

Project Update: October 2023

Introduction

Gishwati-Mukura National Park and Biosphere Reserve is facing the problem of human-wildlife conflict caused carnivores that kill frequently community livestock. Therefore, the real information and documentation regarding the factors of those reported livestock killings in the newly established national park and biosphere reserve are largely missing. Funded by Rufford, the research project titled "Assessing the factors leading to the frequent livestock killings towards the protection of carnivores in Gishwati-Mukura National Park and Biosphere Reserve" with ID: 40727-2, was undertaken in order to come up with the response, to answer back the problem and give the solutions to these conflicts.

Undertaken activities.

a) Inception meetings and discussions with the park management, local authorities and local communities

The three inception meetings, and different discussions have been conducted with local communities, local authorities, park staff and local cooperatives in order to have an overview of the project, presenting the technical elements and approaches (mainly camera traps, questionnaires, and group discussions) to be used in the project implementation. The contribution of the project was also discussed as well as receiving the general ideas/comments from the participants.



Community inception meeting on the overview of the project

b) Field trainings and data collection : camera trapping and community survey

Six field assistants have received the training on how to use camera traps, baiting and tracking animal paths. They also learned how to gather information from local residents about conflicts between people and wildlife.

Ten cowboys and watchmen have received field training on cattle protection, predator behavior, and conveying messages to their fellow cowboys.

In addition, two park rangers have been trained on camera trapping and involved in the process of camera trapping.

For the initial round of trapping, 18 camera traps have been deployed in the field, at the edges of the park, in the buffer zone, in pastures/community forests as well as around homes that are close to forest plantations. Four live baits (sheep) and meat baits (two butchered sheep) have been utilised on each of the 18 deployed camera traps.



Note: Initially, 16 Reconyx camera traps were supposed to be deployed, but 4 reconyx camera traps were defective (technical fault), making this impossible which resulted in bringing in Moultrie 180i Bushell camera types. However, we are currently using 18 camera traps (12 Reconyx, 3 Moultrie 180i and 3 camera traps).

c) Community data collection

We carried out field assessments and observations that would direct the gathering of community data in accordance with asking cell and village leaders for the existing crucial socio-economic data to guide data gathering. Following this, the questionnaires were elaborated and modified in accordance with the important data gathered from local authorities and through on the ground observations.

Note: Community data collection is currently underway and will follow the first round of camera trapping exercises because it was suggested during the inception meetings and discussions that the questionnaires be brought to respondents after checking the first-round camera traps' information to more guiding questionnaires, data collection as well as fully comprehending the community survey.

d) Budget Use

At this time, there are no budget constraints as all activities are being carried out within the allocated spending limits.

Next steps:

- Continue the deployment and follow up of camera traps for the new locations.
- Provide training to 15-20 cowboys/watchmen for security camera traps, animal behaviors and how to behave in front of predators.
- Collecting community data by using questionnaires and group discussions.
- Other activities to be covered by the project.

Annex

Table summarizing the updates of planned activities as per 26th September 2023

Items	Planned timeline	Notes
Field visits in different sites of study area	July-2023	Done
Design of data collection	July and August-2023	Done
Acquisition of camera traps and their accessories	July-2023	Done
Inception meetings	August and September-2023	Fully done at Gishwati Side and remaining with a small part of Mukura side
Training of field assistants	August-2023	Fully done with camera trapping and partially done with community survey
Acquisition of baits (carcasses and live pets)	September-2023 and other months of re-deployments	Done for the deployed 18 camera traps
Deployment and visits of camera traps	September-2023	Done and ongoing for other months

Training to cowboys and watchmen for camera traps	July and November, 2023	Done for 10 people, and still targeting 15-20 people
Community data collection	September-October, 2023	Done with designing questionnaires and taking key information. The deployment of questionnaires to follow
Progress report	November, 2023	Not yet
Data entry and Data analysis	October-November 2023; February- 2024	Not yet
Presentation of final findings	March, 2024	Not yet
Final report to Rufford Foundation	April, 2024	Not yet
Publication in per review journal	June, 2024	Not yet