

AZA Zoos Unite to Address Human-Wildlife Conflict in Africa

Human-wildlife conflict is a serious obstacle to wildlife conservation worldwide. As human populations increase, development expands, the global climate changes and other human and environmental factors put people and wildlife in greater direct competition for a shrinking resource base.

Recognizing the critical need for wildlife professionals to address escalating conflict between humans and wildlife, four AZA-accredited zoos – [Cleveland Metroparks Zoo](#), [Columbus Zoo and Aquarium](#), [Denver Zoo](#), and [Houston Zoo](#) – supported the participation of 15 wildlife conservation professionals from eight African countries. The “conflict transformation” training was designed and led by the [Human-Wildlife Conflict Collaboration \(HWCC\)](#).

"The training was a real eye-opener for solutions to current issues we face every day," said Shivani Bhalla, a training participant from the organization Ewaso Lions. "15 of the 26 participants, like me, would not have been able to attend this important training without the support of the US zoos."

The 15 participants included conservationists working to save lions, Grevy's zebras, elephants, rhinos, mountain gorillas, wild dogs, cheetahs and chimpanzees. Each of the participants face serious daily challenges, such as preventing the illegal killing of lions and elephants in northern Kenya – conflict which is the direct result of increased ethnic violence.

Often described as the “missing link in conservation”, HWCC's approach to transforming conflict between people and wildlife through capacity building can protect increasingly threatened populations of wild animals – as well as the people who live near them. The HWCC's training addressed theory, principles and practice of transforming complex conflicts into sustainable solutions for people and wildlife. It also provides tools for wildlife professionals on the front lines of conservation in Africa to determine root causes of conflict, build a foundation for trust and respect among stakeholders, and unearth fertile ground for cultivating sustainable solutions.

Within less than one week of completing the training, the participants were already reporting progress in resolving long-standing conflicts. Said one participant from Uganda, “the training opened up my mind and created a sense of direction to mitigation measures I am implementing in my conservation area.”

The Human-Wildlife Conflict Collaboration launched in 2006 when more than 50 conservation professionals representing 40 organizations gathered in Washington, D.C. For more information, contact Francine Madden, HWCC Executive Director, at: francine@humanwildlifeconflict.org