



SOUTH LUANGWA
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Human-Wildlife Conflict, and the Role of South Luangwa Responsible Community Project in Mitigation Efforts - 2026

Abstract

Game Management Areas (GMA) in Zambia’s Mambwe District, spanning 4,840 km², buffers South Luangwa National Park, hosting elephants, lions, and hippos. Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) from population growth and farming causes crop damage, livestock losses, and human risks, weakening livelihoods and conservation support. The South Luangwa Responsible Community Project (SLRCP) indirectly reduces HWC through food aid, boreholes, and education. However, limited funding, no victim compensation, and environmental challenges persist (Detecting shared norms..., 2024). Solutions include partnerships, legal reforms, training, alternative incomes, and tools like fences to promote coexistence.

Contents

Human-Wildlife Conflict in Lupande Game Management Area: The Role of South Luangwa Responsible Community Project (SLRCP) in Mitigation Efforts	1
1. Introduction	2
2. Understanding Human-Wildlife Conflict in Lupande Game Management Area	2
3. The Role of SLRCP in Mitigating Human-Wildlife Conflict.....	3
4. What is Lacking in the Current Approach.....	3
a) Positives	4
b) Challenges	4
5. Possible Solutions	4
6. Conclusion.....	5
7. References.....	5

1. Introduction

Situated in Zambia's eastern Mambwe District, this Game Management Area (GMA) encompasses roughly 4,840 square kilometers, functioning as an essential buffer adjacent to South Luangwa National Park, a key site for African wildlife. Home to species like elephants, lions, leopards, hippos and crocodiles, the area faces escalating human-wildlife conflicts (HWC) due to population growth and farming expansion, resulting in damaged crops, lost livestock, destroyed property and threats to human life. Such conflicts jeopardize community livelihoods and erode support for conservation initiatives. The South Luangwa Responsible Community Project (SLRCP), a non-profit organization registered in Zambia, aids in tackling these problems via community development efforts that indirectly alleviate HWC drivers like poverty and dependence on resources.

In this article some of the words have been abbreviated as follows;

HWC: Human-Wildlife Conflict

GMA: Game Management Area

SLRCP: South Luangwa Responsible Community Project (SLRCP)

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

2. Understanding Human-Wildlife Conflict in these Game Management Area

Formed in 1972, GMAs are a part of the Luangwa Valley ecosystem, bordering settlements that enable wildlife to enter agricultural and residential zones, frequently just kilometers from park limits. Main contributors involve habitat breakdown from trees, excessive grazing and demographic increases, compelling animals such as elephants to seek sustenance and hydration in human territories. Elephants cause most crop raids, especially harming maize in rainy periods, whereas hippos and crocodiles lead to injuries and deaths by waterways. Predators including lions attack farm animals, worsening financial strains for subsistence farmers dependent on cultivation.

The monetary impact is considerable, with research showing notable reductions in harvest outputs and state earnings from diminished tourism or oversight expenses. Furthermore, these events damage ties between locals and authorities

like the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW), with communities sensing insufficient aid in managing consequences. Weather fluctuations, like dry spells, worsen matters by gathering wildlife around shared assets with people.

3. The Role of SLRCP in Mitigating Human-Wildlife Conflict

SLRCP seeks to advance eco-friendly conservation alongside elevating underprivileged groups in the Luangwa area through tangible assistance schemes (SLRCP, 2025). Though not centered on immediate HWC actions such as barriers or monitoring, it confronts fundamental issues fueling disputes, including food shortages and scarce basics. Principal actions encompass:

- i. Supplying food packages to needy households, easing starvation and diminishing intrusion into animal habitats for supplies.
- ii. Financing drilling of boreholes for potable water, cutting hazardous journeys to streams where clashes with perilous creatures like hippos and crocodiles happen (SLRCP, 2025).
- iii. Granting study grants, learning tools and facility upgrades to boost educational access, nurturing enduring financial autonomy and lessening poverty-induced terrain stresses (SLRCP, 2025).
- iv. Delivering residence care and treatment for disabled youth, advancing group durability (SLRCP, 2025).

Through these interventions, SLRCP enhances local abilities and fosters eco-conscious behaviors, indirectly curbing HWC by lowering human use of disputed natural zones.

4. What is lacking in the Current Approach

The SLRCP provides important help, but efforts to reduce human-wildlife conflict (HWC) in these GMAs, involving government and NGOs, face challenges. Due to limited budget, SLRCP focuses on community support rather than directly addressing conflict sources, such as using repellents or rapid response teams (SLRCP, 2025). There's a lack of consistent funding for compensating victims, which is not allowed under current wildlife laws, causing frustration and less support for conservation. Limited staff for monitoring and enforcement, along

with weak awareness campaigns, allow conflicts to continue. Environmental issues like ongoing land erosion and climate impacts are not properly addressed in adaptable plans.

a) Positives

SLRCP's locality-focused framework provides multiple benefits for HWC decrease:

- i. It strengthens residents by fulfilling essential requirements, forging favorable links to preservation and spurring involvement in asset care (SLRCP, 2025).
- ii. Efforts like water supply advocate safer options, reducing straight wildlife meetings (SLRCP, 2025).
- iii. Stress on learning and equality fortifies communal ties, crucial for joint dispute reactions (SLRCP, 2025).
- iv. By combating impoverishment, the method indirectly restrains terrain intrusion, matching triumphant locality-led schemes in the locale.

b) Challenges

Notwithstanding advances, primary barriers persist:

- i. SLRCP's indirect techniques might overlook instant dangers, creating voids in vanguard lessening like beast repellents (SLRCP, 2025).
- ii. Finance deficits and workforce bounds curb scheme growth amid increasing poverty and populace strains.
- iii. Weak synchronization amid participants, including SLRCP, DNPW and entities like Conservation South Luangwa, yields scattered attempts.
- iv. Mounting ecological tensions, encompassing tree loss and climate shifts, surpass existing abilities.

5. Possible Solutions

To improve results, specific changes are needed:

- i. Build partnerships between SLRCP and local wildlife scouts to use direct tools like pepper barriers and community patrols.

- ii. Push for legal changes to create compensation systems, increasing community support for conservation.
- iii. Include HWC training in SLRCP programs, teaching methods like crop protection and safe wildlife routes (Elephant Crisis Fund, 2023).
- v. Promote alternative income sources, such as animal-proof crops and eco-tourism, to diversify earnings (High Five Club, 2019).
- vi. Invest in tools like electric fences and early warning systems to create physical barriers and timely alerts (Conservation South Luangwa, 2019).

6. Conclusion

Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) in these GMAs comes from connected social, economic, and environmental factors, creating ongoing dangers for people and animals. SLRCP's focus on community improvement lays a foundation for indirect conflict reduction, but using more direct methods and partnerships is key for lasting impact. By Supporting SLRCP to address gaps through policy changes, education, and new ideas, stakeholders can promote fair coexistence, protecting wildlife while supporting local well-being

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