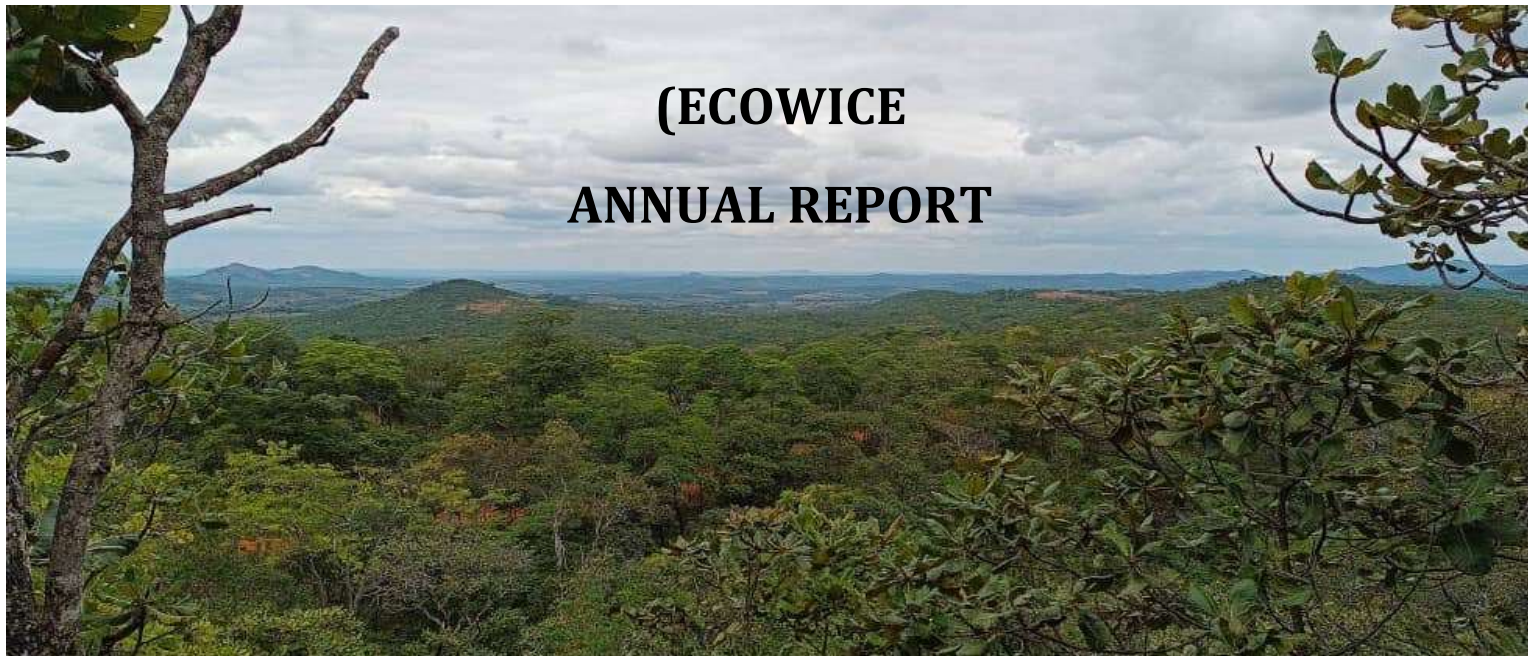


ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION FOR WILDLIFE AND COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE



(ECOWICE ANNUAL REPORT

December 2022

Statement from the chief executive officer



Dear Friends, Partners, and Supporters,

It is with great pride and gratitude that I present ECOWICE's 2022 Annual Report. Over the past year, our organization has continued to strengthen the resilience of communities living alongside Tanzania's precious wildlife, while promoting sustainable livelihoods, environmental education, and conservation initiatives.

Despite challenges such as human-elephant conflict, limited resources, and logistical constraints, our dedicated staff, volunteers, and community partners have made remarkable progress. From expanding beehive fences to protect farmlands, supporting elephant-resistant crops like sesame, and engaging hundreds of children in hands-on environmental education, our programs have not only improved food security and incomes but also fostered a deeper connection between communities and their natural environment.

This year has also been transformative in building institutional capacity. Through strategic partnerships with local and international organizations, the establishment of Village Natural Resource Committees, and the engagement of volunteers from Germany, ECOWICE has strengthened both our operational efficiency and technical expertise.

Looking ahead to 2023, we are excited to expand our projects, increase community participation, improve staff capacity, and enhance sustainability through social enterprise and carbon market initiatives. Our commitment remains unwavering: to empower communities, protect wildlife, and create lasting positive impact for both people and nature.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to our partners, donors, staff, volunteers, and community members for their continued support. Together, we are building a future where humans and wildlife coexist in harmony.

With gratitude and commitment,

Felician Ezekiel Chemihanda

1. Background

Environmental Conservation for Wildlife and Community Enterprise (ECOWICE) is an organization that aims to increase income and food security for biodiversity conservation in Tanzania. The organization promotes environmentally friendly income-generating activities that also provide food security to community adjacent protected areas. Since its establishment in 2014, the organization has been involved in various projects to attain its goals. Each year, the organization implements its activities based on planned strategic objectives. This year, our main focus was on the following strategic objectives;

- i. To implement four community support and conservation projects
- ii. To improve institutional capacity
- iii. To Increase the market for the community's products
- iv. To increase partnerships

2.1. Alternative Crops

As another strategy to help communities cope with elephant challenges, promoting crops that elephants do not prefer has become very important. This year, ECOWICE supported 78 farmers to cultivate sesame, a crop that has proven resistant to elephant invasions due to its strong odor, which elephants avoid. Building on the positive results from 2021, when 40 farmers participated, we expanded support to 78 farmers this year. The success of sesame farming has also motivated around 50 additional farmers to adopt sesame independently, reducing crop losses and strengthening food security. Beyond addressing human-wildlife conflict, this initiative contributes to institutional capacity by organizing farmers into sesame groups, creates new market opportunities for sesame products, and builds partnerships with local stakeholders to scale the approach. By next year, we aim to further expand sesame farming as part of our community support and conservation projects



2.2. Environmental Education

This year, we supported 50 school children to visit Mikumi National Park, giving them a unique opportunity to learn about wildlife firsthand in their natural habitats. Beyond the park visit, children also participated in tree nursery development, tree planting, and environmental cleanliness activities, helping them connect conservation knowledge with practical action.

We further expanded our environmental education initiatives by launching a PenPal Program that connects school children in Tanzania with peers in the United States, fostering cross-cultural exchange on ecological and wildlife conservation. This program is being implemented in partnership with Rural Action, a non-profit based in Athens, Ohio. Additionally, we introduced the *Save Wild* Learning Lab, which engages students in hands-on observation and study of wild animals, insects, and plants, deepening their understanding of biodiversity and inspiring future conservation stewards.



2.3 Community-Based Forest Management

"Local communities have often been excluded from accessing and benefiting from forest resources, which in many cases has driven illegal exploitation. With limited workforce and equipment, the government is unable to effectively protect all forested areas, underscoring the importance of involving local people in conservation.

Through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, the government introduced a framework that allows villages to gain ownership and management rights over designated forest areas. To qualify, each village must establish a Village Natural Resource Committee (VNRC) responsible for managing and protecting the forest.

In line with this framework, ECOWICE supported the establishment of a VNRC with 12 trained members in forest management and sustainable utilization practices. This initiative contributes to community support and conservation projects by promoting local stewardship, strengthens institutional capacity through structured committees, opens avenues for market opportunities such as sustainable forest products and eco-tourism, and fosters partnerships between communities, government, and conservation organizations. Together, these efforts enhance forest protection while improving community livelihoods.



2.4 . Savings and Loans Groups

Due to recurring challenges such as drought and elephant crop raiding, many farmers are unable to harvest enough crops to sustain their households throughout the year. To address this, ECOWICE initiated a community-based savings and loans group in 2021 to provide farmers with a financial safety net during times of hardship.

In this model, group members contribute small weekly amounts, which are securely stored in a metal box with three padlocks. Members can then access loans with low interest rates, enabling them to meet urgent needs or invest in small livelihood activities. At the end of 12 months, the group collectively shares profits generated from the interest.

This year, the *Kilimo Hifadhi* (Conservation Agriculture) group, consisting of 15 members, provided loans amounting to TZS 6,500,000 (USD 2,826) and generated a profit of TZS 2,400,000 (USD 1,043) from interest. This initiative demonstrates how local savings and credit systems can strengthen community resilience, reduce financial vulnerability, and promote sustainable livelihoods.





2.5. International Exchange and Partnerships

This year, our Chief Executive Officer, Felician Ezekiel, had the privilege of visiting the United States of America to build connections and showcase ECOWICE's work. The visit was made possible through funding from the U.S. Department of State's Community Solutions Program (CSP).

During his four-month fellowship, Felician worked with **Rural Action**, a U.S.-based non-profit with goals closely aligned with ECOWICE. Through this collaboration, he exchanged best practices in community conservation and livelihood support, enriching ECOWICE's approaches back home.

Felician also visited local schools, where he shared cultural experiences with young people in the U.S., fostering cross-cultural learning and awareness. In addition, he connected with Ohio University and presented ECOWICE's work at the Appalachian Green Teacher's Conference, strengthening both academic and professional networks.



2.6. Strengthening Workforce Capacity

ECOWICE has enhanced its workforce by recruiting two additional volunteers. We are particularly pleased to welcome Jonas Von Dacken and Jonathan Merk from Germany, who have provided valuable support across multiple organizational activities. Both volunteers joined ECOWICE through our partnership with ADRA Germany under the *Weltwärts* program, strengthening our capacity to implement community and conservation initiatives effectively



2.7. Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration

ECOWICE has partnered with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to implement a human-elephant coexistence project along Nyerere National Park, expected to launch in 2023. This initiative will directly contribute to community support and conservation projects by reducing human-wildlife conflict and improving livelihoods.

Following the U.S. tour of our Chief Executive Officer, ECOWICE is also in discussions with *Rural Action* to establish collaborations that strengthen institutional capacity through knowledge exchange, expand environmental education programs, promote sustainable agriculture, and explore opportunities in the carbon market. These partnerships enhance ECOWICE's networks, open avenues for new **market opportunities** for community products, and build long-term relationships with national and international stakeholders



3. Challenges

3.1. Inadequate Financial Resources

Although ECOWICE has experienced an increase in funding sources this year, financial support remains insufficient to fully implement planned activities. Expanding and diversifying funding streams is essential to ensure sustainability, scale up community and conservation projects, and cover operational costs such as program implementation, monitoring, and capacity-building initiatives.

3.2. Inadequate and Limited Transport Facilities

Currently, the organization relies on a single motorbike to conduct both field and administrative activities. This limitation creates logistical challenges when multiple activities coincide, particularly in distant or remote areas. Additionally, the motorbike is difficult to operate during the rainy season, which restricts mobility and the ability to respond promptly to community or conservation needs. Expanding transport options, such as acquiring additional motorcycles or a suitable vehicle, is crucial for efficient operations.



3.3. Limited Staffing and Skills Gaps

While the number of volunteers has increased, ECOWICE still has only four full-time staff members. This limited workforce constrains the organization's capacity to manage programs effectively and to expand its reach. Furthermore, the professional diversity of staff needs to be strengthened. The organization requires skilled personnel in key areas such as Accounting, Administration, Public Relations, Forest Management, and Community Development to enhance operational efficiency and program quality.

3.4. Inadequate Office Facilities

ECOWICE's current office infrastructure is insufficient to support growing organizational needs. The organization requires additional office facilities, including furniture, computers, printers, and reliable internet access. Improved office infrastructure is essential for effective administrative management, data collection, communication, and reporting, which directly impact the quality and efficiency of ongoing programs.



4. Way forward



4.1. Develop and Expand Initiated Projects

ECOWICE aims to build on the successes of its current initiatives by securing the necessary resources to fully implement and enhance programs started this year. Key planned improvements include:

i. Living Fences

The organization plans to expand the established beehive fences from 60 to 650 beehives, which will protect approximately 390 hectares of farmland owned by 110 farmers. This expansion will significantly reduce human-elephant conflict while supporting additional income through honey production.

ii. Alternative Crops

ECOWICE intends to support 150 farmers in cultivating alternative crops such as sesame and passion fruit. Promoting these elephant-resistant and high-value crops will enhance food security, diversify income sources, and reduce crop losses from wildlife damage.

iii. Environmental Education

The organization plans to increase participation in environmental education programs from 60 to 150 students. Additionally, the number of *Save Wild* learning labs will be expanded from 1 to 4, with improvements in practical learning materials and engagement strategies, ensuring students gain hands-on experience in wildlife and ecosystem conservation.

iv. Village Natural Resource Management

ECOWICE seeks to increase the number of Village Natural Resource Committees (VNRCs) from 1 to 3. The organization will strengthen their capacity through training in forest management, provision of equipment, and technical support to ensure effective local governance and sustainable resource management.

v. Carbon Stock Assessment

To create environmentally and economically sustainable alternatives to deforestation, ECOWICE will support communities in measuring and monitoring forest carbon stocks. This initiative prepares the community to participate in carbon markets, generating passive income from the carbon dioxide absorbed by their forests while promoting long-term forest conservation.