

Conserve

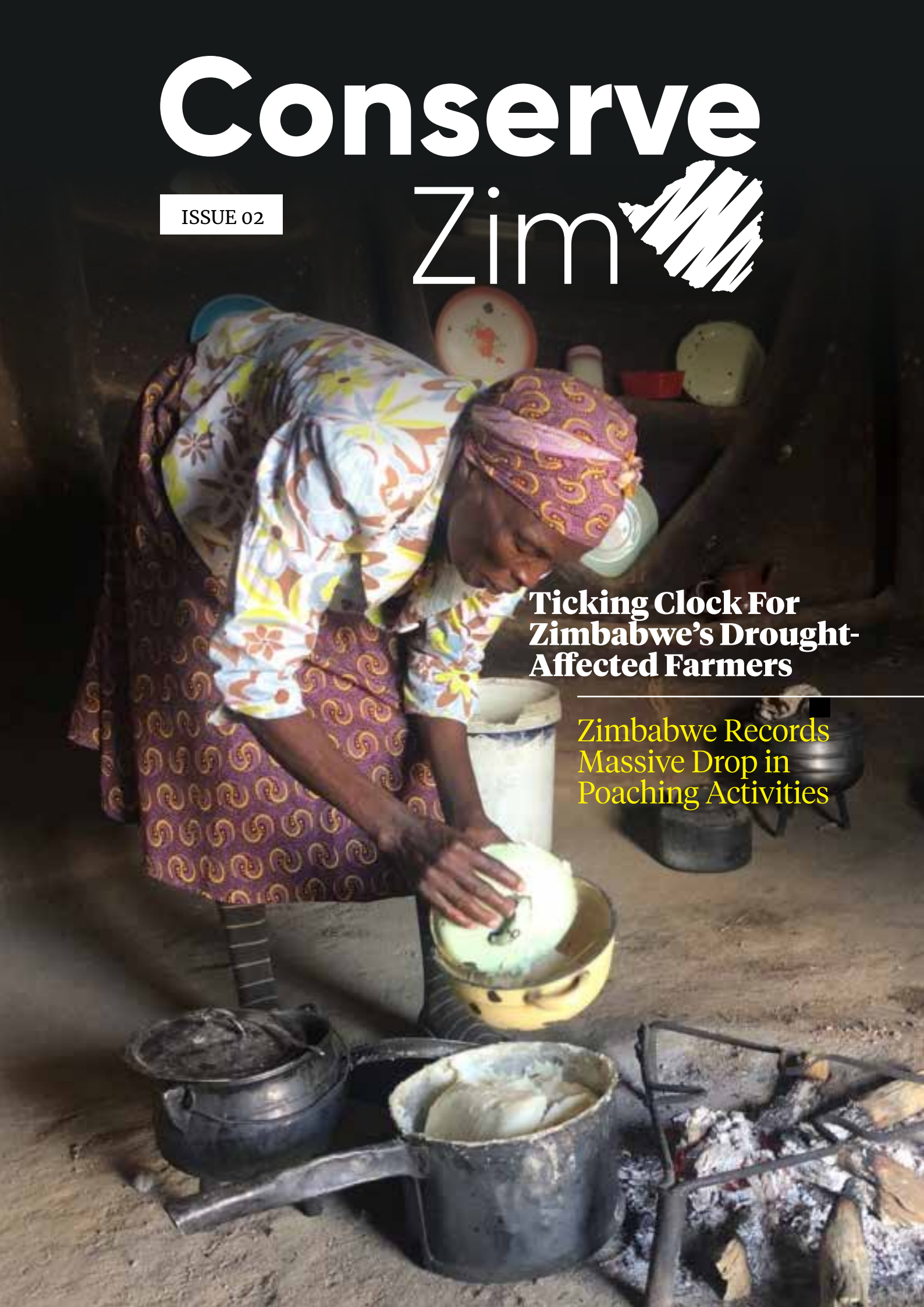
ISSUE 02

Zim



**Ticking Clock For
Zimbabwe's Drought-
Affected Farmers**

**Zimbabwe Records
Massive Drop in
Poaching Activities**





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Editor's Note



Meanwhile the ConserveZim June newsletter is coming at a time when one of our main followers and renowned journalist Lucy Yasini has passed.

Lucy was a dynamic, energetic, courageous and fearless journalist known for standing by the truth.

She spent more than 20 years at the ZBC now Radio Zimbabwe doing Ndebele and Chichewa programmes up to a time when she joined Channel Africa – Chinyanja Service at SABC, before switching to the Studio 7 – Voice of America.

Her love and experience as a radio journalist in conservation and health matters helped the ConserveZim team take a more pronounced direction during the launch of this publication.

Lucy will be missed for her love, care and deep knowledge of the conservation story.

May Her Soul Rest In Peace.

Like Lucy Yasini our conservation hero, we believe that everyone has a role to play in protecting Zimbabwe's environment. Whether you're a seasoned conservationist or just starting to learn more, we hope this newsletter will inspire you to take action.

In the coming editions, we'll continue to bring you in-depth reports, success stories, and ways to get involved.

We also encourage you to share your thoughts and suggestions with us by replying to this email. conservezim3@gmail.com



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Welcome to the June Edition of the ConserveZim Newsletter!

The El Nino induced drought has hit hard certain parts of the southern Africa and in this edition we looked at how Zimbabwean families especially in the lowveld and Matabeleland South are coping.

We have also looked at the impact certain interventions are making in uplifting the livelihood of women in rural Zimbabwe.

There are fears that if nothing is done some parts of Matabeleland South may end up getting drier owing to increased droughts as effects of climate change bite.



Understanding Low Water Levels in Lake Kariba and Their Impact on Electricity Generation

By John Cassim



Kariba, Zimbabwe - News reports often express concern about low water levels in Lake Kariba.

Sometimes, these reports lead to misconception about Zambia and Zimbabwe's capacity to produce electricity yet Lake Kariba has water. The two countries share the Zambezi River and Lake Kariba, managed by the Zambezi River Authority a Bi-National organization.

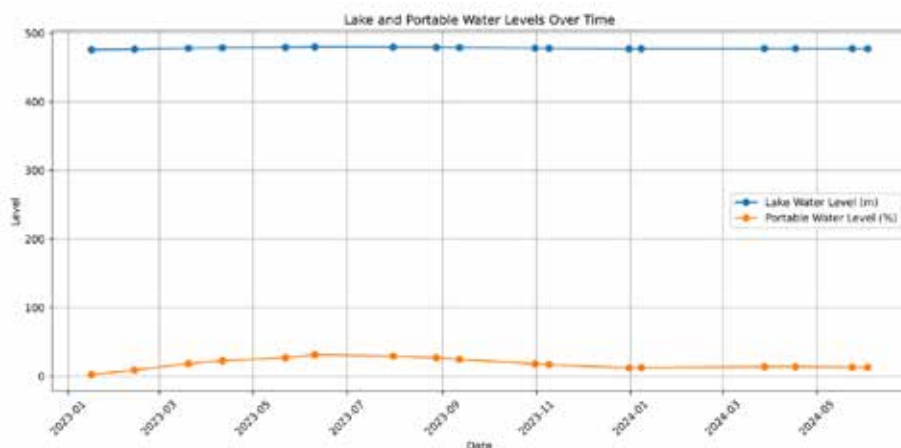
While low water levels can affect electricity generation, ConserveZim aims to clarify misconceptions regarding lake water levels and "dead storage."

Live Storage vs. Dead Storage at Kariba Dam

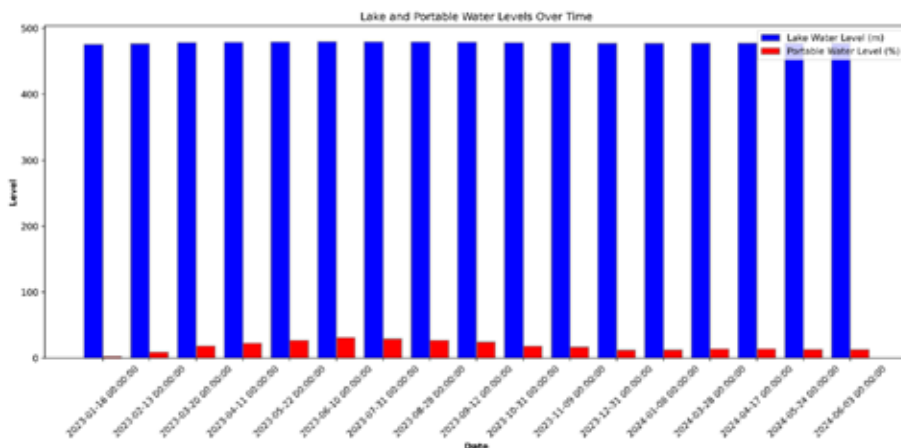
The water used for power generation at the two Kariba power stations by ZESCO and ZETDC comes from intakes located near the dam wall within the reservoir.

The location of these intakes creates two zones in the reservoir based on their height relative to the reservoir base:

- **Dead Storage:** Water below



A line graph made by Julius Ai using own datasets from monthly updates provided by the Zambezi River Authority. @John Cassim



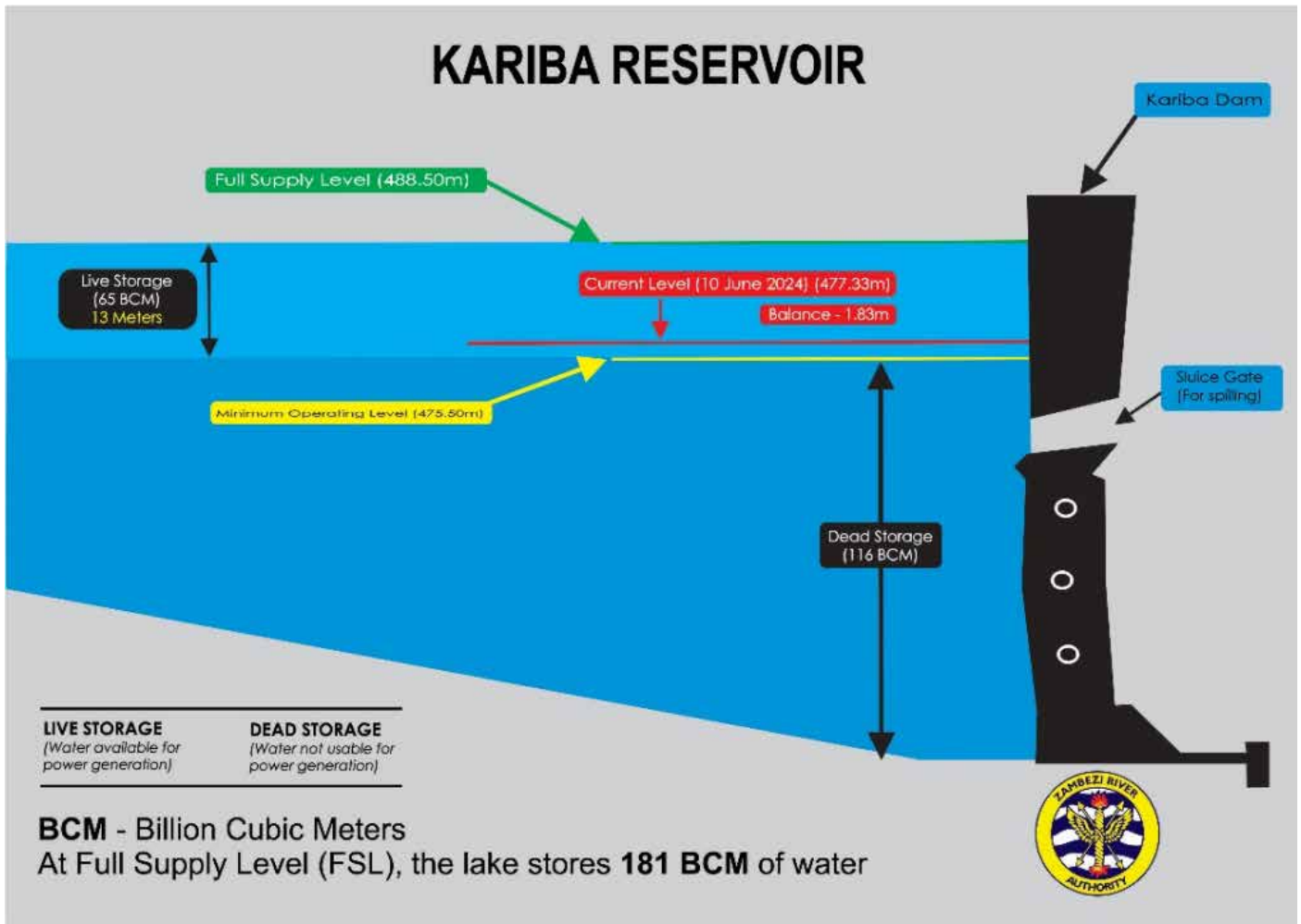
A bar graph made by Julius Ai using own datasets from monthly updates provided by the Zambezi River Authority. @John Cassim

the intake level cannot flow into the intakes and is therefore unavailable for power generation.

- **Live Storage:** Water above the intake level can flow into the power stations through

the intakes and be used for electricity generation.

Even when Live Storage is depleted, Dead Storage may still exist in the reservoir



An image showing the live storage levels

Lake Kariba's Capacity and Storage

At full capacity, the Kariba Dam Reservoir can store 181 billion cubic meters (BCM) of water. Of this total, 116 BCM is Dead Storage, and 65 BCM is Live Storage. Dead Storage remains constant, while the maximum Live Storage is 65 BCM.

The actual Live Storage volume fluctuates due to several factors, including:

- **Rainfall:** Rainfall amounts affect the level and volume of water flowing into the lake from the Zambezi River.
- **Evaporation:** Evaporation from the lake's surface reduces water volume.

- **Power generation needs:** The two power stations utilize the available Live Storage for electricity generation.

These factors influence the amount of usable Live Storage in Lake Kariba.



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‘My other source of income is my small garden but the rivers have dried up. Drinking water is even a challenge. We are drinking unsafe water,’

David Murenje, a smallholder farmer, holding some of this season’s harvest in Wastomba, eastern Zimbabwe. @FARAI SHAWN MATIASHE

Ticking Clock For Zimbabwe’s Drought-Affected Farmers

Farai Shawn Matiashe

As Zimbabwe faces its worst drought in 40 years, Farai Shawn Matiashe speaks to farmers about the barriers to climate resilience.

Margaret Mutasa, a smallholder farmer, stares at her children picking yellow-green guavas from the fields in Watsomba, a rural area in Zimbabwe’s Manicaland Province.

These fruits are what Mutasa’s family eat for breakfast - the only meal they can afford each day.

‘Our harvest will not last a month,’ the 52-year-old mother of seven tells the New Internationalist from her home in Wastomba, 282km from the

capital, Harare.

‘It is only a matter of time until these fruits run out.’

In April, President Emmerson Mnangagwa declared a national disaster to tackle the prolonged drought in Zimbabwe. Mnangagwa said the country needs more than \$2 billion in aid to feed more than 2.7 million people, roughly 20 per cent of the population.

The severe dry spell is wreaking havoc across southern Africa, with Zambia and Malawi declaring it a national emergency

in March. About 80% of Zimbabwe experienced drought caused by El Nino, a weather phenomenon which brought high temperatures and below-average rainfall to the region from November last year to April.

Millions Facing Hunger

The resultant drought, the worst in four decades, has meant that maize harvests are projected to be down 72 per cent,



'We fear a food crisis across the country. Women and children are the most vulnerable, but millions are at risk of moderate and severe acute malnutrition.'

with only two out of 60 districts growing enough food to last a year. Like many smallholder farmers, Mutasa's maize crop has withered.

'During a normal season, I harvest over a tonne of maize,' she says. 'This year I will be lucky if I get 50 kilograms.'

Delilah Takiwara, a technical advisor and nutritionist for the development organization FHI 360 says the reduction in harvest and yields has created a dire situation.

'We fear a food crisis across the country. Women and children are the most vulnerable, but millions are at risk of moderate and severe acute malnutrition.'

Loss Of Income

In Zimbabwe, approximately 70 per cent of the population relies on subsistence rainfed agriculture for their livelihoods and food security, according to United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

David Murenje, another smallholder farmer in Watsomba, now wonders how he will pay his children's school fees. He expects the harvest from his three hectares of land will not last the family of seven for the next two months.

'I sell some of what I harvest to the local market. This time if I sell, we will starve,' he says.

'I sell some of what I harvest to the local market. This time if I sell, we will starve.'

'My other source of income is my small garden but the rivers have dried up. Drinking water is even a challenge. We are drinking unsafe water,' says Mutasa.

The water shortage has also

impacted electricity production in Zimbabwe and Zambia which both rely on hydropower generated by Lake Kariba. Low water levels in the lake have forced Zimbabwe to roll out load shedding schedules lasting more than 12 hours per day because power generated from the Kariba Hydropower Plant is down by nearly half.

Leaders have declared a state of emergency in both Malawi and Zambia to help mobilize resources. Zambia which needs around \$900 million is already in talks with the International Monetary Fund to unlock funding. According to the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit, the Zambian government has so far raised \$51 million - far short of what is needed.

In Malawi, the World Food Programme is appealing for resources to feed the affected population. Last week, the UN launched a \$429 million aid appeal for Zimbabwe, declaring that 3.1 million of the total population of 7.6 million require urgent help as a result of the drought.

Talla, the FAO representative in Zimbabwe, says these are signs of the seriousness of the evolving climate crisis in the region.

'This is one of the most severe droughts that countries in southern Africa including Zimbabwe has ever experienced,' he says, adding that more countries are expected to make similar declarations ahead of the looming dry season.

Talla says more countries are expected to make similar declarations ahead of the looming dry season.

Barriers To Climate Resilience

This is not the first time that Zimbabwe has experienced climate shocks. In March 2019, Cyclone Idai created a humanitarian crisis

and destroyed crops and property worth millions of dollars.

The recurring drought caused by El Nino shows the need to move away from the unpredictability of rain-fed agriculture in favour of climate proof farming including irrigation and drought resistant crops.

Talla suggests that 'Climate Smart Agriculture' techniques such as water harvesting, irrigation and the use of water conservation practices can stabilize food production, even in drought conditions. Renewable energy technologies such as solar pumps can also increase the hectareage smallholder farmers can irrigate in winter to produce more food and to fill the food shortage after a faulty harvest.

But for many smallholder farmers, these climate solutions are expensive and remain out of reach. Efforts to expand these programs are underway, and the UNDP has implemented over 18 solar irrigation schemes for 1,500 people.

Mutasa, unfortunately, is not one of them.

'Those with irrigation schemes in this village have a bumper harvest. If I had one my story would have been different,' she says. 'We last received food hampers from the government in January. We do not know when they are coming back. We are just waiting.'

Source: <https://newint.org>



An Appreciation of the Halal Food Process

A Halaal abattoir

More or far too long, people have misunderstood the concept of Halal food. Many associate it solely with religious rituals and traditions centered around religious festivals, mistakenly believing it involves consuming blood and animal parts. However, this is far from the truth.

Understanding Halal

To understand the Halal process, we must first understand the term itself. Halal simply means “permissible” in Arabic. Permissible by whom? By God Almighty, according to Islamic law.

Halal applies to all aspects of life, encompassing any object or action deemed permissible according to Islamic principles and promoting human well-being. It covers not only food and

drink but also character, conduct, dress, business ethics, respect, and how we treat each other. Here, we’ll focus specifically on Halal food.

The Importance of Humane Slaughter

Since all creation belongs to God, only He can permit the taking of an animal’s life for consumption. Therefore, Muslim slaughter involves invoking God’s name by saying, “In the name of God, God is the Greatest.”

The animal must be slaughtered humanely using a sharp knife to sever the windpipe and jugular veins without damaging the spinal cord and causing cardiac arrest. This method ensures swift bloodletting, removing microorganisms and preventing

bacterial growth that would occur with stagnant blood.

Scientific studies using iris dilation tests have confirmed this method as the most humane and hygienic. The animal must be healthy, treated with respect before slaughter, and shielded from the sight of the knife and other animals being slaughtered. Additionally, injured animals cannot be slaughtered according to Halal guidelines.

Quality through Ethical Practices

External or internal stress in animals activates bodily mechanisms that can affect meat quality. Hormones like epinephrine, adrenal hormones, and thyroid hormones are released during stress. Epinephrine breaks down glycogen (stored energy) into



glucose. Stress before slaughter causes this release, resulting in low glycogen levels at the time of slaughter.

Low glycogen leads to meat with a high pH level, making it dark, firm, dry, and more susceptible to bacterial spoilage. Halal slaughter emphasizes using healthy, well-rested animals, which ensures high glycogen levels. After slaughter, muscle glycogen converts to lactic acid, firming the muscle and carcass. This lactic acid also inhibits bacterial growth, contributing to tastier, tender meat of good quality and colour.

Poultry is typically rested for eight hours before slaughter, while cattle rest for 24 hours. During this time, they have access to water but no food. This allows the body to replenish muscle glycogen as much as possible, leading to high levels of lactic acid in the meat and an ideal pH level.

Hygiene as a Core Principle

Cleanliness is paramount in Halal food production. Since everything divine is pure, all ingredients and production methods must originate from pure and natural sources. Halal prohibits the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and requires all ingredients to be derived from natural, plant-

based sources.

If animal products are used, they must come from animals slaughtered according to Halal guidelines. The entire process, from raw materials to finished product, is meticulously monitored to ensure hygiene and prevent contamination with doubtful products like horse or donkey meat, or additives derived from cochineal beetles (crushed beetles) or human hair (L-cystine).

Maintaining the Highest Standards

The National Halal Association of Zimbabwe (NHAZ) establishes strict guidelines to ensure the highest hygiene standards in certified establishments.

Here are some key requirements:

Valid licenses and certificates:

Establishments seeking certification must provide valid operating or trader's licenses, company registration documents, certificates of incorporation, and health clearance certificates that comply with city health department regulations.

Employee hygiene: All employees directly involved

in production and processing areas must have valid medical certificates and wear appropriate head coverings, gloves, and protective clothing while working.

Ingredient disclosure:

A detailed list of products, ingredients, and their sources must be provided for inspection and verification.

Product removal and facility sterilization: Any unsuitable product must be removed, and the entire facility must be sterilized under NHAZ supervision if contamination occurs.

Sanitary facilities: Production and preparation areas must be well-lit, well-ventilated, and equipped with handwashing basins with detergents and disinfectants readily available. Ablution facilities should be located away from work areas.

Designated eating areas:

The establishment must have canteens or designated food areas for staff, as no food is permitted within production areas. Staff food storage must be completely separate from establishment storage facilities.

Storage and pest control:

Storage areas for raw materials must be kept clean and regularly fumigated. Fumigation certificates are required during routine NHAZ inspections.

Random inspections:

Unannounced inspections are conducted by the National Halal Auditor and the executive council to ensure ongoing compliance

Faizil Ahmed is the Vice President & Chief Operations Officer (COO) of the National Halaal Authority of Zimbabwe and he writes in his own capacity to educate and raise awareness on the benefits of Halaal.



From Bare Land to Breathtaking Escape: *Dzivarasekwa's Transformation*

Harare, Zimbabwe - The search for firewood in the early 2000s took an unexpected turn for a dozen men in the Harare suburb of Dzivarasekwa, 17km west of Harare's CBD.

Arrested by the Forestry Commission for selling wood cut from council land, they faced potential charges. However, a spark of inspiration ignited.

"Instead of watching them get in trouble," the narrative continues, "we decided to buy the firewood and use it for the orphanage project, even sharing some with the community."

This experience led Seppo Ainamo, Founder and Trustee of Dzikwa Trust Fund, to propose a bold idea: "Why not lease the land and create a forest?"

Dzikwa Trust, established by Finnish citizens Seppo

Ainamo and Oili Wuolle, aimed to support vulnerable children through education, extracurricular activities, and environmental awareness.

At the time, the Forestry Commission leased the 90-hectare plot where the men were caught, viewing the trees as a resource to exploit.

"We began collaborating with the Forestry Commission in 2008 to rehabilitate the land," explains Seppo. "When their lease ended in 2010, we secured a 25-year lease from the City of Harare, in March two years later."

Today, over 76,000 exotic and indigenous trees stand tall, transforming the once-dilapidated land into a thriving forest.

Sadly, many Zimbabweans remain unaware of this hidden gem, a place waiting to be explored and appreciated.

- Today, over 76,000 exotic and indigenous trees stand tall, transforming the once-dilapidated land into a thriving forest.



Agro-tourism forest

A group of innovative youths, in partnership with Kukura Business Accelerator (KBA) have launched the Kwedu Township Tourism. Their initiative promotes



tourism and empowers local communities, showcasing Dzivarasekwa's rich cultural heritage and natural beauty. The forest, a testament to successful conservation, has become a key attraction.

The program offers a range of activities, including, guided township tours, traditional cuisine, local crafts and art workshops, community engagement and cultural exchange

It is however the greening and income generating initiatives being undertaken in the forest that is likely going to capture the attention of conservationists.

From inception more than 100 000 trees have planted and only about 76 000 have grown to maturity.

Some dried up, were stolen or died in flooded areas. Of these 60 000 trees did not exist in this forest.

Dzikwa Trust has joined hands with the community to plant trees in this forest each year and more trees are planted during the tree planting week every December.

"We have been planting only gum trees all along but have now

started planting other indigenous and fruit trees to prevent illegal cutting down of trees. We noticed if you plant acacia trees they don't cut them down," Kindoni Takawira a botanic expert at this forest explained.

Last year alone 600 fruit trees like, mangoes, avocados, nautches, guavas were planted.

To date at least 25 hectares of land has been transformed into a forest and each year, crops such as maize are planted on five hectares, to loosen the soil then after harvest three are planted the following year.

Out of the 90 hectares, 60 hectares has been fully rehabilitated through funding from Finland, Small Grants Programme and the UNDP.

Lifechanging thrust

Children under Dzikwa Trust's care participate in tree planting, learning the importance of environmental conservation. The project encompasses permaculture practices and addresses food security by cultivating maize and raising broiler chickens, rabbits, and vegetables.

- "It is a special environmental program on 60 hectares of degraded land leased from the City of Harare, we can call it permaculture as it has nurseries for tree planting and horticulture.

- "Animal husbandry, fish ponds, orchard, apiary and environmental education are some of the conservation activities at the plot," Seppo Ainamo, said during the tour.

- "We are cultivating maize on a 5-hectare portion together with members of the community members but this year owing to the El Nino induced drought we did get much, we use grain from the portion to feed hungry children from the community," Seppo added.

To rehabilitate the forest Dzikwa Trust is working in collaboration with the Forestry Commission of Zimbabwe, Agritex in the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture, Bindura University of Science Education as well as the City of Harare.

In terms of food security, Dzikwa Trust can boast of an annual production of 4000 broiler chicken, 1200 rabbits a variety of green vegetables in the greenhouse with a 5 KVA solar powered borehole.

Fruit trees and a honey project are some money-making initiatives that are sustaining Dzikwa Trust.

Dzikwa Trust has increased income generating projects by introducing road-runners that will provide eggs, chicks and meat that now on demand in the country.

They have also introduced goats and fish farming. The nutrient rich water from the ponds is used to water the plants that indeed looked very healthy upon the visit to the forest.

Cabbages, covo, lettuce, spinach, tomatoes, rape,



chilis, and a wide range of herbs were ready for harvest but the bee keeping attracted more.

Currently they are migrating from the commonly used Kenyan Top Bar hives to Langstroth hives that are most common in North America and Australia.

“To avoid the breeding system of the bees we are moving to the Langstroth as we are still expanding our honey project,” Kindoni Takawira explained.

Dzivarasekwa Forest has transformed from barren land into a thriving ecosystem and a must-visit recreational escape. It’s a testament to the power of community, innovation, and dedication to environmental sustainability.



“We are cultivating maize on a 5-hectare portion together with members of the community members but this year owing to the El Nino induced drought we did get much, we use grain from the portion to feed hungry children from the community,”

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Solar-Powered Water Scheme Brings Relief to Drought-Stricken Zimbabwean Community

M

ATOBO, ZIMBABWE - As winter approaches in southern Africa, the Tshatshani River

in Lingwe community, Matobo District, is drying up due to the El Nino-induced drought. This has taken a toll on villagers in

wards 8, 9, and 10, as well as those under Chief Bidi. However, a timely intervention - the rehabilitation of the Lingwe



Cattle resting in the sand along Tshatshani River, to cool down. Although the river is dry, it has become the beacon of hope for Lingwe villagers in Matobo, Matabeleland South in Zimbabwe following the rehabilitation of a piped water scheme that has not worked for the past 24 years.

piped water scheme - is proving to be a lifesaver.

The Tshatshani River, which once provided life-giving water between 1991 and 1998 through a diesel-powered pump, lay idle for 24 years, it was barely suitable for anything more than cooling livestock in the sand.

Hope Beneath the Sand

But beneath the sandy surface lies a beacon of hope - a new water extraction technology.

Funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by Christian Care under the Enhanced Resilience for Vulnerable Households in Zimbabwe (ERVHIZ) Project, this initiative utilises sand abstraction to obtain water from the riverbed.

The water is then pumped using a solar system to 30,000-liter storage tanks before being distributed to the community via gravity flow.

"This is an integrated approach by the Government of Zimbabwe in collaboration with UNICEF and FAO," explained

Takaendesa Sanangurai, a Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Consultant from UNICEF. "We abstract water from the riverbed, pump it using solar power to a storage tank, and then distribute it using gravity to the community."

A Welcomed Relief

The dry riverbed, once teeming with villagers fetching water the old-fashioned way, now serves as a stark reminder of the past hardships. Today, a piped water scheme has replaced that arduous task, bringing relief to 216 households across Zamadube, Lingwe, and Matshina villages. The scheme also benefits a few more households in wards 8, 9, and 10 whose cattle rely on the dip tank it supplies.

"We used to bring our herds here for dipping, but fetching water for the tank with 20-liter containers was a huge challenge," said Tobedza Ndlovu, an 87-year-old resident of Makhasa village. "Now, it's as simple as opening a tap. This has freed up time and manpower."

The Lingwe piped water

scheme extends its benefits beyond households. Two business centres and Lingwe Primary School, with an enrolment of 230 pupils, now have access to clean water.

"The scheme also supports a school with 230 pupils, a community garden with 50 farmers, and a dip tank serving 201 farmers with a total of 1,398 cattle," said Elvis Dube, a local representative of the scheme.

The access to clean water has a ripple effect, promoting better health and hygiene throughout the community. Bekithemba Moyo, a WASH Extension worker, highlights the positive impact on cattle dipping. "People can now dip their cattle at the right time, which has reduced livestock diseases in the area," he said.

Residents like Sibusisiwe Nyathi, 61, can finally breathe a sigh of relief. "We used to scoop water from the sand, which took forever. The water was often contaminated, and some villagers even fell sick," she said. "Now, taps are closer to our homes, and the distance to water points has been significantly reduced."

For 24 years, the village grappled with a lack of clean



drinking water. Attempts to drill boreholes proved futile. “The southern part of our district has a very low water table,” explained Elvis Sibanda, CEO of Matobo Rural District Council.

Lingwe Primary School girls fetch water from a tap just a few meters from their classroom. In the past teachers and students had to take turns to fetch water from a dam some distance away from the school, thereby compromising the quality of education.

A Brighter Future for Lingwe Primary

Lingwe Primary School, which has long suffered from water shortages, can now boast access to clean water. Upon visiting the school, new toilet blocks were under construction, and water taps were readily available in the schoolyard. Teachers and students expressed their belief that this will significantly improve the quality of education.

“This will have a positive impact on student health, nutrition, and sanitation,” said the school’s headmaster,



Lingwe Primary School girls fetch water from a tap just a few meters from their classroom. In the past teachers and students had to take turns to fetch water from a dam some distance away from the school, thereby compromising the quality of education.

Ferdinand Namate. He highlighted the importance of the scheme’s girl-friendly toilets, which are currently being built. According to UNICEF Zimbabwe, ill and malnourished children are more prone to dropping out of school, particularly girls

who may be forced to work to support their families instead of attending classes.

In the past, the school had to mobilize students to fetch water from a distant borehole.

Empowering Rural Women: Goats, Chickens, and Skills Build Resilience in Zimbabwe



The intervention by Women and Land in Zimbabwe reached out to 4,000 adult women and 2,000 young women, despite the economic challenges.

“The project used a number of strategies like trainings, irrigation gardens, provision of seed packs, and value addition apart from the successful livestock project. This impacted on food and nutrition security, household income challenges in the face of climate change and El Nino induced drought that threatened the resilience of rural women,”

Harare, Zimbabwe – Ester Mudhava, a 23-year-old mother of two from Gutu’s Mashate village, exemplifies the success of the Food Security and Livelihoods Project. Early this year, her agricultural skills earned her a place in a group of ten women who received ten goats under the Kurongeka Goat Project.

This initiative aimed to address multiple challenges, targeted household food security, climate change awareness, and building resilience among rural women, particularly young adults. Funded at US\$285,000 by the Norwegian People’s AID, the project run by Women and Land in Zimbabwe operates in seven districts: Chipinge, Makoni, Gutu, Shurugwi, Gokwe South,

Mwenezi, and Gwanda. A recent evaluation in Harare marked its nearing completion.

While income generation from the goats is yet to begin, Ester and her colleagues are equipped with valuable business and animal husbandry skills that will ensure long-term sustainability. Their herd has already grown from 10 to 16 goats, thanks to recent births.

“Our success hinged on building an elevated goat pen using a ‘mukando’ (cash club) system to fund the fence. We received two male and eight female adult goats, that included pregnant does,” Ester explains. “We take turns grazing the goats on nearby hills for nutritious tree leaves. Currently, we use herbal remedies instead of antibiotics.”

Women and Land in Zimbabwe also equipped them with record-keeping skills and security measures to prevent theft. The project empowers young farmers with sustainable skills to become successful goat breeders, prepared to face future climate challenges.

This resonates with Lucia Mhlanga, a 23-year-old young



farmer from Ngoma village, Chipinge. Along with nine others, she formed a club and received road runner chickens for breeding under the program.

“The birds were at the point of layer and within a few weeks we started getting eggs, from a business point of view we realised selling the eggs would give us at least US\$ 3 per crate of 30 while selling the chicks would get us, US\$ 30 for the same number of eggs,” Lucia told ConserveZim.

“We already have orders for chicks and our fear is that if we continue selling the chicks we will end up not having enough seed in the future, but all I can say is this project has a good turn around in a short space of time,” she added.

Success of the project

According to Mucheki Mucheki, while giving a report on the project’s success, the intervention by Women and Land in Zimbabwe reached out to 4,000 adult women and

2,000 young women, despite the economic challenges. At least 400 goats and 2,000 chickens were distributed to 50 and 100 rural women groups respectively.

“The project used a number of strategies like trainings, irrigation gardens, provision of seed packs, and value addition apart from the successful livestock project. This impacted on food and nutrition security, household income challenges in the face of climate change and El Nino induced drought that threatened the resilience of rural women,” Mucheki said.

At least 3,000 jobs were created especially in dry regions with low rainfall resulting in perennial crop failures. For some beneficiaries, the project raised them from a zero income to at least US\$15 per week from the sale of vegetables.

In a bid to effectively deal with market accessibility challenges under this project, two grinding mills, three solar driers, and two oil pressing machines were procured. This enabled

the beneficiaries, especially in Makoni district, to add value to their produce.

Call for rural industrialisation

“The only long-term solution to poverty is economic development, which comes through full structural transformation for industrialisation. But this takes time, hence the short-term interventions by Women and Land in Zimbabwe to enhance long-term development,” Professor Mandivamba Rukuni told the gathering.

Professor Rukuni made these sentiments while challenging the beneficiaries of the Food Security and Livestock Project to begin industrialising using Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS).

“You cannot solve a problem at a lower level than it was created. All African countries are in a middle-income trap as all of them have dual economies. This makes it very difficult for most African nations to be fully industrialised economies,” he challenged

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Cash Transfers:

A Lifeline for Zimbabwean Families Facing Drought and Disappearing Mopani Worms

Harare, Zimbabwe - A young girl of about four years old cries as she tries to protect her food on a blue plate from hungry free-range chickens and dogs. This is a daily struggle for her grandfather, 66-year-old Nkumbulo Mpfu, who cares for his grandchildren while their parents are away.

His wife, Siphon Moyo, was attending a routine savings club meeting when this scene unfolded. The lack of relish with the maize meal was a worrying sign for the children's well-being.

A full meal with relish is only provided when all the grandchildren are at home according to Nkumbulo.

Mpfu had tried planting watermelons and other nutritious crops, but the surrounding fields lay barren due to the failed 2023-2024 rainy season. Even the family's silos stood empty, highlighting the impact of the drought on their food security.

Under normal circumstances, Matabeleland South is known for producing mopani worms, a rich source of nutrients, especially for children. However, due to the drought, these "golden worms" have disappeared.

Villagers say mopani worms can earn each family US\$70-US\$100 during peak season.



- Mpfu had tried planting watermelons and other nutritious crops, but the surrounding fields lay barren due to the failed 2023-2024 rainy season.

- Faced with such hardship, Mpfu and his wife were enrolled in the Harmonised Social Cash Transfer and Emergency Social Cash Transfer Programme launched by the government in partnership with UNICEF



Nkumbulo's wife Siphon, dishes an afternoon meal in her kitchen in Mangwe, Matabeleland South. Image by: John Cassim



“If you use the money wisely, you can buy livestock like goats, which can become a source of income in the future. This is not money to waste. Even if you have a job, this little money can help you survive. You can pay school fees, buy chickens to breed, and sell goats.”

Nkumbulo Mpofo's goats fetching food outside the yard. These are some of the goats the family bought using savings from the cash transfer programme being implemented by the Zimbabwean government and UNICEF.

Faced with such hardship, Mpofo and his wife were enrolled in the Harmonised Social Cash Transfer and Emergency Social Cash Transfer Programme launched by the government in partnership with UNICEF in the last quarter of 2023.

Funded by the German

government through the KfW Development Bank, the programme provides a monthly stipend of US\$54, a glimmer of hope for struggling families.

The programme's main aim is to enable households to afford basic necessities and avoid resorting to risky coping

mechanisms like child labour and marriages.

In response to climate change impacts like El Niño, UNICEF and its donors are deploying resilience-building strategies like cash transfers to help vulnerable families in rural Zimbabwe recover.



“My wife sets aside US\$10 every month to contribute to the Savings Club. They will use the money collected by December to buy groceries for each household. This will help us avoid shortages in the coming year. We were selected for the cash transfers because of our age. My wife is also old. We have five children, but one passed on last year, leaving us with the grandchild you see here (the young girl whose meal was eaten by the dogs and chicken). The other grandchildren are attending day care and will be here soon.”

UNICEF particularly emphasises the vulnerability of children, who are more affected by decreased access to clean water, poor diet, malnutrition, and diarrheal diseases.

Nutritional gardens, sustainable water schemes, school feeding programmes, and cash transfers are some of the initiatives that have helped vulnerable villagers in Mangwe District.

Nkumbulo Mpofu is full of praise for the cash transfer program. “I am grateful for this help,” he says. “If you use the money wisely, you can buy livestock like goats, which can become a source of income in the future. This is not money to waste. Even if you have a job, this little money can help you survive. You can pay school fees, buy chickens to breed, and sell goats.”

Mpofu and his wife care for a full house. Three of their five children live in Botswana, and one tragically passed away last year. Now, they have five grandchildren to raise under their roof. Mpofu doesn't rely on his children for financial support, as they struggle to send money back home.

His story reflects the hardships faced by many families chosen for UNICEF's cash transfer programme in the district.

The programme provides a much-needed boost. Families can use the cash to purchase essential food staples, contribute to savings clubs for future needs, and even invest in livestock. Livestock, especially donkeys for their crucial draft power, are seen as valuable assets that can be sold during difficult times.

Mpofu adds, “My wife sets aside US\$10 every month to contribute to the Savings Club. They will use the money collected by December to buy groceries for each household. This will help us avoid shortages in the coming year. We were selected for the cash transfers because of our age. My wife is also old. We have five children, but one passed on last year, leaving us with the grandchild you see here (the young girl whose meal was eaten by the dogs and chicken). The other grandchildren are attending day care and will be here soon.”

Buthelezi Moyo, aged 33, from a neighbouring village, agrees that the cash transfers are a lifeline for families struggling with drought and the disappearance of mopani worms. “The mopani worms were indeed sustaining us,” she says. “We were able to make very good money each month during the peak season, but now they are vanishing, hence the cash transfers are indeed helping us.”

The cash transfer programme is a critical intervention for families like Mpofu's who are facing food insecurity due to drought and the disappearance of mopani worms, a traditional source of income and nutrition.

This programme provides a much-needed safety net, allowing families to purchase food, invest in their future, and avoid resorting to risky coping mechanisms.

As climate change continues to threaten livelihoods in rural Zimbabwe, such programmes will be essential to ensuring the well-being of vulnerable communities.



Zimbabwe Records Massive Drop in Poaching Activities



According to statistics released by ZimParks incidents of poaching of elephants, rhinos, lions and buffalos dropped from 130 in 2019 to 15 this year.

- The work that we are doing with our partners, the conservation partners, it has also helped in terms of fighting this problem of poaching right across the country

Harare, Zimbabwe – Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks) has revealed an impressive 88.46% decrease in poaching activities targeting the big five (elephants, rhinos, lions, and buffalos) over the past five years. Additionally, detections, arrests, and recoveries related to poaching have also significantly decreased by 90% from 2019 to


2024.

According to ZimParks statistics, poaching incidents involving the big five dropped from 130 in 2019 to just 15 this year. Tinashe Farawo, ZimParks Spokesperson, attributed this success to increased ranger presence and collaboration with conservation partners.

“The drop is caused by more effort, more boots that we are putting on the ground. If you look

almost every station throughout the country has a Land Cruiser or at least a service vehicle to respond to these things.

So, it becomes easier for our work because we are more visible and we are on the ground. This is despite the fact that we have a shortage of rangers because of the lack of financial resources. But most importantly the work that we are doing with our conservation partners, it has also



“Rangers often need more equipment, such as vehicles, and experience poor living conditions at ranger bases. That is why IFAW has dedicated much of its time and resources to enhancing ranger welfare. The construction of the new Makona Ranger station in the remote southern part of the 14,600km² Hwange National Park has greatly improved wildlife protection operations and ranger welfare,”

helped in terms of fighting this problem of poaching right across the country,” Tinashe Farawo, ZimParks Spokesperson told ConserveZim.

While elephants were the most targeted animal in 2019, with 53 deaths nationwide, buffaloes have become the primary target since 2020. This year alone, only three elephants, two rhinos were killed against 10 buffaloes.

In 2020, at least 37 buffaloes were killed compared to 25 elephants, eight rhinos, and four lions. The number of buffaloes killed peaked at 41 in the two preceding years before dropping to 10 this year.

“Our conservation partners have been helping us with resources in some cases, training, financing, and co-financing some of the anti-poaching efforts. And the other thing that has also helped is in terms of we are working closely with the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) in terms of sentencing of suspects or offenders. We work closely of course with the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) in terms of fighting this problem.

And also, on the the armed conduct. I think we have been warning people that if you are found within a protected area you will be shot,” Farawo added.

Phillip Kuvawoga, Landscape and Conservation Director at International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), emphasized the importance of their long-term partnership with ZimParks. A US\$50 million, 25-year conservation agreement has bolstered biodiversity conservation efforts, including the construction of a new ranger station in Hwange National Park.

“Rangers often need more equipment, such as vehicles, and experience poor living conditions at ranger bases. That is why IFAW has dedicated much of its time and resources to enhancing ranger welfare. The construction of the new Makona Ranger station in the remote southern part of the 14,600km² Hwange National Park has greatly improved wildlife protection operations and ranger welfare,” he said.

Kuwawoga acknowledged the evolving tactics of poachers and stressed the need for technology-driven anti-poaching strategies alongside training in leadership and rights-based law enforcement approaches.

ZimParks reported a significant decrease in protected area invasions (from 1355 in 2019 to 209 in 2024) and armed confrontations with poachers (from 56 in 2019 to zero in 2024). Recoveries of ammunition

and ivory have also dropped dramatically.

ZimParks has managed to reduce cases of armed contacts with poachers from 56 to none at the moment.

Recoveries of ammunition have significantly dropped from 191 in 2019 to 10 this year while 257 pieces of ivory were recovered in 2019 and 18 this year.

On the one hand the state run newspaper The Herald has quantified the total valued of poached members of the big five to US\$ 8 million in 422 incidents.

Experts say the ivory ban by China in 2017 was a game changer as

elephant populations globally, and particularly in Africa, were devastated by a poaching epidemic.

The rising demand for ivory carvings and jewelry helped was said to have been pushing a poaching crisis across Africa with more than 20,000 elephants being killed annually for their tusks.

Since then, WWF has been conducting annual surveys of Chinese consumers and found promising decline in elephant ivory buying.

WWF has been tracking black market activity and found that wholesale prices of ivory in the country have dropped.



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- * Boot loops/ Hanging on Apple Logo/ Flashing
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