Chains in SADC TFCAs Peer-to-Peer Learning Exchange: Wildlife Based Enterprise Value

Report

Outcomes and Lessons Learned

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Venue: Southern African Wildlife College – Great Limpopo TFCA, Limpopo, South Africa

1. Introduction

Wildlife-based enterprises (WBEs) are key critical drivers of conservation and sustainable development within Southern African Development Community (SADC) Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs). However, developing resilient and equitable value chains for wildlife products faces significant challenges, from governance and market access to community engagement. This report summarizes the outcomes and lessons learned of a peer-to-peer learning exchange designed to explore these challenges and opportunities. It documents the evolving perceptions of participants ranging from government officials to community representatives before and after being exposed to successful models in game ranching, tanning, bioprospecting, and wildlife-positive enterprises. The findings highlight a marked shift in understanding, particularly towards the importance of value addition and processing, and provide critical insights into the capacity building and collaborative strategies needed to strengthen WBE value chains across the region.

2. Methodology

This short/summary report is based on a pre- and post-exchange survey designed to capture shifts in participant perceptions. The methodology consisted of three core phases:

I. **Pre-Exchange Baseline -** Participants were first asked to complete a survey to establish a baseline of their knowledge and perceptions regarding WBE value chains in SADC TFCAs.

II. **Immersive Learning Programme -** Participants were then engaged in a structured programme including:

   - A one-day overview featuring discussions and presentations on various WBE projects and business models.

- A three-day field exposure to real-world enterprises categorized as:
    - **Game Ranching:** Operations demonstrating multiple income streams (e.g., trophy
    - hunting, game meat, ecotourism, skin tanning).
    - **Bioprospecting/BioTrade:** Enterprises focused on the sustainable harvesting and processing of natural products (e.g., baobab, aloe) for local and international markets.
    - **Wildlife Positive Enterprise:** Models such as Herding for Health (H4H).

III. **Post-Exchange Assessment:** Following a half-day workshop to synthesize lessons learned, participants completed a second survey with identical questions to the pre-exchange survey. This allowed for the observation of changes in perspective and the identification of key learning outcomes from the programme.

3. Outcomes/Results

3.1 Demographics

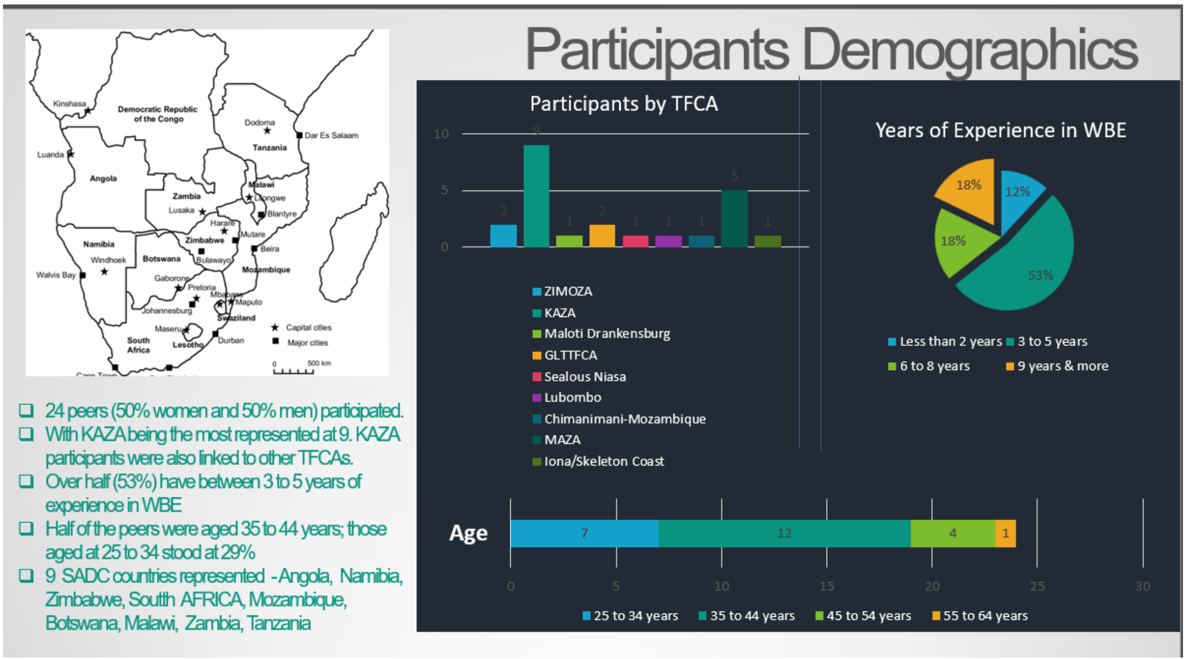


Figure 1: *Demographic profile of peers at the wildlife-based economy peer-to-peer learning exchange for SADC TFCAs*

3.2 Industry/Sector Peers Exposed to:

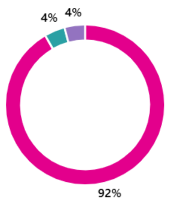
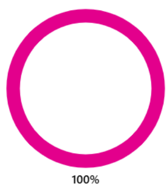
- **Game Ranching** – multiple streams of income (e.g. skin tanning, museums, hunting, game meat, biltong, sheep keeping, lodging, eco-tourism,

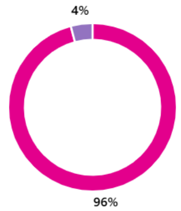
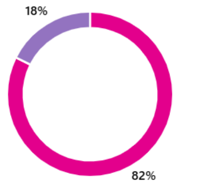
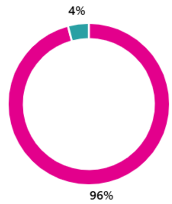
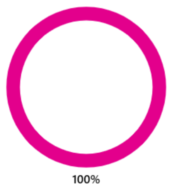
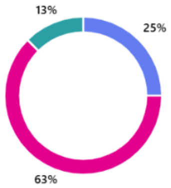
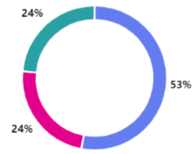
- **Bioprospecting/BioTrade** – fruit picking (baobab)/harvesting (aloe) – oil, powder, capsules etc.; making (manufacturing/processing); packaging and branding, and local and international markets (e.g. EU),
- **Nature Positive Enterprises and Community Development** – Herding 4 Health, Climate-Smart Agriculture and sustainable financing mechanisms in communities (i.e., eco-savings groups)

3.3 Pre and Post Learning Exchange Perceptions of peers on wildlife-based enterprises value chains in SADC TFCAs.

The table compares pre and post perceptions of peer-to-peer learning exchange. In the pre survey the change Potential value chains in TFCAs could be categorised into two Products and services. Products include the actual use of *wildlife resources. e.g. essential oils; hides, skins-leather, trophy hunting, meat, medicinal plants. While services included* eco-tourism, bee keeping, crafts, millet, fish and farming. Pre the exchange, services were the most listed by peers. For instance, Tourism occurred 7 times in the pre survey and 3 times in the post survey. Also, while value addition for wildlife resources, was significant with over 45% of the mentions in the pre-survey, 62.5% of the participants believed processing and value addition has considerable viability in as part of SADC WBE value chains in the TFCAs.

Table 1: Pre-and-Post Learning Exchange Perceptions of peers (N =24) on wildlife-based enterprises value chains in SADC TFCAs

Theme	Products	Before	After
Key Potential Value Chains	Several mentioned by all groups: **Cat 1**: *Products from consumptive use of wildlife resources. e.g. essential oils; hides, skins-leather, trophy hunting,* **Cat. 2:** *Non-consumptive use/wildlife friendly enterprises* -e.g. Eco-tourism, bee keeping, crafts, millet; fish farming	• Peers also mentioned themes like "Community work, education and support" but did not indicate/elaborate how these could be a key component of the value chains. These could include products like wildlife training schools/colleges/universities/consultants, short courses/diplomas. • Tourism (including eco and culture tourism) mentioned 7 times while honey (bee keeping) 4 times. • High focus or interest on moving up the value chain through processing. E.g. marula oil. Processing and value addition (including NTFPs, skins etc.) sub theme, was mentioned 11 times	• **Cat 1**: Tourism was mentioned only 3 times. • Processing and value addition sub theme, was mentioned 15 times in the post survey
Characteristic of a Sustainable Game Value Chains	**Science-based quotas ensure sustainable benefits for communities** Focus/prioritize international markets Low community participation in harvesting		

Challenges to bioprospecting value chains in TFCAs	Limited processing facilities and market access Lack of community interest in products		
Governance for successful value chains in TFCAs	**Harmonized cross-border policies improve value chain efficiency** Policies should prioritize private sector control		
Sustainability issue threatening wildlife-based value chains in TFCAs	Equitable benefit sharing across all stakeholders Unequal benefit distribution favouring certain groups Environmental impact from tourism		
Partnership strategy & TFCA value chains	• All peers believed pre and post the exchange that "building networks among communities, private sector, NGOs, and governments" is key to the success of WBE value chains. • None of the participant both pre a nd post believe that "Limiting the role of NGOs in the wildlife economy"; "prioritize private sector"; and "limiting government involvement" can help sustian WBE value chains in TFCAs		
Major challenge in game value chains	• Balancing conservation with community benefits • Excessive regulatory compliance		

Regarding Partnership strategy & TFCA value chains. All peers believed pre and post the exchange that "building networks among communities, private sector, NGOs, and governments" is key to the success of WBE value chains. Also, • None of the participant both pre and post believe that "Limiting the role of NGOs in the wildlife economy"; "prioritize private sector"; and "limiting government involvement" can help sustain WBE value chains in TFCAs. On challenges to bioprospecting value chains in TFCAs, pre survey results show that only 4% agreed that "limited processing facilities and market access" while past results show 18% whereas the pre and post result show that lack of community interest in [wildlife] products is seen as a major barrier by participants.

Observed changes in perception are likely influenced by the engagement and field visits with more exposure to the real-world examples. These insights point to a collective maturation in thinking, where the exchange not only clarified priorities but also highlighted interdependencies, for instance, how poor governance could amplify sustainability threats, or how effective partnerships might mitigate challenges in bioprospecting.

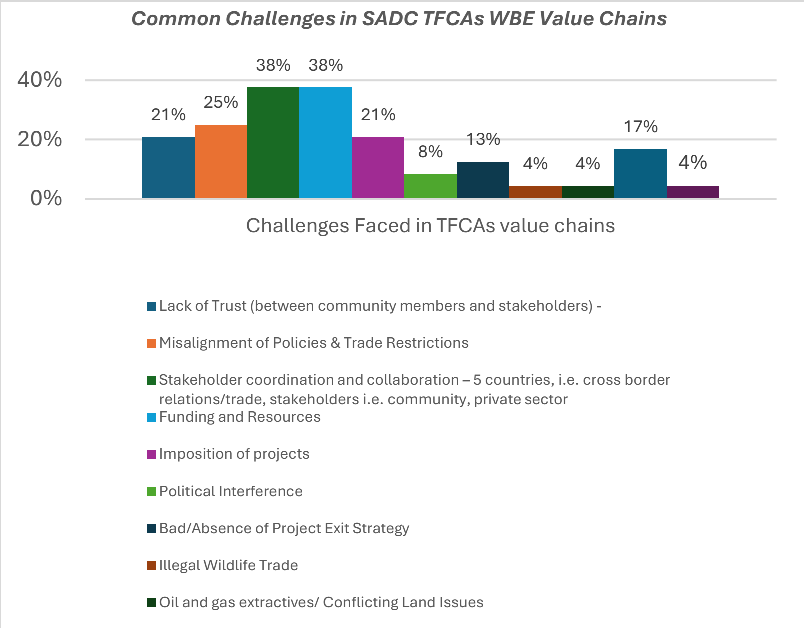
3.4 Capacity Building and Research Needs

Table 2: Capacity Building and Research Needs to support wildlife-based enterprises value chains in SADC TFCAs

Participants Voices	Skills Needs
1. Identify entrepreneurship opportunities.	Enterprise Opportunity Development skills
2. Best practises of creating value chains for wildlife products.	Value addition and value chain analysis
3. Grow and sustain community tourism business	Leadership Community tourism governance
4. To copy some of value chains that are not happening back home and implement them home for the betterment of communities adjacent to Malawi's protected areas	Benchmarking - TFCAs and WBE enterprises
5. Improve knowledge of Linking Value Chain to market access,	Market Access and Value Chain Development
6. Policy alignment	Policy Analysis/Review
7. Value chain networks. Innovative ideas on making community projects sustainable	Community Business Modelling
8. Sustainable financing mechanism at programmatic level and enterprises level	Sustainable Finance for Community Projects

3.5 Common Challenges in SADC TFCAs WBE Value Chains

Theme	Number of Mentions	%
1. Lack of Trust (between community members and stakeholders) -	5	20.8%
2. Misalignment of Policies & Trade Restrictions	6	25%
3. Stakeholder coordination and collaboration – 5 countries, i.e. cross border relations/trade, stakeholders i.e. community, private sector,	9	37.5%
4. Funding and Resources	9	37.5%
5. Imposition of projects	5	20.8%
6. Political Interference	2	08.3%
7. Bad/Absence of Project Exit Strategy	3	12.5%
8. Illegal Wildlife Trade	1	4.17%
9. Oil and gas extractives/ Conflicting Land Issues	1	4.17%
10. No/Lack of Facilities for Processing and Markets	4	16.67%
11. Human wildlife conflict	1	4.17%



The chart lists challenges on the left and represents their prevalence or significance with percentages on the right. The percentages likely represent the proportion of respondents who identified that issue as a major challenge.

The challenges can be grouped by their prevalence:

Tier 1: The Most Critical Challenges (Highest Mentions)
#3. Stakeholder coordination and collaboration (37.5%, 9 mentions)
#4. Funding and Resources (37.5%, 9 mentions)
Analysis: These are the two most frequently cited obstacles. This reveals a critical dual problem: even if you can perfectly coordinate WBE activities or different countries, private sectors, and communities (the coordination challenge), you might still fail due to no money to implement plans (the resources challenge).

Tier 2: Significant Structural & Governance Challenges

- #2. Misalignment of Policies & Trade Restrictions (25%, 6 mentions)
- #1. Lack of Trust (20.8%, 5 mentions)
- #5. Imposition of projects (20.8%, 5 mentions)

Analysis: This trio of issues forms the core structural and human-relationship barriers. Policy Misalignment is the technical, legal hurdle of operating across borders. Lack of Trust and Imposition of projects are the social and procedural hurdles. They are deeply connected; projects imposed from the top-down without community input actively destroy trust and ensure failure.

Tier 3: Important Implementation & Contextual Challenges

- #10. No/Lack of Facilities for Processing and Markets (16.67%, 4 mentions) - NEW
- #7. Bad/Absence of Project Exit Strategy (12.5%, 3 mentions)
- #6. Political Interference (8.3%, 2 mentions)

Analysis: This tier highlights specific operational failures. The theme, **Lack of Facilities**, is crucial. It points to a direct bottleneck in the value chain. Communities can produce goods (e.g., crafts, raw materials) but have nowhere to process, package, or sell them at a large scale, preventing economic growth. The **lack of an exit strategy** shows a short-term project mindset, dooming initiatives to collapse once external funders leave. **Political interference** remains a disruptive force.

Tier 4: Context-Specific Threats (Lower Mentions, High Impact)

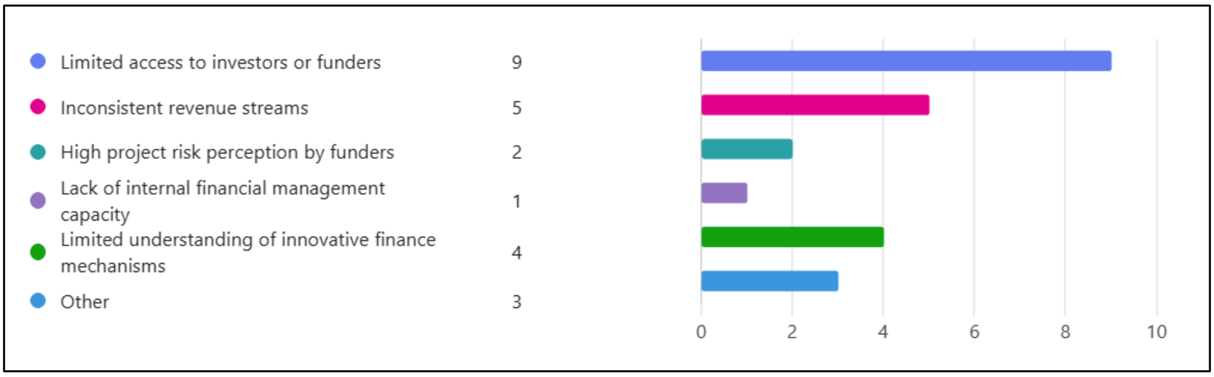
- #8. Illegal Wildlife Trade (4.17%, 1 mention)
- #9. Oil and gas extractives/Conflicting Land Issues (4.17%, 1 mention)
- #11. Human wildlife conflict (4.17%, 1 mention) -

Analysis: While mentioned less frequently, these are not minor issues. They are potentially catastrophic "wild cards." **Human-Wildlife Conflict** is a critical a addition. It is a fundamental daily challenge for communities living near wildlife. If not managed, it destroys local support for conservation efforts, as wildlife is seen as a threat to livelihoods and safety, not a benefit.
Illegal Trade undermines conservation goals and support for responsible WBE enterprises.
Competing Land Use (like oil/gas) due to their promise on high income, jobs and economic growth presents an WBE existential threat, where conservation land can be reallocated for extraction.

Key Conclusions and Implications

The top challenges remain governance and resources. The biggest barriers are human and systemic, not environmental. The value chain bottleneck is explicit with the mention of "no/lack of facilities for processing and markets" emerging as a vital insight. it moves the problem beyond planning and into practical economics. Solving this requires targeted investment in infrastructure and market access. The human-wildlife conflict is critical; its mention, even once, is significant.t highlights that for value chains to work, the negative impacts of wildlife on communities must be addressed and compensated for. This is a key to gaining community trust and support. Solutions must address all tiers in some instances simultaneously, i.e. top-down - policy alignment, securing large-scale funding; bottom-up - building trust, co-creating projects, solving human-wildlife conflict, building local facilities, and cross-border - improving coordination mechanisms between all stakeholders.

3.6 Financial Constraints in WBE value chains/projects in SADCTFCAs



This list describes a classic "financing gap" faced by many conservation-oriented enterprises. The projects are often too risky or small for traditional commercial investors, yet they need to be professionally managed to attract any form of investment. This creates a significant barrier to scaling up WBE value chains.

3.6.1 Breakdown of Financial Constraints

1. External Funding Challenges (The Investor & Funder Problem)

These constraints are related to the external environment and how potential funders view these projects. Projects simply do not know where to find the right kind of money. Traditional business investors do not understand conservation, while large conservation donors are difficult to locate or access. There is a missing "matchmaking" link. Also, investors and donors see these projects as inherently risky. This risk is likely due to linked to political instability or cross-border bureaucracy; reliance on tourism, which is vulnerable to shocks (e.g., pandemics, economic downturns); human-Wildlife Conflict threatening assets; and lack of a proven track record.

2. Internal Operational Challenges (The Business Model Problem)

These constraints are related to the internal functioning and financial health of the projects themselves. The income is unreliable and seasonal (e.g., dependent on tourist or hunting seasons, rainfall for wildlife). This makes it impossible to plan for the long term, pay regular salaries, or fund maintenance, scaring away investors who want predictable returns. Lack of internal financial management capacity. Projects also are said to lack the skills to manage the business properly. This includes budgeting, accounting, financial reporting, and auditing. Poor management leads to wasted funds and a loss of credibility for future funding.

3. Knowledge & Innovation Gap (The Awareness Problem)

This constraint is about a lack of awareness of modern financial tools. Limited understanding of innovative finance mechanisms. Projects are more likely to be aware of traditional grants or loans. They are not using or aware of more modern tools like blended Finance (using donor funds to attract private investment); impact Investing (investments seeking a social/environmental return alongside a financial return); green bonds (raising debt for specific environmental projects); and payment for ecosystem services (PES) (getting paid for the natural benefits the area provides (e.g., clean water, carbon sequestration).