

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION FOR WILDLIFE AND COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE



December 2021

Message from the Chief Executive Officer



I would like to express my sincere appreciation to our board members, organizational members, supporters, and partners who have continued to offer their unwavering support throughout the year. Your contributions have been instrumental in helping ECOWICE successfully implement its activities and move closer to achieving our long-term vision.

In 2021, we made significant strides toward fulfilling our 2020–2024 strategic objective of strengthening the organization’s internal and external operational capacity. The progress we’ve made this year is both promising and encouraging, laying a strong foundation for even greater achievements in the coming year.

Our key focus this year was on promoting coexistence between communities living adjacent to Mikumi National Park and elephants, addressing ongoing challenges of human–wildlife conflict. Additionally, we expanded our scope by integrating environmental education into our core activities to foster conservation awareness among youth and local communities.

This year’s report highlights our efforts and achievements in the areas of species conservation, economic empowerment, conservation education, and habitat protection. We are particularly proud to have:

- Strengthened existing partnerships and secured three new collaborative partners;
- Created additional technical learning opportunities;
- Increased our workforce capacity by recruiting more volunteers;
- Enhanced our financial management systems for greater transparency and accountability.

As we look ahead to 2022, I call upon all staff, board members, partners, and stakeholders to deepen their engagement and support. With continued collaboration and commitment, I am confident that we will surpass the milestones of this year and deliver even greater impact in our communities and conservation efforts.

Let us remain united in our mission and move forward with purpose.

Felician Ezekiel
Chief Executive Officer

Background

Environmental Conservation for Wildlife and Community Enterprise (ECOWICE) is a non-governmental organization based in Tanzania, dedicated to enhancing biodiversity conservation through community empowerment. Since its establishment in 2014, ECOWICE has implemented a range of projects that integrate environmental conservation with food security and income generation for communities living adjacent to protected areas.

The organization promotes environmentally friendly income-generating activities as a strategy to reduce pressure on natural ecosystems while improving rural livelihoods. Each year, ECOWICE implements activities aligned with its strategic objectives, ensuring that its work remains focused, impactful, and community-driven.

In 2021, ECOWICE focused its efforts on the following key strategic objectives:

1. To increase the number of community-based support and conservation projects
2. To improve institutional capacity
3. To increase market access for community products
4. To expand partnerships and collaboration

IMPLEMENTED ACTIVITIES ON 2021

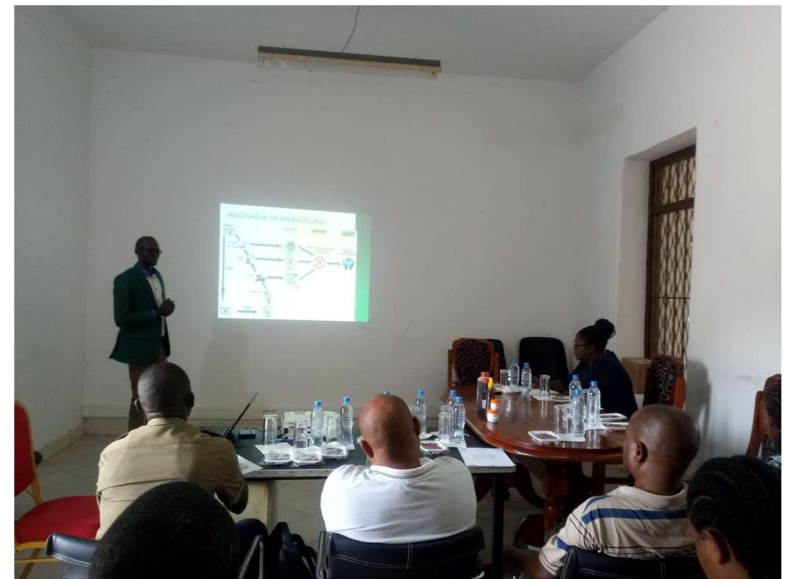
Stakeholder Engagement: Advancing Food Security, Livelihoods, and Human-Wildlife Coexistence

Stakeholder engagement remains central to our mission of promoting food security, supporting community livelihoods, and fostering peaceful coexistence between people and wildlife. In 2021, we successfully organized four stakeholder meetings and one village assembly, providing platforms for inclusive dialogue, strategic planning, and coordinated action.

A major milestone was a high-level management meeting involving key conservation and government partners: Mikumi National Park, the Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA), the Regional Game Officer for Morogoro, and the District Game Officer of Mvomero District Council.

This meeting was instrumental in shaping joint strategies to address persistent human-elephant conflict, a major challenge undermining both food production and household income in villages bordering Mikumi National Park. By working together, stakeholders identified actionable solutions aimed at protecting staple crops, reducing economic losses for farmers, and improving safety for local communities.

These collaborative efforts are a vital step toward securing sustainable livelihoods, enhancing community resilience, and achieving long-term food and income security in wildlife-affected areas.



Fundraising Event: Quiz Night for Conservation

To sustain and expand its conservation efforts, ECOWICE relies on diverse and reliable sources of funding. This year, we hosted a vibrant fundraising event, a Quiz Night, designed to raise support for our ongoing conservation initiatives around Mikumi National Park.

Held at Dragonnaires Hotel, the event brought together local supporters for an evening of fun, learning, and community spirit. To maximize participation and inclusivity, the event was also streamed virtually, with the link shared globally to engage our wider network of friends, donors, and conservation enthusiasts.

The event not only helped raise essential funds, but also strengthened awareness of human-wildlife conflict challenges and the urgent need to support grassroots solutions. Through creative engagement and global outreach, we continue to build a strong foundation for impactful, community-driven conservation work.



Support for Sesame Farming: A Sustainable Solution to Human-Elephant Conflict

As part of our commitment to promoting sustainable livelihoods and reducing human-elephant conflict, ECOWICE supported 60 smallholder farmers in adopting sesame cultivation, a crop known for being less susceptible to elephant raids.

Each farmer received high-yielding, improved sesame seeds, and cultivated an average of one hectare using minimal tillage techniques to promote soil conservation and long-term land health.

This initiative not only enhances food and income security for farming households but also contributes to conflict mitigation, by shifting agricultural practices toward crops that naturally deter elephants, protecting both harvests and wildlife.



Training on Organic Pesticide Production: Promoting Eco-Friendly Farming

To promote environmentally sustainable agriculture, ECOWICE conducted a hands-on training for 60 farmers on the production and use of organic pesticides made from locally available plant materials found in nearby forests and farms.

The training focused on practical, low-cost techniques for preparing natural pest repellents using ingredients such as neem leaves, chili peppers, garlic, and other indigenous plants known for their pest-deterrent properties. Farmers learned how to identify suitable plants, extract active compounds, mix effective solutions, and apply them safely to protect their crops.

This initiative empowered farmers with the knowledge and skills to reduce dependency on costly and harmful chemical pesticides, thus preserving soil health, safeguarding biodiversity, and protecting water sources. By using organic methods, farmers are not only protecting their crops but also contributing to a healthier ecosystem and more resilient farming systems.

The training was part of a broader effort to integrate climate-smart and conservation-friendly practices into local agriculture, ensuring that crop protection goes hand-in-hand with environmental stewardship.



Support for Community Conservation Banking (COCOBA): Strengthening Financial Resilience

As part of its integrated approach to conservation and community development, ECOWICE supported the establishment of a Community Conservation Bank (COCOBA) for 15 farmers living in villages adjacent to Mikumi National Park.

This initiative aims to enhance financial resilience, promote self-reliance, and provide a secure mechanism for savings and access to small loans, especially critical for rural communities vulnerable to economic shocks caused by wildlife-related crop loss or climate variability.

To kick-start the COCOBA model, ECOWICE provided the group with:

- A secure savings box to store group funds
- Record-keeping materials, including sharebooks, loan ledgers, and a group constitution book
- Training sessions on savings principles, internal lending procedures, interest calculation, and governance

Guidance on how the COCOBA model can be linked to conservation goals, such as funding elephant deterrent strategies or investing in alternative livelihoods that reduce pressure on protected areas.

The initiative not only supports economic empowerment, but also strengthens collective responsibility, as members work together to achieve financial stability while supporting conservation efforts. The group has already begun saving and issuing small loans, with plans to expand membership and reinvest in eco-friendly income-generating activities.

By linking community finance with conservation, the COCOBA model offers a sustainable, people-centered solution for improving livelihoods while safeguarding the environment.



Harvesting and Market Support for Sesame Farmers: Boosting Income Through Fair Trade

As part of our ongoing efforts to promote sustainable agriculture and improve rural livelihoods, ECOWICE provided critical post-harvest and marketing support to 48 sesame farmers in the communities surrounding Mikumi National Park.

Following a successful growing season, ECOWICE facilitated the purchase and aggregation of 1,210 kilograms of sesame seeds directly from the farmers. To ensure fair compensation and incentivize continued cultivation of elephant-resistant crops, the sesame was purchased at Tshs 2,000 per kilogram, a significant increase of Tshs 900 from the previous year's average market price.

This price boost not only reflected improved market access but also represented a major step forward in increasing farmers' income, reducing exploitation by middlemen, and building confidence in sesame as a viable, conservation-friendly crop.

Through this intervention, ECOWICE is helping to build a more reliable and rewarding value chain for sesame, while also strengthening food and income security in communities affected by human-wildlife conflict.



Strengthening Village Natural Resource Committees: Building Foundations for Sustainable Forest Management

Recognizing the vital role of community-based governance in forest conservation, ECOWICE carried out an in-depth assessment of the Village Natural Resource Committee (VNRC) in partner communities. This evaluation was aimed at identifying gaps and opportunities for strengthening the committee's capacity to effectively manage local forest resources.

The assessment revealed several key challenges, including:

1. Weak management and leadership skills
2. Gender imbalance, with limited representation of women in decision-making roles
3. Concerns around transparency and corruption
4. Lack of clear structure and accountability in committee operations

These findings highlighted the urgent need for capacity-building, institutional reform, and inclusive participation in natural resource governance. ECOWICE is now developing a targeted intervention plan that includes training programs, gender mainstreaming strategies, and tools for improved transparency and accountability.

By improving the performance and credibility of the VNRC, we



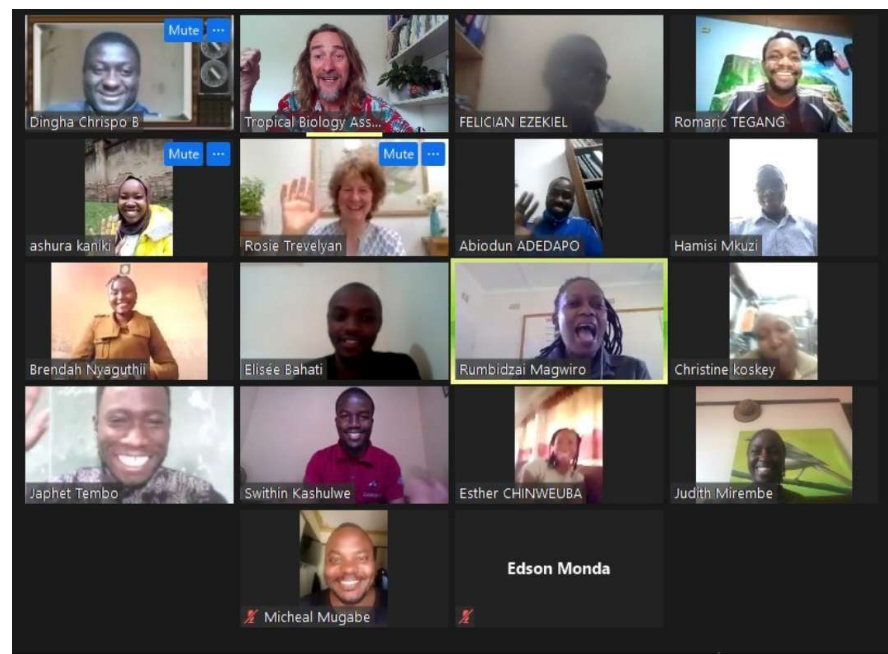
Capacity Building: Investing in Leadership and Organizational Growth

In our continued commitment to strengthening organizational capacity and enhancing project impact, ECOWICE invested in key staff training and leadership development during the year.

Our Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Felician Ezekiel, was selected to participate in an intensive Project Design and Management training organized by the Tropical Biology Association (TBA). This prestigious six-week program brought together 30 emerging conservation leaders from across Africa, providing a collaborative space to build skills in project planning, monitoring and evaluation, stakeholder engagement, and sustainable impact strategies.

In addition, other ECOWICE staff members took part in online training sessions facilitated by the Convention on Biological Diversity through its “Learning for Nature” platform. These courses focused on conservation finance, biodiversity integration, and nature-based solutions, equipping the team with practical knowledge to advance ECOWICE's mission at both local and national levels.

These capacity-building efforts are helping to ensure that ECOWICE remains a technically strong, adaptive, and visionary organization—ready to deliver innovative solutions to conservation and community development challenges.



Conservation Education at Mkata Primary School: Inspiring the Next Generation of Environmental Stewards

One of ECOWICE's core goals is to nurture future conservationists, especially among children living near protected areas who are most directly connected to wildlife and natural ecosystems. In line with this vision, ECOWICE launched a Conservation Education Program at Mkata Primary School, located near Mikumi National Park.

The program operates under a vibrant green club known as the SAVE WILD Club, which engages students in hands-on conservation activities that foster a strong connection with nature. Key activities conducted throughout the year included:

- Tree planting around the school and nearby community spaces
- Environmental cleanup campaigns
- Wildlife-themed games and creative learning sessions
- Education on animal behavior, habitats, and conservation ethics
- An exciting field trip to Mikumi National Park, where students observed wildlife firsthand and learned about park conservation efforts



Expanding Strategic Partnerships: Strengthening Our Global Network

This year, ECOWICE successfully expanded its network of strategic partnerships by joining two respected international organizations:

- Society for Ecological Restoration (SER)
- Global Waste Cleaning Network (GWCN)

These partnerships provide valuable technical support, opportunities for global networking, and access to professional membership platforms that enhance our organizational capacity and visibility.

Through these new affiliations, ECOWICE is better positioned to exchange knowledge with global conservation practitioners, participate in capacity-building initiatives, and align its programs with international best practices in ecosystem restoration and sustainable waste management.

Strengthening such partnerships is a key part of ECOWICE's strategy to leverage global expertise while maintaining a strong focus on local impact.

Growing Our Team in 2021: Expanding Capacity Through Volunteer Engagement

In 2021, ECOWICE made significant strides in strengthening its internal capacity by recruiting three skilled volunteers to support the organization's expanding programs. These volunteers contributed their expertise in key operational areas, including:

- Financial management
- Project planning and implementation

Their involvement played an important role in improving organizational efficiency and ensuring the successful delivery of community-based conservation initiatives throughout the year.

By engaging passionate and capable individuals, ECOWICE continues to invest in a resilient and adaptive team structure that supports both short-term project needs and long-term institutional growth.

Opening of Sales Center in Morogoro Municipality: Expanding Market Access and Visibility

In 2021, ECOWICE successfully launched a new sales center located along SUA Road in Morogoro Municipality. This strategic initiative aims to strengthen the organization's ability to:

- Increase product sales from community-based enterprises
- Ensure timely and efficient delivery of goods to customers
- Promote and showcase locally made, eco-friendly products

The sales center serves as a vital hub for connecting conservation-linked products, such as honey, tree seedlings, and crafts, with urban markets. It also provides an opportunity to raise awareness about ECOWICE's work and the importance of sustainable livelihoods that support both people and nature.

This milestone marks a significant step toward building a self-sustaining conservation model that not only supports community income generation but also reinforces environmental stewardship.



Challenges

While ECOWICE achieved several milestones in 2021, the organization also faced a number of **challenges** that impacted the pace and scope of implementation across its programs. These challenges are outlined below:

1. Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The global COVID-19 pandemic continued to present significant setbacks. One of the major impacts was the disruption of volunteer engagement, particularly international support. The organization had planned to host three international volunteers, whose roles were intended to enhance project delivery and capacity building. Unfortunately, due to the resurgence of COVID-19 cases, all three volunteers cancelled or postponed their placements, limiting the organization's manpower and cross-cultural exchange opportunities.

2. Limited Financial Resources

Despite a modest increase in funding sources during the year, financial performance remained below the level needed to support full implementation of planned activities. Several initiatives were scaled down or delayed due to **budget constraints**, underscoring the ongoing need to diversify income streams and attract sustainable funding.

Way Forward

In response to the challenges encountered, ECOWICE has outlined the following strategic priorities for 2022 to enhance impact and improve organizational capacity:

- Increase the number of innovative, community-driven projects to address conservation and livelihood challenges more effectively.
- Expand partnerships and collaborations with local, national, and international organizations to strengthen technical support and resource mobilization.
- Improve transport facilities by acquiring additional vehicles or motorbikes suitable for both administrative and field operations.
- Recruit more full-time staff to enhance program implementation and support organizational growth.
- Diversify and increase funding sources, including grant applications, social enterprise development, and donor outreach, to ensure long-term financial sustainability.