



**The Global Conservation Program
Achievements and lessons learned from 10 years of support for threats-based
conservation at a landscape and seascape scale**

**African Wildlife Foundation
Conservation of Resources in African Landscapes (CORAL)**

Zambezi Heartland, Zambia-Zimbabwe-Mozambique

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Key achievements, impacts and lessons learned

With support from USAID's Global Conservation Program (GCP), African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) and its partners achieved substantial conservation and development results in each of four priority landscapes, known as African Heartlands. AWF's Samburu, Kilimanjaro, Zambezi and Maasai-Steppe Heartlands were the focus of our efforts within GCP's portfolio of globally important conservation landscapes. Program activities over these 10 years were in support of the project's overall result, which was to establish landscape-level conservation in each of these Heartlands. Our approach to achieving conservation impact in Africa was to focus on priority large landscapes that have the potential to conserve viable populations of wildlife as well as key habitats and ecological systems well into the future. Within each Heartland, AWF worked to develop conservation strategies to protect and maintain these elements of biodiversity while meeting human needs and aspirations.

Throughout ten years of GCP support, progress in each of these Heartlands was cumulative. The strategy across Heartlands is structured around results that closely align with AWF's Heartland Conservation Process (HCP). GCP provided AWF the resources to adequately plan and design our program in each Heartland, and enabled AWF to demonstrate conservation impact in these sites through implementation of priority interventions. Priority interventions were focused around several themes which include: strengthening protected area management, resource monitoring, species conservation, participatory land use planning, wildlife-based enterprise development to secure livelihoods of local people, and capacity building with local institutions to strengthen natural resource management. AWF also helped to integrate sustainable economic development into conservation through support for empowerment and land use rights, improved governance of community institutions and facilitating the development of community wildlife-based enterprises, often in remote and marginal areas, and in equitable partnership with the private sector. These results from GCP support also leveraged additional funding opportunities from a range of sources that enabled AWF to scale up its activities to abate threats to biodiversity conservation targets.

Specifically, AWF's Zambezi Heartland made significant progress with 10 years of GCP support. Highlights of summary achievements are the following:

- Coordinated regular technical meetings with protected area authorities to improve regional coordination of conservation in this landscape.
- Focused planning for implementation of conservation business ventures as a conservation strategy in the Chiawa and Siavonga areas of the Heartland.
- Conducted detailed socio-economic profiles for selected areas; baseline socio-economic profile report of the landscape. These outputs directly contribute to the knowledge base needed to develop intervention strategies to deal with human-wildlife conflicts and improved livelihoods.
- Produced a consolidated Heartland-wide large mammal aerial survey report; elephants and other large herbivores, wild and domestic, were surveyed from the air in the Zambezi Heartland between Lakes Kariba and Cahora Bassa in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Zambia. This marked the first coordinated survey within the three countries that encompass the Zambezi Heartland.
- Capacity building support for partners through training of wildlife personnel on general resource monitoring.
- AWF collaborated closely with the ZIMOZA (Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia) Transboundary Initiative, which aims to improve community involvement in the management of transboundary natural resources in Zumbo and Magoe in Mozambique, Luangwa in Zambia and Guruve in Zimbabwe.
- Conducted field fish survey expeditions for biodiversity assessments, catch assessment surveys and frame surveys in the confluence area of the Heartland extending to cover the Zumbo Basin of Cahora Bassa and the whole stretch of the Luangwa River up to Luangwa Bridge on the Great East Road.

- Monitoring program supported for lions in Mana Pools NP and surrounding safari areas
- Supported training sessions for game scouts in Mozambique and Zimbabwe as part of capacity building for the Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) Program institutions in the Heartland.

GCP program background

The Global Conservation Program (GCP) was a partnership between USAID and six leading US-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that was established to conserve globally significant areas of biodiversity. African Wildlife Foundation was one of these six implementing partners of GCP. Over the past 10 years of GCP support, partner organizations implemented site-based programs around the world. These programs worked at varying scales, from the community level to large landscape and seascape scales. GCP was designed to achieve conservation results in partnership with NGOs, and to promote best practices, partnerships, and build communities of practice. It was a long-term centrally funded and managed program that complemented investments of bilateral missions and partner organizations. GCP's central mandate focused on achieving landscape-level conservation results in a representative selection of the world's most biodiverse areas. The program also focused on the sharing of lessons learned and conservation approaches among sites and partners.

Location, global importance and key threats to this landscape/seascape

The Zambezi Heartland is a large, three-country (Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe), transboundary landscape that includes extensive high-biodiversity areas along the middle stretch of the Zambezi River. Geographically, it covers an area of approximately 48,000 km², consisting of National Parks, Game Management Areas (GMAs) and large open communal areas. In terms of biodiversity richness, the protected areas in the heartland incorporate some of the most outstanding terrestrial and riverine wildlife viewing and scenic landscapes in Southern Africa. The heartland is typified by extended riverine habitat that hosts an estimated 36,000+ elephant population (*Loxodonta africana*), hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*), crocodile (*Crocodilus niloticus*), lion (*Panthera leo*), leopard (*Panthera pardus*), buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*), a diversity of antelope, including kudu (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*), many smaller mammals, reptiles and insects, and until very recently, the black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*). The area also has an abundant avifauna with over 300 bird species recorded, and the Siavonga open area in Zambia is an International Bird Area (IBA). In addition, the Zambezi River is an important reservoir for freshwater fish resources that include tiger fish (*Hydrocynus vittatus*), lungfish (*Protopterus annexens*), and a wide variety of cichlid (tilapias) and cyprinid species, some of which are local endemics and rare species. For Zambezi Heartland the most critical threats affecting priority conservation targets are: encroachment of incompatible human settlements; cultivation of natural areas; poaching; dam operations; uneven distribution of elephants; invasive plants (mainly river); and lack of regional coordination. Critical underlying drivers of threats include climate change, human population growth in the landscape, and high levels of poverty.

GCP partner historic and current roles in this landscape

Through GCP support AWF played a facilitation role as well as directly implementing conservation actions on the ground in Zambezi Heartland. Partners here included wildlife Authorities in all three countries; local governments in the districts where we worked; other programs/projects working on natural resources management, in particular: the Tchuma-Tchato program in Mozambique.; CAMPFIRE program in Zimbabwe; UNDP-GEF reclassification project in Zambia.

GCP partner approach to threats based conservation at a landscape scale

AWF Heartlands are biologically important landscapes with scope to maintain healthy populations of wild species, habitats, and conserve natural ecological processes in perpetuity. Over the past ten years of GCP support and working at landscape-scale, AWF was able to develop and fully adopt a threats-based approach to

its biodiversity conservation program across Africa. AWF now uses a proven iterative, threats-based, strategic planning process, known as its ‘Heartlands Conservation Process’ (HCP), to design and prioritize interventions. HCP helps AWF and its partners to develop intervention strategies that address critical threats to the ecological viability of these landscapes, identifying specific biodiversity conservation targets while also working to improve the livelihoods of local people. Conservation targets include individual species, habitats, and ecological services aiming to represent the suite of biodiversity of the site. Conservation targets drive landscape-scale conservation planning including monitoring threats and refining threat-mitigation actions, developing intervention strategies, and measuring conservation impact. The overall goal of AWF’s GCP program was to partner with USAID and a broad spectrum of stakeholders to achieve integrated biodiversity conservation and sustainable economic development in four priority landscapes in Africa through improved practice on the ground, policy advocacy, and cross-site learning. AWF’s conservation objective for Zambezi Heartland was to maintain the ecological integrity of this landscape by developing sustainable conservation interventions that protect biodiversity and important habitats and corridors. Interventions were designed to secure land and critical habitats for wildlife, maintain landscape connectivity, protect important wildlife species, and promote capacity and policies that advance conservation in the landscape.

Implementing conservation at landscape scale

In the four AWF Heartlands supported by the GCP, AWF made significant progress over the past 10 years with support from USAID and other donors. We made important gains in: securing wildlife movement corridors and dispersal areas through detailed assessments and implementing participatory land use plans in key areas; established applied species research programs and security networks for wildlife protection; and facilitated transboundary collaboration between partners across international borders. Key milestones have also been achieved to operationalize community wildlife conservancies through participatory NRM planning. In addition to building on the impetus and intellectual capital of GCP supported work, AWF believes that over the last several years we have achieved a number of important advances in our integrated approach to sustainable landscape scale conservation. These advances add new dimensions and richness to our Heartland program. Specifically, AWF now leads the field in Africa with innovative strategies in areas such as: private land conservation tools; restructuring state assets; integrating livestock, agriculture and conservation; developing local community-based security networks; and advances in Conservation Enterprise. These and other intervention strategies will help ensure GCP success at landscape scale will make a lasting contribution to biodiversity conservation, sustainable natural resources management, and livelihood improvement in Africa.

Sustainability

To address socio-economic and financial sustainability, each AWF Heartland forms a sizeable economic unit in which tourism and other natural resource-based activities contribute significantly to local livelihoods. Because of the importance of poverty and livelihood vulnerability as an underlying driver of threats to conservation in Africa, AWF is committed to integrating socio-economic parameters into its strategies, and particularly into our work on land, enterprise and capacity, while our applied species research often addresses human-wildlife conflicts. To promote financial sustainability in Zambezi, AWF worked with each stakeholder group to ensure its financial objectives were reasonable and realized. AWF also worked with the private sector and their community partners to ensure fair and lasting income benefits from conservation enterprise deals. AWF worked with government partners through its policy work to ensure that land use planning and zoning takes account of government fiscal regimes. And lastly, since its founding and throughout the GCP program, AWF contributed to the development of African leadership in conservation as well as capacity for conservation management at field level. In Zambezi, AWF worked with community leaders to improve the skills needed to manage land and promote conservation enterprises.

Measures of success

In order to measure results under GCP, AWF utilized its PIMA monitoring and evaluation system, which monitors key indicators at site, cross-site and organizational (pan-African) levels. PIMA feeds into an ongoing

process of lesson learning and program adaptation at activity, landscape, national, region and continental level, with best practice also fed into global policy processes. Impact in GCP-supported sites was measured according to four strategic areas: land and habitat protection, species conservation and reduction of threats to biodiversity targets, human livelihood measures such as economic returns from conservation enterprises, and capacity building and conservation leadership impacts. Using annual results from its performance assessment tool, the program worked to adaptively design and adjust interventions to ensure delivery of landscape level conservation impact, and livelihood improvement. In order to continually improve this system, we engaged other conservation organizations and partners in developing status measures for biodiversity targets, as well as socioeconomic indicators.

Value of the GCP program

The Global Conservation Program was instrumental in supporting African Wildlife Foundation to develop and apply its Heartland Conservation approach to 4 priority biodiversity landscapes in Africa, one of which was the Zambezi Heartland. The financial and programmatic support from GCP enabled AWF to implement tangible conservation actions on the ground, along with developing and refining the practice of landscape-scale conservation. The intellectual exchange between USAID and GCP partners were fundamental in improving the practice of global biodiversity conservation, while leading to lasting conservation and sustainable development impacts at site-level well into the future. Program goals and conservation objectives in AWF’s Zambezi Heartland were achieved with the invaluable support from USAID’s GCP.

Additional Information:

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