

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION FOR WILDLIFE AND COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE

(ECOWICE)



ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Chief Executive Officer's Statement

This year, ECOWICE stood as a testament to resilience, innovation, and the power of community-driven conservation. Guided by the belief that protecting nature must go hand in hand with improving people's lives, our efforts created real and lasting impact.

The Beehive Fence initiative grew from a small pilot into a thriving community solution, safeguarding farms from elephants while producing honey that strengthens food security and household incomes. Alongside this, the promotion of alternative crops like sesame offered farmers both economic opportunity and protection from wildlife raids, proving that coexistence and prosperity can go together.

We also invested in governance and education. Village Natural Resource Committees were strengthened to ensure conservation decisions remain rooted in local leadership, while children engaged in hands-on environmental learning, from tree planting to cross-cultural exchanges with students in the United States. These experiences are nurturing the next generation of environmental stewards.

Understanding human-wildlife conflict remained central to our mission. Through monitoring and dialogue, we gathered vital insights that not only guide our programs but also inform wider policy discussions. Creativity played its role too, with initiatives like *Songs and Screens for Coexistence* using film, music, and storytelling to spark conversations and celebrate coexistence as a shared cultural value.

As we look ahead, we are committed to deepening these efforts, building stronger partnerships, and continuing to bridge conservation with community well-being. With farmers, children, local leaders, and global allies by our side, ECOWICE is shaping a future where people and wildlife thrive together.

Felician Chemihanda
Chief Executive Officer



The Buzzling Fence-Every drop of honey, tells a story

For farming families living on the edge of protected areas, each growing season carries the same fear: elephants raiding fields and wiping out months of hard work. These losses don't just mean empty granaries, they threaten food security, children's education, and the very hope of a stable livelihood.

To turn this struggle into an opportunity, ECOWICE, together with village leaders and farmer groups, has introduced an innovative solution rooted in both nature and culture; beehive fences. A total of 280 beehives have been distributed among 180 farmers, circling their fields like living guardians. As elephants instinctively avoid bees, the buzzing fences protect crops while also opening new doors to income.

What makes this project powerful is the people behind it. Women make up 65% of participants and young people 70%, ensuring that the next generation carries forward the vision of coexistence. Beyond guarding harvests, the hives will yield honey; a product tied to tradition, nutrition, and market opportunities, strengthening household incomes and reducing dependence on vulnerable crops.

By protecting fields, sustaining families, and respecting wildlife, the community is building an environment where both people and elephants can thrive.



 280

Beehives Installed

 65% & 70%

Women & Youth Benefited

How Farmers Are Redefining Food Security

For families living beside protected areas, farming is never simple. Each planting season requires a delicate balance between protecting food from wildlife and ensuring there is enough to feed their households. Too often, the shift to crops less attractive to elephants and other animals leaves families with fewer options on the table, and a food security gap behind.

ECOWICE is working to change that story. This year, the organization supported more than 180 farmers with sesame seeds, passion fruit seedlings, and mushroom farming facilities, crops carefully chosen because they are not targeted by elephants yet hold strong potential to nourish families and strengthen incomes.

Sesame provides a valuable cash crop, passion fruit vines promise both nutrition and market opportunities, and mushrooms grow quickly in small spaces, adding a reliable food source even during lean seasons. As one farmer explained:

“Before, elephants would destroy my maize overnight, and we had nothing left. Now with sesame, I can sell my harvest and buy the food my family needs.”

Another farmer proudly showed her new mushroom shed, saying:

“These mushrooms are small, but they feed us well. I can cook them for my children and also sell some in the market. For the first time, I feel safe from elephants.”

By pairing these crops with support to access both local and external markets, ECOWICE is helping farmers not only grow food that is safe from elephants but also boost their purchasing power to meet other household needs.

What makes this approach powerful is its double impact: every harvest both shields families from wildlife conflict and strengthens their resilience through healthier diets and stronger incomes. In this way, the fields at the forest’s edge are becoming places of innovation and hope, where conservation and food security grow side by side.



**180+**

Farmers Supported

**3**

Wildlife-Resistant Crops





270+

Stakeholders

5

Meetings

6

Joint field visits

Building Common Ground for Conservation

Lasting change happens when communities, leaders, and institutions unite around a shared vision. To strengthen this common ground, ECOWICE engaged in 3 workshops, 5 meetings, 6 joint field visits, and 3 conferences that connected local leaders, government officers, and community groups.

These gatherings were more than formalities, they became spaces of listening, trust, and co-creation. In one village workshop, a leader reflected:

“Before, we only saw wildlife conflict as a problem. Now we see it as something we can solve together, by changing what we plant, how we govern, and how we work with ECOWICE.”

Highlight of events:

- Workshops such as the WWF-led environmental education program that brought together teachers to strengthen school-based conservation learning.
- Conferences like the TAWIRI Conservation Conference, ECHO East Africa Forum on sustainable agriculture, and Weltwärts International Volunteering Conference in Rwanda, where ECOWICE shared lessons and built global partnerships.
- Joint meetings and field visits with government officers and ECOWICE teams that bridged local realities with policy support.
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Through these engagements, communities not only shared ideas but took ownership of conservation initiatives. What began as external interventions is now transforming into a shared community movement, anchored in local leadership, backed by government, and energized by the people themselves.

3

Workshops

Educating the Next Generation

Educating young people is essential for building future communities that can successfully meet the challenges of coexistence with wildlife. Since 2017, ECOWICE has been running environmental education programs, and this year the program was further strengthened to become more hands-on, practical, and scientific.

Children are now learning about animal behavior through simple, direct, and engaging activities with approachable species such as butterflies. By collecting caterpillars from host plants and caring for them until they transform into butterflies, students experience firsthand the connections between plants, animals, and people. These lessons highlight not only the delicate balance of ecosystems but also the critical role humans play in sustaining life.

One excited student reflected:

"I never knew a caterpillar could become a butterfly. We must take care of wildlife."

To build on this learning, ECOWICE established a school-based learning lab, a dedicated space where students can conduct experiments, access educational materials, and explore nature through science. This practical approach nurtures curiosity, critical thinking, and environmental stewardship, ensuring that the next generation grows up with both the knowledge and passion needed to protect biodiversity and promote coexistence.

In collaboration with Rural Action (USA), ECOWICE also launched an initiative that connects students from Tanzania and the United States. Through letter exchanges, children share environmental lessons, build friendships, and exchange cultural experiences, broadening their worldviews while strengthening their commitment to caring for the environment.



12

Village natural resource
committee members

55

Maasai pastoral community
members

Cross-Cultural Exchange for Shared Solutions

This year, ECOWICE was proud to host an exchange program with Rural Action, a non-profit organization based in Ohio, USA. Through support from the U.S. Department of State and IREX, we welcomed Molly Sowash, Director of Sustainable Agriculture at Rural Action, to our communities in Tanzania.

Molly's visit created a space for learning and collaboration. Together, we trained 12 Village Natural Resource Committee members to conduct forest assessments, strengthening local capacity to manage and protect vital landscapes. She also shared knowledge on sustainable land and pasture management practices to 55 Maasai pastoral community members.

To further support livelihoods, Molly contributed 20 beehives to farmers and helped establish the Upendo Women's Group, a collective of 24 women artisans who produce crafts as an alternative source of income. These efforts not only advanced conservation goals but also empowered women and strengthened community resilience.



20

Beehives donated

24

Women Artisans supported

The exchange was more than a transfer of skills, it was a partnership built on shared values of conservation, sustainable livelihoods, and community empowerment, planting seeds for long-term collaboration between Tanzania and the U.S.

Learning from Conflict with Wildlife

Human–wildlife conflict is never the result of a single factor. It is shaped by a web of influences, from animal behavior to farming practices, from land use to policy gaps. For this reason, effective monitoring is essential to understand not only which species are involved but also how and why conflicts occur.

This year ECOWICE carried out wildlife monitoring in Mikumi National Park, Nyerere National Park, and the Rungwe Mountains Nature Reserve, focusing particularly on elephants and the endangered *Rungwecebus kipunji*. The monitoring revealed a variety of species contributing to conflict, with elephants, wild pigs, and monkeys identified as the most prominent.

For farmers, these findings reflect daily struggles. As one community member shared:

“An elephant can destroy an entire field in one night. The monkeys take what little is left during the day. We feel like we are farming for wildlife instead of our families.”

A key insight from the study is that many communities have limited knowledge about wildlife behavior, the drivers of conflict, and practical mitigation strategies. These challenges are compounded by policies that often fail to address realities on the ground.

ECOWICE is committed to turning these insights into action. The findings will guide the refinement of our programs, strengthen community education, and inform policy discussions. By bridging knowledge gaps and promoting evidence-based solutions, we aim to create a path toward sustainable human–wildlife coexistence, where both people and wildlife can thrive side by side.

 Farmer
Voices Captured

 3 Sites
Monitored

 2 Priority
Species Studied

 Policy Gaps
Highlighted

 3 Major
Conflict Species
Identified



Songs and Screens for Coexistence

Understanding what drives human–wildlife conflict and how others have successfully managed it is essential for communities to take part in solutions. When people are equipped with knowledge, they can adopt new practices, share experiences, and apply strategies that make coexistence possible.

To support this, ECOWICE organized awareness-raising events that blended education with creativity. One of the most engaging activities was the night cinema projection, where communities gathered to watch films showcasing wildlife behavior and real-life success stories of coexistence. These moments not only informed but also inspired, sparking conversations about what could work locally.

As one participant shared:

“Watching how other farmers solved conflicts gave me hope. I realized we are not alone in this struggle, and there are ways we can protect our farms without harming wildlife.”

Music and culture also played a powerful role. Communities were engaged through songs carrying messages of coexistence, using familiar rhythms and traditional storytelling to make the message resonate deeply. These creative approaches turned awareness into a shared experience one that informs, unites, and empowers communities to take action for both people and wildlife.



 4 Cinema
Events

 6 Coexistence
Songs

 1,000
Community
Members
Engaged

Challenges and Way forward

1. Limited Infrastructure and Transport

Accessing remote villages remains difficult, particularly during the rainy season when roads become impassable. With only one motorbike as the primary means of transport, it is challenging to conduct both field and administrative activities effectively.

ECOWICE is seeking to expand its transport capacity by acquiring two additional motorbikes and a vehicle, which will improve mobility, ensure timely project delivery, and strengthen field presence.

2. Inadequate and Short-Term Financing

Most of ECOWICE's programs currently rely on short-term, one-year funding cycles. While these funds allow important activities to begin, the lack of long-term financial stability affects program continuity, scalability, and the ability to achieve lasting impact.

ECOWICE is actively working to diversify its funding sources by building new partnerships, exploring social enterprise initiatives such as honey and sesame sales, and strengthening relationships with international donors for multi-year commitments.

3. Insufficient Workforce Capacity

The organization continues to rely heavily on volunteers and part-time staff, who, while valuable, are not always consistently available. With only a small number of full-time employees, ECOWICE faces limitations in professional diversity, technical expertise, and overall capacity to implement programs at the scale required.

ECOWICE plans to expand its staff base from 8 to 15 full-time professionals in the coming year while continuing to engage skilled volunteers locally and internationally. This will ensure both stability and the technical expertise needed in fields such as administration, accounting, forest management, and community development.



Donors and Partners

1. Convention for Biological diversity
2. Swisscontact
3. Rufford foundation
4. IREX
5. Rural Action
6. ADRA Germany
7. Weltwärts
8. Mvomero district council
9. Namtumbo district council
10. Mikumi National Park



