

## **Project Update: March 2021**

### **Project summary**

Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) has become a pressing conservation and poverty issue in recent years in Africa, a major one being human-elephant conflict (HEC). HEC threatens elephant populations through retaliatory killing and increased hostility towards elephants, leading to tolerance of poaching. It harms the livelihoods of farmers, as crop-raiding results into reduced food security. It also deteriorates relations between communities and wildlife authorities. This project is addressing the fundamental drivers of HEC and enhanced coexistence through facilitation of community-led projects that increase and diversify incomes, reduce crop losses from elephants, and conserve elephants.

### **Project activities progress**

#### **1.0 Beehive fences**

Three beehive fences were built around Nyerere National Park in three villages (Kisaki Kituoni, Kisemo, and Mgude). Each village has an 800 m beehive fence with 50 hives.

#### **1.1 Beehive occupancy**

In Kisaki Kituoni village, 24 out of 50 beehives (48 %) have bees, with 19 out of 50 occupied (38 %) in Mgude village, and 39 out of 50 (78 %) in Kisemo village.

#### **2.0 Beekeeping training of farmers groups**

In collaboration with the district government, we have provided beekeeping training, collaborating with farmers in three villages to develop and monitor beehive fences, honey production and business plans and honey market links.

#### **3.0 Marketing beehives fence projects for tourism and establish links with tour operators.**

Via existing links with Tanzanian eco-tourism operators, we have increased local incomes (\$300 in each village) from tourism by developing a human-wildlife coexistence tourism package featuring visits to the beehive fence projects.

#### **4.0 Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA)**

VSLA is a group of people who save together and take small loans from those savings. The activities of the group run in cycles of 1 year, after which the accumulated savings (shares) and the loan profits are distributed back to members and the cycle start again in the following year. In this case, the local communities will be empowered through VSLAs in their registered farmer's group in order to increase access to loans and buffer financial losses through alternative income apart from farming activities.

Loans provided at low interest rate to farmers groups through VSLAs will be used to enable income-generating activities (small investments) apart from farming activities and to assist with household cash flow. The social fund provides useful lump sums for life-cycle events and as a result it increases commitment and positive views and tolerance towards elephant and biodiversity conservation.

In three project villages, we assisted with the formation of VSLAs. Between August 2020 and March 2021, these VSLAs made the following progress: Kisemo village has \$750 in

savings and \$300 in the social fund; Mgude village has \$1,250 in savings and \$360 in the social fund; and Kisaki village has \$900 in savings and \$345 in the social fund. VSLA members have received small loans from accumulated savings with a 10% interest rate, as follows: \$400 in Kisemo village, \$950 in Mgude village, and \$770 in Kisaki village. VSLA members have also received small loans of \$200 from an accumulated social fund with no interest rate in Mgude village, although no loans from social funds were issued in Kisemo and Kisaki villages.

#### **5.0 Provision of conservation education and outreach programs**

HEC mitigation strategies, together with education and outreach programs, play a great role in enhancing wildlife conservation and human-elephant co-existence in particular. This provides knowledge and increase interest and motivation for mitigation techniques and increase awareness about wildlife. We have conducted environmental education in three schools and village meeting discussions.