


WILDLIFE ACTION GROUP



ANNUAL REPORT 2017



Wildlife Action Group (WAG) is a registered non-governmental, non-profit organization working in Malawi to support the Government to protect wild areas and the wildlife that live there. WAG are directly responsible for two forest Reserves in the central region, Thuma Forest Reserve and Dedza Salima Escarpment Reserve, covering a total area of over 500km². (52,000 hectares).

Our major stakeholders are the Department of Forestry and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife, along with the local communities.

Both forests have suffered immense deforestation and due to the high poaching incidences, most wildlife were on the verge of becoming extinct. Due to the ongoing efforts through law enforcement, mitigation of human elephant conflict and community relationships, these areas have seen positive conservation and social economic impacts.

In 2017, an area of approx 8,000 hectares have been reclaimed, dramatically reducing deforestation with rangers patrolling daily.

Our vision is to see both Reserves returned to their former glory; the habitat rehabilitated and restocked with wildlife, and local communities benefiting and assisting to protect these areas, making them Malawi's premier Forest Reserves for future generations.



MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR

2017 closed on a positive note and 2018 brings exciting prospects. Wildlife Action Group celebrated 15 years working in Thuma Forest Reserve. This NGO was founded by a German couple (George and Suzi Kloble) who are dedicated conservationists. 2002 saw the signing of a MoU with the Department of Forestry which allowed WAG to co-manage Thuma. Four young men were employed as scouts all coming from local villages and the long walk to conserve and rehabilitate the forest began. It was believed only 25 elephants remained at this time. There was commercial deforestation with trucks loaded with forest resources leaving the Reserve daily and evidence of mass poaching of elephants. The remaining elephants were moving like spirits,

believed to be here, but never seen. These shy giants, were terrified by humans and remained silent and hidden in what was left of a forest being eaten by deforestation. WAG adopted a motto at the start which still hangs at our entrance „MORE SWEAT AND LESS POACHING“. George and Suzi's vision to protect the remaining wildlife and stop the deforestation has created a legacy. This story is far from finished but so far a forest has risen from the ashes and the phoenix is rising from the fire. Many managers, scouts and volunteers have come and gone, all have left their mark and we would not be where we are today without their efforts, for which we are truly thankful. Many are still supporting us and our WAG family has grown and



Since 2013 total Animal counts have been conducted every two years.



2017 figures show increases in all wildlife living in both reserves.

continues to grow. We still sweat and the work continues. We sincerely thank our donors and supporters who have enabled us to do this work, and have been with us through thick and thin, the good times and the really tough times. Today, WAG is proud to be able to say that approximately 10% of the total population of Malawian elephants are living and moving freely inside these forests, no longer invisible spirits. They are reclaiming the forest as theirs and are seen daily. The forest is regenerating and in 2017 the final area which has seen ongoing destruction since 1994 due to charcoal burning has been reclaimed. Now we need to work harder than ever. The vision continues and the 2017 figures show increases in all wildlife living in both reserves.

Our work commitment strengthens. Reintroduction of certain species, good forest management, introduction of eco tourism, continued development in surrounding communities and strengthening protection of the habitat are all top of our agenda. I salute our staff, whose dedication and hard work ensures the protection of these areas and the wildlife that live here. They are the ones who are ensuring this legacy for future generations of Malawians. I, on behalf of WAG, would finally like to thank our government partners for their ongoing trust and support of the work being carried out here and pledge our commitment to continue this long walk to conserve and protect.

Yours sincerely

Lynn Clifford

Enforcement patrols are carried out in both reserves. The number of patrols conducted per year have increased from 369 per year in 2011 to 1807 per year in 2017.



some other species from
our database



WHAT WE DO

1. Law Enforcement

With local specially trained rangers and scouts, we protect the forest, wildlife and people living around the reserves.

2. Human Elephant Conflict(HEC)

Conflict and competition for land is an ongoing dilemma facing many countries and the wildlife is at the forefront. Many protected areas are now islands surrounded by humanity and conflict becomes a real security challenge for people and wildlife. Through solar powered electric fences we are striving to mitigate this threat. We are also trying alternative strategies to reduce elephants leaving the reserve such as bee hives and satellite collars.

3. Biodiversity Conservation and Research

Through our work two wildernesses are currently being protected and rehabilitated and wildlife populations are once again increasing. Through ongoing research we are discovering more about the areas, which enables us to adapt good management practices.

4. Wildlife Welfare

Working with other partner NGO's we are able to react to emergency wildlife care, including snare removal, rescue and releases.

5. Community Development and Education

It is important that local communities benefit from the Reserves to ensure its long term future. We encourage this by working in schools, supporting the local health centre, providing transport for local emergencies and working closely with local chief and traditional authorities. We also support income generating activities through training and start up incentives such as sewing clubs, bee keeping, irrigation gardens, tree planting, etc. We currently employ 65 permanent local staff and offer various seasonal short term contracts. We are also teaching conservation education in ten schools close to the Reserves delivering to over 7,600 children.

6. Advocacy

Along with other conservation partners we have been raising the profile of the plight of wildlife in Malawi and further afield. Awareness campaigns include the amendment of the Wildlife Act 2017 and the illegal wildlife trade.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

in 2017 Law enforcement is an integral part of our work. The success of this effort is not only in the arresting of poachers but the prosecution and court hearing outcome which punches home the illegal act and will be a deterrent to people wishing to carry out illegal activities. 2017 saw 96 arrests. Of the arrests 15 were wildlife crime related; one related to the killing of an elephant. The remaining arrests were related to forest crime. The highest sentence was 8 years for trafficking in protected specimen species (someone selling elephant bones carved to look like ivory), followed by 6 years then 4 years for wildlife hunting crimes. Forest crime offences were receiving an average of 1 year custodial sentence. One elephant was lost through poaching in Dedza Salima, none in Thuma Forest Reserve. Two suspects were arrested and the ivory retrieved. WAG currently have 32 full time scouts, who are statically placed in camps in both reserves. Both long and short patrols are carried out 365 days a year. A total of over 1,800 patrols were carried out in both reserves. 286 wire snares were found and removed offering further safety to the wildlife.

Despite some resource challenges, WAG ensured that ongoing training was conducted for new recruits and refresher/on-going training was carried out throughout the year. Further training is planned for early 2018 as we feel it is very important to continuously top up the skill set of our team which enables us to adapt to this ever changing war against wildlife and forest crimes.

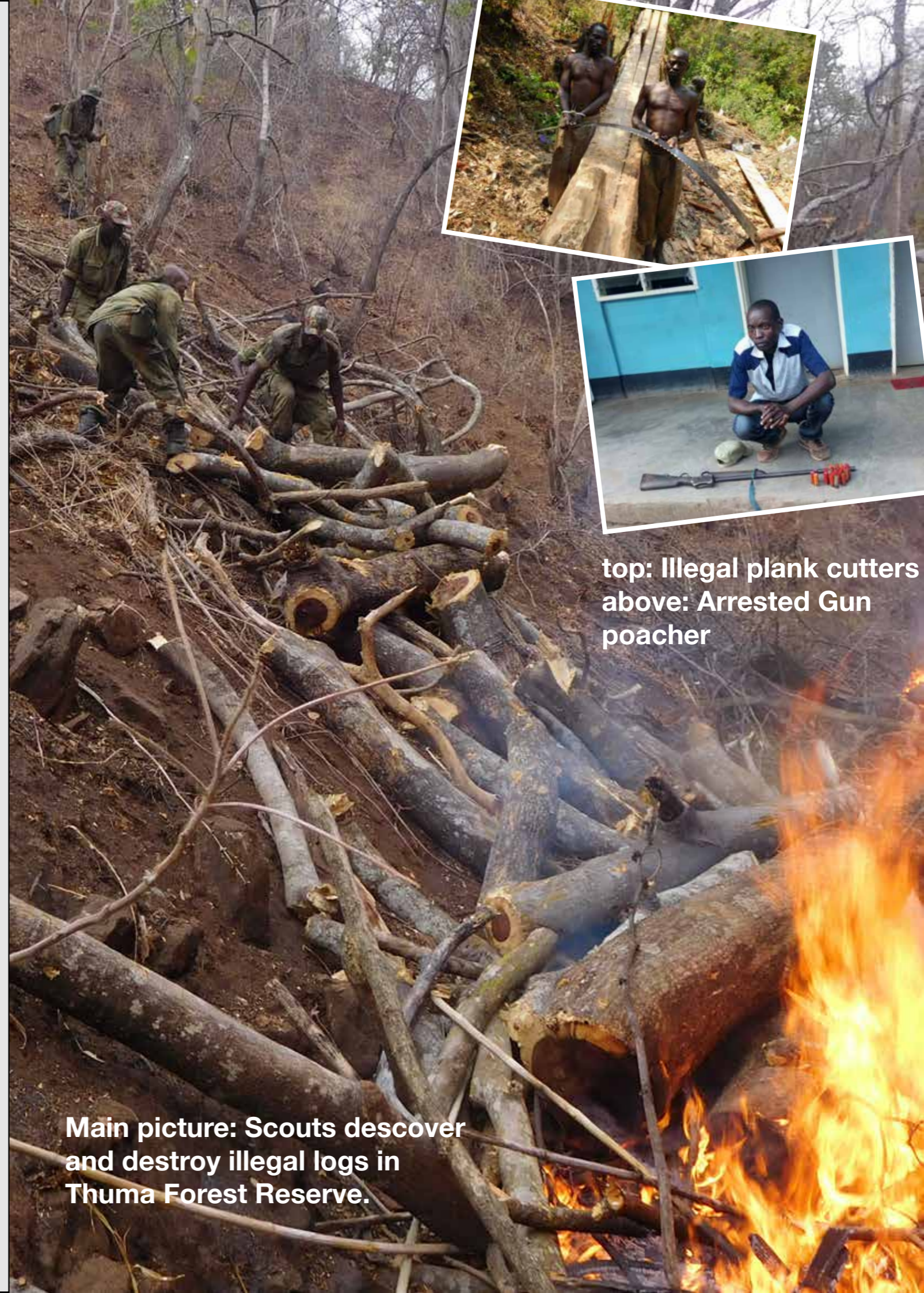
Malawi saw a change in the National Parks and Wildlife Act, with much higher sentences for those found guilty. Thanks to Save the Elephants and Wildlife Conservation Network, through the Elephant Crisis Fund, we were able to produce and design a

community guide booklet in Chichewa and English explaining the new amendments to the Wildlife Act and the sentences on all wildlife crimes. Meetings were held at both districts and village level, with all traditional leaders. Every T/A, GVH's and Chief's was given a booklet and empowered so they could inform their people.

Much effort was placed in carrying out investigations around the Reserves and developing an informer network which led to many arrests. This is an ongoing process.

In April we held our fourth law enforcement workshop where we invited all the law enforcement stakeholders from the four districts surrounding both forests. Police, prosecutors, judiciary along with Forestry Department and Department of National Parks and Wildlife, came to Thuma Base Camp where we discussed and shared challenges and successes relating to crimes being committed inside the forest, plus introduced the newly amended Wildlife Act.

WAG strive to achieve zero elephant deaths in 2018 and a further reduction in other crimes. Zero human elephant conflicts which will ensure community food security.



top: Illegal plank cutters
above: Arrested Gun poacher

Main picture: Scouts discover and destroy illegal logs in Thuma Forest Reserve.

Matthews gets up close and personal with a darted and injured elephant. Who was been treated.



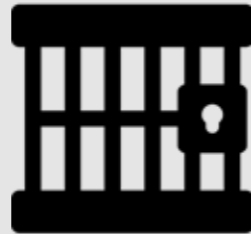
ACHIEVEMENTS 2017



96 ARRESTS



66 FINE OR CUSTODIAL



36 JAILED



BOOTS ON GROUND
12'136KM PATROLLED IN
2017



COMMUNITY AWARENESS
CAMPAGNE COMPLETED
OVER 6000 BOOKLETS
DISTRIBUTED



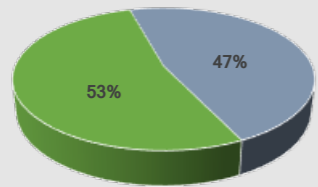
9000 TREE SEEDS PLANTED



CONSERVATION EDUCATION:
OVER 7600 CHILDREN

INCREASE IN PATROLED AREAS SINCE 2012

TFR 2012



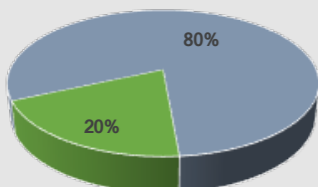
regular patrolled sporadically patrolled

TFR 2017



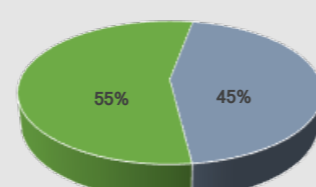
regular patrolled sporadically patrolled

DSFR 2012



regular patrolled sporadically patrolled

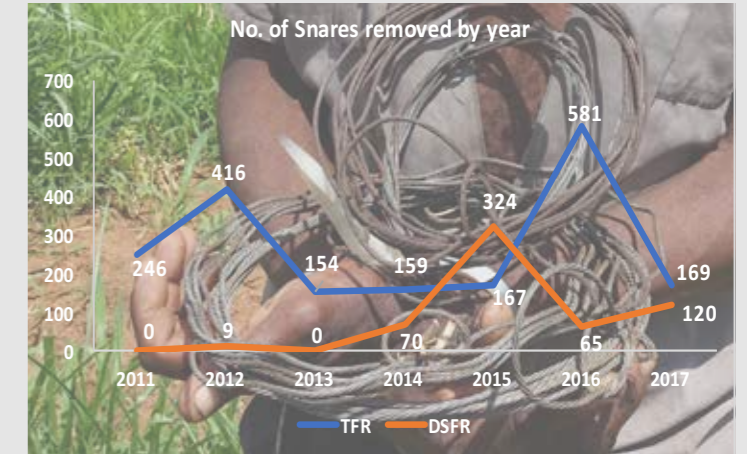
DSFR 2017



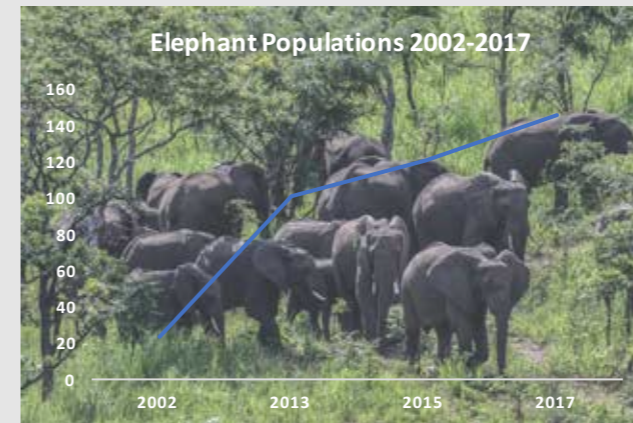
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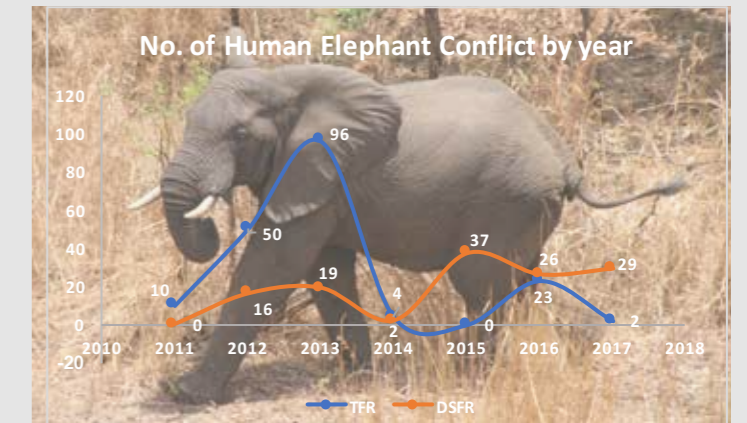
DSFR: one camp closed down in 2015.



2015 to 2016 saw arrests of active snare poachers which explains the decrease.



2013 saw the first total count. prior to that was estimated quantities.



Recent trends are related to two identified bulls.



main picture: irrigation garden.

inserts: bee hive projects.



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

Community development and education forms an important part of our daily activities. Over 7,600 children received conservation education in 10 schools surrounding both forests. Exercise books and pens were donated to each child by our partner Tuesday Trust Ireland. Each school is also participating in an „education, nutrition and conservation“ competition. Each school has been given a variety of seeds to plant in the school garden and who ever produces the most wins football kits, chalk, t-shirts, net ball kits etc. Last year Namajete School won the prize. Wildlife clubs are also established in each school.

In Malamba area, west of Thuma a tree planting club has been created made up of 50 men who have spent the last 10 years cutting trees illegally. They approached us asking for assistance to start planting trees. We supplied over 9,000 seeds to this project and work closely to monitor the success. Three natural resource committees have been established in T/A Chitekwere area. Tree planting and bee hive clubs established. With funding from USFWS, bee keeping training along with bee hives were donated. One of the biggest challenges on this side of the forest is that most of the trees have been cut for charcoal. We hope that with these incentives people will see there are other ways to make an income than charcoal burning.

WAG partnered with USAID (PREFORM) in late 2016. The aim of this was to kick start some development activities in ‚Hot Spot‘ problem areas which would alleviate peoples‘ complete reliance on the forest resources. PREFORM established some site-based interventions to address drivers of deforestation and help generate livelihood opportunities for vulnerable households. The two areas chosen were Chilombo and TA Chitekwere areas. PREFORM carried out a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) to get a better understanding of the drivers of deforestation and community challenges.

Thereafter, some irrigations gardens were established and treadle pumps donated. Some villages were trained to build stoves using 15 bricks, to replace the three stone traditional cooking method and reduce the usage of firewood. WAG contributed tomato seeds and watering cans to several families creating alternative income generating activities, which was very successful. This project is ongoing.

WAG supported families along the northern boundary of Thuma to start vegetable gardens, using the river to irrigate over the months of June to August with seeds and watering cans. Income was generated with the sales of the produce.

Ladies living close to the entrance to Thuma are sewing small key rings from recycled local materials which are then sold in Europe and locally in shops. This project has created an income for these ladies and enables them to send their children to school, buy fertilizer, salt and daily necessities. We hope to expand this project in 2018.

All these projects are making differences to people along the boundary of the Reserves, bringing hope and new possibilities.





photo credits by Lynn Clifford, Reto Güttinger and Scouts / all icon credits by Graphic Resources S.L

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

To ensure effective management of both forest Reserves and the wildlife it is vital that we continue to monitor and collect data and adapt good management practices.

Our camera traps are really assisting us in understanding animal distribution, discovering new species but also aiding us to identify elephants and finding animals who are maybe injured. In 2018 we hope to increase the number of camera traps around the Reserves

In February 2017 we conducted the first forest inventory funded by CEPF. The data collected covered aspects such as assessing biodiversity, determining the carbon stocks, evaluating the regeneration potential and identifying the different species of trees and plants. Some species of orchids were discovered and further research is needed on this. This data will be added to the National Forest Inventory of Malawi. WAG partnered with Forestry Research Institute (FRIM) over the 3 week process.

In November 2017 we carried out our third Total animal count with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife. Results show an increase in all wildlife species and show the wildlife are moving back into areas which were previously used for illegal activities such as charcoal burning. The data we are collecting covers a diversity of plants, reptiles, insects and mammals.

We will continue to monitor and collect data which will assist us to manage these specific areas.



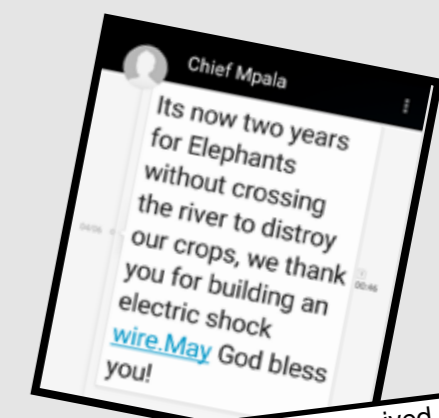
FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Thanks to our donor support our spending this year totalled USD 117,817. This was broken down into operational costs of USD 78,592 and project costs totalling USD 39,224. Balances brought forward are related to ongoing or new projects which were funded through proposals which are about to start or end in 2018.

Operation costs typically covers salaries and day to day activities. Special project costs are related to funding received to carry out projects which have a time frame for completion. 2018 will see a dramatic rise in the overall expenditure with many exciting projects being implemented and an increase in the number of staff.

B/F & INCOME		C/F 2017	INCOME
2017 C/F & Income	MK	6'828'677	6'078'361
donor income 2017	USD	102'764	151'211
donor income 2017	Euro	8'004	53'988

EXPENDITURE 2017		Expenditure 2017
operating expenditure 2017	MK	57'512'854
special projects expenditure 2017	MK	25'313'084
Total Expenditure 2017	MK	82'725'938



Text message received from a local chief in June 2017

AIMS FOR 2018

- Continue phase 4 of solar powered electric fence along western boundary
 - Construction of purpose built law enforcement camp in western Thuma
 - Continue increasing awareness through education in schools
- Introduce low impact tourism by building eco lodge in Thuma East
- Perform Wildlife Reintroduction assessment
 - Recruit 12 new rangers
- Continue zero tolerance to Charcoal burning activities in both Reserves
- Strengthen stakeholder relations through law enforcement workshops and ongoing court monitoring
- Continued law enforcement with strong focus on elephant protection
- Strengthen community relations through NRC and income generating activities
- Continue wildlife laws awareness campaigns in the four districts around both Reserves
 - Complete Forest Inventory project
- Reduce encroachment in Dedza Salima FR
 - Collar 3 elephants to reduce HEC and for tracking purposes
 - De-snare any injured wildlife
- Build conservation educational centre/library
 - Ranger refreshment training for all scouts/rangers
- Improve telecommunication network within the Reserves





WILDLIFE ACTION GROUP



We are very grateful to the Government of Malawi through the Department of Forestry and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife and all our partners and funding supporters who have enabled us to carry out this very important work to protect Thuma and Dedza Salima Forest Reserves and the wildlife living here. Most of you have supported WAG on a long term basis. Due to your ongoing support, the impact on the ground speaks for itself.

Alexandra Mackels
Andy Clayburn
Ania Pitz
Anita Gomme
Aoife Calven
Bernd Van Beek
Cecile Boemer
Claudia Classen
Cris Van Beek
Dajana Van Beek
Demiter Avtanski
Dirk Thomaere
Donald Goldberg
Edgar Mackels
Ernst Paulis
Ester Iohmane
Friedmann-French Foundation
Friedrich Thomas

Gaby Andres
Hazel Richardson
Henn Walburga
Ingbert Palm
Isabel Wolfel
Jeaf Morgen
Joanna Gentili
Jörg Thomas
Judith Friedlaender
Kevin Johnson
Kevin Palm
Kindy French
Mady Krahl
Maja Neerman
Malgorzata Broskewitz
Marianne Biedermann
Marie Berlin
Mario Mackels
Martin van Strien

Mathias Huttman
Nicole Maas
Oswald Palm
Peggy Bulat
Peter Stöger
Philip Heck
Ronald Ulrich
Samatha Palm
Sarah Palm
Sascha Stock
Sauvez les elephats d'afrique
Siegmond Dorer
Stephan Ritz
Steven Stone
Tracy de la Mater
Ulli Keller
Wim Gerrits

