



STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF ELEPHANTS IN THE KAVANGO ZAMBEZI TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION AREA

1. BACKGROUND

The Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA) is home to approximately half of Africa's remaining savannah elephants. The outlook for the wellbeing of these populations hinges on maintaining their habitats and upon ensuring the spatial and temporal movement of elephants from more densely-populated areas in Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia, to areas in Angola and Zambia.

While the KAZA Partner States have committed to the conservation of the landscape's elephants, and although numerous strategies and plans (e.g. the KAZA Master Integrated Development Plan) have been developed, the relevant stakeholders in government and civil society need to agree upon the means of achieving those ends. In order to do so, a planning framework to encompass strategies and plans with elephants as their primary focus has been developed to build an interconnected network of safe habitat for elephants and other species across KAZA, particularly during the current wildlife crime epidemic. In recent years across the continent, tens of thousands of African elephants have been illegally killed for their ivory.

The latest elephant surveys revealed a combined population of at least 220,000 across the five countries. Of this number approximately 85% occurred in Botswana and Zimbabwe, alone. Data from successive IUCN African Elephant Status Reports indicate that elephants in southeast Angola and southwest Zambia have suffered major declines due to poaching. In the Kavango and Zambezi (formerly Caprivi) regions of Namibia elephant populations are growing, despite a worrying increase in the levels and distribution of poaching.

In places where elephant numbers are increasing in KAZA, they may pose a threat to diminishing riverine and woodland habitats and the species dependent upon such habitat. Also, increasing elephant populations, combined with human population growth and human settlements in existing wildlife dispersal areas is leading to increases in human elephant conflict, of which increased illegal killings can be a symptom and problem animal control off take becomes necessary. This may have a "push" effect on elephant movements. In contrast, the KAZA portions of Angola and Zambia have large tracts of suitable elephant habitat, but with smaller populations of elephants and other wildlife (and concomitant lower human densities), which should provide a "pull" effect.

The long-term viability of KAZA elephants as a transboundary population depends upon securing and connecting or re-connecting of wildlife movement corridors. Once secure, this will also allow the movement from densely populated areas within the landscape, to areas with greatly reduced elephant numbers. Such corridors are under various stages of intactness and face the potential threat of permanent closure due to encroaching human settlements, agriculture and infrastructure developments (roads, rail, riparian) livestock disease control measures (veterinary cordon fences), and potential mining developments.

Both science-based and participatory scenario planning needs to be undertaken to address these threats to corridors and elephant habitat in general. To enable this planning, long term monitoring of the KAZA elephant population is required, as well as identification and mitigating threats and drivers inimical to integrated land use and landscape planning and management to ensure securing adequate space for the survival of these elephants. A contemporary and emerging threat is climate change to which elephants are already vulnerable in areas of limited water supply, which will likely exacerbate human-elephant conflict.

2. PURPOSE

To enable long term planning, monitoring of the KAZA elephant population is required, as well as identifying and mitigating threats and drivers inimical to integrated land use and landscape planning to ensure securing adequate space for the survival of these elephants. A contemporary and emerging threat is climate change to which elephants are already vulnerable in areas of limited water supply, which will likely exacerbate human-elephant conflict.

To address these issues and to ensure a long term future for elephants and many other species dependent on the KAZA landscape, an elephant conservation planning workshop for the partner countries of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe was convened specifically to develop a strategic planning framework for the conservation and management of these elephants in the largest terrestrial conservation area in the world. The framework is part of the suite of measures towards harmonisation of policies, legislation and practice in the management and sustainable use of natural resources as provided for in the KAZA TFCA Treaty.

The framework was adopted by the KAZA Ministers' Committee on 11th April 2019 and now endorsed by the Kasane Elephant Summit on 7th May 2019 places the focus squarely on the following long term Vision and the four primary objectives to achieve it.

3. VISION

The framework sets the following vision: "KAZA's elephants, the largest viable and contiguous population in Africa, are conserved to the benefit of people and nature within a diverse and productive landscape."

4. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: Facilitate the development of an integrated land use planning process to secure long-term ecosystem integrity and connectivity of KAZA's elephant population

The future of KAZA's elephants will depend on the bigger landscape in which they occur and the development needs with which they frequently compete. This means planning for the conservation and management of elephants must be part and parcel of planning for the larger landscape. The water, agriculture, livestock management, mining and other sectors must become a part of planning for elephants and vice versa – elephants must become a part of the broader land use planning efforts.

New thinking, new partnerships and new tools are needed to better ensure that the stated Vision becomes a reality. Fortunately, a range of new technologies, new initiatives and funding opportunities are already in play. These must be sought out and put to work.

As a starting place the objective adds to the elephant-specific data requirements by incorporating the often-repeated need to obtain and then to share the broader information and data that may impact the conservation and management of KAZA's elephants, including climate change impacts, the distribution and status of water resources and a number of other key data sets pertaining to development activities at a variety of scales across KAZA. New analysis of this information will be required to underpin and support planning and conservation action for KAZA's elephants.

Objective 2: Maintain and manage KAZA's elephants as one contiguous population

In conserving KAZA's elephant population it must be fully understood - this means knowing as much as possible about its numbers, trends, seasonal distribution and movements. Conducting another overall and systematic survey across using a standardised and agreed methodology to allow future comparisons across countries is now long overdue. Connectivity in the landscape will be essential for the future of KAZA's elephants and this must be underpinned by capture and sharing of information on elephant in the existing Wildlife Dispersal Areas (WDAs) and beyond.

In addition to understanding the living population it is also increasingly important to understand the timing, levels, distribution and patterns of poaching across all partner countries. The different countries' contributions such as MIKE (Monitoring Illegal Killing of Elephants) are critical to building this understanding, though improved harmonisation of methodologies used for capturing carcass data is essential.

The KAZA elephant strategy must form an umbrella under which each of the partner country's national elephant action plans and strategies can sit. Formulation of this KAZA strategy framework is timely. New country elephant action plans have either recently been completed or are in process – Angola produced a NIAP (National Ivory Action Plan) in 2016 and their NEAP (National Elephant Action Plan) is currently being finalised, Botswana is currently consulting about the country's NEAP, Namibia's plan is undergoing review, the Zambian plan is being finalised and Zimbabwe's plan was approved in 2015.

Objective 3: Promote and support co-existence of humans and elephants for ecological, social and economic benefits

The growing conflict between people and elephants (HEC) is a recurring theme throughout the KAZA landscape. For example Namibia cited the increased conflict as one of the main reasons for having to revise their management plan. This conflict was felt to reflect not only the growing human population but also the expanding elephant range in some countries. The link between the level of compensation offered and the amount of conflict reported was discussed. The need for communities to benefit from elephants was emphasised, with some stressing consumptive uses and others only non-consumptive, but all agreed communities have to be involved, as they are truly the first line of defence in an age of increasing illegal wildlife trade activity.

Objective 4: Reduce the illegal killing and trade in elephants and elephant products

Current high levels of illegal killing and trade pose an imminent threat to KAZA's elephants and recent reports of poaching in the KAZA area suggest the need for greatly enhanced vigilance. Poaching and illegal wildlife trade has changed over time and is no longer driven simply by the short-term motivations of impoverished and beleaguered local communities. It has become part of the highly organised criminal syndicate networks; involving the same people engaged in illegal drugs and human trafficking and reflecting a clear change in the dynamics of this growing challenge. Large-scale shipments still move out of the region and some are seized along the supply chain between Africa and their final markets. Most recently small-scale local carving industries are being established across Africa, including countries in SADC, to produce beads, bangles and earrings for export to Asian markets. To this end, information on the pattern and nature of illegal trade in ivory must continue to be gathered and reported.

With the growing value of this trade and the increasing number of species involved, it has become clear that there is a need to engage local communities in combatting the trade where its first impacts will be felt.

Objective 5: Establish a high-level decision-making process on which to build the planning framework for conserving KAZA's elephants

In order to achieve the aspirations laid out in this strategic planning framework for KAZA's elephants between now and 2030, there will be a need for high level support in decision making and action. Political will is of the essence. The current KAZA TFCA governance structures provide the bedrock needed to build the support needed for fully realising its aspirations.

APPENDIX 1: INDICATIVE SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM ACTIVITIES

Objective 1: Facilitate the development of an integrated land use planning process to secure long-term ecosystem integrity and connectivity of KAZA's elephant population

Short term

- Undertake a single Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for KAZA or several individual ones on key transboundary wildlife corridors to strengthen and secure governments' recognition to the importance of maintaining key KAZA corridors. This should be linked to large landscape planning in contrast to more traditional land use planning.
- Conservation and management of Angola water towers, to secure the long-term flow of the four river systems that form the basis of KAZA's wildlife and tourism assets.
- Create understanding and advocate for the need to integrate sectoral planning processes (water conservation, infrastructure development, agricultural expansion, mining, veterinary, etc.) with elephant conservation planning processes
- Create cross-sectoral understanding of infrastructural, water, conservation and rural development planning processes
- Review current databases from all relevant disciplines at all available scales and identify key gaps
- Prioritise and identify updated information to fill gaps
- Collect, collate and standardise current data on climate change, water resources, law enforcement, agricultural expansion, infrastructure development, etc.
- Continue to populate the KAZA GIS database with new geo-spatial information
- Undertake preliminary analyses of existing data and establish baselines
- Continue to undertake awareness raising of future scenarios across all sectors
- Improve stakeholder awareness to support WDAs and the establishment of corridors within these

Medium term

- Establish a sound knowledge base across the conservation and development sectors using the best available information and technology
- Undertake continuous collection, updating and sharing of data
- Conduct further analyses to contribute to modelling and other approaches to support the development future scenarios
- Use this information for adaptive management
- Develop integrated KAZA landscape level plans which include WDAs and other key elephant movement corridors
- Where feasible undertake natural resources valuation assessments

- Raise awareness of these plans and pursue their implementation
- Harmonise legislation and policy to secure (formal, legal recognition) WDAs, elephant movement corridors and landscape-level land uses
- Support justification for the re-alignment and/or removal of veterinary and wildlife fences especially of crucial sections along country borders which can be informed by SEA.
- Secure WDAs and elephant corridors within and between these dispersal areas for the long term

Objective 2: Maintain and manage KAZA's elephants as one contiguous population

Short term

- Undertake KAZA-wide synchronised aerial surveys to determine numbers and seasonal distributions
- Further analyse existing movement data to identify knowledge gaps
- Collect local movement data using long term collared elephant data and ground surveys at different scales and in different places
- Improve understanding of how elephants occupy and use habitats and resources across the KAZA landscape
- Collate and use data sources on human distribution and land uses to better inform understanding of the present elephant distribution and future range
- Consolidate and report MIKE and other data on elephant poaching
- Undertake a review of the national elephant action plans in each of the five partner countries with a view towards their full integration under this KAZA strategic planning framework

Medium term

- Understand better elephant demographics and related population and habitat dynamics in the context of WDAs
- Establish trends in numbers, seasonal distribution and movements in relation to land cover and land use change
- Document historical knowledge of elephant range to highlight future land use conflicts

Objective 3: Promote and support co-existence of humans and elephants for ecological, social and economic benefits

Short term

- Support alternative livelihood initiatives among communities and exchange of best practices in mitigating conflict
- Monitor and evaluate socio-economic interventions
- Engage communities in undertaking and monitoring local level adaptive management interventions as a way of instilling ownership of resources

- Build capacity in communities for simple data collection methods
- Develop enabling policies and practices for communities to sustainably manage, utilise and benefit from elephants
- Build capacity of community-based coexistence management i.e. mitigation through local level land use planning and use of local knowledge
- Engage relevant stakeholders in co-existence and mitigation measures
- Support development and implementation of enabling policies to utilise, manage and benefit from elephants and other wildlife in a sustainable manner

Medium term

- Strengthen and expand organisational development support to community-based conservation structures e.g. transboundary natural resource management community forums
- Support sustainable alternative livelihood initiatives
- Expedite Commodity Based Trade (CBT) for beef within the region to enhance income generation for communities
- Support government implementing bodies or institutions responsible for wildlife management

Objective 4: Reduce the illegal killing and trade in elephants and elephant products

Short term

- Mobilise financial, human and material resources to undertake needed and urgent actions to combat wildlife crime through coordination of existing law enforcement interventions and anti-poaching strategies by several stakeholders.
- Improve human capacity and understanding across all sectors through awareness and training
- Develop and implement country specific strategies to reduce illegal killing and trade in elephants and elephant products with particular reference to the SADC LEAP strategy
- Coordinate transboundary ground-based patrols and air surveillance
- Increase understanding and sharing of information regarding the nature of organised crime across borders, including the reporting of seizures to CITES through TRAFFIC's Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS)
- Engage communities to help combat wildlife crime using inter alia transboundary natural resource management community forums and other new approaches such as First Line of Defense (FLoD)
- Create enabling conditions (national to local level policy) to allow for cross boundary pursuit of wildlife criminals
- Review existing extradition legislation to allow prosecution of wildlife criminals across the KAZA partner countries
- Collect and collate genetic information (from DNA analyses) centrally to better inform evidence-led prosecutions

Medium term

- Align principles, policy and legislation across KAZA on combatting illegal wildlife trade
- Implement standardised protocols and procedures for wildlife intelligence, patrols, crime scene investigations, prosecutions and penalties
- Develop and implement standardised protocols and procedures for customs and immigration officials regarding recognition of the cross-border movement illicit wildlife goods and apprehension of suspects
- Provide training of customs and immigration officials on the above

Objective 5: Establish a high-level decision-making process on which to build the planning framework for conserving KAZA's elephants

Short term

- Continue the process of implementing the elephant conservation planning framework process
- Review current processes and identify gaps

Medium term

- Undertake a 5-year progress review of the elephant strategic conservation planning framework
- Ensure partner countries allocate financial and other resources to implement the strategic planning framework
- Establish a reporting and feedback framework mechanism (which includes all levels of the KAZA structures)

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