POLICY BRIEF

MARCH 2025

LOCAL COMMUNITIES ON THE VEDGE OF CRISIS: TIME TO ADDRESS TRANS-BOUNDARY HUMAN-ELEPHANT CONFLICTS IN TANZANIA

Wildlife conservation is an important pillar of nature-based tourism in Tanzania, contributing 17% of GDP- roughly a quarter of foreign currency and over 1 million jobs[1,2]. It is also a vital source of ecosystem services. Local communities in the North-Eastern Tanzania are reportedly undergoing historical levels of unbearable Human-Elephant Conflicts (HECs) perturbations. Research reveals that lack or weak trans-boundary natural resources management policies are partly to blame.

WHAT IS AT STAKE?

With 33.5% of its terrestrial area committed for conservation[3], Tanzania has positioned herself as a leader in wildlife conservation. However, such a fortune has come with a cost, to both humans and wildlife in terms of deleterious consequences of co-existence. This is particularly so as both humans and wildlife populations strive to share diminishing resources while at the same time rapidly increasing in populations. For instance, the population of Tanzania has quadrupled between 1967-2012, projected to hit 89,204,781 by 2035[4]. The wildlife population has also increased significantly. The country now hosts 35-50% of all

[1] Mirondo, Rosemary. (2019, July 27). "Number of tourists visiting Tanzania rises to 1.5 million". *The Citizen.* Retrieved from https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/news/Number-of-tourists-visiting-Tanzania-rises-to-1- 5million/1840340-5212812-6jkudu/index.html

[2] "Tanzania Tourism Revenues and Arrivals Up in 2018" (2019, April 8). *Tanzania Invest.* Retrieved from https://www.tanzaniainvest.com/tourism/tanzania-tourism-revenues-and-arrivals-up in-2018

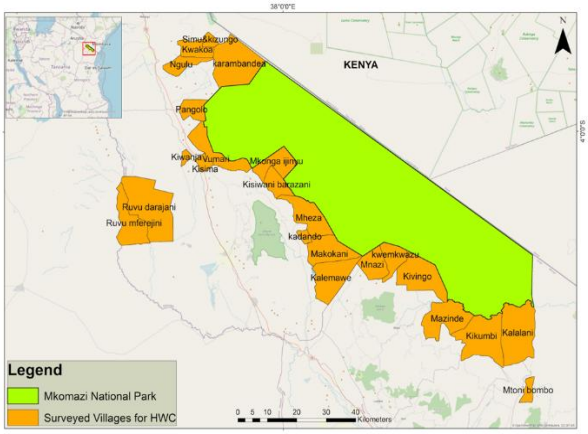
[3] Vice President's Office. (2015). "National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2015-2020". Division of Environment, United Republic of Tanzania, Dar es Salaam

[4] Tanzania, NBS. (2012). "Population and housing census: population distribution by administrative areas." Ministry of Finance, Dar es Salaam

Elephant[5] and lion[6,7] and most of hippo[8] within East Africa. However, this is not entirely good news since the rural communities living adjacent to protected areas are confronted daily with HWC risks of various forms resulting into loss lives or properties and bodily injuries, as well as destruction and depredation. Of their crops and livestock, respectively. Thus, how to promote human-wildlife co-existence stands as an agenda of top government priority. In this regard, gathering of empirical information so as to inform effective interventions against the HWC problem remains critical. This policy brief is intended for top decision and policy makers, respectively, seeking to promote human-wildlife co-existence in Tanzania.

METHODS

Reseachers from the College of African Wildlife Management-Mweka embarked on documenting the trend in elephant influx in a newly emerged Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) foci of north-eastern Tanzania. They also examined how communities there were striving to cope copying with such a new and rapidly evolving HEC situation. Detailed data on community perceptions on HEC were collected from 21 villages encompassing Mwanga, Same, Lushoto, and Korogwe administrative districts of North-eastern Tanzania, selected purposely with the help of the District Game Officers (DGOs) from the respective districts. In total 214 people were surveyed. Key informant interviews, 21 Focus Group Discussions comprising of 10 participants each, balanced by gender, in addition to 8 key informants were surveyed. The survey team carried out direct observations. Each study village was located within 10 km from Mkomazi National Park, the heart for elephant conservation. These surveys were supplemented by time-series mapping (2014-2021) of land-use/land-cover change by use of QGIS desktop 3.20.1.



Study Villages

Discussion on HEC at Ngulu Village, Same District

[5] Thouless, C., Dublin, H. T., Blanc, J. J., Skinner, D. P., Daniel, T. E., Taylor, R. D., ... & Bouché, P. (2016). African elephant status report 2016. *Occasional Paper Series of the IUCN Species Survival Commission, 60.*

[6] Mésochina, P., Mbangwa, O., Chardonnet, P., Mosha, R., Mtui, B., Drouet, N., & Kissui, B. (2010). Conservation status of the lion (Panthera leo Linnaeus, 1758) in Tanzania. *Paris, France: SCI Foundation, MNRT-WD, TAWISA & IGF Foundation.*

[7] Riggio, J., Jacobson, A., Dollar, L., Bauer, H., Becker, M., Dickman, A., ... & Lichtenfeld, L. (2013). The size of savannah Africa: a lion's (Panthera leo) view. *Biodiversity and Conservation, 22(1), 17-35.*

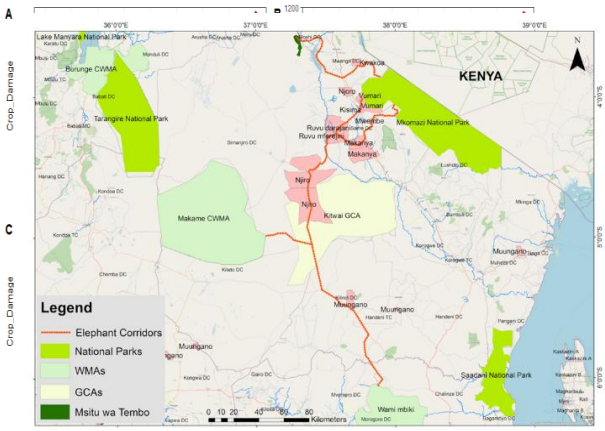
[8] Lewison, R. & Pluháček, J. (2017). Hippopotamus amphibius. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2017: e.T10103A18567364. https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2017-2.RLTS.T10103A18567364.en.Downloaded on 20 March 2020.

RESULTS

A record rapid elephant influx in a consequent HEC hike was confirmed in local community lands. Hitherto, HEC was localized and of low concern but the problem has now grown rapidly and widespread - raising public anxiety and outcry in the study areas, particularly so in Mwanga and Same districts. The adjacent Mkomazi National Park also now harbours a record elephant population size, which has increased 12 times since 1995, from 87 to 1054. This dire situation, has also led to a widespread disruption of livelihoods, especially in crop losses.

Beehive fence deployed to address HEC in Kalalani village, Korogwe district

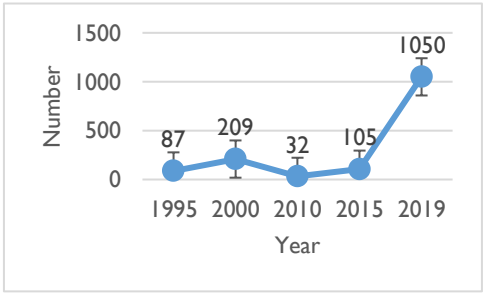
Evidence for blockage of the historical elephant migratory corridors was confirmed. Amidst this confusion, the local communities have resorted to a combination of basic HEC interventions, for instance, through the use of roman candles, firecrackers, chili bombs, horns, and high-intensity torches. However, these are reportedly inefficient or costly to the great majority. Clearly, the sudden surge of scores of elephant groups into these areas has caught these local inhabitants by surprise. These communities recall that such large numbers of elephants are beyond historical records and ascribe this scenario to the general land use changes, notably in the trans-boundary elephant stronghold of Tsavo National Park and surrounding lands in Kenya. In any, case this is a newly emerged HEC crisis that should prompt a stronger policy consideration if the livelihood of these communities are to be safeguarded.



Key elephant Migratory routes within the affected region

Key Findings

1. A sudden surge in HEC has prompted public outcry
2. Communities are ill-prepared to immediately handle these consequences
3. Part of the problem unsustainable trans-boundary land use changes



Trend in elephant population in Mkomazi National Park 1995-2019

Policy Insights

The sudden influx of elephants in northen Tanzania has overhwelmed the lives of local communities and presents a particular livelihood challenge of its own. That part of

the problem emanates from outside Tanzania opens a new policy dimension altogther in attempts to address

HEC challenges. It is critical initiate or strengthen trans-boundary dialogue and other initiatives so as to resolve any inconsistencies in terms of trans-boundary policies and other inititaives for better promoting human-wildlife co-existence in this region and elsewhere in Tanzania and beyond.