

# Honeyguide's scoping visit to Namibia, June 2023

## Introduction

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| <b>Implementer</b>    | Kateto Ollekashe , Lemuta Mengoru  |
| <b>Program</b>        | Human and Wildlife Conflict (HWC)  |
| <b>Activity Dates</b> | 20th June 2023 - 26th June 2023  |
| <b>Activity name</b>  | Assessing the Scope for HEC Mitigation Toolkit Usage in Namibia                                  |
| <b>Partners</b>       | The Honeyguide Foundation (HGF) and Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) |
| <b>Country</b>        | Namibia  |

## Summary of activity

During our stay in Namibia, we had the opportunity to visit four conservancies: Omatendeka, Otjui, Ozondundu, and Ombuyokanguindi. One common issue we noticed across these areas is the presence of elephants that come from different regions. Namibia has unfortunately lost a significant number of elephants, remaining with around 24,000 countrywide. The majority of the regions in Namibia are characterized by desert-like conditions, which leads to challenges when elephants venture into farms as they tend to consume everything in their path.

Each conservancy faces unique challenges based on the distribution of farms and the landscape of the area. From our observations, approximately 80% of the region requires a specific toolkit consisting of a torch, air horn, chill cloud, and Roman candles, to help manage and deter elephants effectively. The remaining 20% might require different methods, such as using chili fences and chill bricks to address the issue.

The positive aspect is that the local communities are willing to embrace the toolkit and utilize it even among the women, provided they receive proper training on its usage. Additionally, the farms being in close proximity to homes will facilitate the practical implementation of the toolkit.

By employing these methods and working together with the community, we aim to create a sustainable coexistence between humans and elephants, mitigating potential conflicts and safeguarding both livelihoods and wildlife.

## Activity objectives

During our visit to the conservancy, we had the opportunity to visit four farms and observe the methods they currently employ to address human-wildlife conflicts. We found that most of the methods being used are common and traditional, but not as advanced as the ones we utilize in Tanzania.

In comparison, the methods we use in Tanzania are smaller in size but more advanced in terms of effectiveness. We shared and demonstrated these methods to the farmers, who expressed interest and acknowledged their potential benefits.

Based on our assessment, it was evident that elephants frequently encroach the farms, particularly during the farming seasons. This is where the HWC toolkit we mentioned earlier can play a vital role in effectively managing and mitigating these conflicts.

**The current methods and tools being used by the farmers include:**

1. Using drums for producing sound.
2. Forming teams of individuals to scare off elephants.
3. Using flashlights to deter elephants.
4. Burning cow dung or tires to create smoke.
5. Setting fires around the farms as a deterrent.
6. Utilizing electric fences with support from IRDNC.
7. Access vehicles from IRDNC for additional support.
8. Using stones to create barriers around the farms.
9. Putting chili in the cow dung and burning.

**This is a sample of a fence**



**This is a sample of a stone fence**

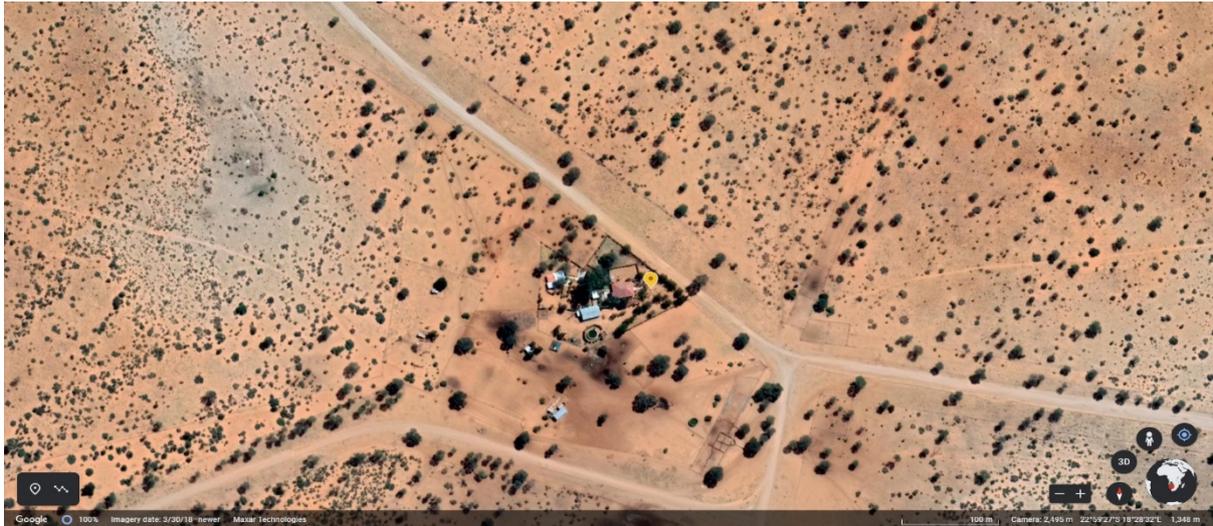


### **Omuramba The GPS point 18°50'05.5"S 13°58'12.1"E**

Omuramba people, who are guarding the farms, do not have any effective tools to protect their crops from elephants. Given that they are scattered across different geographical locations, this makes it even more challenging to address human-wildlife conflicts in a coordinated manner.

In such a situation, the implementation of the HWC toolkit becomes even more critical. The toolkit, consisting of torches, air horns, chill clouds, and Roman candles, can provide the Omuramba people with a practical and versatile solution to deter elephants effectively.

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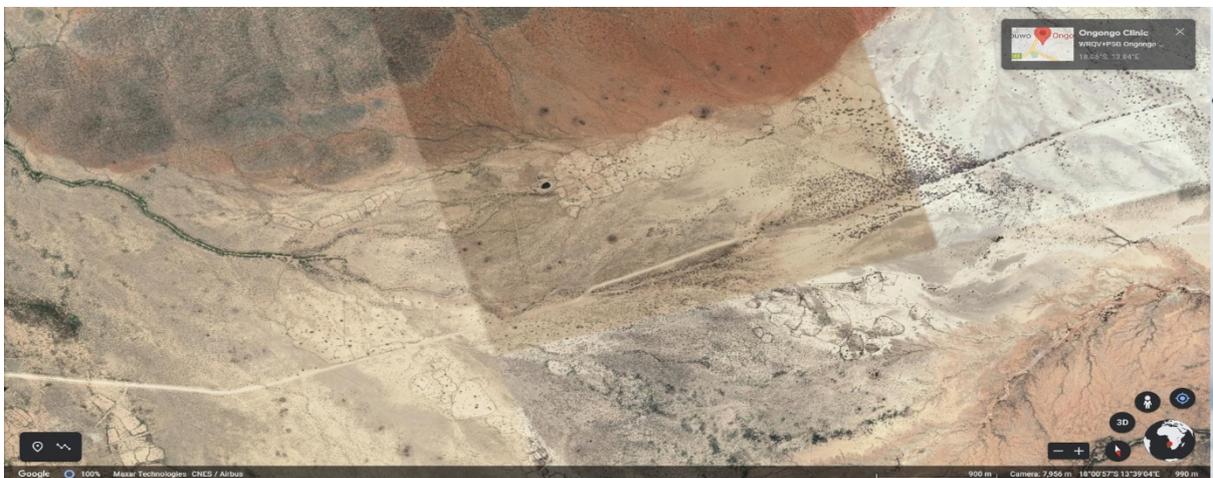


### **Ongongo The GPS point 18°04'09.8"S 13°23'21.4"E**

One of the villages visited, Ongongo, is characterized by multiple seasonal rivers that flow through it. It was in this village where a fence was previously installed but unfortunately washed away by the force of the flowing water.

In such a setting, the HWC toolkit we discussed earlier would be particularly effective. The proximity of the farms to the homes and the flat terrain with no significant trees obstructing the viewing distance makes it an ideal environment for implementing the toolkit.

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### **Okatumba The GPS point 19°03'37.8"S 14°21'10.5"E**

It is understandable that most people in the area work individually, which can result in poor performance when utilizing tools on farms. However, the presence of the car from IRDNC during the crop seasons has proven to be particularly helpful.

In order to improve the effectiveness of the HWC toolkit, encouraging the formation of groups and promoting collective action would be beneficial. By working together as a group, community members can support and assist each other in implementing the toolkit effectively. This collaborative effort will enhance their ability to manage human-wildlife conflicts more efficiently. While the car from IRDNC serves as a valuable backup

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### **Okarumba The GPS point 22°31'41.7"S 17°67'19.5"E**

In Okarumba, where farms are scattered and water bodies are close to the farms, the challenges posed by elephants are evident. As most people here protect their farms individually, it becomes crucial to find effective solutions to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts.

Given the movement patterns of elephants from one area to another, it presents a suitable opportunity to implement chill fences or chill breaks strategically. Placing these deterrents in areas where elephants frequently pass can help protect the farms and create a barrier to prevent elephants from causing damage.

In addition to large-scale farming, the presence of small farms growing vegetables throughout the year makes it essential to address the elephant challenge comprehensively. These smaller farms are at continuous risk from elephant intrusion, impacting the livelihoods of the community members

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## Overview of observations

Based on our observations, it appears that the HWC toolkit can be effectively utilized in all the conservancies due to the distribution of farms and the favourable landscape. The community's active involvement in implementing the toolkit is essential because they are directly affected by the human-wildlife conflicts and are the ones living alongside the animals.

By actively participating in the use of the toolkit, the community members can take ownership of protecting their crops and finding ways to coexist peacefully with the animals in their region. Their adaptation to the situation and proactive approach will be crucial in ensuring the success of the toolkit's implementation.

Given the suitability of the landscape and the farms' dispersion, the toolkit's visual and auditory elements, such as torches, air horns, chill clouds, and Roman candles, can be highly effective in deterring elephants and reducing conflicts between humans and wildlife

## Challenges, Concerns and Recommendations

During our visit to Namibia, we identified several challenges that the communities are regarding HWC issues, and we believe that IRDNC as a supporting organization can play a vital role in addressing these issues:

a) Toolkit Component Availability: One of the concerns is whether the toolkit components, such as firecrackers and Roman candles, can be obtained locally in Namibia because it would be too complicated and almost impossible to move these across the borders from Tanzania into Namibia. IRDNC could assist in exploring reliable sources for these components within the country or neighboring regions such as South Africa to ensure their availability for implementation.

b) Limited Backup Resources: The area is quite vast, and relying on only one car as a backup source might not be sufficient to cover the entire region effectively. IRDNC could explore options to provide additional backup resources, such as more vehicles or alternative means of transportation, to enhance the community's response capabilities.

c) **Financial Constraints:** It appears that the villages might not have sufficient funds to purchase the toolkit on their own. IRDNC could offer financial assistance or explore potential funding options to help the community acquire the toolkit, making it more accessible and affordable for them. For sustainability purposes IRDNC could explore ways to get communities to contribute even a small percent so they value the tools and they start getting used to the cost. This also solves the ownership problem where community will feel more on the frontline, owning the problem and the solution rather than building up dependence to IRDNC.

d) **Lack of Backup Team:** Having a backup team of trained rangers is essential to effectively respond to human-wildlife conflicts. IRDNC could provide training and support to establish a backup team within the community, equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to assist in managing conflict situations.

e) **Proximity of Water Holes:** The water holes being close to the farms pose a challenge as they attract wildlife, including elephants, to the vicinity of the crops. IRDNC could work with the community to implement measures that deter wildlife from accessing the water holes or create alternative water sources further away from the farms.

### **Agreed and suggested next steps**

Here is a list of agreed tasks to be accomplished;

a) The Namibia team will visit Tanzania to observe and understand the practical implementation of the HWC toolkit.

b) Check the availability of toolkit components, specifically firecrackers and Roman candles, in Namibia or South Africa. Ensure that these components can be sourced locally to facilitate the implementation of the toolkit.

c) Arrange a Zoom call between the Honeyguide Foundation (HGF) and Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) directors to discuss the results of the trip and the next steps on this collaboration and exchange knowledge and experiences related to managing human-wildlife conflicts, roles of each partner and ways of communicating.

d) Develop a budget specifically for the HWC toolkit based on the requirements and input from the teams on the ground. This will help determine the necessary resources and funding needed for the successful implementation of the toolkit.

e) Establish teams of groups in the pilot villages who will actively participate and be involved in the implementation of the toolkit. These teams will play a crucial role in the successful adoption and utilization of the toolkit within the community after the training.