



Community Engagements with Kalahari Research and Conservation

KRC conducts a variety of outreach programs in the communities living near the KTP and in other parts of Botswana. Engaging and involving communities is a critical part of wildlife conservation. KD1 (12 000km²) has three small community settlements called Ngwatle (300 residents), Ukwi (500) and Ncaang (250). There is one settlement in KD2 (6000 km²), Zutshwa (500 residents). The communities are primarily made up of Bakgalagadi and Basarwa (also known as San Bushmen). Our focal communities at this stage are Zutshwa in KD1 and Ngwatle in KD2. We hope to work with Ukwi and then Ncaang in the near future.



Figure 1: KRC and Female members from the Ngwatle Adult Conservation Group who were keen to learn how to track animals and attended a tracker training bush retreat with experienced male trackers.

Community Adult Conservation Groups

Over the years we have engaged with children in Environmental Education and we have learnt that adults are also keen to learn about the environment and wildlife around them. We also understand that the adult's participation in conservation is critical as they are most likely to make the much-needed changes in conservation. We recently helped the Zutshwa and Ngwatle communities each set up Adult Conservation Groups. These groups presently have around 40 members each (this number is growing) and they all meet up regularly. KRC supports them by organizing presentations once a month, overnight bush trips and other activities some of which provide knowledge and incomes for them. The enthusiasm that group members have for learning about the wildlife around them is infectious, and it has been very

rewarding to give them the opportunity to get into the bush around them and see things for their first time. The groups already have a growing “voice” within their community and advocate for the conservation of the wildlife in their area. We plan to continue to provide support for these groups as they grow and ultimately reach more members in each community. We also hope to open up similar groups in Ukwi and Ncaang when we have the capacity to do so.



Figure 2: The logos that each group decided on have helped give the group members a sense of identity.

Our community work also involves engagements with, workshop training and support for the other stakeholders within the villages including the Village Development Committee, the Trust and the leaders within the communities. We will also soon be engaging with the primary schools in the villages to organize appropriate and interesting environmental education talks to the pupils.

Conservation Performance Payments

A key focus for KRC now is working with both communities to implement a community “Conservation Performance Payment (CPP) ” project. This CPP project has been set up to address the issue of the Wildlife Management Areas of KD1 and KD2, being compromised by a recent upsurge of livestock encroachment and an increase in the poaching of wildlife. The covid19 pandemic has temporarily removed all incomes for the communities that previously obtained via ecotourism and legal trophy hunting. This has resulted in community members diverting to livestock farming and illegal hunting of wildlife for income. Our objective is to substantially decrease livestock encroachment and poaching in KD1 and KD2. Livestock and other farming in this arid region with low quality grazing and limited water are not sustainable activities that will generate relevant incomes. The CPP project will provide significant direct financial payments into communities as a reward for their responsible management of livestock that does not encroach into wildlife areas as well as evidence of decreased poaching. The better the communities achieve this, the higher their payments will be. Direct payments will also be paid based on the numbers of large carnivores photographed on camera traps set up near the villages. Direct payments will also be paid based on the numbers of large carnivores photographed on camera traps set up near the villages. Community members will also receive income through employment as livestock herders/monitors, antipoaching eco-rangers and assisting with camera trap deployments.



Figure 3: Refilwe Baatweng (far right) is our Community Engagement Officer and she has the support of our whole team, Bokamoso Tshekiso (left) and Mmoloki Keiteretse Included.

This project is of particular importance at this time, as if something is not done to help the communities through this terrible covid19 pandemic time, the wildlife in the region will decrease significantly. Ecotourism needs to remain a viable option in the area, so that communities can again receive sustainable and significant incomes from the wildlife. We will also assess whether this CPP scheme, is a viable option to help communities overcome future difficult periods brought in by unusual circumstances.



Figure 4: Dr Moses Selebatso passed and published his PhD 3 years ago under KRC on wildebeest in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. He is now our KRC “team leader” and he has a very important active leadership role for our community engagement efforts.

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