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Lessons from a Multi-Pronged Approach to Reduce Wild Meat Consumption

USAID ZAMBIA EASTERN KAFUE NATURE ALLIANCE

Photo: Ray Rui/Unsplash

Activity Summary

Africa's third largest national park, Zambia's Kafue National Park, is home to a wide variety of ecosystems and species, including antelopes, lions, leopards, wild dogs, elephants, and cheetahs. The Greater Kafue Ecosystem includes nine Game Management Areas that border the park, supporting local communities' livelihoods and food security. However, Kafue's landscape faces many challenges. Not only does habitat degradation threaten the health and well-being of the 200,000 people living in these buffer zones, but also wild meat poaching has significantly depleted the area's wildlife. Demand for wild meat for both personal consumption and commercial trade (particularly in the nearby capital of Lusaka and the Copperbelt Province) drives poaching and the illegal wildlife trade across Zambia.

Building on an existing collaboration between Zambia's Department of National Parks and Wildlife and a cohort of non-governmental organizations, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) initiated the Eastern Kafue Nature Alliance in 2021 to address the drivers of biodiversity loss, deforestation, land conversion, and ecosystem degradation along the park's eastern edge. The activity is part of USAID's Health, Ecosystems, and Agriculture for Resilient, Thriving Societies (HEARTH) family of public-private

Activity Highlights

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

The Nature Conservancy, Kashikoto Conservancy Limited

LOCATION

Game Management Areas and conservancies bordering the eastern side of Zambia's Kafue National Park

FUNDING AMOUNT

$20 million ($10 million USAID, $10 million private-sector leverage)

PERFORMANCE PERIOD

September 2021–September 2026

STRATEGIC APPROACHES

- Strengthen natural resource compliance and management systems
- Develop inclusive ecosystem-based markets for local prosperity
- Strengthen community maternal and child health and improve access to clean water
- Develop effective land and resource use planning, tenure, and governance systems

partnerships that leverage cross-sectoral efforts to improve the well-being of people and the planet.

Approach and Implementation

The Alliance's implementing partners collaborate to strengthen the enforcement and prosecution of poaching within the park and the nine Game Management Areas. This work involves enhancing the capabilities of community scouts to prevent illegal activities, while also monitoring law enforcement efforts and wildlife population trends to assess and adjust strategies. Additionally, the Alliance aims to deter criminal activities by supporting effective prosecutions and appropriate sentencing.

The Alliance also promotes diversified agricultural markets to provide communities in the Greater Kafue Ecosystem with alternatives to poaching. These efforts include advocating for organic farming of crops like legumes (beans, cowpeas, and groundnuts), and supporting sustainable forest enterprises like honey production. Such initiatives boost household income and steer communities away from relying on wild meat harvesting and trade. Looking ahead, the activity will scope large-scale enterprise development opportunities, such as private conservancies for game ranching and ecotourism. Community game ranching could provide multiple benefits by increasing income through tourism and the sale of legally-harvested wild meat and providing food for household consumption.

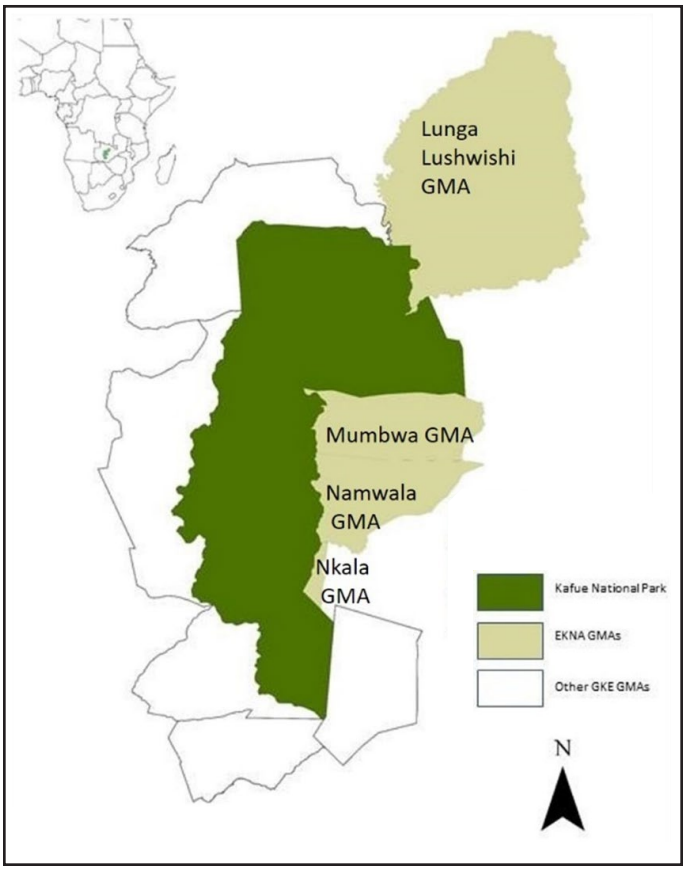

FIGURE 1: Map of Greater Kafue Ecosystem
Source: The Nature Conservancy

Photo: drcmarx/Adobe Stock

The Feasibility and Value of Impact Evaluation

In 2022, USAID conducted a Feasibility Assessment to determine the most effective and rigorous evaluation methods for the Eastern Kafue Nature Alliance activity. The assessment found that conducting an Impact Evaluation that leverages existing biodiversity monitoring throughout implementation would provide the Alliance with the **opportunity to assess the impact of conservation efforts on biodiversity outcomes**. The assessment also found that collecting similar wildlife monitoring data in comparison areas would support the Impact Evaluation's measurement of biodiversity outcomes.

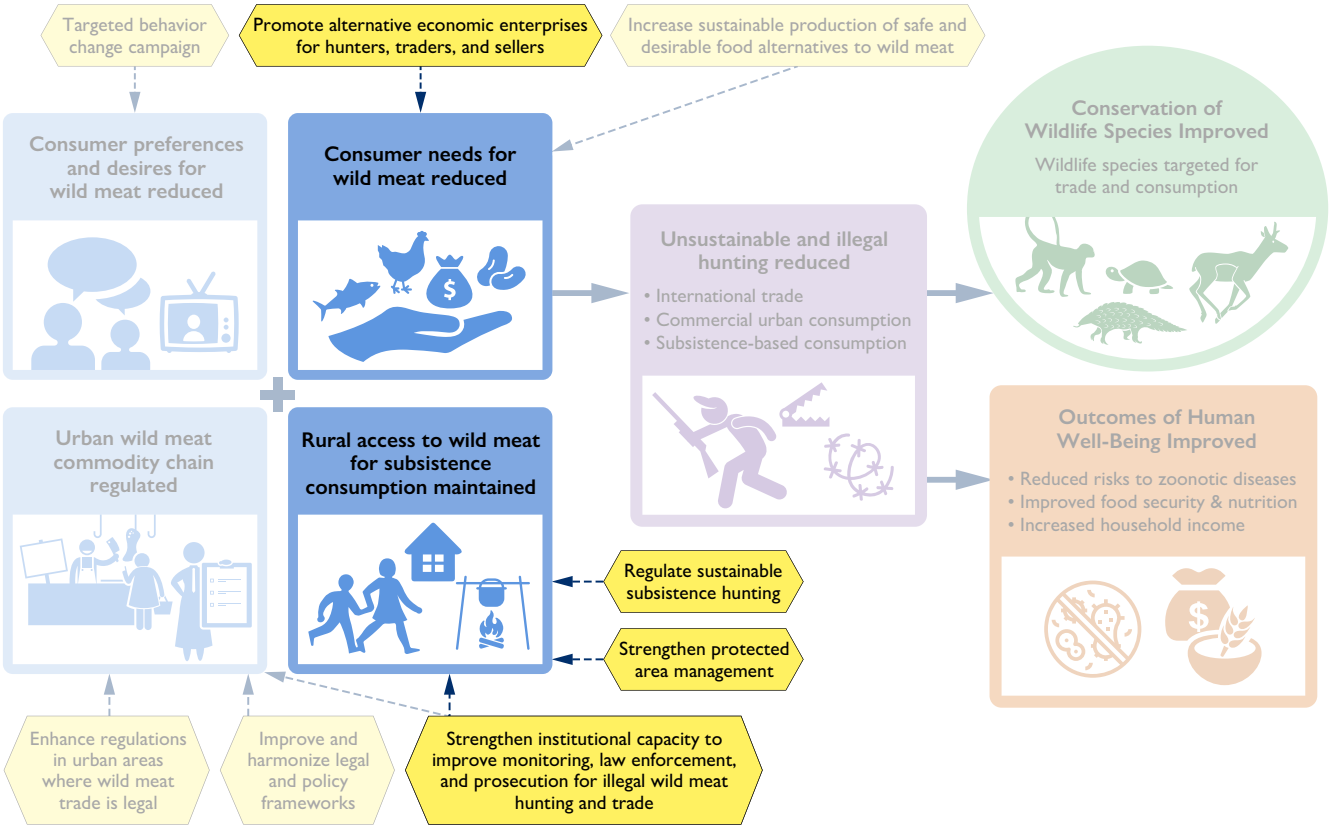

FIGURE 2: The Alliance approaches highlighted on the Wild Meat Learning Group Theory of Change

To begin the evaluation process and enable data comparison, the evaluation team gathered baseline data around each strategic approach. The evaluators conducted surveys with households, women decision makers, and community leaders and held key informant interviews and focus group discussions with stakeholders. They also discussed their findings in a pause and reflect event. The team will use the information they gathered when developing annual work plans and also during the evaluation's endline and follow-up phases.

Objectives and Indicators

The Alliance uses a robust monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning framework, which outlines multiple channels of data collection, such as focus groups to obtain beneficiary feedback, remote-sensing analysis of the project area, and data from village leaders about results and engagement.

TABLE 1: Eastern Kafue Nature Alliance Activity Strategic Approaches and Indicators

Strategic Approaches	Related Indicators
Strategic Approach 1: Strengthen natural resource compliance and enforcement systems.	Number of hectares of biologically significant areas showing improved biophysical conditions as a result of U.S. government assistance.
Strategic Approach 2: Develop inclusive ecosystem-based markets for local prosperity.	Number of people with improved economic benefits derived from sustainable natural resource management and/or biodiversity conservation as a result of U.S. government assistance.
	Percentage of female participants in U.S. government-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources (assets, credit, income, or employment).
	Number of hectares under improved management practices or technologies with U.S. government assistance.
	Number of people who have received U.S. government-supported short-term agricultural sector productivity and sustainable farming training.

In addition to tracking performance indicators, the Alliance collects data on a larger set of outcome and impact indicators through its Impact Evaluation, including some related to wild meat consumption, hunting, dietary diversity, and food security.

Lessons Learned

Learning Question: What management systems for land and protected areas can support sustainable subsistence hunting for local communities without contributing to commercial hunting?

MIXED ATTITUDES ABOUT COMMUNITY RESOURCE BOARDS

The Alliance supports community actions to combat environmental crimes. This support involves strengthening the capacity of Community Resource Boards (CRBs) to govern natural resources more effectively within their jurisdiction through improved recruiting, training, and deployment of community scouts to counteract illegal activities, including poaching for game meat. The baseline data revealed that survey participants had overall positive attitudes about anti-poaching units (including that they do protect wildlife and do not harass people). However, attitudes were more mixed about the benefits of CRBs, with 37 percent of respondents agreeing that CRBs brought about positive changes and 41 percent disagreeing. Similarly, a majority (46 percent) did not believe the CRBs had created employment opportunities. While CRBs have significant potential to improve community management of the Greater Kafue Ecosystem's resources, current community attitudes indicate such benefits are not yet realized. As capacity of CRBs to govern natural resources improves, community perceptions may also improve.

Lessons Learned

Learning Question: What combination, if any, of strategic approaches are effective in achieving threat reduction and improving human well-being, and under what conditions?

CHALLENGES IN GATHERING BASELINE DATA FOR ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES

The baseline data the Eastern Kafue Nature Alliance activity gathered in 2023 provides insight into local attitudes and experiences related to wildlife populations, wild meat consumption, and poaching, and points to where further monitoring is needed. While the majority of survey participants (55 percent) responded that wildlife numbers had remained the same over the previous four years, a large portion (34 percent) believed numbers had decreased. Regarding wild meat consumption, the baseline findings noted that 15 percent of households consumed wild meat the previous year, with most households reporting eating wild meat only once (62 percent) or twice (19 percent) a year. Antelopes were the most common species reported consumed (54 percent), followed by warthog or bush pig (16 percent) and waterbuck (9 percent). Rather than households consuming meat they hunted themselves, most wild meat is purchased either raw (41 percent) or cooked or cured (33 percent). Baseline findings suggest a higher prevalence of wild meat consumption when considering the entire study area, reported by 27 percent of households in both the treatment and comparison Game Management Areas, but only 15 percent of households in the treatment Game Management Areas alone.

In addition, the baseline data shows low dietary diversity and high food insecurity across the population. Women of reproductive age reported consuming only four food groups on average over the past 24 hours, compared to the recommended five food group minimum. In addition, only 37 percent of women of reproductive age achieved the minimum dietary diversity, a proxy for micronutrient adequacy, compared to 45 percent across rural Zambia on average. Food insecurity is highly seasonal and closely related to the growing season (i.e., food insecurity drops off during the harvest in April, May, and June, and slowly increases to its peak during the lean season in January and February). These data and others may provide insight into the role of wild meat in meeting dietary needs.

However, the illegal nature of poaching for game meat makes it challenging to collect data on these activities. Respondents may not truthfully report their involvement in game meat hunting due to its illegal status, complicating interpretation of this data. To partially mitigate reporting bias, the evaluation team used list experiments, an approach to elicit more truthful responses to sensitive survey questions, thereby reducing respondents' motives for deliberate misreporting. Other research suggests that poaching is prevalent in the Greater Kafue Ecosystem, as game meat is a significant protein source for its communities. Game meat is also traded for various items, such as solar panels and TV sets, with customers in Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Recognizing the difficulty of collecting accurate data around sensitive topics, the team used qualitative focus group discussions and wildlife monitoring data from camera traps and spoor transects to triangulate data.

About this series: *In 2022, USAID collected case studies addressing the questions posed in the Wild Meat Learning Agenda. The series looks at USAID-funded activities from around the world. For more information and resources on USAID's Wild Meat Collaborative Learning Group, please visit biodiversitylinks.org/learning-evidence/wild-meat-collaborative-learning-group. This document was produced for review by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). It was prepared by Environmental Incentives LLC with its partners Foundations of Success, NORC at the University of Chicago, and World Resources Institute for the Improving Design, Evidence, and Learning (IDEAL) contract.*