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**United Nations Development Programme
Project Document for nationally implemented projects
financed by the GEF Trust Fund**

ANNUAL REPORT: January – December 2020

Project title: Strengthening Biodiversity and Ecosystems Management and Climate-Smart Landscapes in the Mid to Lower Zambezi Region of Zimbabwe	
Country: The Republic of Zimbabwe	Implementing Partner: Ministry of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry (MECTHI)
Management Arrangements: National Implementation Modality (NIM)	
UNDAF/Country Programme Outcome: Food and Nutrition Security: Outcome 1 - Targeted households in rural and urban areas have improved food and nutrition security; Outcome 2 - Communities are equipped to cope with climate change and build resilience for household food and nutrition security; Poverty Reduction and Value Addition: Outcome 1 - Key institutions formulate and implement socio-economic policies, strategies and programmes for improved livelihoods and reduced poverty of communities. CPD Output 3.1. Scaled up action on climate change adaptation and mitigation in vulnerable districts is funded and implemented	
UNDP Strategic Plan: Integrated Results and Resources Framework Output 1.4.1: Solutions scaled up for sustainable management of natural resources including sustainable commodities and green and inclusive value chains. SP Indicator 1.4.1.2 Natural resources that are managed under a sustainable use, conservation, access and benefit-sharing regime:	
UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Category: Moderate	UNDP Gender Marker: 2 (the project has gender equality as a significant objective)
Atlas Project ID/Award ID number: 00107199	Atlas Output ID/Project ID number: 00107558
UNDP-GEF PIMS ID number: 5693	GEF ID number: 9660
Planned start date: July 1 st 2018	Planned end date: July 1 st 2024
LPAC date: Friday 13 th April 2018	
Brief project description: Zimbabwe has very high level of biodiversity and is home to all the "Big Five" – African elephant, white and black rhinos, lion, buffalo and leopard. However, it also	

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faces multiple challenges for sustainable development associated with biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, and climate change consequences. This 6-year GEF project focuses on reducing key threats for wildlife, habitat, and livelihoods of local communities (poaching, IWT, deforestation, and impact of climate change) in one of the key biodiversity country's hotspots – Lower Zambezi Valley. The project strategy aims to strengthen the capacities of law enforcement agencies to fight wildlife and forest crime (Component 1); strengthen Protected Area (PA) and Community Wildlife Conservancy management for wildlife and woodlands (Component 2); build strong sustainable Natural Resources Management (NRM) capacity for local communities and districts in cooperation with private sector (Component 3); and promote effective knowledge management (Component 4) to achieve the project objective: *to promote an integrated landscape approach to managing wildlife resources, carbon and ecosystem services in the face of climate change in the protected areas and community lands of the Mid to Lower Zambezi Regions of Zimbabwe.* The total project funding is US\$ 57,436,964, including GEF contribution of US\$ 10,025,964 and co-financing – US\$ 47,411,000. This project forms part of the GEF Programmatic Approach to Prevent the Extinction of Known Threatened Species, and falls under the GEF Programme Global Partnership on Wildlife Conservation and Crime Prevention for Sustainable Development (9071). Under this programmatic framework, with the coordination through the programme steering committee, coordinated knowledge management and cross-fertilisation of the individual projects will be assured.

FINANCING PLAN

GEF Trust Fund	USD 10,025,964
UNDP TRAC resources	USD 2,000,000
(1) Total Budget administered by UNDP	USD 12,025,964
PARALLEL CO-FINANCING (<i>all other co-financing that is not cash co-financing administered by UNDP</i>)	
Government (METHI, ZPWMA, FC, EMA, CAMPFIRE)	USD 40,100,000
NGOs (AWF, , Zambezi Society, Tashinga Initiative, WWF)	USD 2,540,000
Private Sector (Kariba REDD+ Project Tree Eco Ltd., HKK Safaris, McCallum Safaris, Nzou Safaris)	USD 2,771,000
(2) Total co-financing	USD 45,411,000
(3) Grand-Total Project Financing (1)+(2)	USD 57,436,964

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Background

The Ministry of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry (MECTHI), received funds from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and with technical support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), developed a project to mitigate these challenges in the Mid to Lower Zambezi Region of Zimbabwe. The project “Strengthening Biodiversity and Ecosystems Management and Climate-Smart Landscapes in the Mid to Lower Zambezi Region of Zimbabwe” also known as the *Zambezi Valley Biodiversity Project (ZVBP)* was developed in strong cooperation with national and international stakeholders. The Project has four components and these are (a) Strengthening capacity and governance frameworks for integrated wildlife and forest management and wildlife and forest crime enforcement in Zimbabwe; (b) Strengthening Zimbabwe’s PA estate and CAMPFIRE Wildlife Conservancies in areas global BD significance; (c) Mainstreaming BD and ES management, and climate change mitigation, into the wider landscape; and (d) Knowledge Management, M&E and Gender Mainstreaming.

Zimbabwe has a high level of biodiversity of global significance. The country faces multiple challenges for development associated with biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, and climate changes consequences. The challenges include, poaching and illegal wildlife trade, human wildlife conflicts and retaliatory killings, deforestation, and climate change consequences that include droughts, floods, and increased frequency of veld fires.

The project has four outcomes which are (1). Increased national capacity for IWT control, and integrated wildlife and woodland management; (2). Improved capacity of PA network and CAMPFIRE Wildlife Conservancies to protect globally significant biodiversity of the mid-lower Zambezi region over a total area of 1,616,900 ha; (3). Increased area under sustainable management and benefits for local communities from CBWM, SFM and SLM in established CWCs and (4). Lessons learned by the project through participatory M&E and gender mainstreaming are used nationally and internationally.

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1. Executive Summary

The Zambezi Valley Biodiversity Project is being implemented in the Zambezi Valley region and covers Hurungwe, Mbire and Muzarabani Districts as well as Mana Pools National Park and the surrounding protected areas complex that includes Sapi, Chewore, Hurungwe, Dande, Charara and Doma Safari Areas,. The project commenced implementation of activities in September 2018. Implementation of activities planned for 2020 was negatively affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Zimbabwe government declared the COVID-19 crisis a “national disaster” on 27 March 2020 and began a nationwide lockdown on March 30. The lockdown was later eased but extended indefinitely on 16 May 2020. The Project revised the annual work plan to accommodate some changes that allowed the work to continue under the new conditions imposed to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

The ZPWMA conducted two trainings for rangers, one on Basic First Aid and the other on management of human-wildlife Conflict. The Basic First Aid training was attended by 10 rangers (6 males and 4 females), whilst 25 rangers (2 females and 23 males) attended the human-wildlife conflict management training. The extended lockdown and increasing poverty levels due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted law enforcement in the Zambezi Valley during the reporting period. The number of arrests of poachers and other offenders for environment-related crimes increased during the reporting period, and these included underage offenders. The project responded by purchasing drones, boats and increasing rations and fuel for anti-poaching activities.

The project facilitated the signing of small grant agreements between UNDP and five non-governmental organisations, namely Lower Guruve Development Association (LGDA), Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources (SAFIRE), Environment Africa, Zim Apiculture Trust and Zambezi Society. To date US\$194, 520.00 has been disbursed between December 2019 and November 2020 under small grants. A total of 70 participants (50 males and 20 females) in Masoka Ward 11 and 82 participants (57 males and 25 females) in Gonono Ward 4 attended the inception meetings. Lower Guruve Development Association (LGDA) constructed fishponds and drilled borehole for 3 nutritional garden sites. Zim Apiculture Trust (ZAT) conducted meetings with stakeholders in the project area to prepare for implementation of activities. Environment Africa (EA) conducted a training on the construction of biogas digesters at Chikafa Ward 12 in Mbire (19 males).

Seedling production was done at Forestry nurseries in Harare, Chinhoyi, Guruve and Mavhuradonha nurseries. To date, 78,616 seedlings have been produced. Two nurseries have been fenced in the project area and boreholes will be drilled at the nurseries sites. Deforestation continues to be a major problem in Hurungwe and Muzarabani.

The Environmental Management Agency held 32 awareness meetings on veld fire management legislation where 2000 participants attended during the 2020 fire season in the project. In order to increase the awareness levels on dangers of veld fires, EMA also conducted 85 veld fire mobile awareness campaigns in Hurungwe, Mbire and Muzarabani District.

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CAMPFIRE Association (CA) carried out consultations on the establishment of Community Trusts in Mbire, Muzarabani and Hurungwe, and a total of 845 community members being consulted (645 men and 200 women). Community Trusts will operate in conformity with existing legislation in their interaction with government departments as well as the private sector.

A contractor, Land Resources International of South Africa, was engaged to carry out aerial surveys of elephants of large herbivores and other mammals in the Zambezi Valley. The survey commenced on the 17th of October 2020 and the survey aircraft unfortunately crashed on the 23rd of October in the Chewore area. One team member died on the spot, two survived with serious injuries and another one, an ecologist from ZPWMA, is still missing as at 17 December 2020. The survey has therefore been postponed to 2021.

The Secretary for Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry and other senior Ministry officials conducted a monitoring visit to the project area. EMA and Forestry Commission senior management also conducted monitoring visits to the project area.

Context and key developments of the project

The year under review was challenging in terms of project delivery mainly due to the impacts of COVID-19. Most of the project activities, especially those involving gathering groups of people, were postponed or cancelled altogether due to the country-wide lockdown. The situation improved towards the end of the year as the Project adjusted to the new norm and a number of project activities were conducted. In addition, the project engaged consultants to carry out assignments within the project sites. Consultancies carried out included development of Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA); an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP); and development of a Gender mainstreaming Action Plan.

Changes in monetary policy by the government negatively affected the implementation of the project. At some stage the mobile money platform Ecocash was suspended thereby affecting payments to service providers and community members in remote areas where this is the only available method of payment besides cash. Earlier in the year, some service providers could not give quotations in United States dollars though this situation later eased with the policy change that allowed companies and individuals to trade in United States dollars.

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2. Objectives

The objective of the project is to promote an integrated landscape approach to managing wildlife resources, carbon and ecosystem services in the face of climate change in the protected areas and community lands of the Mid to Lower Zambezi Regions of Zimbabwe.

Outcome 1. Increased national capacity for IWT control, and integrated wildlife and woodland management

Output 1.1. National policy and regulatory framework is reviewed, and updated in accordance with the new Zimbabwe Constitution and national development priorities including National Wildlife Policy, Parks and Wildlife Act, forest legislation in accordance with National Forest Policy (2017), and National Law Enforcement and Anti-Poaching Strategy.

Output 1.2. Two Multi-Agency Wildlife Crime Prevention Units are established and functional to ensure strong inter-agency collaboration to fight IWT and forest crimes

Output 1.3. Key law enforcement agencies (ZPWMA, ZRP Minerals and Border Control Unit, FC, ZIMRA, EMA, investigators, judiciary, and prosecutors) are provided with necessary trainings and tools to fight IWT and forest crime

Output 1.4. Nationwide system for monitoring wildlife and forest crimes is developed and implemented

Output 1.5. International treaties between Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique on protection of ZIMOZA and Lower Zambezi - Mana Pools Trans-Frontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) are developed, submitted to the countries' governments and supported for implementation

Output 1.6. Project area awareness campaign targeting IWT, deforestation and climate adaptation/mitigation issues is developed and implemented

Outcome 2. Improved capacity of PA network and CAMPFIRE Wildlife Conservancies to protect globally significant biodiversity of the mid-lower Zambezi region over a total area of 1,616,900 ha

Output 2.1. Updated Management Plans are developed and implemented for UNESCO Mana Pools WNH site (Mana Pools National Park, Sapi, and Chewore SAs) and surrounding PA complex of Charara, Hurungwe, Dande, Doma Safari Areas, including enhanced anti-poaching, woodland, HWC and veld fire management

Output 2.2. CAMPFIRE Wildlife Conservancies (CWCs) with total area of 334,500 ha are officially established, have functional governance structure and CWC Management Plans, and trained in CBWM, SFM, HWC, and fire management

Outcome 3. Increased area under sustainable management and benefits for local communities from CBWM, SFM and SLM in established CWCs

Output 3.1. Integrated Landscape Management Plans for Hurungwe (northern part), Mbire, and Muzarabani Districts are developed, officially approved, and implemented

Output 3.2. Pilot projects on community based SFM, SLM, HWC management and alternative sources of income are developed and implemented in the target CWCs via sustainable small grant mechanism

Output 3.3. Model woodland restoration projects are developed and implemented in the target CWCs.

Output 3.4. Local communities in the target CWCs are provided with alternative sources of energy and energy saving equipment to decrease their dependence on firewood

Output 3.5. Corporate conservation and social responsibility programs are developed and introduced to tobacco companies in the project area to mainstream biodiversity conservation in the production sector

Outcome 4. Lessons learned by the project through participatory M&E and gender mainstreaming are used nationally and internationally

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Output 4.1. Participatory project monitoring, evaluation and learning framework is developed and implemented

Output 4.2. Lessons learned from the project are shared with national and international conservation programmes, including GWP

Output 4.3. Gender strategy developed and used to guide project implementation, monitoring and reporting

3. Achievements

Outcome 1. Increased national capacity for IWT control, and integrated wildlife and woodland management

Output 1.1: National policy and regulatory framework is reviewed, and updated in accordance with the new Zimbabwe Constitution and national development priorities including National Wildlife Policy, Parks and Wildlife Act, forest legislation in accordance with National Forest Policy (2017), and National Law Enforcement and Anti-Poaching Strategy.

The Ministry of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry is now taking a leading role in the review and updating of policies and legislation that include the Parks and Wildlife Act, and the Wildlife Policy. Two consultative meetings on the Parks and Wildlife Act were held in Chinhoyi and Bulawayo. Principles for the Act have drafted and will be submitted to the Attorney General's office.

The Ministry has developed Terms of Reference for a consultant who will review the Wildlife Policy and this work will commence in 2021.

Output 1.2: Two Multi-Agency Wildlife Crime Prevention Units are established and functional to ensure strong inter-agency collaboration to fight IWT and forest crimes

A Multi-Agency Wildlife Crime Prevention unit is being established at Chinhoyi to combat poaching and illegal wildlife traffickers in the Zambezi Valley as well as at national level. Equipment that include a vehicle, an LCD screen, computer and furniture has already been procured and is already at Chinhoyi.

Output 1.3. Key law enforcement agencies (ZPWMA, ZRP Minerals and Border Control Unit, FC, ZIMRA, EMA, investigators, judiciary, and prosecutors) are provided with necessary trainings and tools to fight Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) and forest crime

A CITES Feedback meeting was held on the 7th of January 2020. The meeting discussed proposals made by Zimbabwe to CITES CoP 18 and the resolutions thereof. The roadmap of how the country prepared for the CoP 18 was also presented. High priority was given to information dissemination after the United States government impose restrictive measures on importation of sport-hunted trophies in 2014.

The meeting agreed that there was need to engage community on CITES issues at national level. The chair of the Communities Working Group had requested for a workshop but this failed to take place due to resource constraints. Zimbabwe's proposals to CITES CoP18 included the following;

- Elephants where an amendment to Annotation 2 pertaining to the elephant populations of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe

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- Community involvement mechanisms for community engagement and communities to have a voice in CITES decision making processes

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an increase in poaching in the project area, and this necessitated provision of additional equipment, rations and fuel to the ZPWMA. The project purchased four boats and two drones for use in law enforcement. There was an increase in the number of arrests as a result of increased patrol effort, for example 21 arrests were made and 557 snares and 1570m of twine nets were recovered in Charara Safari area in four months.

Output 1.4. Nationwide system for monitoring wildlife and forest crimes is developed and implemented.

A SMART support exercise was conducted from the 11th to the 16th of February 2020. The objective of the mission was to identify gaps in SMART implementation in preparation for future trainings.

SMART equipment were procured including cyber trackers, servers, screens and computers for the use in the project area as well as for teaching at Mushandike College. Consultants were initiated for the National SMART Development Plan and these will be concluded in 2021.

Rangers noticed some illegal activities in the field, leading to further investigations of these activities. Observations from field assessment indicated that there is mining of glitter stone in Charara SA. Of great concern is the amount of vegetation being destroyed at mining sites, increase in population through expansion of villages, the construction of an illegal ECD school, and the nature, size and depth of open pits among other developments. There is need for ZPWMA and Charara SA management to employ effective strategies to contain the mining activities.

In Doma Safari Area field assessments conducted indicated that illegal underground and surface mining has been happening in Pondorose. The negative impacts include vegetation destruction at mining sites, opening of roads to the site, nature and size of shafts and tunnels. At station and provincial levels Doma Safari Area management have intensified efforts to contain the illegal mining but there is need for more to be done.

In Chewore South SA illegal surface gold mining is current happening in Secret Valley. There is evidence of vegetation destruction, paving of roads and used pits that were not rehabilitated. The absence of ZRP and ZPWMA patrols has made the area extremely vulnerable to continued degradation and increased threats to poaching of wildlife in Secret Valley.

Output 1.6. Project area awareness campaign targeting IWT, deforestation and climate adaptation/mitigation issues is developed and implemented

Awareness campaigns were mainstreamed under different outputs including small grants and awareness activities by EMA.

Outcome 2

Output 2.1: Updated Management Plans are developed and implemented for UNESCO Mana Pools WNH site (Mana Pools National Park, Sapi, and Chewore SAs) and surrounding PA complex of Charara, Hurungwe, Dande, Doma Safari Areas, including enhanced anti-poaching, woodland, HWC and veld fire management

In order to enhance basic survival skills during patrols a basic first aid training was conducted from the 17th to the 20th of February 2020 to ZPWMA rangers. The training was facilitated by a consultant from EMRAS. The training objective was to ensure rangers can assist each other when on patrol and to be able to assist clients in cases of emergency. Rangers trained are now able to perform Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), set a patient in the recovery position and identify the signs and symptoms of convulsions, fainting, choking, insect stings, heat illness, heat stroke, bleeding, fractures, dislocations, snake, scorpion and spider bites. This training was the second one conducted under the project in the Zambezi Valley. It was highlighted by the participants in the training that there is lack of resources to use in rendering First Aid to colleagues. It is therefore recommended that a health services needs assessment of areas in the Zambezi Valley be done to determine the resources and further capacity building needed.

Rangers and Community Liaison Officers in ZPWMA are expected to assist communities in managing Human Wildlife Conflict (HWC). A training facilitated by SAFIRE was held in Karoi to train rangers in the basics of HWC dynamics and management. The objective of this training workshop was to improve the ability of conservation practitioners to understand conflict dynamics and establish more effective ways to address them. The main topics covered were;

- Develop site- or context-specific Conservation Conflict Intervention Plans for transforming a current conflict)
- Apply the theory, principles, skills, processes, and strategies of conservation conflict transformation (CCT) in their projects and programs
- Employ 1-2 analytical tools to investigate and monitor conflicts in their professional work
- Recognize current reactions to conflict and develop strategies for effective responses
- Understand the complex, diverse, and deep-rooted conflicts impacting conservation agencies/organizations, programs, and projects
- Design and lead a range of conflict transformation processes
- Improve strategies to engage multiple sectors, stakeholders, and resources to address conservation needs and challenges
- Have basic understand of community engagement exercises for conflict resolution

The project has provided funds to improve radio communication in the Zambezi Valley through enhanced communication among rangers. The project has signed a contract with PM Communications on 14 August 2020 for the supply and fixing of the radio digitalization equipment for upgrade of the Mid Zambezi Valley Radio System from analogue to digital. Full migration to the digital radio system is expected to be completed during the first third of 2021.

Output 2.2: CAMPFIRE Wildlife Conservancies (CWCs) with total area of 334,500 ha are officially established, have functional governance structure and CWC Management Plans, and trained in CBWM, SFM, HWC, and fire management

The first consultative workshop on establishment of Community Trusts was held in the 3 districts during the course of the reporting period with 845 community members being consulted (645 men and 200 women). A general observation made during these consultations included lack of understand the meaning and purpose of a Conservancy. After being informed on the primary objectives of CAMPFIRE Conservancy participation and anticipation among

community members was observed through increase in participation. It was highlighted that Community Trusts will operate in conformity with already existing legislation in their interaction with government departments as well as the private sector. Community leadership were urged to take up the concept of Community Trusts as it does not rely only on consumptive utilization (hunts) but can open up other non-consumptive income generating activities to ensure sustainable utilisation of natural resources especially wildlife. Women and the youth were also encouraged to take up local leadership positions. The gender action plan to be developed in the last third will assist in addressing gender imbalance in leadership positions within the community.

The Campfire Association handed over camping equipment to Muzarabani RDC on the 14th of April 2020 to assist local authority to increase anti-poaching patrols. The equipment included the following 5 x two men tents and accessories, 10 sleeping bags, 10 trench coats, and 10 backpacks were handed over. The equipment will be used when carrying out extended man patrols in the project area.

It was noted that Human Elephant Conflict was at its peak in the month of March and April 2020, with huge elephant populations migrating from Mozambique into the project area. The major elephant corridors affected are Museredza, Muringazuva and Kairezi Wards in Muzarabani District.

Law enforcement and HWC in CWCs

All the three districts are facing the challenge of HWC. The Covid-19 pandemic makes it more difficult for districts to respond timeously to Problem Animal incidences due to shortage of resources such as patrol rations, vehicles and fuel shortages. The situation has been worsened by a drastic decline in revenues from tourism (consumptive and non-consumptive) operations by safari operators with most bookings cancelled or postponed due to the travel bans issued by various countries worldwide. This is affecting the amount of support to the CAMPFIRE programme in the Districts;

Muzarabani

- In January 2020, 3 poachers were arrested after poaching a Kudu in the Mavhuradonha conservancy, poachers have already been sentenced.
- 16 Gold panners were arrested in January 2020 in the Mavhuradonha conservancy.
- 9 chrome mining companies which were operating in the wilderness without valid EIAs were fined and their operations stopped.
- 2 people who were fishing without permits were arrested. Their nets and a boat were seized.
- 7 people who had encroached and settled within the wilderness were arrested and have since appeared before a court of law.
- A villager was killed by an elephant in Kairezi Ward, and there were several HWC reports in Muzarabani.
- 1 kudu was killed by poachers

Hurungwe

- Five cattle and 1 donkey were killed in Nyamakate Ward 7 by a pride of 5 lions
- One lion was captured in Nyamakate and released in Marongora Parks Estate
- One wounded was Hippo killed at Easter Parade Ward 1 after destroying wheat and posing a danger to human life
- One leopard was captured, collared and translocated to Mana Pools airstrip. The leopard had killed 65 goats in 3 villages until it was captured.
- 11 human injuries from buffaloes.
- 75 cattle were killed by lions and 2 by crocodiles.

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- five goats and 6 donkeys were killed by crocodiles.

Mbire

- Three people lost their lives as a result of HWC, one from elephant, one from a snake bite and the other from a hippo attack.
- Four cattle and 4 goats were killed by lions
- Four goats were killed by hyenas
- Elephants destroyed silos in Ward 2 and Ward 11
- 12 cattle were killed in Dande and Doma, by lions.
- Problem animals (three elephants and one buffalo) were put down in Dande.
- There were human injuries recorded as follows: 6 (hippo), 1 (buffalo), 1 (baboon), 8 (snakes).
- 77 goats were killed by hyenas, leopards and crocodiles.
- 11 cattle were killed by crocodiles, lions, hyenas and snakes.
- 160 hectares of crop fields were destroyed by elephants and 12 hectares by hippos

The CAMPFIRE Association contracted Mr Methuseli Maphala to facilitate the establishment of community trusts for each of the six CAMPFIRE wildlife conservancies in the three districts. The consultant is expected to produce an appropriate model and structure for each trust.

In efforts to increase patrols in Muzarabani the project has engaged a contractor, Mr Hardluck Mhondorohuma to construct three Scout base camps in Muzarabani. The three Scout Base Camps will help improve law enforcement in the district and improve the response time to HWC incidences.

- 1.1.1 Outcome 3. Increased area under sustainable management and benefits for local communities from CBWM, SFM and SLM in established CWCs

Output 3.1: Integrated Landscape Management Plans for Hurungwe (northern part), Mbire, and Muzarabani Districts are developed, officially approved, and implemented

The 2020 Fire Risk Prediction and Management Strategies were finalised and used to reduce fire incidences in the project area. The fire prediction assists stakeholders and communities to put in place fire management strategies before the fire season for countering veld fire destruction in different areas. The vegetation status mapping was produced using normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI) which indicated that the country has high NDVI values of 0.65. This shows that there is healthy vegetation hence more biomass (fire fuel) in the 2020 fire season when the vegetation dries up. Some of the wards in the project area have significantly high NDVI values as shown in figure 1 hence are vulnerable to fire incidences.

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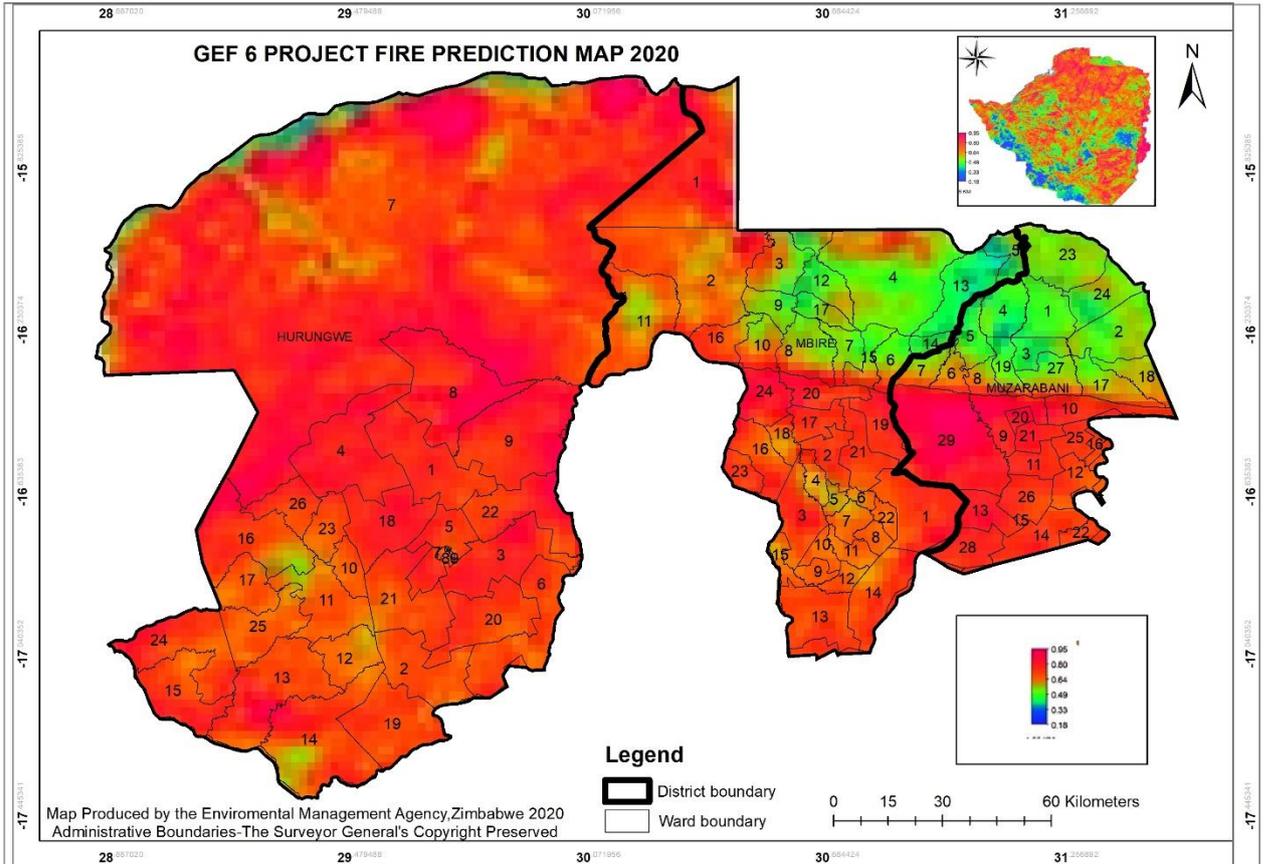


Figure 1: The NDVI values for the project area (1 April 2020)

The Environmental Management Agency held 32 awareness meetings on veld fire management legislation where 2000 participants attended during the 2020 fire season in the project. The meetings discussed strategies to curb environmental degradation in due to mining operations. Environmental challenges identified include veld fires, pollution, deforestation, human wildlife conflicts and land degradation. During these meeting, EMA implored local leadership especially Chief to play an active role in the projection of natural resources from veld fires. It was also pointed out that veld fires and deforestation were the major causes of human wildlife conflicts.

In order to increase the awareness levels on dangers of veld fires, Environmental Management Agency conducted 85 veld fire mobile awareness campaigns in Hurungwe, Mbire and Muzarabani District. The mobile awareness approach was employed as opposed to community gathering to protect and curb the spread of COVID-19 in the project area. In addition, 600 fire management pamphlets were distributed in the project wards especially areas that had a high NDVI value showing high fuel fire load. Community members were encouraged to prepare for the 2020 fire season through fireguard construction, hay bailing using mechanical equipment such as hay balers and use of available home bailing equipment such as drums, bins, tobacco bailing boxes and bags. In addition, the project facilitated procurement of 500 fire beaters, 900 sickles, 250 water cans and 250 bibs for ESCs to enhance the preparedness of the fire season by the community. The project procured 11 tractors that will assist in fireguard construction and other work in the project area. A total of

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108 000 bundles of thatch grass were combed in the project area. The thatch grass bundles are sold for US\$0.30c each. This resulted in the total revenue generated of US\$ 3240.00



Figure 2: Mobile fire awareness campaigns in Hurungwe District.

Due to the efforts that were made to prepare for the fire season, there was a reduction of area burnt by 4% compared to 2019 fire season in the project area.

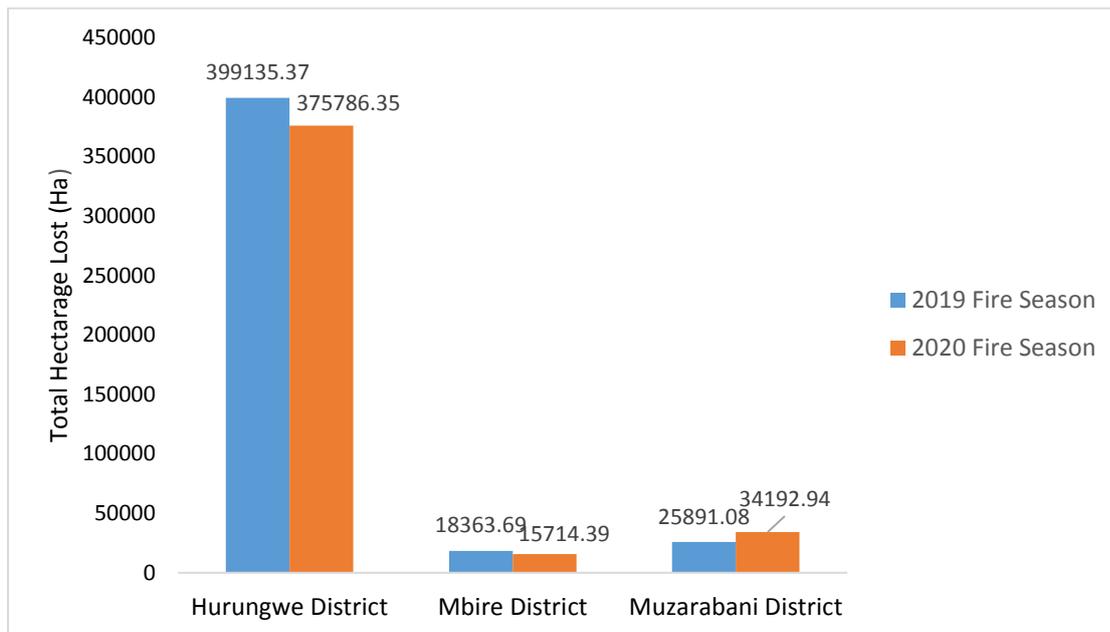


Figure 3: Comparison of area burnt in the project area 2019/2020

Output 3.2: Pilot projects on community based SFM, SLM, HWC management and alternative sources of income are developed and implemented in the target CWCs via sustainable small grant mechanism

The Project Selection Committee reviewed twenty-one ZVBP Small Grants proposals received in March 2020. Low value grants were granted to 8 NGOs to conduct livelihoods activities in the project area. The distribution of grants is highlighted in table 1 below: -

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Table 1: Projects that were approved during this reporting period

	Grant Recipients	Thematic Areas	Approved Grants	Distribution of resources across the 3 Districts		
				Hurungwe	Mbire	Muzarabani
1	Lower Guruve Development Association	2 (Livelihoods)	150,000.00	→		
2	Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources	2 (Livelihoods)	150,000.00	→	50,000.00	50,000.00
3	Zim Apiculture Trust	2 (Livelihoods)	150,000.00	→	50,000.00	50,000.00
4	Environment Africa	3 (Energy)	50,000.00	→		50,000.00
5	Zambezi Society	1 (Awareness)	25,000.00		25,000.00	
6	Community Technology Development Organisation (CTDO)	2: Livelihoods	143,350.00		143,350.00	
7	Biotechnology Trust of Zimbabwe (BTZ)	3 (Energy)	49,840.00		49,840.00	
8	Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA)	1 (Awareness)	25,000.00			12,500.00
Total Approved Grants			\$743,190.00		\$318,190.00	\$312,500.00
					\$112,500.00	

The LGDA in MBIRE is one of the beneficiaries of the small grants and has managed to do the following:

- Conduct District Veld fire awareness campaigns in conjunction with the Forestry Commission, EMA and Carbon Green Africa.
- Conduct Ward level veld fire awareness campaigns in Wards 1, 2, 4, 11 and 12.
- LGDA conducted Borehole siting with Blue-Gold Borehole drilling company in Masoka Ward 11, Nyambudzi Ward 12 and Gonono Ward 4. In Masoka, four sites were surveyed since the area proved to have very low water.
- LGDA conducted a Look and Learn Visit to Mahuwe Ward 15 where fish farming projects are being carried out. The following lessons were learnt from the look and learn visit:
 - i. Tilapia species is the ideal species for fish farming project in Mbire District as it adapts to a wide range of temperatures.
 - ii. Tilapia has a high food conversion rate so it does not require much of purchased or non-organic feed as animal droppings can be used as a feed alternative.
 - iii. Individual community members are capable of conducting fish farming projects as it does not require high initial cost, has low production costs and is also not labour intensive as well as production cost.
 - iv. Fish farming provides livelihoods sustainability and employment creation.

A total of 43 participants (17 males and 26 females) attended a joint crop production and conservation agriculture training that was conducted at Masoka ward 11 in conjunction with the WFP/LGDA LSA Programme. This was aimed at capacity building of communities to empower them to combat poverty through enhanced productivity. From the training, it was observed that farmers had little knowledge of Conservation Agriculture and the benefits which come along with it over other conventional technologies. It was also observed that several farmers had adopted Conservation Agriculture, but it is not being properly done.

SAFIRE finalized two manuals for training in fuel saving stoves, which were translated into vernacular (Shona) and will be used as a trainer's manual for Mbire and Muzarabani Districts. The project further finalized on analysis of potential suppliers of fuel saving stove frames after reviewing possible models made. The organisation conducted a meeting with Mbire and

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Muzarabani Districts to seek authorization to resume implementation. The organisation was advised to mainstream COVID-19 activities and to follow WHO standards during meetings.

Output 3.3. Model woodland restoration projects are developed and implemented in the target CWCs.

The Forestry Commission conducted a look-and-learn tour to two plant tissue culture facilities at the National Biotechnology Authority (NBA) at Marondera Horticultural Research Centre, and the Tobacco Research Board (TRB) at Kutsaga. The objective was to learn requirements for the establishment and management of plant tissue culture facilities as there are plans to establish a similar facility at Forest Research Centre to produce indigenous tree seedlings.

The nursery at Mavhuradonha Wilderness commenced operation in the last third of the year with 14,634 seedlings being produced. Forestry Commission nurseries produced 78,616 seedlings to compliment the project nurseries. It is anticipated that tree planting will be an ongoing activity during the rainy season.

The Forestry Commission, ZPWMA and EMA carried out a joint operation to stop illegal charcoal production and firewood sales in Mbire and Muzarabani. 2058 bags of charcoal (packed in 50kg bags) and 13m³ of firewood were confiscated.



Figure 4: Confiscated firewood and charcoal bags from Charuma, village Ward 17 of Mbire

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Figure 5: Charcoal bags confiscated from sellers being ferried to FC district offices in Mbire



Figure 6: Stakes of firewood in Muzarabani District

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A mapping exercise was conducted by the Mapping and Inventory Unit, Forestry Commission and 16,074 ha were identified and mapped for restoration. Activities to restore these woodlands will be planned per district taking into account variations on the ground. Mbire has large tracts of diverse prime forests. The different types of forests noted included *Colophospermum mopane*, *Combretum terminalia* and wooded grasslands.

The local Member of Parliament ordered Police and Council to stop Forestry Commission vehicles from transporting the confiscated charcoal. The MP questioned the legality of taking charcoal from Muzarabani to Forestry Commission Offices saying locals should benefit from those resources. Stakeholders in the area were of the same opinion but this is in contravention to the Forest Act 19:05. It was observed from the conduct of the local MP the need to carry out awareness activities on forest crimes as stipulated in the related legislation. Some of the recommendations that came out of the meeting are as follows;

- Conduct regular patrols in those wards
- Produce a documentary on charcoal production and its environmental effects. This will assist in influencing policy makers to stop this practice. This can then be presented to the Portfolio Committee on Environment.
- Conduct awareness meetings especially with the District leaders
- Strengthen Environmental Sub-Committees (ESC) to be effective on the ground.
- For repeated offenders, there will be no fine option but imprisonment

Output 3.4. Local communities in the target CWCs are provided with alternative sources of energy and energy saving equipment to decrease their dependence on firewood

Environment Africa (under the Small Grants) conducted Jengetahuni Stove builders training workshop in Gonono Ward 4, Masoka Ward 11 and Kanyemba. There were 22 participants in Gonono and these comprised of 10 from Chikafa Ward 12 and 12 from Gonono Ward 4. There were 22 participants that attended training in Masoka with 9 from Angwa Ward 2 and 13 from Masoka Ward 11. In Kanyemba there were 12 participants. There is currently a total of 37 registered beneficiaries of Jengetahuni stoves (31 females and 6 males). From 30 June to 4 July 2020, Environment Africa conducted the identification of builders and siting and pegging of biogas digesters in Mbire Wards 1, 2, 4, 11 and 12. There were 15 male beneficiaries that were identified and registered.

During the year, 19 community members (all males) were trained on biogas digesters construction by facilitators from the Ministry of Energy and Power Development and Rural Electrification Fund in Chikafa Ward 12, Chidongo homestead in Mbire. The trained individuals will assist with construction of biogas digesters in their wards.

Output 4.1: Participatory project monitoring, evaluation and learning framework is developed and implemented

The Environmental Management Agency Directorate went on a project monitoring tour in Muzarabani and Hurungwe districts from 19th August 2020 to 27th August 2020. They evaluated the extent of implementation of their component of the project, any challenges faced on ground, and made recommendations for the implementation of the outstanding 2020 activities. Meetings were held with different stakeholders in the project area including district authorities, traditional leadership and other local institutions. In view of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Directorate recommended proceeding with caution especially with training

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activities, taking into account the Government and WHO guidelines. The directorate recommended to the RDCs on the concept of beneficiary tax where all tobacco farmers will be registered with the RDCs as business people for the council to have more revenue source. The importance of promoting and strengthening livelihood projects in the project area for communities to appreciate the benefits of ZVBP project was emphasized.

Forestry Commission management conducted a monitoring visit to Mbire and Muzarabani district. The team toured the proposed nursery sites, charcoal production hotspots and held meetings with Muzarabani and Mbire Rural District Councils to discuss sustainable forest management. The General Manager highlighted that Forestry Commission will support all Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) activities. Forestry Commission made an undertaking to facilitate the establishment of masau (*Ziziphus mauritiana*) blocks in each ward to add on to the existing resources for sustainable processing given that masau (*Ziziphus mauritiana*) establishes and grows well in Regions 4 and 5. RDCs were encouraged to continue raising awareness on the effects of tree cutting to the environment and the role of the Environmental Committee (EC), Environmental Subcommittees Committees (ESCs) and traditional leaders in forest management.

The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry and other senior ministry officials conducted a monitoring visit to the project area. The team visited Muzarabani and Mbire districts to evaluate progress made to date. A visit to the protect area was also conducted at stations such as Mkanga, Mana Pools National Park and ZAVARU. Presentations were made on the use of Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) in patrol data gathering. It was recommended during the visit that there is need to front-load some activities that are important for law enforcement. There is need for improved collaboration with Zambians on patrolling the Zambezi River which is the international boundary.

Project Technical Committee Meetings

Output 4.2. Lessons learned from the project are shared with national and international conservation programmes, including GWP

The small grants financial arrangement is more effective and efficient for timely delivery of activities on the ground. This was shared at the GWP 2020 annual conference.

Output 4.3. Gender strategy developed and used to guide project implementation, monitoring and reporting

In November 2020 the project hired the services of a Gender Expert to develop a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and Gender Action Plan for the Zambezi Valley Biodiversity Project. It is anticipated that the plan will assist the project to involve more women in natural resources management in the project area.

4. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment, and Social Inclusion

During CWCs community consultations the number of women attending the consultations was very low. A total of 326 participants attended the consultations. Only 22% of the participants

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were women. The project needs to do more to encourage participation of women in decision making processes at community level.

The project is in the process of hiring a Gender Expert whose responsibility is to develop a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and Gender Action Plan for the Project. The plan will assist the project to involve more women to participate in natural resource management under the project.

The project has trained women under the small grants in Jengetahuni stove making (Figure 7). The stove is efficient in saving firewood. This activity will also improve their income levels through selling of the stove to other community members.



Figure 7: Participants moulding Jengetahuni stove

Capacity Development and Sustainability

A meeting to discuss concept notes for the first quarter was held on 23-24 January 2020 at CAMPFIRE Association. The meeting was attended by Responsible Parties. During the meeting concept notes were discussed and a calendar for activities for the first quarter was developed.

The project has been providing capacity building to project beneficiaries through the small grants. Members of the community in Mbire were trained on Jengetahuni stove making by Environment Africa. LGDA conducted a look-and-learn visit with potential beneficiaries to Mahuwe Ward 15 where fish farming projects are being carried out.

A training session on UNDP policies, procedures and guidelines on implementation of small grants was conducted on the 21st of January 2020. The overall objective of the training was to

strengthen the capacity of NGOs/CBOs that will be implementing the Zambezi Valley Biodiversity Project Small Grants. The meeting was attended by six selected grant recipients, namely Lower Guruve Development Association (LGDA), Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources (SAFIRE), Environment Africa, Zim Apiculture Trust, The Zambezi Society and Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe. These grant recipients were trained on Financial Management, Procurement, Communication, Monitoring and Evaluation policies and guidelines.

The ZVBP Small Grants Call for Proposals was launched on the 27th of January 2020 through UNDP procurement website:

https://procurement-notices.undp.org/view_notice.cfm?notice_id=62806. The call for proposals was closed on the 20th of March 2020.

Proposals for the 20 eligible organizations have been submitted to the Selection Committee for consideration.



Figure 8: Participants at the training session on UNDP policies, procedures and guidelines on implementation of small grants

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

During the reporting period PMU finalized the annual report for the 2019 programming year. The annual work plan was finalized during the reporting period taking into consideration recommendations from the project steering committee. The COVID-19 pandemic was identified as a new risk to the project as it has affected several planned activities during the reporting period. All activities associated with bringing people together were postponed to reduce the spread of the coronavirus.

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The following activities were implemented to minimise the risk associated with COVID-19;

- Virtual and remote methods for working and meetings with stakeholders
- Monitoring personnel wellbeing during crisis/ telecommuting
- Conduct online trainings where feasible
- Consultant hired should commence with desk study review, field work can be conducted when the operating environment permits
- Increase anti-poaching activities in the project area.

Due to the impacts of COVID-19 on some project activities, the PMU through consultation with RPs and UNDP adjusted implementation of some of the activities in response to the pandemic. This was done through reprogramming project activities mainly training. The project will increase support through purchase of materials needed to increase anti-poaching patrols in the project area.

The project has recruited a consultant to carry out aerial survey for elephants and other large herbivores. Results from the survey will be used to update the project results framework. The project has been supporting the Environmental and Social Management Plan Consultancy which is updating the SESP for the project. The project initiated the process of updating the Gender Mainstreaming Plan with assistance from a consultant.

The Zambezi Valley Biodiversity Project participated in the 2020 GEF Annual Monitoring Reporting (AMR) process. This is part of the GEF AMR process, that GEF/LDCF/SCCF/NPIF financed projects under implementation for one year or more will need to complete a Project Implementation Report (PIR). The project updated a 12 indicators in response to the PIR. The project is on track to achieve most of the midterm targets. However, activities on indicators that relies on updating legislation and institutional frameworks are being affected by COVID-19 pandemic.

In August, Environment Africa conducted one physical monitoring visit to one of Jengetahuni stove trainees in Mbire. The other 14 trainees were reached by phone because of Covid-19 restrictions.

HACT Compliance

The Direct Transfer modality of payment affected training participants and the PMU staff as cash withdrawal was challenge at the banks. Payment of DSA through Ecocash was suspended.

Observations

- During the monitoring visits in Hurungwe district, it was observed that communities (Nyamakate ward 7, Chitindiva Ward 8 and Chikova Ward 9) are ready for the establishment of trusts. This was noted by the numbers and contributions made during the consultations. Key stakeholders (Councillors and local leadership, and relevant RDC and government officials) in the district attended the consultations.
- COVID-19 will affect some of the planned activities
- There has been an increase anti-poaching activities in the project areas especially in areas that normally would have tourist.

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- There is a general increase in human-wildlife conflict in the project area which is resulting in loss of life in some cases.
- Unavailability of cash from the bank is affecting the smooth running of the project.

Annual Review and Planning Meeting

The project carried out the annual review and planning meeting in Karoi from 14th to 15th December 2020.

6. Challenges and Lessons Learned

Challenges:

- Inconsistencies in monetary policy affecting payment of service providers to the project
- COVID-19 restrictions affected implementation of planned trainings during the year.
- Increased incidences of poaching mainly due to COVID-19 and economic challenges being faced.
- Increased poaching and destruction of the habitat as a result of artisanal mining activities in some sections of the protected area.

Lessons learned:

- It is important to involve stakeholders with prior experience in the establishing of community trusts.
- Community trusts should not be limited to benefits from wildlife resources only but should target diversification to all sectors of the economy.
- Non-consumptive use of natural resources especially wildlife should be encouraged in some CWCs to boost wildlife numbers.
- It is important to plant trees at community institutions such as schools where there is continuous monitoring. This will improve the survival rate and protection from theft especially of fruit trees.
- It is important to apply adaptive management to reduce impacts of COVID-19 on project activities. The use of adaptive management is important in project management as it allows quick responses and adaptation to the changing operating environment.
- There is need to include all key stakeholders when dealing with forest crimes. Community involvement in natural resources management will play a big role in reducing deforestation.
- Remote monitoring if employed with different strategies can assist in verifying progress of the project in times when it is not possible to conduct regular monitoring visits due to COVID-19 restrictions. Stakeholders in the project area can also monitor project activities on behalf of the Project Management Unit.
- It is important to include local leadership in community projects so as to foster project sustainability.

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- Empowering communities to manage their natural resource is important as it results in reduced environmental degradation. ESCs are important stakeholders that should be used to reduce deforestation in the project area.

7. Project Board Meeting Outcomes and Programmatic Revisions

A Project Steering Committee (PSC) Meeting was held on 15 June 2020 via Zoom. The objective of the meeting was to approve the revised annual work plan following the COVID-19 pandemic which has led to some activities being moved to the last third. There were new requests by ZPWMA to increase anti-poaching activities. The revised work plan was approved by the PSC.

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