

Field Report: Showcasing the Role of Communities in Tackling Illegal Wildlife Trade at the National Elephant and International Rhino Awareness Day in Tanzania



Cover Photo: Discussion with communities in a village in Tunduru district to identify their roles in tackling IWT. Photo Courtesy: Lodrick Mika, TNRF

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Location: Tunduru District, Ruvuma, Tanzania

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List of abbreviations

HWC	Human Wildlife Conflict
IWT	Illegal Wildlife Trade
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
LeAP	Learning and action platform for community engagement against illegal wildlife trade
MNRT	Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism
SGR	Selous Game Reserve
TAWA	Tanzania Wildlife Authority
TNRF	Tanzania Natural Resource Forum
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature
WMAs	Wildlife Management Areas

1. Introduction

Tanzania Natural Resource Forum (TNRF) in collaboration with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT) hosted the National Elephant Day and International Rhino Day between 16th - 22nd September 2020. The events aimed to share experiences of how communities are engaged to combat poaching and illegal wildlife trade (IWT), and to raise awareness in villages with a high number of human-wildlife conflicts (HWC).

Before the main event on 22 September, 7 villages in Tunduru District were visited by TNRF, the Tanzania Wildlife Authority (TAWA) and Tunduru District officials, to create awareness on how communities can address HWC caused by elephants in the Ruvuma landscape. Experiences on HWC and IWT were shared from Ikona, Enduimet and Burunge Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) from the northern circuit, plus Nalika and Chingoli WMAs from the southern circuit. TNRF also disseminated 295 booklets: “Community-based approaches to tackling poaching and illegal wildlife trade: Case studies from Tanzania.”

These activities are part of the Learning and Action Platform for Community Engagement against IWT (LeAP) project, funded by the UK Government’s Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund. LeAP aims to develop best practices in involving communities to tackle poaching and TNRF is involved in the project through the collection of policy and evidence information regarding IWT in Tanzania.

2. Objective

To showcase the role of communities in tackling IWT at the National Elephant and International Rhino Awareness days in Tunduru District, Ruvuma, Tanzania.

3. The geographical context of southern Tanzania

Tunduru District can be found in the south-eastern part of the Ruvuma region between latitudes 100 15' and 110 45' south of the equator and between longitudes 360 30' and 380 east of Greenwich. It has a total surface area of 18,778 square kilometres, of which 2.2% is covered by water bodies. Most land is arable (83.6%), followed by forests (14.2%), with the rest reserved for settlements. Tunduru Township is the administrative center of the district council and is situated 264 kilometres east of Songea Municipality (Tunduru District Council, 2018).

3.1 Geographical location of Tunduru District to the neighbouring Selous Game Reserve

Tunduru District is located to the south of Selous Game Reserve (SGR) and is bordered by Namtumbo District to the west, Liwale District (Lindi region) to the north, and Nachingwea District (Lindi region) and Masasi District (Mtwara region) to the east. In the south, it borders the Ruvuma River which forms a physical international boundary with Mozambique (Tunduru District Council, 2018).

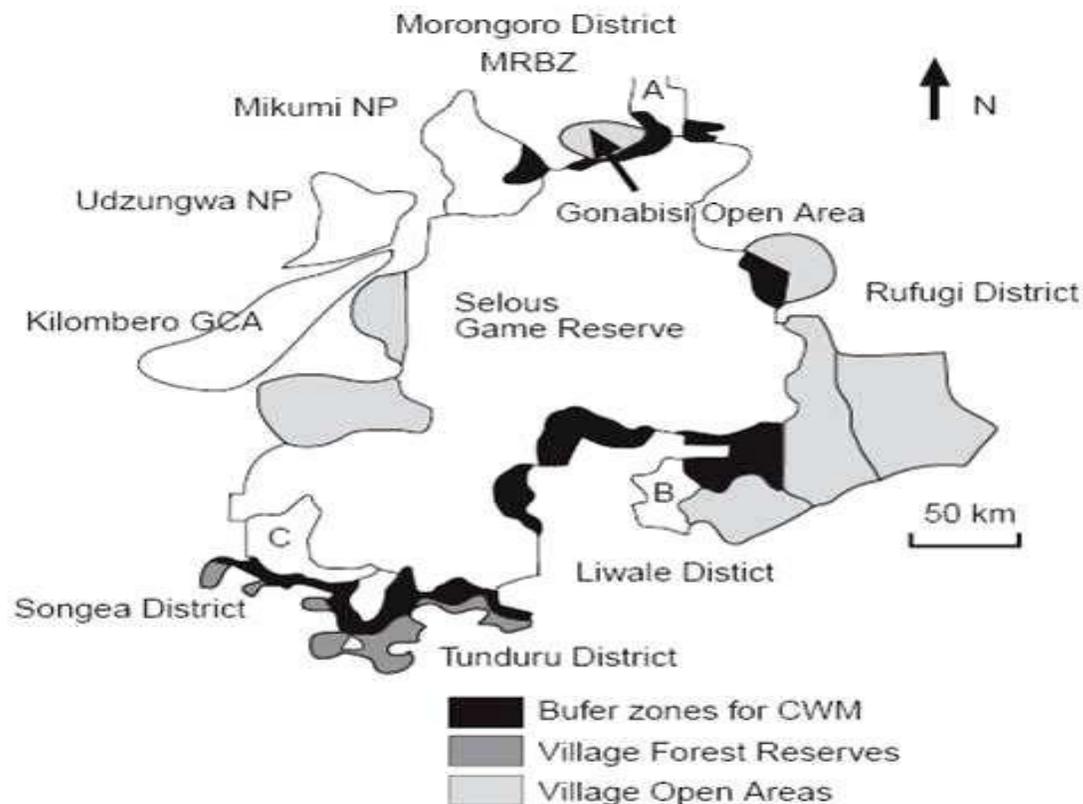


Figure 1: Map of Selous Game Reserve portraying neighboring districts including Tunduru district council. Credit: Gillingham and Lee, 1999

4. Key activities

1. Community awareness and dialogues: 16-21 September
2. Key informant interviews: 16-21 September
3. Participation in the stakeholder's dialogue during the National Elephant and International Rhino Day on 22 September

5. The process, achievements and challenges in combating poaching and IWT in southern Tanzania

5.1 Awareness creation and community dialogues

Prior to the National Elephant and International Rhino Day, TNRF teamed up with TAWA, WWF, MNRT, Nyerere National Park, representatives from the Tunduru District Council, plus some of the beneficiaries (e.g. community members and leaders) from the WMAs, to create awareness and share experiences on the role of communities in tackling poaching and IWT.

Discussions were held with village councils and presentations were given in the following villages as they have high rates of HWC: Kajima, Rahaleo, Muhuwesi, Mpanji, Misyaje, Majimaji and Hulia.

5.2 Highlights from the field visit

- Discussions with the District Council and communities revealed that communities have been involved in anti-IWT efforts through government-provided training on the negative effects of poaching, such as prison fines and sentences.
- There was good collaboration between TNRF and District Officials, WWF, MNRT and WMA representatives from the northern circuit throughout the week.
- The participants visited Kajima, Rahaleo, Mpanji, Muhuwesi, Misyaje, Majimaji and Hulia villages, as they have high rates of HWC, where it was observed that communities are seriously affected as their farms and crops are destroyed by wild animals.
- TNRF, together with the northern WMA representatives, raised awareness in villages in the southern circuit in Tunduru District on their role in tackling IWT and addressing HWC.
- Information about community perceptions on poaching and IWT was gathered through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs).
- WMAs from the northern circuit learnt about different experiences to do with poaching and IWT from the southern circuit WMAs.
- Outputs include publications, a documentary, press releases ([14-10-2020](#)) [website](#) and newsletters.



Photo Credit: Margareth Mollel, TNRF

5.3 Lessons learnt during the field visit

- Tunduru District was noted as one of two districts in Tanzania with the highest rates of HWC.
- There are insufficient tools, weak manpower and a low understanding of communities' role in conservation. The communities don't see direct benefits from conservation due to a lack of investors in the landscape compared to the northern circuits.
- There is a need to have observation points for game scouts to improve monitoring and security of migratory species.
- Community involvement is crucial for conservation since communities are the ones directly affected by wildlife.
- Government should invest more in the southern circuit in order to promote future investment, with the aim of improved livelihoods and infrastructure development, such as schools and hospitals.

5.4 Challenges faced by communities in combating poaching and IWT

Villages bordering Selous Game Reserve face a number of challenges, including:

Human-wildlife conflict was observed in all seven villages visited that neighbour SGR. All of these villages are in WMAs, other than Majimaji Village. The majority of conflicts are with elephants, who destroy farms and crops. Village councils have been given tools to chase elephants back to conserved areas, however most failed to mitigate the problem or just simply weren't used. In some cases, the tools actually made

the problem worse as elephants became agitated by them, causing increased damage. Most villages believe that game scouts employed by the local government provide insufficient support to address the problem, as they arrive too late or not at all.

Inadequate transparency on funds from WMA leaders to some villages forming WMAs. It was noticed that the amount owed from the distribution of revenue is not known to most villagers. This could indicate why there is a low interest in conservation within most villages.

A low tourism profile and inadequate investments was observed in the villages both those inside and outside WMAs. It was noticed that management of natural resources needs to be improved in order to create more value to the southern circuit as a tourist destination. Currently communities are not involved in and don't benefit from tourism, and there is no local marketing and product development to promote equitable business and fair prices. Key informants indicated that there are no development projects and investments within their areas resulting in poor livelihoods.

5.5 Observations in the southern circuit compared to the northern circuit

About	Tunduru district (Selous Game Reserve)	Northern (Serengeti, Tarangire and Manyara)
The Terrain	Most of the villages in Tunduru district that neighbour SGR are hilly with forests despite SGR having an exceptionally high variety of habitats including open grasslands, Miombo woodlands, river, forests and swamps. The terrain complicates the process of controlling elephants and other destructive wild animals in the district.	Villages border open plains of treeless grassland, savanna, open woodlands and riverine forests. This gives them an advantage over destructive wild animals like elephants.
Perception of conservation	Communities have a low interest in conservation. Influencing factors include: human-wildlife conflicts, poverty, fear of using illegal wildlife resources and inadequate investments	Most of the communities have a positive perception about conservation - they value wildlife because they benefit from conservation.
Methods of combating poaching & illegal wildlife trade	The communities in the villages have a fairly low knowledge of combating poaching and illegal wildlife trade.	Most of the communities around national parks and game reserve cooperate with game scouts and the government. For example, by providing information about poachers and illegal wildlife traders, diversifying livelihood activities and engagement in village game scouts.
Awareness of conservation	While the Tunduru District is committed to sustaining and conserving its rich ecological heritage, communities in the villages visited showed a different picture as they are not well equipped with conservation trainings, they don't see the value of wildlife and face rising human wildlife conflicts mostly triggered by elephants.	Communities in the northern circuit are involved in many projects aiming to stop poaching and illegal wildlife trade and also receive benefits from conservation directly or indirectly.
Investments	Despite an abundance of natural resources, the villages visited mostly remain undeveloped with inadequate investments even in WMAs. Overall there is a poor contribution of the natural resources to social and economic development within the communities.	National parks like Serengeti, Tarangire and Manyara contribute to the WMAs, meaning communities benefit from development such as the construction of dispensaries and schools. As a result, communities feel the benefits and really happy with conservation and protection of wildlife in their areas.
Human-wildlife conflict	Within the villages visited the greatest threat of human wildlife conflict is caused by elephants, particularly when they crop raid in village farms.	Communities in the northern circuit also have human wildlife conflicts. Animals involved include elephants, lions and hyena - elephants destroy crops while lions and hyena attack livestock especially cattle, goats and sheep.

6. Key Informant Interviews on engaging communities in combating poaching and illegal wildlife trade

TNRF conducted key informant interviews (KIIs) with community representatives, including a few who attended the National Consultative Dialogue on Communities and IWT hosted by TNRF in December 2019. The interviews aimed to gather information about community perceptions towards poaching and IWT, as well as understand the way local communities combat poaching and IWT in Tunduru District in villages bordering SGR.

Themes that arose from the interviews include:

a) The problem of poaching and illegal wildlife trade in Tanzania

Respondents acknowledged that poaching and IWT is a problem within the country. Replies included:

- “Poaching is only profitable to the person practicing it”.
- “It is damaging”.
- “Policies for conservation are broken”.

b) Poaching and illegal wildlife trade at communities

There is a general feeling that communities are involved in poaching and IWT, however during the KIIs respondents largely declared that they aren’t aware of any such activities. It was apparent that some respondents were influenced by fear in their response. Others stated that poaching used to be a problem but that incidents are much rarer nowadays. Replies included:

- “In the year 2000, poaching was abolished completely”.
- “It stopped during the period of Matintedi (Operation Tokomeza)”.
- “Poaching is no more in our area”.
- “There is patrolling in our area now so poaching has reduced”.
- “Poaching has reduced because of the guidelines, follow up and gathering of guns”.

c) Tackling poaching and illegal wildlife trade

Generally, respondents thought that they needed better education and awareness raising on poaching:

- “I would like to be given more education about poaching and illegal wildlife trade”.
- “I would like to be given an opportunity to learn so that I may have a deeper understanding about conservation”.
- “Education should be given to the game scouts”.
- “I will follow what the government says”.

d) What needs to be done by the government to reduce poaching and illegal wildlife trade

- “Education on the importance of wildlife conservation”.
- “Capacity building on ways to deal with poaching and illegal wildlife trade”.
- “Discourage the market for wildlife products”.
- “Enough game scouts should be allocated in villages around game reserves and national parks”.
- “Provide opportunities for community members to be consulted about poaching and illegal wildlife trade”.
- “Education on human-wildlife relationships”.

7. Stakeholders Dialogue during the International Rhino and National Elephant day, 22 September 2020

The World Rhino day along with the National Elephant Day was celebrated in Tunduru District in the Ruvuma Region. The event focused on the challenges facing rhinos around the world as well as address human-elephant conflicts. Tunduru District Commissioner Hon. Julius Mtatiro officiated the event with support from Professor Noah Sitati (WWF) and Mr Karamagi (MNRT).

Mr Mtatiro represented the Ruvuma Regional Commissioner who was unable to attend due to ongoing political campaigns for Tanzania’s national election. It was felt that due to these political campaigns a roundtable meeting with select stakeholders was more appropriate than a public forum with local villages. The roundtable meeting was used as a platform to communicate to decision makers’ any feedback from the villages visited during the week. Participants discussed the critical issues of IWT and HWC, how to move forward and next steps.

7.1 Issues raised during the event

7.1.1 Status of human-elephant conflict

About 50 villages in Tunduru District are affected by human-elephant conflict. Elephants often pass-through village land when migrating or when in search of food and water, frequently damaging crops, infrastructure and sometimes causing injury or loss of life. Tunduru District Commissioner Hon. Julius Mtatiro said they recognise the challenges faced by communities but that they’ve encountered setbacks handling the problem including: inadequate tools, manpower and budget.

Stakeholders discussed ways to work together to reduce HWC and improve the protection of rhinos and elephants. Ideas suggested included: the need to operationalise anti-poaching strategies, regulate wildlife corridors, better land use planning, strategies to support communities affected by HWC, as well as ensuring continual monitoring and evaluation of approaches to ensure they are effective.

7.1.2 Engagement of communities in combating poaching and illegal wildlife trade

As a result of frequent – many of them serious – HWC incidents in Tunduru District, local support for conservation has declined, which has possibly allowed poaching and IWT to continue. Generally, poaching is for bushmeat with ivory poaching much less common. Covid-19 has been a setback as most game scouts

haven't been able to work during lockdown, reducing the security of wildlife. Feedback from the communities' included the need for better education and awareness raising on the importance of conservation, plus they would also like to have better access to wild meat.

7.1.3 Dissemination of a case study booklet on community-based approaches to tackling IWT in Tanzania

During Stakeholders meeting, TNRF disseminated booklets containing case studies on community-based approaches to tackling IWT. Case studies are of initiatives based in Tanzania that feature on the People not poaching platform.

8. Challenges of the field visit

- Tunduru district is far from Arusha and requires a full two day's travel both to and from.
- Not all key stakeholders were able to join due to ongoing political campaigns for the election.
- The government opted to have dialogues with technical people only due to the election and Covid-19, limiting the participation of community members who were meant to attend the originally planned open public hearing.

9. Conclusion and recommendation

Stakeholders together with MNRT discussed ways forward and how to work together to address HWC and improve protection of elephants and rhinos by looking into the need to operationalise: ***Anti-poaching strategy, wildlife corridors regulations, proper land use planning, strategy to support affected communities, procedure of handling cases for poachers, human-wildlife conflict strategy and monitoring and evaluation of various approaches and initiatives to protect these species.***

MNRT advised Tunduru villagers in Ruvuma region residing near SGR to avoid shifting cultivation and ensure proper and effective management of land use plans to mitigate HWC.

Each village with a WMA was advised to use village game scouts who have already been trained on animal behavior, and who are supported by government with the equipment needed to scare off wildlife.

Meanwhile the MNRT has launched the Human-Wildlife Conflict Management Strategy (2020-2024) to minimise conflicts in wildlife areas. The strategy was launched in Dodoma by the Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, Dr. Hamis Kigwangalla. The strategy suggests several sustainable measures to mitigate the conflicts between human and wildlife in hotspot areas such as Tunduru District.

Finally, it was recommended that the government invest more in preventive measures to mitigate HWC, such as additional trained village game scouts, more tools for patrolling and better training for village councils and communities, as well as find ways to attract more stakeholders to invest in the southern circuit.

References

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