

TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION DURING COVID-19: A GRANT RESPONSE REVIEW

RESULTS, LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS



TFCA FINANCING FACILITY



November 2024

Supported by:



Implemented by:





In the SADC region, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation BMZ has partnered for over 20 years with SADC Secretariat and Member States to establish Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) jointly managed by two or more countries. The objective of the joint German Development Cooperation Programme on SADC Transboundary Use and Protection of Natural Resources is to promote sustainable development and economic growth i.e. to conserve trans-boundary ecosystems and biodiversity, improve livelihoods and climate resilience of the population, enhance the tourism sector and job creation as well as to promote economic stability and regional integration.

Those objectives were seriously threatened by the Covid-19 pandemic that has impacted the region for several years. Even today the recovery of the tourism sector and livelihoods of local communities are still work in progress. Immediately after the outbreak of the pandemic the German Government committed additional funding to the SADC region and its TFCAs, mainly through channels of bilateral cooperation. This is how the support to Kavango-Zambezi TFCA (Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe), Great Limpopo TFCA (Mozambique mainly), Malawi-Zambia TFCA (Malawi, Zambia) as well as national programs in Namibia and Tanzania was mobilised and implemented.

But it is only thanks to the SADC TFCA Financing Facility providing a financing mechanism that is flexible and demand driven that we were able to channel funding to a lot more SADC member states and TFCAs in the SADC region. As shown and presented in this brochure the package has reached out to a total of 8 countries and 9 TFCAs including a good number of new destinations and beneficiaries of our cooperation program (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Eswatini, Lesotho). Some delays and other challenges have occurred and can help us to improve

and adjust not only the TFCA Financing Facility but also other projects and programs at TFCA level. Those lessons learnt, enabling factors and recommendations presented by the local communities, implementers, stakeholders and government agencies are well taken and will provide good guidance for the future.

The SADC region has vast natural capital and immense potential to protect and use the biodiversity as a primary source of economic, social and cultural development as well as regional integration for present and future generations. And it is through regional cooperation that the natural richness of Southern Africa can be best shepherded for the benefit of its people. We are proud that this year we can celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the opening of the first TFCA – the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park - alongside the SADC Member States, the SADC Secretariat and our partners. And we are looking forward to continuing our partnership for many years to come.

Mr Philipp Knill from BMZ | *Director Africa II*



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OVERVIEW

The SADC TFCA Financing Facility



OVERVIEW

THE SADC TFCA FINANCING FACILITY

The SADC TFCA Financing Facility (TFCA FF) is a regional financing mechanism established to provide sustainable funding for conservation and management actions in Transfrontier Conservation Areas in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The Financing Facility was established to become a flexible, responsive, demand and performance driven financing mechanism, with the unique purpose of supporting the establishment and sustainable development of transfrontier conservation areas.

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of the German Government, through KfW Development Bank, provided initial funding for establishment of the TFCA Financing Facility. The long-term vision is for the TFCA Financing Facility to be funded by several international cooperating partners and other innovative financing models to reach an initial target of EUR 100 million. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is the Project Executing Agency (PEA) for the TFCA Financing Facility through its Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office.

SUMMARY



A regional fund designed to support development of TFCAs in the SADC region



Established in 2020, with initial phase to run for 6 years

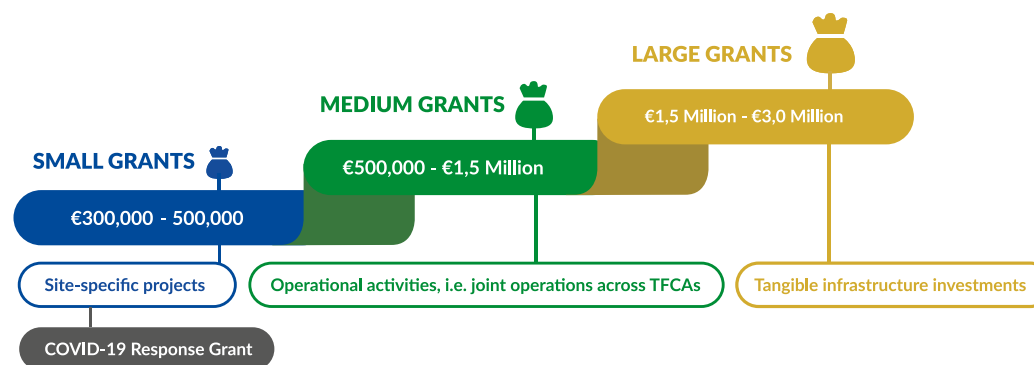


The German government has committed €44m to the TFCA FF

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT



TYPES OF TFCA FF GRANTS



OVERVIEW



OBJECTIVES OF THE SADC TFCA FINANCING FACILITY

The TFCA FF aims to invest in tangible measures that strengthen ecological, economic, cultural and institutional connectivity within SADC TFCAs.

The SADC TFCA FF addresses the critical needs for conservation by integrating the three dimensions of “species”, “habitat” and “people”, and aligning with the overall socio-economic development and regional integration goals of SADC TFCAs.

The three dimensions are:

SPECIES

Improved habitat connectivity for selected key migratory species

HABITAT

Improved management effectiveness of TFCAs and PAs

PEOPLE

Improved livelihoods for communities affected by human-wildlife cohabitation



COVID-19 RESPONSE GRANT

This grant mechanism was specifically created to address the pressing challenges that arose during the pandemic.

The pandemic's wide-reaching effects hit these areas particularly hard, causing a significant decline in tourism, which is a major source of income for both protected areas and surrounding communities. The sudden border closures, travel restrictions, and lockdowns caused an immediate halt to tourism, leading to the collapse of local economies that were heavily dependent on international visitors. The impact was not only economic but also environmental. The reduction in ranger patrols and operational funding led to an increase in illegal activities such as poaching and the harvesting of natural resources, further endangering biodiversity in these areas.

With most of governments redirecting their budgets and resources toward addressing health crises, conservation efforts were deprioritized, leaving protected areas and their associated tourism economies at risk. Many parks and conservancies were unable to operate fully, and this led to a loss of jobs, increased poverty, and reduced capacity to manage and protect wildlife. The Covid-19 response grant aimed to counteract these

effects by providing immediate financial support to ensure the continuity of key conservation activities and to alleviate the economic strain on communities.

Fast-track Funding Mechanism – Covid-19 Emergency Response

On April 30th 2021, IUCN invited SADC Member States to submit concept notes to be considered for funding under the fast-track funding mechanism. By the June 7th, **ten (10) Member States had submitted a total of 22 concept notes. Each Member State had an allocation of EUR 300,000.** Some submitted one concept for the max amount, whereas other countries submitted multiple concepts within the allocated budget of EUR 300k. The submitted concepts targeted 13 TFCAs in the region; with the highest number received for the Maloti-Drakensberg TFCA (4 concepts).

A total of 11 concepts were approved, and additional concepts initially submitted in response to the Close Call for Covid-19 received IUCN recommendation to be considered under the First Open Call. This allowed grantees adequate time to further develop proposals and additional 2 project were approved and are currently on-going beyond the scope of the Covid-19 grants.





COVID-19 RESPONSE GRANT

Urgent response to the severe disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly within Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) in Southern Africa.

The Covid-19 Emergency Response Grants were created as an urgent response to the severe disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly within Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) in Southern Africa. These areas, which span across borders, are crucial for the conservation of biodiversity and support the livelihoods of local communities, many of whom depend on tourism and conservation-based activities.

Key challenges faced by TFCAs during Covid-19

Border and movement restrictions

Human and financial resources limitations

Operational challenges

Policy and budgetary priority shifts

Grant goal

The grant aimed to counteract these effects by providing immediate financial support to ensure the continuity of key conservation activities and to alleviate the economic strain on communities

Objectives

Biodiversity conservation

Ensure the continued protection of biodiversity within TFCAs

Support local communities

A significant part of the funding was allocated to support local communities who had lost income due to the collapse of the tourism industry

Strategies

Infrastructure Development and Tourism Enhancement

Community Livelihoods and Economic Support

Conservation and Wildlife Management

Capacity Building and Stakeholder Collaboration

Outputs

Employment

Equipment

Infrastructure

Support to income-generating activities

Capacity Building

OVERVIEW

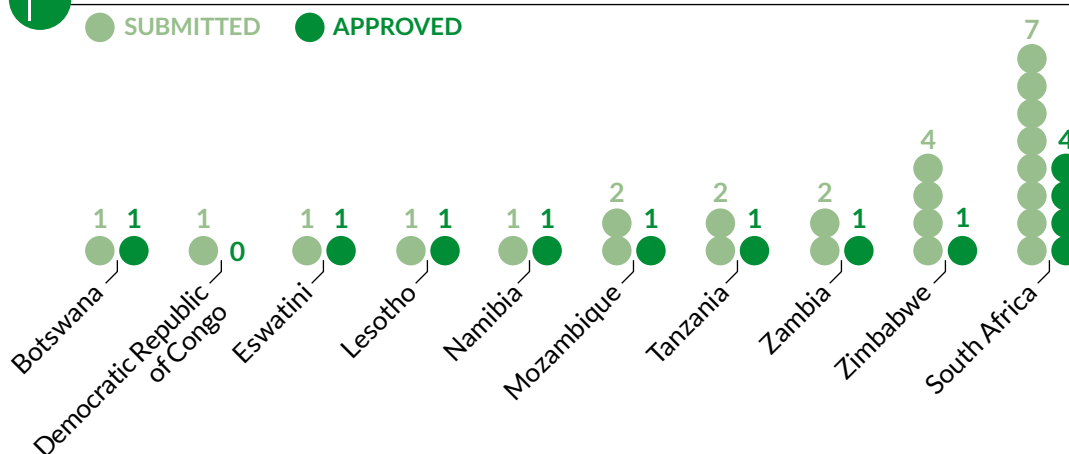


CONCEPT NOTES X PROJECTS APPROVED



CONCEPTS PER COUNTRY

● SUBMITTED ● APPROVED



CONCEPTS PER TFCA

● SUBMITTED ● APPROVED

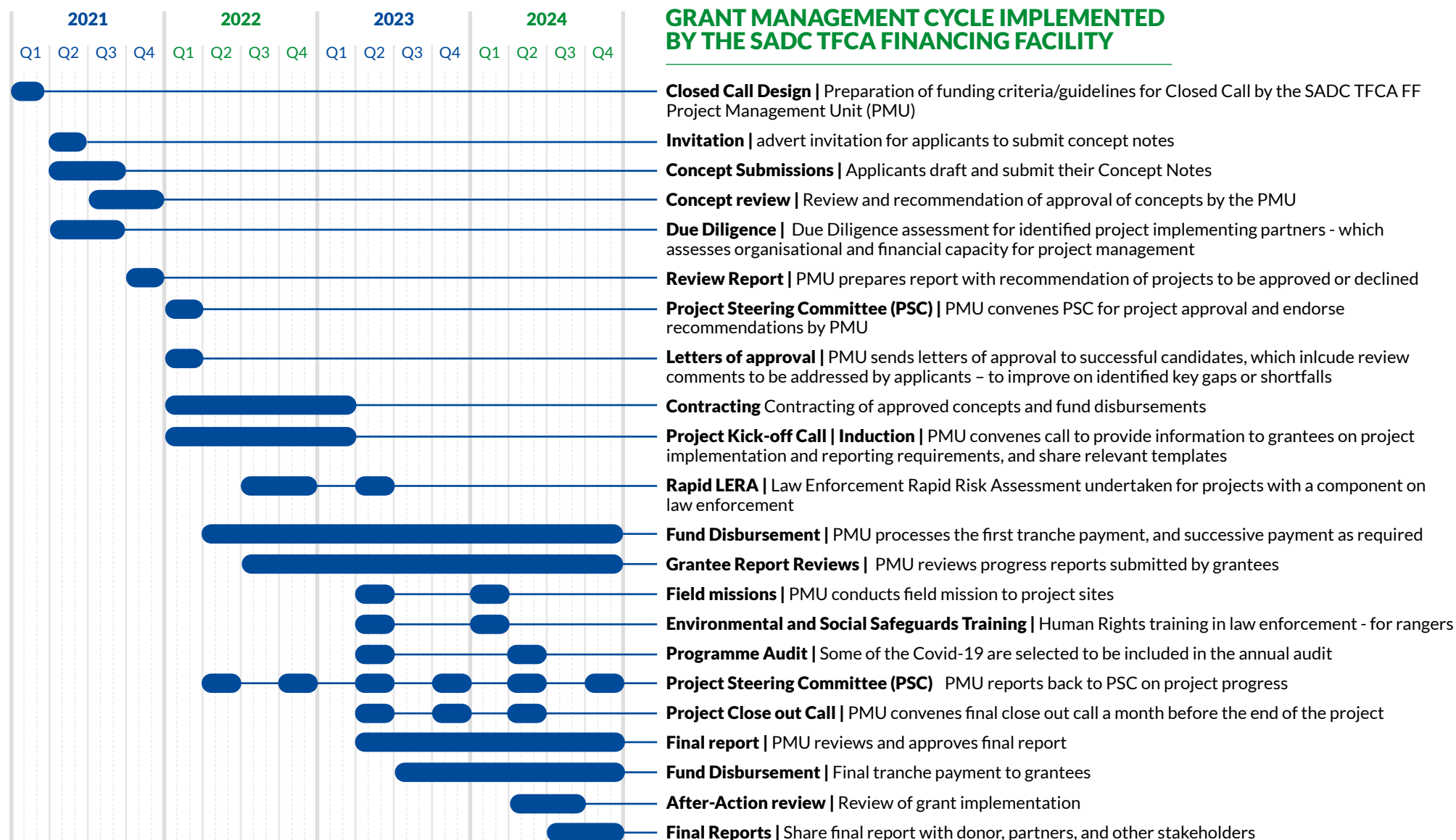


PROJECTS DECLINED: 5

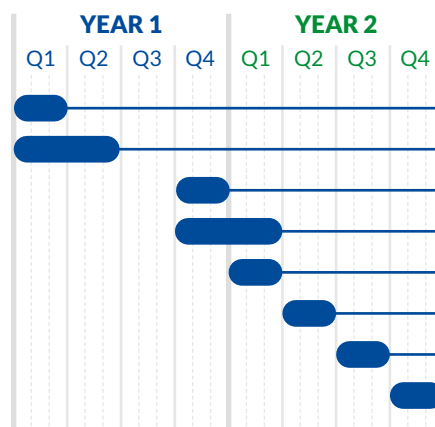
Key reasons for it are related to the fact that these concepts did not meet the requirements of the Covid-19 Grants such as:

- Limited information and background provided to justify all the proposed activities;
- The location of proposed activities not clear or maps not included;
- Project objectives and outcomes not clear or aligned to the criteria set for the Covid-19 Emergency Response Grant;
- Discrepancy or misalignment between the planned activities and the amount budgeted in the concept;
- Unrealistic timeframes - some of the projects would require more than 12 months to be completed;
- Incomplete information on target areas, beneficiaries, and institutions involved;
- Lack of information on other projects and activities within the TFCA. This includes information on past and present initiatives;
- Revenue generating activities that lacked sufficient information to demonstrate the model of implementation or did not provide a clear link to the improvement of community livelihoods;
- For most concepts, it was also not clear how the proposed activities would complement existing conservation initiatives being implemented by other partners in the same area.

OVERVIEW



OVERVIEW



PROJECT MANAGEMENT CYCLE IMPLEMENTED BY GRANTEES

- Step 1 Invitation - Closed call** | Applicants review call to submit concept notes
- Step 2 Concept Submissions** | Applicants draft and submit their concept notes
- Step 3 Letters of approval** | Successful candidates receive letters of approval, which include review comments to be addressed
- Step 4 Contracting** | Contracting review and signing
- Step 7 Report 1** | Grantee submits Progress report 1
- Step 8 Report 2** | Grantee submits Progress report 2
- Step 9 Report 3** | Grantee submits Progress report 3
- Step 10 Final report** | Grantee prepares and submits final report

TOTAL BUDGET

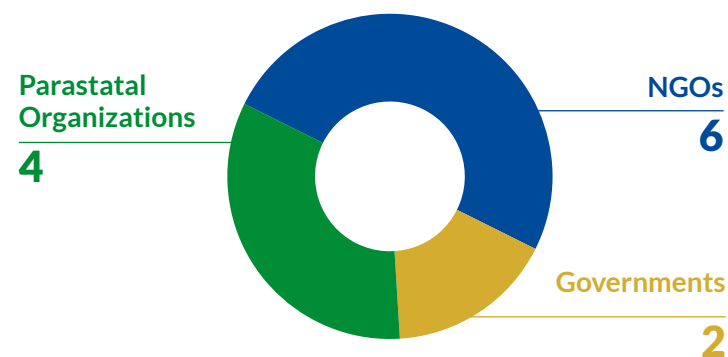


BUDGET PER PROJECT

from € 39,000 (€)

to € 300,000 (€)

BENEFICIARIES



OVERVIEW

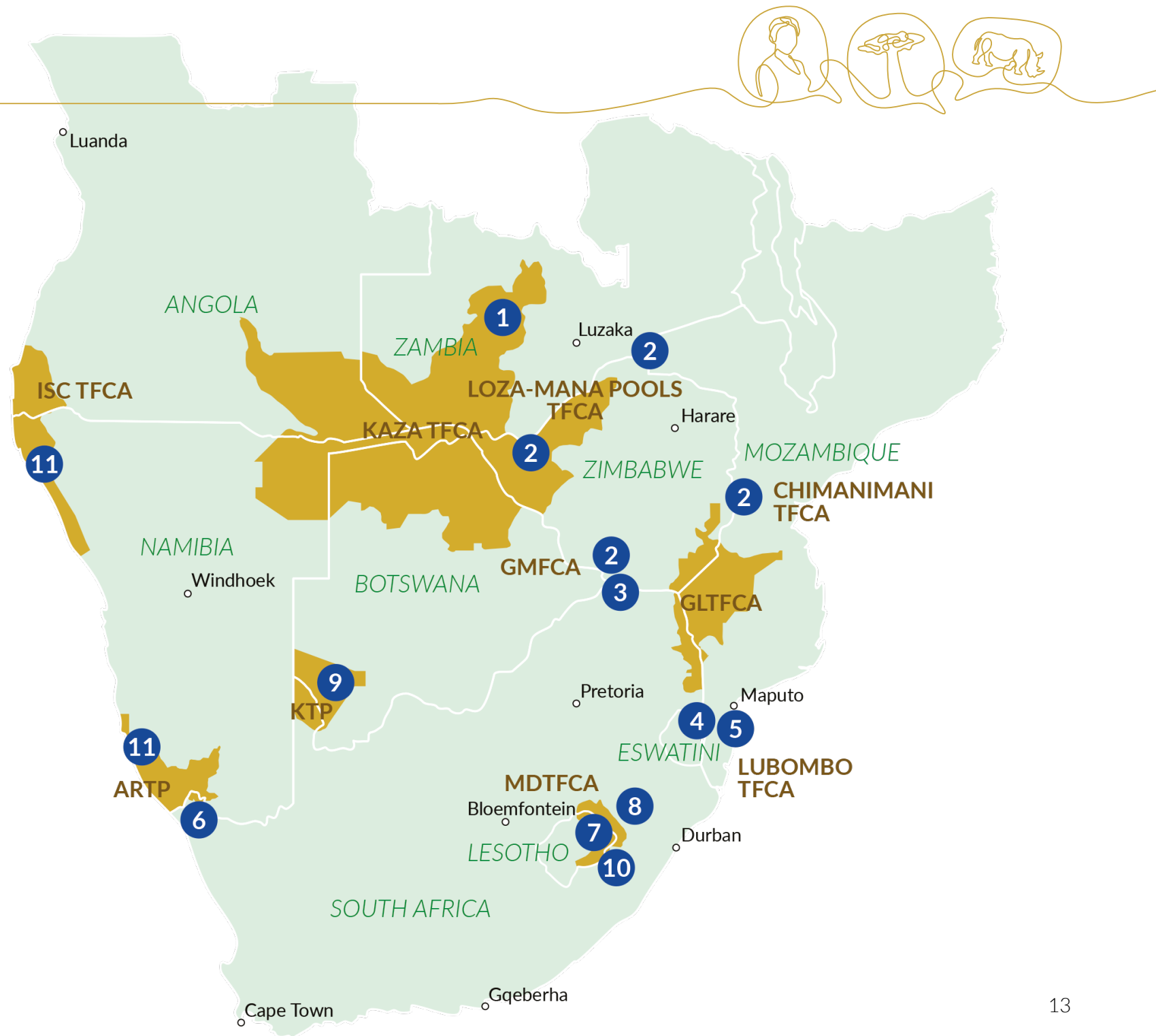


APPROVED PROJECTS

	Project Lead		Countries	TFCA	Type of organization
1	Panthera		Zambia	KAZA	NGO
2	Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority		Zimbabwe	Chimanimani, GMTFCA, KAZA, LoZA - Mana Pools	National Conservation Agency Parastatal
3	SANPARKS		South Africa	GMTFCA	National Conservation Agency Parastatal
4	Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM)		Eswatini	Lubombo	NGO
5	PPF		Mozambique	Lubombo	NGO
6	Transfrontier Parks Destinations		South Africa	MDTFCA	NGO
7	Ministry of Environment & Forestry		Lesotho	Maloti-Drakensberg	Government Ministry
8	Wild Trust & Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife		South Africa	MDTFCA	Provincial Conservation Agency Parastatal + NGO
9	Birdlife Botswana		Botswana	KTP	NGO
10	SANPARKS		South Africa	ARTP	National Conservation Agency Parastatal
11	Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism		Namibia	ARTP & Iona Skeleton	Government Ministry

OVERVIEW

COVERAGE OF APPROVED PROJECTS



COVID-19 RESPONSE GRANTS

Supported by the SADC TFCA
Financing Facility





1

SAFEGUARDING WILDLIFE RESOURCES IN THE SICHIFULO AND MULOBEZI GAME MANAGEMENT AREAS, ZAMBIA

This project aimed to safeguard wildlife and enhance conservation efforts in the Sichifulo and Mulobezi Game Management Areas (GMAs) in Zambia. The project focused on wildlife protection, habitat conservation, and alternative livelihood support for local communities.

Key initiatives included improving anti-poaching efforts by equipping 50 patrolling officers with uniforms, boots, and patrolling kits to enhance their operational readiness. Additionally, solar water systems were installed at two boreholes to provide year-round water for wildlife, addressing the critical issue of water scarcity during the dry season. This step reduced wildlife mortality and helped prevent human-wildlife conflicts.

The project also tackled habitat protection by creating 50 km of firebreaks to mitigate the risk of wildfires. The community actively participated in fire management activities, which involved employing 30 local workers. This collaborative effort strengthened the relationship between local communities, Panthera, and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW), ensuring shared responsibility for conservation efforts.

To further support sustainable livelihoods, the project introduced alternative



income-generating activities, such as distributing gardening seed packs to 200 households. This initiative aimed to improve food security and reduce dependence on poaching as a survival strategy in economically stressed communities.

Ultimately, this comprehensive approach integrated wildlife conservation with community development, ensuring the sustainability of both environmental protection and socio-economic growth. Through enhanced



GRANT OVERVIEW

Country	Zambia
TFCA	KAZA
Beneficiary	Panthera Corporation
Grant amount	€ 299,362
Period of Implementation	Start: March 2023 End: October 2024



patrol operations, water access for wildlife, and local community engagement, the project contributed significantly to safeguarding the biodiversity of Sichifulo and Mulobezi GMAs.



WEBSITE

panthera.org



GRANT OUTPUTS

- 50 patrolling officers equipped with uniforms, boots, and full patrol kits.
- Salaries provided for 50 community scouts.
- 2 boreholes drilled and water troughs established for wildlife.
- 50 km of firebreaks created.
- 200 households provided with gardening seed packs.
- Laptops and printers supplied for project administration.
- Regular fuel provisions for patrol teams.



2
PRESERVING THE INTEGRITY
OF CHIMANIMANI, GREATER
MAPUNGUBWE, KAVANGO-
ZAMBEZI, AND LOWER
ZAMBEZI MANA POOLS TFCAS

The project, spearheaded by Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZIMPARKS), aimed to preserve the integrity of key conservation areas within Zimbabwe, including Chimanimani, Greater Mapungubwe, Kavango-Zambezi, and Lower Zambezi Mana Pools TFCAs. It addresses critical conservation challenges such as wildlife monitoring, infrastructure development, and community engagement, with the overarching goal of bolstering conservation efforts and improving park management.

A drone was procured for anti-poaching operations in the Chete Safari Area, significantly improving wildlife monitoring capabilities and increasing land coverage. The drone is also utilized for data collection, allowing for more informed conservation strategies and faster response times to poaching incidents. Staff have been trained in drone operation, ensuring sustained benefits from this technology.

Infrastructure improvements were made across various protected areas, including the installation of 10KVA solar power systems in Chete and Tuli Safari Areas. These systems ensure reliable communication for law enforcement, enhancing security and operational efficiency. The project also supplied patrol rations



to rangers working in remote locations under challenging conditions, providing them with essential support for their extended fieldwork. Community engagement efforts were supported through the provision of bee suits for apiculture projects. These suits helped increase honey production, which serves as an alternative livelihood for local communities. This component highlights the project's focus on sustainable community development alongside wildlife conservation.

GRANT OVERVIEW

Country	Zimbabwe
TFCAs	GMTFCA, KAZA, LOZA TFCAs
Beneficiary	Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority
Grant amount	€ 300,000
Period of Implementation	Start: January 2023 End: February 2024



Finally, critical infrastructure repairs were completed, including the rehabilitation of Chawawa Bridge in Mana Pools, which now facilitates the movement of both light and heavy vehicles. Tourist facilities, including Tuli Guest House and Corner Camp, were also renovated, boosting tourism potential and supporting

the long-term sustainability of conservation efforts in the region.

This comprehensive approach integrates cutting-edge technology, infrastructure development, and community involvement to enhance conservation efforts and secure the future of Zimbabwe's rich biodiversity.



WEBSITE

www.zimparks.org.zw

GRANT OUTPUTS

- Drone purchased and deployed for anti-poaching in Chete Safari Area.
- 10KVA solar power systems installed at two sites.
- Fuel procured for Kariba Recreational Park and other areas.
- Construction of staff housing at Chimanimani National Park.
- Patrol rations distributed to rangers in several parks.
- Repairs of bridges and tourist facilities at Mana Pools and Tuli Guest House.



3

NEIGHBOURING COMMUNITY UPLIFTMENT: MAPUNGUBWE NATIONAL PARK

The Mapungubwe National Park, located in South Africa, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its rich cultural history and diverse wildlife. However, the Covid-19 pandemic caused significant economic challenges for both the park and the surrounding communities. In response, the 2022 Covid-19 Relief Grant aimed to support the livelihoods of local community members while improving the park's infrastructure. The project primarily focused on repairing 98 km of game fence and clearing vegetation along 65 km of roads, benefiting both wildlife conservation and the local tourism industry.

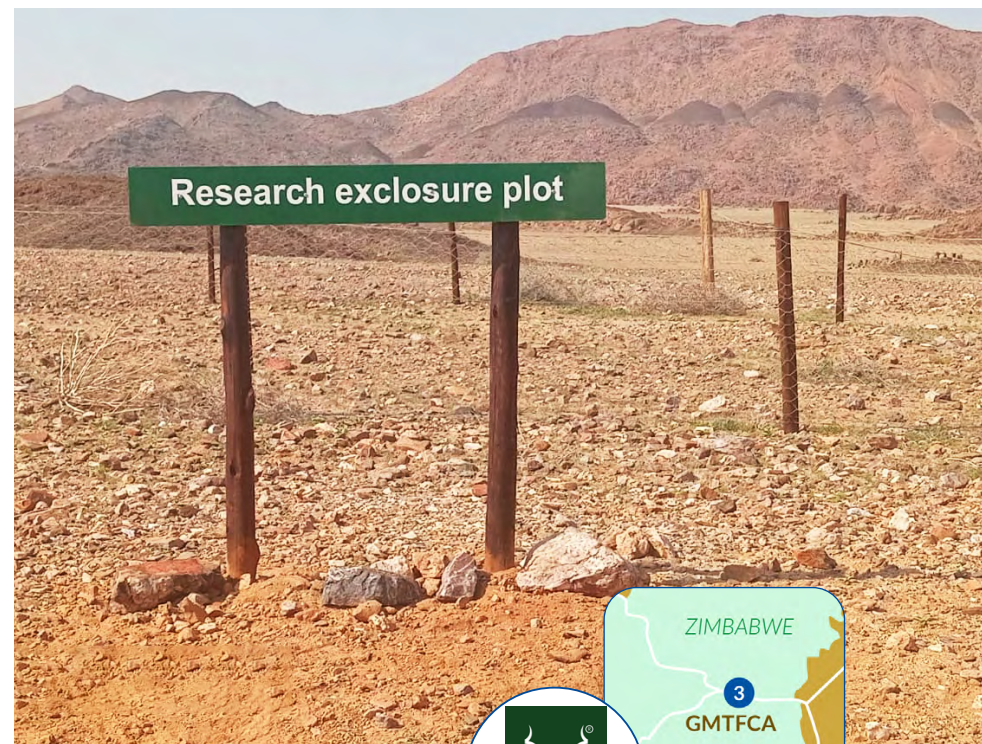
One of the main accomplishments of the project was the employment of 12 local community members for 10 months. These individuals were trained in fence maintenance and vegetation clearing, skills they can use for future employment. The repairs to the 98 km game fence helped reduce incidents of human-wildlife conflict, particularly by preventing large animals like elephants from leaving the park and damaging nearby crops. This not only safeguarded the animals but also protected the livelihoods of local farmers.

The project also improved 65 km of park roads by trimming vegetation that had been scratching tourists' vehicles, enhancing the visitor experience and ensuring safer travel



within the park. The work on the roads made it easier for park rangers to conduct patrols and for tourists to access the park's remote areas, contributing to the recovery of the local eco-tourism industry, which had been severely impacted by the pandemic.

Despite some delays caused by the late start of the project, all key deliverables were met, including the completion of fence repairs and road maintenance. SANParks, the organization managing the park, will continue to maintain



GRANT OVERVIEW

Country	South Africa
TFCA	SANPARKS
Beneficiary	Mapungubwe National Park
Grant amount	€ 38,493
Period of Implementation	Start: July 2022 End: June 2023



the infrastructure with its own operational budget, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the improvements. The project also fostered stronger community engagement with conservation, as the local workforce gained a deeper understanding of the importance of protecting the park's natural resources.



Overall, the Covid-19 Relief Grant Mapungubwe National Park project successfully addressed both economic and conservation challenges. By improving critical park infrastructure and providing jobs to the local community, the project helped protect wildlife, reduce human-wildlife conflict, and contribute to the recovery of the tourism sector.



Watch the video



WEBSITE

www.sanparks.org

GRANT OUTPUTS

- 98 km length of park fence repaired and maintained.
- 65 km of vegetation was cleared along the roads.
- Twelve people employed for a period of 10 months.

4

LUBOMBO TFCA RESPONSE TO COVID-19 AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY LIVELIHOODS

The project aimed to mitigate the severe impacts of the pandemic on conservation areas and community-based tourism initiatives within the Lubombo Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA) in the Kingdom of Eswatini, a complex system of conservation areas between Mozambique, South Africa and Eswatini, covering a total area of 10,029 km².

The once-thriving eco-tourism industry, a lifeline for local communities, faced a devastating collapse as international travel halted. The Shewula Mountain Camp and Mhlumeni Bush Camp—community-run areas—suddenly saw their doors close, jobs vanish, and livelihoods thrown into disarray.

The Lubombo TFCA Response to Covid-19 project stepped in with a clear mission: to help communities not only survive but thrive. It wasn't just about protecting the biodiversity of the globally significant Maputaland Centre of Endemism; it was about protecting the people who had nurtured and relied on it for generations.

The project introduced innovative solutions in seven communities. Mushroom farming sprouted as a new, sustainable livelihood, offering both nourishment and income. A community forest reserve was fenced, ensuring a long-term sanctuary for wildlife, while



bush clearing initiatives provided much-needed jobs. These efforts not only curbed the damaging rise in poaching and illegal farming but also helped communities with income generating activities.

For the conservation areas themselves, vital resources were deployed. Rangers, equipped with new uniforms, personal protective equipment (PPE), and communication tools, increased their patrols to safeguard the land. A dedicated vehicle was purchased to strengthen field operations, ensuring the entire TFCA could be monitored and protected more effectively.



GRANT OVERVIEW

Country	Eswatini
TFCA	Lubombo
Beneficiary	Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM)
Grant amount	€ 300,000
Period of Implementation	Start: December 2022 End: February 2024



Watch the video



WEBSITE

www.pelum.org.sz



And for the eco-tourism sector, which had taken such a hard hit, stipends helped keep staff at community lodges employed, maintaining these establishments afloat while they prepared to welcome guests once more. Marketing strategies were developed to reignite interest in local tourism, promising a brighter future for the region.

Through it all, the Lubombo TFCA Response to Covid-19 project carried a message of resilience and unity. By creating alternative livelihoods, supporting conservation efforts, and preparing eco-tourism for its return, this initiative is helping to rebuild stronger, ensuring that both people and nature in this beautiful region can thrive once again.

GRANT OUTPUTS

- A total of 32 sets of ranger PPE were purchased - trouser, shirt, jersey, belt, cap, boots and jacket.
- Camping equipment – 6 sleeping bags, 6 camping tents and 70 mattresses – purchased for public sector lodges.
- One Toyota GD6, double cab vehicle was purchased.
- Payment of stipends for Community Tourism Staff – 30 employees.
- Construction of ablution block in the Mambane Community campsite.
- 8 km of fencing installed in the Jilobi Community Forest.
- Construction of two mushroom growing houses.

5

ASSISTING COMMUNITIES IN MAPUTO NATIONAL PARK THROUGH CASH-FOR-WORK PROJECTS

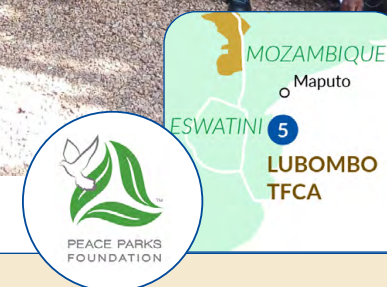
The Assisting Communities in Maputo National Park (MNAP) project, implemented by the Peace Parks Foundation, aimed to support local communities bordering the park through cash-for-work initiatives. The project focused on creating jobs, improving park infrastructure, and reducing human-wildlife conflict (HWC). By maintaining 150 km of fence-line and clearing 80 km of existing roads along with 16 km of new roads, the project not only provided employment but also improved access to remote areas of the park, enhancing tourism opportunities and park management.

One of the critical achievements of the project was the engagement of 40 community members who were employed for 12 months to work on road and fence maintenance. This initiative provided much-needed income to local households and equipped workers with skills such as plumbing and waste management. The maintenance of the fence-line helped reduce the occurrences of elephants leaving the park, which had previously led to crop damage and risks to human life. While HWC remains a challenge, the project introduced a new “porcupine” fence concept to test its effectiveness in preventing elephant escapes.

Tourism in Maputo National Park has benefited from the project’s road-clearing efforts,



as visitors can now access remote areas more easily, improving the overall experience. The big game drive vehicles have better access to wildlife-viewing areas, increasing the park’s appeal to tourists. Improved tourism infrastructure also brings economic benefits to surrounding communities, as 20% of park revenue is allocated to them. Additionally, safer roads reduce accidents caused by overgrown vegetation, contributing to both visitor safety and wildlife conservation.



GRANT OVERVIEW

Country	Mozambique
TFCA	Lubombo
Beneficiary	Peace Parks Foundation
Grant amount	€ 99,971
Period of Implementation	Start: April 2022 End: April 2023



The project also addressed sustainability by continuing the employment of workers beyond the initial project period. Funding from MozBio has supported 30 of these workers until December 2023, with Peace Parks Foundation seeking additional resources to maintain these eco-jobs. These efforts contribute to long-term park management and community upliftment, providing a sustainable approach to conservation and economic development.

In conclusion, the Assisting Communities in Maputo National Park project successfully balanced conservation objectives with community livelihoods. It reduced human-wildlife conflict, supported local economies, and strengthened the park's infrastructure, laying a foundation for continued environmental and social benefits in the region. Despite some challenges, such as managing HWC, the project has achieved its goals and set the stage for future conservation efforts.



www.peaceparks.org

GRANT OUTPUTS

- Maintenance of 150 km fence-line.
- Maintenance and clearing of 80 km of existing roads and 16 km of new roads.
- 40 community members employed for 12 months.



6
**AI-AIS/RICHTERSVELD
TRANSFRONTIER PARK (ARTP)
TOURISM IMPROVEMENT**

The Ai-Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park (ARTP) is a unique desert landscape that spans the borders of South Africa and Namibia. The ARTP Tourism Improvement project aimed to enhance visitor experience through the installation of directional and informational signage across the park. By improving navigation and providing detailed information about the park’s unique biodiversity, the project supported both tourism and conservation efforts. The project was implemented by South African National Parks (SANParks) and focused on increasing the accessibility and safety of the park for visitors while promoting environmental awareness.

One of the key accomplishments of the project was the procurement and installation of over 1,600 signs throughout the park. These included directional signs to help visitors navigate the rugged terrain and informational signs that provided educational content about the Richtersveld Desert Botanical Garden and the park’s unique flora. The signage played an important role in reducing the environmental impact of tourism by ensuring visitors stay on designated paths, which helps protect fragile ecosystems from damage.

The project also created employment opportunities for the local community, including the appointment of a Tourism Assistant and

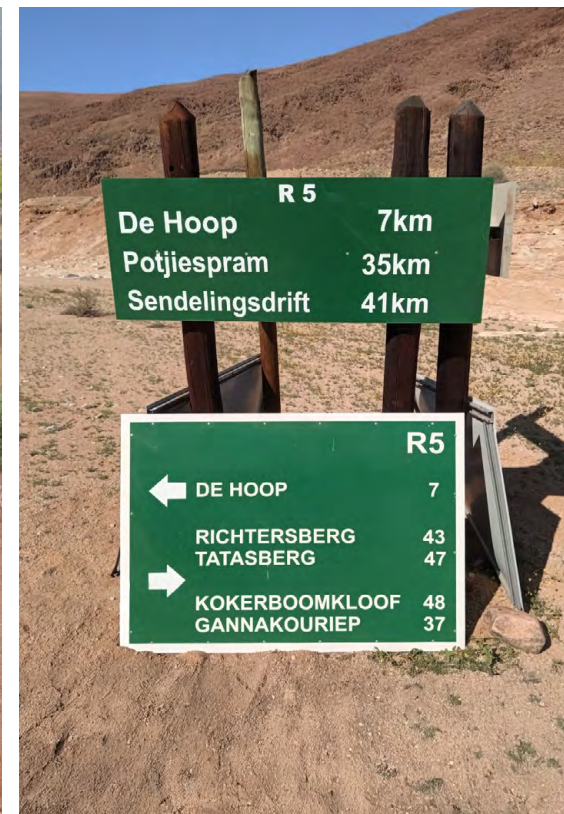


the involvement of a local Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprise (SMME) to assist with the installation of the signage. This engagement not only supported local livelihoods but also fostered a sense of ownership and participation in the park’s conservation efforts. The inclusion of local businesses helped ensure that the benefits of the project were felt within the community.

Despite some initial delays in procurement due to supply chain management (SCM)



GRANT OVERVIEW	
Country	South Africa
TFCA	SANPARKS
Beneficiary	ARTP Tourism Improvement
Grant amount	€ 60,000
Period of Implementation	Start: June 2022 End: February 2024



challenges, the project successfully completed all its deliverables. The signage has significantly improved visitor safety, navigation, and education within the park. Visitors now have better access to information about the park's biodiversity and cultural heritage, enhancing their overall experience.

The ARTP Tourism Improvement project has left a lasting legacy by improving the

infrastructure necessary to support sustainable tourism in the park. The signage will continue to guide and educate visitors long after the project's conclusion, contributing to the long-term sustainability of the park and its ecosystems. SANParks plans to integrate the signage maintenance into its regular operations, ensuring the ongoing benefits of the project for both visitors and the environment.



GRANT OUTPUTS

- Tourism assistant appointed for six months.
- Directional and tourist information signage boards installed in the park.



7

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY LIVELIHOODS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN THE MALOTI DRAKENSBERG TRANSFRONTIER AREA

The Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Area in Lesotho, a region renowned for its biodiversity and stunning landscapes, faced serious challenges when the Covid-19 pandemic hit. Eco-tourism, a major source of income for local communities, came to a standstill. With jobs lost and income sources depleted, pressures on natural resources increased. Poaching, illegal grazing, and wildlife conflicts escalated, threatening both conservation efforts and community stability.

In response to these challenges, the Biodiversity Conservation to Improve Community Livelihoods project was launched. This initiative aimed to restore the region's rich biodiversity while providing alternative livelihoods for communities, reducing their dependence on unsustainable resource use. At the heart of the project was a group of Community Environmental Monitors (CEMs), trained and deployed to protect the environment. These monitors patrolled Protected Areas, recorded wildlife, and reported illegal activities, such as poaching and grazing. They didn't stop there—CEMs worked closely with herders and local



residents, promoting sustainable land-use practices to reduce human-wildlife conflicts. Through this, communities became more involved in conservation efforts, strengthening both biodiversity protection and local ownership of these initiatives.

The pandemic had disrupted vital conservation management, but the project set out to reinstate these activities. Fire control operations were resumed, including the construction of firebreaks to protect landscapes



GRANT OVERVIEW

Country	Lesotho
TFCA	Maloti-Drakensberg
Beneficiary	Ministry of Environment & Forestry
Grant amount	€ 299,995
Period of Implementation	Start: January 2023 End: February 2024



Watch the video



WEBSITE

Organisation website / email or phone

from wildfires. Teams also manually removed invasive alien species without chemicals, providing temporary jobs for community members. In Bokong Nature Reserve and Sehlabathebe National Park, wetland rehabilitation efforts targeted critical habitats for endangered species.

To breathe new life into eco-tourism, the project also focused on enhancing visitor experiences. Existing hiking trails within the Transfrontier Conservation Area were mapped and assessed for future upgrades, including signage and development. A new campsite was identified, with plans for community members to manage it, offering a

sustainable income stream once tourism bounces back.

Despite facing obstacles like staffing shortages and procurement delays, the project succeeded in addressing the immediate threats to both biodiversity and livelihoods. By involving local communities in conservation activities and promoting sustainable resource management, the project has set the stage for long-term environmental and economic recovery in the Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Area. With renewed hope, this region is gearing up for a future where both nature and people can flourish together.

GRANT OUTPUTS

- 25 Community Environmental Monitors were engaged for a period of nine (9) months.
- 25 Community members in five districts equipped and deployed to conduct environmental monitoring that supplements law enforcement.
- Procurement of Project vehicle, monitoring equipment (3 cameras, 10 spotting scopes, tripods, 10 binoculars, 10 GPS).
- Annual fire control operations - Bokong Nature Reserve (1970 ha); 2) Tšehlanyane National Park (30 km); 3) Sehlabathebe National Park (240 km).
- Developed map of existing hiking trails in SNP - Sehlabathebe National Park, BNR - Bokong Nature Reserve and TNP - Tšehlanyane National Park.



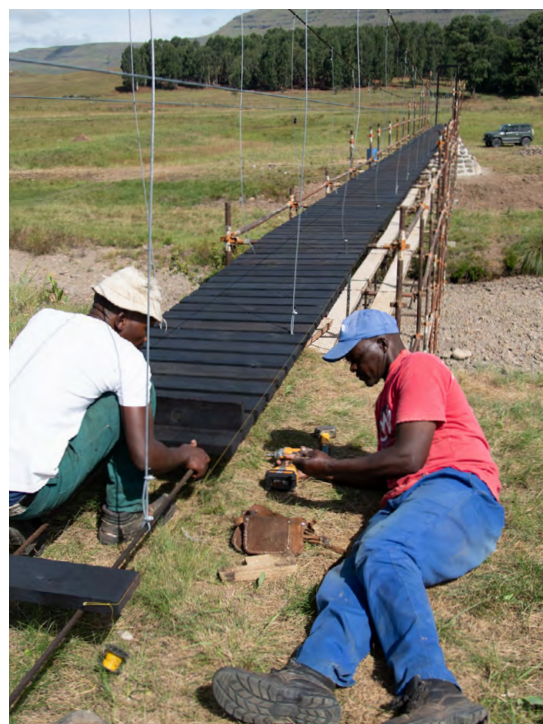
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REINSTATEMENT OF THE ICONIC GIANTS CUP 5-DAY HIKING TRAIL

The Giants Cup 5-Day Hiking Trail, located in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal region, is an iconic trail known for its scenic views and rich biodiversity. The trail, which runs through the Drakensberg Mountains, attracts eco-tourists and hiking enthusiasts, contributing to local economies. However, the trail and its infrastructure, including huts and bridges, required significant maintenance to ensure visitor safety and enhance the overall hiking experience. This project, led by Wildlands Conservation Trust, focused on upgrading key facilities along the trail, including the Swiman hiking hut and two important trail bridges.

One of the main components of the project was the complete renovation of the Swiman hut, which included repairing the roof, replacing gutters, and laying new flooring. These upgrades improved the hut's structural integrity and comfort for hikers. The hut's refurbishment was completed successfully, with oversight from Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife (EKZNWildlife). Additional maintenance funded by EKZNWildlife has been initiated to further enhance the facility.

In addition to hut upgrades, the project also addressed the construction and maintenance of two critical trail bridges at Mlambonja and Mzimkulu. These bridges are essential for safe passage along the trail, particularly during rainy



seasons, ensuring the trail remains accessible to hikers year-round.

Overall, the Giants Cup Hiking Trail Reinstatement project has made significant progress in restoring the trail's infrastructure, ensuring that it remains a premier destination for hikers. By improving the trail facilities, the project not only enhances the visitor experience but also contributes to the region's eco-tourism sector, supporting local communities and promoting conservation efforts in the Drakensberg Mountains.



GRANT OVERVIEW

Country	South Africa
TFCA	Maloti-Drakensberg
Beneficiary	WILDTRUST and Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife
Grant amount	€ 52,950
Period of Implementation	Start: July 2022 End: June 2023



Watch the video



WEBSITE

wildtrust.co.za
www.kznwildlife.com

GRANT OUTPUTS

- Renovation of hiking huts - Painted walls, replaced wooden floorboards, replaced damaged tables.
- Upgrade and maintenance of roof and floor of the Swiman hiking hut.
- Construction of pedestrian river crossing over the Mlambonja River.
- Maintenance of the existing pedestrian river crossing over the Mzimkulu River.



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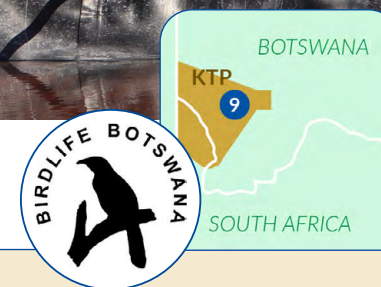
SECURING THE LIVELIHOODS OF COMMUNITIES AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION IN THE K GALAGADI TRANSFRONTIER PARK

The vast Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP), straddling the border of Botswana and South Africa, is a haven for wildlife. Large predators like lions and cheetahs roam freely alongside majestic herbivores, drawing visitors from all over the world for game drives, bird watching, and camping. Tourism has long fuelled the local economy, while adjacent communities in Botswana, through the Community-Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) programme, have developed their own eco-tourism activities. With activities ranging from cultural tourism to salt production and sand dune experiences, these communities have found a sustainable balance between making a living and conserving the land they call home.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic arrived like a storm, sweeping away much of the tourism sector. Border closures and health protocols led to a staggering 90% decline in tourism activity. The ripple effect was felt immediately by community trusts that rely heavily on tourism revenue, plunging them into financial uncertainty. Government funding for conservation and community initiatives also took a hit, leaving both people and wildlife at risk.



With campgrounds shut down and community projects halted, economic hardship deepened, and desperation set in. With few income-generating options, some community members turned to poaching, seeing it as a means of survival. Between 2018 and 2020, the TFCA saw a 450% spike in poaching arrests, driven by the financial strain caused by the pandemic. This wave of illegal hunting targeted large herbivores and predator cubs, threatening conservation efforts and increasing human-wildlife conflicts across the park.



GRANT OVERVIEW

Country	Botswana
TFCA	Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park
Beneficiary	Birdlife Botswana
Grant amount	€ 295,789
Period of Implementation	Start: March 2023 End: November 2024



Watch the video



WEBSITE

www.pelum.org.sz

Given these unprecedented challenges, a strategic response was launched. The goal: to scale up existing community-based economic projects, such as salt production, while bolstering conservation efforts to protect the park's precious biodiversity. Through the SADC Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA) Covid response grant, communities were incentivized to participate in wildlife conservation by linking it directly to their livelihoods. Salt production became not only a lifeline for local economies but also a key to fostering a deeper commitment to protecting wildlife. Additionally, the grant enabled the government to equip crucial borehole to supply water within KTP, ensuring that wildlife had access to this vital resource even as tourism dwindled.

Beyond infrastructure, the project strengthened community engagement in conservation. Local residents were encouraged to take an active role in wildlife monitoring, a move that fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility for the land and its biodiversity. This collaborative approach helped mitigate the surge in poaching and alleviated some of the human-wildlife conflicts that had flared up during the pandemic.

As Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park emerges from the shadow of Covid-19, the resilience of its communities stands as an example to the power of innovation and collaboration. By scaling up sustainable economic projects and fortifying conservation efforts, the region is charting a path toward recovery, ensuring that both people and wildlife can thrive in the years to come.

GRANT OUTPUTS

- Ten (10) local community members temporarily employed for perimeter fencing.
- Eight (8) local community members hired for ponds lining.
- Construction of brine holding.
- Expansion of salt storage facility.
- Procurement of ICT equipment for efficiency (laptop, router, printers, etc.).
- Training of the CBO on business management.
- Drilling and equipping borehole at KTP.



10 WATER SECURITY FOR THE BATLOKOA COMMUNITY OWNED WITSIESHOEK MOUNTAIN LODGE

The Water Security for the Batlokoa Community Owned Witsieshoek Mountain Lodge project was designed to address critical water challenges faced by the Witsieshoek Mountain Lodge, a community-owned tourism facility located in a remote, mountainous region of South Africa. The lodge plays a vital role in local ecotourism and is a key source of income for the Batlokoa community. Given the lodge's location, reliable access to water is essential for its operations, which directly serves both local livelihoods and conservation efforts. The project's primary objective was to ensure long-term water security, thereby supporting the lodge's sustainability and the surrounding community's economic resilience.

The project delivered several key infrastructure improvements to enhance water management at the lodge. First, it installed a 2.5-kilometer electrical cable connection from the lodge's generator to the water pump at a nearby dam, ensuring a consistent water supply despite frequent power outages caused by load-shedding. Second, the lodge's water storage capacity was expanded from 40,000 liters to 110,000 liters through the addition of eight new water tanks. This additional storage provided a buffer against water shortages, which



are common during the dry season. Third, a borehole was equipped to serve as an emergency backup water source, further securing the lodge's water supply during periods of drought or when the dam runs dry.

In addition to these infrastructure upgrades, the project implemented a comprehensive water purification system to provide safe drinking water for both guests and staff at the lodge. This system ensures that the lodge meets health and safety standards, enhancing



GRANT OVERVIEW

Country	South Africa
TFCA	Maloti-Drakensberg
Beneficiary	Transfrontier Parks Destinations
Grant amount	€ 39,600
Period of Implementation	Start: May 2022 End: July 2023



the overall guest experience and supporting the lodge's reputation as a sustainable ecotourism destination. The successful installation of this system marked a significant milestone in securing the lodge's water needs for the foreseeable future.

The project also had a positive impact on the local economy. Approximately 85% of the project's budget—around € 34,000—was spent in the local economy, employing local contractors and labor from nearby communities such as Phuthaditjhaba. In addition to creating jobs during the construction phase, the project has helped improve the long-term viability of the lodge, which provides ongoing employment and supports local businesses that rely on tourism. The Batlokoa community, which owns the lodge, has greatly benefited from these improvements, ensuring that the lodge remains a valuable asset for both economic and cultural development.

By securing water access, the project has strengthened the Witsieshoek Mountain Lodge's capacity to withstand environmental and infrastructure challenges, particularly due to recurring droughts and power shortages. This enhanced resilience not only supports the lodge's operations but also contributes to the broader conservation goals of the area by maintaining the lodge as a hub for ecotourism. As a next step, the lodge plans to seek further funding to address energy security issues, aiming to



WEBSITE

www.tfpd.co.za

install a holistic off-grid energy solution to complement the water infrastructure improvements made under this project.

In 2022, Witsieshoek Mountain Lodge was selected as the best Responsible Tourism destination in the world by the WTM Responsible Tourism Awards. Witsieshoek was chosen from the 26 finalists representing 21 countries having won Gold in the category "Local Economic Benefit" to get into the final group.

GRANT OUTPUTS

- Installation of a 2.5 km electrical cable connection from the lodge's generator to the pump at the dam, which serves as the primary water source for the lodge.
- Expansion of the lodge's water storage capacity by adding 70,000 liters in 8 new JoJo tanks, increasing the total capacity from 40,000 liters to 110,000 liters.
- Equipping of a borehole to serve as a secondary water source, linked to the storage tanks for use during droughts or if the dam runs dry.
- Installation of a comprehensive water purification system to supply potable water to both guests and staff of the lodge.



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COVID 19 IMPACT MITIGATION MEASURES IN THE CONSERVATION AND TOURISM SECTOR IN THE NAMIBIAN COMPONENT OF AI-AIS-RICHTERSVELD TRANSFRONTIER PARK AND IONA SKELETON COAST TRANSFRONTIER PARK

The Covid-19 Impact Mitigation Measures in the Conservation and Tourism Sector project marked a significant chapter in Namibia's efforts to preserve its conservation legacy through the challenging years of the pandemic. It began at a time when Namibia's treasured conservation areas faced an unprecedented crisis: the global pandemic had ravaged tourism, a key economic lifeline for places like the Ai-Ais-Richtersveld and Iona Skeleton Coast Transfrontier Parks. Revenue from tourism, which normally sustained both conservation and the welfare of surrounding communities, had all but vanished. Faced with this reality, the Ministry of Environment, Forestry, and Tourism (MEFT) stepped forward to lead an initiative designed to bridge the gap until tourism could return, carrying with it the promise of stability and renewal.

At the heart of the project was a dedication to protecting Namibia's wildlife and landscapes. With anti-poaching as a critical priority,



the project funded patrols that ventured across the transfrontier parks, fortified with dry ration packs and fuel to allow for regular, joint operations. These patrols became a line of defense for endangered species and essential habitats. Park rangers received vital training, from mastering 4x4 driving to handling snakes and administering first aid, all of which bolstered their readiness to manage the parks and ensure visitor safety. Each training session equipped these frontline defenders with the skills they needed to tackle the daily challenges of conservation, even in the toughest conditions.



GRANT OVERVIEW

Country	Namibia
TFCA	Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park IONA Skeleton Coast
Beneficiary	Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism
Grant amount	€ 300,000
Period of Implementation	Start: September 2022 End: March 2024



The project didn't stop at the preservation of wildlife; it looked to the very landscapes that sustained them. One major effort addressed the invasive *Prosopis* species, which had begun to choke the native biodiversity along the park's riverine ecosystems. In Rosh Pinah, 16 community members joined in on *Prosopis* removal and harvesting, gaining hands-on skills and a sense of purpose in revitalizing their own natural surroundings. This initiative provided much-needed work opportunities, weaving together the conservation of Namibia's unique habitats with sustainable livelihoods for its people.

Recognizing that tourism infrastructure needed to be ready for the industry's eventual resurgence, the project set its sights on the Boo Platatz Adventure Hub. As a vital stop for cross-border tourism, Boo Platatz had been neglected in the



pandemic's wake. The project took on the task of restoring its ablution facilities, ensuring the hub was ready to welcome back tourists. This effort was part of a larger strategy to enhance the parks' accessibility and appeal, aiming to set the stage for an economic recovery driven by a vibrant tourism sector.

By the time the project drew to a close, it had woven together conservation gains, community support, and an investment in the parks' future.

Through these efforts, it built a legacy that would outlast the crisis, leaving a foundation of resilience for the Ai-Ais/Richtersveld and Iona Skeleton Coast Transfrontier Parks. This project, crafted in a time of great uncertainty, ultimately became a testament to Namibia's commitment to ecological and economic endurance in the face of adversity.



WEBSITE

www.meft.gov.na

GRANT OUTPUTS

- Two vehicles were procured.
- Acquired camping equipment for both Ai-Ais Game Park and Skeleton Coast Park.
- Dry ration packs and fuel to support anti-poaching patrols and joint patrols within Skeleton Coast National Park and Ai-Ais National Park.
- *Prosopis* management and harvesting training was conducted in Rosh Pinah to train 16 harvesters for Ai-Ais Game Park and Driehoek.
- Renovation of the ablution facility at Boo Platatz Adventure Camp.
- The park rangers and managers have undergone a series of specialized training programs aimed at enhancing their skills and capabilities for effective wildlife conservation and management. These training sessions included:
 1. Driving in difficult terrain (4x4 offroad driving).
 2. Snake handling and identification.
 3. River guide training.
 4. Level one first aid.
 5. Training on controlling alien invasive plants.
- Three river guides were contracted to work at the Boo Platatz Adventure Camp for the duration of the project.

RESULTS, LESSONS LEARNED, GOOD PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS





RESULTS AND OUTPUTS OF COVID-19 RESPONSE GRANT

The Covid-19 response grant significantly impacted Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) by addressing immediate challenges and laying the foundation for long-term resilience. This session outlines the results and outputs of the grant mechanism, highlighting improvements in infrastructure, community livelihoods, conservation efforts, and capacity building.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM ENHANCEMENT

The grant facilitated improvements in infrastructure, which played a crucial role in enhancing both visitor access, operational efficiency and communities livelihood. The development of tourism infrastructure ensured easier access to conservation areas, attracting more visitors and boosting local economies after Covid crises.

Outputs:

- Construction of brine holding pans
- Expansion of salt storage facility
- Drilling and equipping borehole at the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.
- Construction of ablution block in the Mambane Community campsite
- Fencing in the Jilobi Community Forest
- Supply of electrical cabling and other electrical equipment/materials
- Supply and installation of 6 x 10000l water

storage tanks at lodge and reticulation to existing system

- Supply and installation of solar pump and water piping for the newly drilled borehole for the community lodge
- Directional and tourist information signage boards installed in the park in Ai-Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park
- Renovation of the ablution facility at Boo Platatz Adventure Camp
- Renovation of overnight hiking huts in the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park
- Construction of pedestrian river crossing bridge over the Mlambonja River on Giants Cup Hiking Trail
- Fire breaks created - 112 km fire breaks created in Mulobezi and Dundumwezi GMAs
- Two boreholes drilled and equipped in Sichifulo GMA
- Repair of Chawawa Bridge at Mana Pools National Park
- Installation of 5 KVA Solar power unit at Tuli Safari Area
- Installation of 10 KVA solar power system at Chete Safari Area

COMMUNITY LIVELIHOODS AND ECONOMIC SUPPORT

Addressing the economic fallout of the pandemic, the grants provided financial resources

to create temporary jobs and alternative income projects. Cash-for-work programs helped restore livelihoods and generated income for communities hit hardest by job losses and reduced tourism revenue. These initiatives improved community resilience by providing essential financial support during a critical period.

Outputs:

Temporary employment

- 10 local community members in the Zutshwa community employed for perimeter fencing.
- 8 locals in the Zutshwa community hired for pond lining.
- 25 Community Environmental Monitors were engaged by the Lesotho Ministry of Environment to support park management activities.
- 40 community members were employed for 12 months to support road and fence maintenance in the Maputo National Park.
- Twelve people were employed for a period of 10 months to support road and fence maintenance in the Mapungubwe National Park.
- Payment of stipends for Community Tourism Staff in the Lubombo TFCA - 30 employees.
- Three river guides contracted to work at the Boo Platatz Adventure Camp for the



duration of the project.

- Tourism assistant appointed for six months in the Ai-Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park.
- Payments facilitated for 50 Community scouts each month from February to June.
- 30 casual workers paid for 30 days and additional funds for 10 days were used to procure safety gear and rations for the casual workers during the exercise.

Support to income-generating activities

- Renovation and equipping of mushroom growing facilities in the Mhlumeni Chiefdom
- Procurement of beekeeping suits for community projects

CONSERVATION AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Conservation efforts saw marked improvements, with reduced poaching incidents and enhanced wildlife management within conservation areas. The grant supported the procurement of equipment and vehicles, enabling more effective patrols and better detection of illegal activities. Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) was mitigated through community engagement and the provision of water sources within parks, reducing wildlife encroachment into neighboring communities.

Outputs:

Equipment

- One vehicle, ranger uniforms and equipment purchased for the Eswatini National Trust Commission
- One vehicle and ranger equipment purchased for the Lesotho Ministry of Environment and Forestry
- Two vehicles, camping equipment, dry ration packs purchased for the Namibia Ministry of Environment, Forestry, and Tourism.
- Uniforms, equipment, and rations provided for rangers in the Sichifulo and Mulobezi GMAs.
- 1140 liters of fuel to support sensitisations activities.
- Provision of laptops to Dundumwezi and Mulobezi sectors for law enforcement operations, coordination and administration.
- Drone acquired to support anti-poaching operations for Chete Safari Area

CAPACITY BUILDING AND STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

Capacity building was a cornerstone of the grants, focusing on skills training, safeguards, business management, wildlife conservation and management, law enforcement and environment education. The grant management experience allowed to strengthen financial reporting and internal controls among grantees. Inception calls and regular catch-ups en-

sured compliance with Environmental and Social Management Systems (ESMS) and built stronger ties between NGOs, government, and local communities. This collaborative approach fostered a unified effort towards achieving conservation goals.

Outputs:

- Training of the Community Based Organisations on business management
- Training programs designed for park rangers and managers in order to enhance their skills and capabilities for effective wildlife conservation and management. These training sessions included:
 1. Driving in difficult terrain (4x4 off road driving)
 2. Snake handling and identification
 3. River guide training
 4. Level one first aid
 5. Training on controlling alien invasive plants
- Two training workshops for rangers in Human Rights in law enforcement:
- 53 Rangers in Eswatini received Human Rights training in law enforcement
- 67 Rangers and Environmental Monitors received training on Human Rights Training in law enforcement



ENABLING FACTORS AND GOOD PRACTICES TO SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS

The success of the Covid-19 response grants was made possible by a combination of enabling factors and good practices that not only facilitated effective implementation but also built a strong foundation for sustainability. By understanding these factors and adopting the good practices, future initiatives can achieve meaningful and lasting impacts on biodiversity and community well-being.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND SYNERGIES

Enabling Factor:

Collaborations with state governments, IUCN, NGOs, and community-based organizations (CBOs) were essential for accessing resources, expertise, and fostering shared responsibility. Integrating efforts and sharing resources enhances impact while reduce duplication.

Good Practice:

Actively seek and strengthen partnerships with local organizations, community leaders, and governmental agencies. Formalize agreements and establish clear communication channels to ensure sustained collaboration and resource sharing. These relationships foster deeper community engagement and more effective conservation outcomes.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Enabling Factor:

The projects addressed immediate economic needs by supporting income-generating activities and providing temporary employment through cash-for-work programs. Involving communities in project planning and implementation ensured that interventions were relevant and impactful.

Good Practice:

Involve stakeholders early and continuously throughout the project lifecycle to ensure alignment with local needs. Conduct regular community engagement sessions to maintain transparency and gather feedback. Empower communities by promoting ownership and encouraging active participation in decision-making, which enhances the sustainability of conservation efforts.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Enabling Factor:

Existing capacity within grantee organizations and targeted capacity-building efforts contributed significantly to the success of the projects. Organizations with prior project management experience were better positioned to meet grant requirements and adapt to changing circumstances.

Good Practice:

Invest in training and capacity-building initiatives that enhance project management skills and technical expertise. Ensure that grantees have the tools and knowledge to manage projects independently and sustain efforts beyond the grant period. Empowering staff and community members fosters a sense of ownership and contributes to long-term success. Create platforms for knowledge-sharing and best practice exchange to build a network of organizations that can effectively respond to crises. These preparations will enhance future crisis management and project resilience.

FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Enabling Factor:

Grantees' ability to adapt financial plans and reallocate resources in response to unforeseen challenges ensured that funds were used effectively. Continuous support on financial management practices helped maintain compliance with reporting and regulatory standards.

Good Practice:

Foster a culture of financial transparency and accountability by providing regular training and resources on financial management. Develop flexible financial strategies that allow for adaptation to changing circumstances.



Emphasize the importance of co-financing and resource mobilization to ensure long-term financial sustainability for future projects.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Enabling Factor:

The need for robust risk management became evident during the pandemic. Risk assessments and adaptable procurement and reporting mechanisms allowed projects to reduce delays and allocate resources efficiently.

Good Practice:

Establish comprehensive risk management plans that include flexible strategies for adapting to unforeseen challenges.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Enabling Factor:

The shift to digital tools such as virtual meetings and digital content allowed for continued engagement and operational continuity during movement restrictions. This adaptability maintained stakeholder involvement and supported conservation efforts.

Good Practice:

Develop a hybrid communication model that integrates both in-person and virtual activities. Utilize digital tools to enhance engagement, streamline operations, and maintain stakeholder connections. Regularly update stakeholders

on project progress and challenges, and apply clear communication to manage expectations and reinforce participation.

PROMOTION OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

Enabling Factor:

The projects made a deliberate effort to include marginalized groups, ensuring that initiatives were equitable and beneficial to all members of the community, including women and youth.

Good Practice:

Integrate social inclusion strategies into project design and implementation by targeting marginalized groups with tailored training, mentorship, and leadership roles. Empower individuals from these groups to take on active roles within the project, contributing to greater diversity and more inclusive decision-making.

ADEQUATE STAFFING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Enabling Factor:

Adequate staffing and resource allocation were key to maintaining project momentum and operational efficiency. Regular assessments of staffing needs ensured that support was available when necessary.

Good Practice:

Regularly review staffing needs and allocate resources based on project demands. Foster open communication about staffing challenges and work collaboratively to resolve issues. Ensuring proper staffing and efficient resource allocation enhances project outcomes and sustainability.

By combining these enabling factors with good practices, future projects can maximize their impact and create lasting benefits for both communities and biodiversity. Fostering strategic partnerships, enhancing community involvement, investing in capacity building, maintaining financial accountability, managing risks effectively, and utilizing clear communication will contribute to sustainable conservation efforts and a more resilient sector.



LESSONS LEARNED FROM TFCA FF GRANT MECHANISM AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

APPLICATION PROCESS

Efforts to streamline the application process underscored the importance of transparency, training, and stakeholder communication in facilitating effective proposals. Lessons learned include:

- Clearly defined eligibility criteria and transparent thresholds foster trust and set realistic expectations.
- Pre-application workshops and training sessions, especially through accessible channels, can bridge knowledge gaps, reduce frustrations, and improve the quality of proposals.
- Including regional support partners, like SADC Secretariat, from the start strengthens capacity-building efforts and enhances regional alignment.
- Hybrid engagement models using digital tools for stakeholder mapping and consultations can broaden participation while improving the consistency of information-sharing.

CONTRACTING, DUE DILIGENCE, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, AND REPORTING

Efficient grant management processes rely on clarity, flexibility, and targeted training, yet time delays and policy misalignment

present ongoing challenges. Lessons learned include:

- Having flexible contract terms, including extension options, allows for adaptive project management as conditions evolve.
- Comprehensive, pre-set templates for financial management and contracting simplify processes and reduce errors, especially when aligned with local policies.
- Providing structured financial training improves grantee reporting and supports smoother project implementation.
- Establishing online project portals for document access and reporting can reduce administrative burdens and enhance communication.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (ESMS) IN GRANT IMPLEMENTATION

Timely integration of environmental and social safeguards enhances compliance, but project-specific adaptation and communication are critical. Lessons learned include:

- Introducing ESMS officers and budget lines from the project's outset supports smooth compliance and clear funding allocation.
- Developing tailored ESMS guidelines based on project size or type enables more flexible, practical approaches to

environmental and social standards.

- Publicizing ESMS requirements and success stories encourages greater awareness and sharing of best practices across projects.
- Accessible training, manuals, and materials ensure consistent understanding and application of ESMS requirements among grantees.

MONITORING & EVALUATION (M&E) AND TECHNICAL REPORTING

Effective monitoring, evaluation, and reporting foster accountability. Realistic timelines and clearer impact narratives are crucial for maximizing project success. Lessons learned include:

- Simplified, clearly explained templates and robust grantee support improve compliance and the quality of submitted reports.
- Clear impact frameworks, including SMART goals and logical timelines, provide structure and measurable indicators for project success.
- Early capacity assessments and ongoing technical support for grantees help identify needs and reduce issues with report quality and delays.
- Regular feedback on reporting, combined with after-action reviews, encourages adaptive learning and enhanced outcomes in future project cycles.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION AREAS (TFCAS)

The After-Action Review of the Covid-19 Response Grant enabled IUCN and its grantees to analyze project outputs, identify critical success factors, and reflect on successes and challenges. The process uncovered valuable good practices to guide future initiatives and outlined actionable recommendations to improve the design and impact of upcoming grant mechanisms and projects.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhance Transparency and Accessibility of Application Process

Enhance the transparency and accessibility of the application process by defining clear eligibility criteria and transparent thresholds, conducting accessible pre-application workshops, and utilizing lean application and budget templates tailored to grantees' capacities. Simplify the process to minimize delays and improve turnaround times, while deploying targeted outreach and visibility efforts, building capacity for applicants on guidelines and requirements, simplifying processes for small grants, and establishing realistic timelines for the award phase.

Promote Inclusion of Community-Based Organisations

Design projects with deliberate strategies to include community-based organisations

(CBOs) in consortiums that implement TFCA FF grants, in order to improve on social inclusion and direct benefits for local communities.

Invest in Capacity Development for Grantees

Develop capacities of grantees on project management, M&E, and communication skills, including tools like workplans, log frames, and reporting templates. Equip beneficiaries and its organizations with the technical expertise and resources needed to independently manage projects and sustain impacts beyond the grant period. Additionally, organize experience-sharing initiatives and platforms to promote continuous learning and improvement among grantees.

Foster Adaptive Learning and Simplify M&E and Reporting Tools

Simplify M&E and reporting tools by using clear, user-friendly templates and providing robust support to improve compliance and report quality. Establish clear impact frameworks with SMART goals and logical timelines to guide measurable outcomes. Strengthen M&E capacities within IUCN and among grantees, ensuring adequate resources and agreed-upon project indicators for effective data collection and impact reporting. Foster adaptive learning by providing regular feedback on reporting and facilitating knowledge

exchange platforms to promote shared learning and enhance outcomes in future projects.

Staffing and Resource Allocation for TFCA FF Project Management Unit

Assess PMU staffing needs, allocate resources effectively to improve operational efficiency, and responsiveness to applicants and grantees.

Contracting, Due Diligence, Financial Management, Procurement, and Reporting

Standardize and simplify processes by incorporating flexible contracting terms with extension options, providing comprehensive templates for financial management, procurement, and contracting that align with local policies, and developing online portals for document sharing and reporting to streamline communication and reduce administrative burdens. Additionally, deliver structured financial management training, require procurement plans to ensure compliance, and emphasize the importance of inclusive attendance during project inception calls. Foster continuous mentoring and capacity development for grantees throughout the entire grant cycle to ensure successful implementation and long-term impact.



Ensure Financial Compliance and Accountability

Offer ongoing financial management training to promote transparency, accountability, and compliance, while developing adaptive financial strategies to address unforeseen challenges. Emphasize co-financing and resource mobilization to enhance financial sustainability. Additionally, identify common financial audit findings and provide training to prevent and mitigate future issues. Support grantees in identifying procurement needs early and developing individual procurement plans for effective planning and monitoring. Ensure that grantees establish dedicated financial management teams to ensure effective oversight and implementation.

Integrate Robust Risk Management

Develop comprehensive risk management plans with adaptable strategies for addressing unexpected events, and conduct regular risk assessments to identify and mitigate potential delays and inefficiencies in project implementation.

Integrate ESMS Early and Customize and Share ESMS Practices

Integrate the Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) early and holistically by assigning ESMS officers, allocating specific budget lines, and including Environmental and Social Commitment Plans in grant contracts to ensure compliance and efficient resource use. Tailor ESMS guidelines

based on project size and type for practical application, publicize success stories to raise awareness and encourage best practice sharing, and provide accessible training, manuals, and materials to ensure consistent understanding and implementation of ESMS requirements among all stakeholders.

Ensuring Long-Term Project Sustainability through Diversified Funding

Ensure the long-term sustainability of funded projects by diversifying funding sources, including volunteer work, partnerships, and income-generating activities, rather than relying solely on government funding. Advocate for extended grant periods to allow for the design and implementation of projects with a longer-term vision, and create opportunities for grantees to apply for recurrent funding to continue advancing conservation actions.



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