

## Moza community's hunting revenue-powered development



**Emmanuel Koro, Jan 30 2021**

<https://www.chronicle.co.zw/moza-communitys-hunting-revenue-powered-development/>

Wildlife hunting is increasingly becoming the main “driver” for not only socio-economic development but also for wildlife and wildlife habitat conservation in southern African communities that co-exist with wildlife.

When a group of Sadc journalists went on a study tour to Mozambique’s Tete Province-based Tchuma Tchato Community in 1999, they saw a community that lacked almost all the basic needs. A very poor community, where only the fishes and waters of the Zambezi River were seemingly the main sources of their livelihoods. Local residents could be seen fishing, using canoes and engine-powered old boats.

They did not fear the monstrous-sized crocodiles that are a common sight in that part of the mighty Zambezi River, about 600 kilometres away from the point it empties itself downstream into the Indian Ocean. The few crops they grew continued to be destroyed by wildlife such as hippos and elephants.

Back then the visiting Sadc journalists were told that wildlife hunting had recently been started in the area. Part of the revenue generated from it was going to improve people’s livelihoods, including creating jobs. It was very difficult for most of the journalists to imagine that hunting could ever bring revenue to meet the missing basic development needs for the local residents.

Twenty-two years later, hunting has stunningly brought roads to the Tchuma Tchato Hunting Community that was almost inaccessible using an ordinary vehicle. Without a school, 22 years ago, Tchuma Tchato Community's Bawa Village now has a hunting revenue built primary school. Tchuma Tchato Community only has one secondary school in Zumbo Village. Another secondary school is urgently needed in the far away Chintopho Village, where hunting revenue would be used to construct it.

Unlike before when the Tchuma Tchato hunting communities fetched water from the banks of the crocodile and hippo-populated Zambezi River, risking life and limb; today they are fetching it from hunting revenue drilled boreholes.

"Using money from hunting we have built a community school, drilled community boreholes and bought maize grinding mills," said the Tchumatchato Community chairman, Mr Clemente Shumba. "We are enjoying the hunting benefits that have taught us to value and conserve wildlife and its habitat."

Wildlife that is hunted there include elephant, leopard, buffalo, fish, lion, hippo, warthog and crocodile. Tchuma Tchato is literally translated into English as "our wealth". Wildlife revenue is the only significant source of wealth for the Community.

Safaris De Moçambique LDA Operations Manager, Mr Justin Rodger, said that the Tchuma Tchato Community's Tete Province-based hunting area boasts of having Tete's biggest elephant population.

The Safaris De Moçambique LDA owner, Mr Simon Rodger said in an interview that their company has drilled 18 boreholes in the area, for both the community and wildlife.

"The company maintains all roads, including community roads as well as using these as a tool for fire management," said Mr Rodger. "Meat from hunting is distributed fairly to communities. Through conservation committee or gestao."

The company also holds conservation education courses for the local children. They recently donated sewing machines and motorbikes to the community as part of their social responsibility to help create self-employment.

Safaris De Moçambique LDA also helps repair the Community's' maize grinding mills, bicycles, donkey carts and motorbikes.

"We employ a full time anti-poaching unit, at the moment we have 25 game scouts on the ground who are working together with the local Tchuma Tchato authorities, local government and communities to protect wildlife and stop illegal wildlife crime," said Mr Rodger.

The Safaris De Moçambique LDA also attends problem animal cases as a way of solving human-wildlife conflict.

"We also provide a free emergency medical transport service to anyone who requires transportation to clinics or for medical emergencies," he said.

“We contribute more than 50 percent of revenue to the government from hunting in Tete Province,” said Mr Rodger. “The community received US\$50 000 for the 2019 hunting season — the largest ever pay-out from the government (33 percent of total annual hunting revenue) since the formation of the Tchuma Tchato programme. This money is used by the conservation committee for various democratically approved community projects such as schools, clinics, transport, agriculture etc.”

The Tchuma Tchato Community is situated in a beautiful part of the mid-Zambezi valley where Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique share the same borders in the Kanyemba area, north of Zimbabwe.

The three countries are naturally separated by the Zambezi River and Luangwa River between Mozambique and Zambia. The locals have already given the area an acronym that represents the three countries’ names, ZIMOZA.

The wildlife hunting socio-economic benefits from the Zambezi region can also be traced in the nearby CAMPFIRE community of Masoka in Zimbabwe, where the flagship hunting revenue built Masoka School has produced medical doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, doctors and accountants.

From across the Luangwa River that separates the Tchuma Tchato Community with the neighbouring Zambian communities of Luangwa comes a successful elephant conservation success story. Before hunting benefits, poaching reduced South Luangwa’s elephant population from 90 000 in 1975 to about 1 000 by 1988. But hunting benefits later turned out to be a magic elephant conservation “bullet” that “shot” down poaching and increased the elephant population to 15 750, according Zambia’s great elephant census of 2014-2015.

Meanwhile, it seems the potential of the Tchuma Tchato Community hunting benefits have attracted the attention of the Mozambican Government.

“Plans are underway to build an international airport near Zumbo Village on the Mozambican side of the ZIMOZA transfrontier area,” said Safaris De Moçambique LDA Operations Manager, Mr Justin Rodger. “This would make tourist travel to the Tchuma Tchato hunting community much easier and faster.”

Emmanuel Koro is a Johannesburg-based international award-winning environmental journalist who writes independently on environment and development issues in Africa.