learn from honeyguide and Rangers from Tanzania.

"If they can do it, what is preventing us, who are living with elephants from doing it?"

John Kasaona, IRDNC.



*The group of rangers presenting their findings from
their morning in the field.*

John then mentioned that conservancies are not generating an income, and that funding was needed for future plans such as:

- Further training of the rangers, which included first aid, identifying plants and insects and tracking.
- Mapping of water points, Fields and elephant pathways in each of the conservancies was needed.
- Putting tracking collars on elephants from large groups so that their movements could be monitored, and an early warning system could be set up.
- Fund all the Kunene Elephant Rangers to receive their motorcycle license, as 15 of the 21 motorcycles that were donated to IRDNC remained in storage with no one to use them. April was set as the deadline for this goal.
- Building a ranger post where the ranger could base their operations.

After saying goodbye, the Honeyguide team then left the campsite with John and his family for their journey back to Windhoek. They stayed in a small town, similar size to Makuyuni, called Opuwo, where they were taken to the semi-final of the local football cup and stayed in John Kasaona's home.

Day Six (24/03/2024)

We left Opuwo at approximately 9am and on the journey we stopped in a location in the Ozondundu Conservancy which was a possible location of the Kunene Elephants Ranger

post. Kateto and Lemuta assisted the IRDNC team with choosing a location which was hidden from the main road but accessible, with a good view, access to water, and phone signal. (18°55'05.58"S 13°50'15.36"E). The team arrived in Okahanja at around 9pm and met John's family, and then arrived in Windhoek at 11pm.

Day Seven (25/03/2024)

Before Lemuta and Kateto's flight back to Tanzania they met with the IRDNC team in their Windhoek office where they discussed the way forward and next steps for the Kunene Elephant Walk Rangers.

Section 2: Trip results and actions

Training and Capacity Building:

The primary focus of the visit was to retrain personnel on the HWC toolkit and elephant behavior. A total of 210 individuals from three conservancies were trained:

- Omatendeka Conservancy: 120 community members trained.
- Okangundumba Conservancy: 45 community members trained.
- Okachanja Conservancy: 45 community members trained.

Additionally, special training was provided to selected volunteers (community game guards) on topics such as discipline, teamwork, reducing operating costs, uniform protocols, fitness, and the establishment of ranger posts. These efforts aimed to enhance the capacity of local teams in managing HEC effectively.

Deployment and Effectiveness of HEC Toolkits:

IRDNC procured ten complete HEC toolkits for use by community game guards in the Kunene elephant region. Each toolkit includes a flashlight, siren, silver crackers, and roman candles. While the effectiveness of some toolkit components was noted, such as the silver crackers and the flashlight torches which has no proposed light with pointer less distance only 200 meters compared to the proposed for deterring elephants which is 900 meters plus, improvements were suggested for items like the siren and roman candles to enhance their utility in deterring elephants.



Section 3: Recommendations and Way Forward:

Based on the assessment findings, several recommendations are proposed:

1. Facilitate communication and toolkits transfer between Tanzania and Namibia through the Namibian embassy in Tanzania. **(John Kasaona visit Namibia embassy in Tanzania)**
2. Conduct mapping of water points, fields, and elephant pathways in conservancies to improve conflict management strategies.
3. Secure long-term funding to support community efforts in protecting their gardens from wildlife.
4. Facilitate exchange training programs between Kunene elephant rangers and counterparts in Tanzania. **Especially community rangers in Tanzania (Wildlife Management Areas like Randilen and Makame WMAs)**
5. Establish ranger posts to serve as operational bases and facilitate patrols (ranger post construction)
6. Implement tracking collars on elephants to monitor their movements and establish early warning systems.
7. Provide uniforms for Kunene Elephant rangers and develop interactive training materials for enhanced capacity building.
8. Disseminate training materials within Namibia, across Southern Africa, and internationally to promote best practices in HEC management.
9. Support and equip rangers who respond to HEC i.e. camping gears and allowance
10. Dedicated water point for elephants
11. Electric fence around the gardens
12. Secure other 30 HEC toolkit for the community game guard to support and respond effectively toward the community
13. Monitoring and evaluation – data collection and toolkits tracking systems and efficient

Annex 1: Trip itinerary

ASSESSMENT PROGRESS VISIT TO NAMIBIA ITINERARY



IRDNC



HONEYGUIDE

AIM

- Review of the HEC training conducted in Tanzania
- Monitoring of HEC and toolkit deployment and effectiveness in Namibian conservancies
- Training farmers/communities on how to chase elephants away from their gardens

18 MARCH 2024

- Arrival at Hosea Kutako Windhoek International Airport and transfer to Windhoek
- Overnight at Uzuri Guesthouse (BB)
<https://www.uzuri-namibia.com/>
- Meet & Greet with Mr. John K Kasaona

19 MARCH 2024

- Travel to Omatendeka Conservancy
- Introduction to the farmers and rangers
- Overnight at Omatendeka - Camping

20 MARCH 2024

- Training commence (08:00-11:00)
- Travel to other Conservancies
- Familiarize with gardens and meet farmers
- Overnight at Ozondundu Conservancy - Camping

21-22 MARCH 2024

- Training and night motoring of gardens in the conservancies

23 MARCH 2024

- Rangers' Self Management Training
- Recap and way forward

24 MARCH 2024

- Travel back to Windhoek
- Overnight at Uzuri Guesthouse (BB)

25 MARCH 2024

- Transfer to Hosea Kutako Windhoek International Airport for return flight
- Departure time: