

# Save Our Elephants



*Source: PT*

## **Objectives**

The following strategy intends to protect elephants in Botswana in two ways:

- 1) Changing social norms of rural communities, to get them in support of legislation making it illegal to kill elephants in any circumstance.
- 2) Lobbying government actors to introduce legislation making it illegal to kill elephants in any circumstance (e.g. even for hunting)

## Background

The killing of elephants is commonplace in Africa and is harmful for the species. Since 2006, elephant numbers in Africa have decreased by 21% with savanna elephants declining by 30% between 2007 and 2014 (DEFRA, 2022). The main reason for this is because they are killed by humans (DEFRA, 2022). Such action has been condemned by many nations as it is considered inhumane and has resulted in them introducing measures preventing the trade of ivory (Mistlin, 2021; GOVUK, 2021).

Elephants often experience painful deaths because, once shot, the mammals are not killed immediately which causes suffering (view fig.1). Essentially, killing this large animal is cold-blooded and ruthless.

**Figure 1. A dead elephant killed in Botswana.**

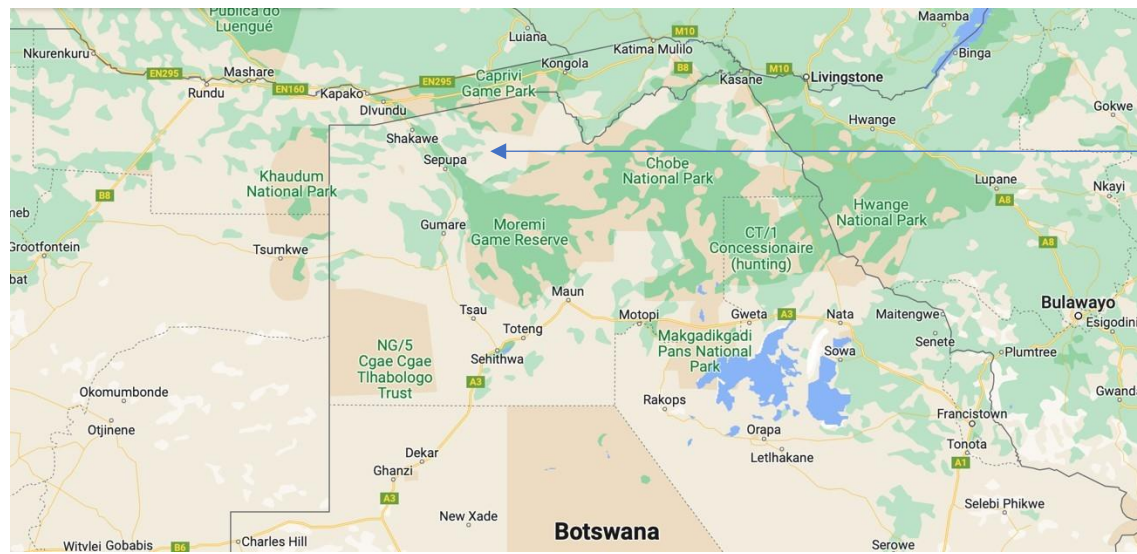


*Source: Independent*

In Botswana, whilst poaching is illegal, elephant hunting is a lawful activity with a hunting ban lifted in 2019. This was decided because high elephant numbers was leading to crop destruction in rural areas. The ban was initially implemented in 2014 due to a worrying decrease in the elephant population.

This decision is problematic as hunting is not fully regulated despite the government stating it is. Lifting the ban instead of having legislation making it illegal to kill elephants in any circumstance encourages poaching. There has been an increase in this since the ban was lifted and there continues to be a lack of enforcement preventing it (Lemieux & Clarke, 2009). For instance, 87 elephants were found dead between the Okavango and Chobe rivers and they had been poached (Somerville, 2019; view fig.2).

**Figure 2. Map displaying the location of elephant carcasses.**



Location of dead elephants.

Source: GM

## Power Analysis

To recognise the type of power held by actors, Lukes (1974) forms of power are used: visible, hidden and invisible.

The president of Botswana holds '*visible power*' as he is the head of state and government and is currently serving a five-year term. Considering the president will be running for election again in 2024, to serve another term like his predecessor, he will likely be looking to ensure the people of Botswana are content with his decisions.

The Minister of Environment, Natural Resources Conservation and Tourism (ENT) also holds '*visible power*'. She is in charge of this government department and is responsible for introducing new legislation that can protect elephants (e.g. a law which makes it illegal to kill them).

Environmental scientists and wildlife biologists in Botswana hold '*hidden power*' and strongly support making it unlawful to kill elephants (Solly, 2019). They have expert knowledge of the effects such action has on the species, biodiversity and ecosystems.

Conservationists and the African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG) also have '*hidden power*' as they are experts on alternative methods to manage high elephant numbers. Their expertise is vital for informing and ensuring rural communities understand there are alternatives to managing elephants rather than simply killing them.

Taking into consideration the tourist industry will likely be negatively impacted from not making it illegal to kill elephants in any circumstance, the Botswana Tourism Organisation (BTO) holds '*hidden power*'. Since allowing the killing of the mammals, with the lifting of the hunting ban, it has caused outrage in countries abroad leading to fewer tourists visiting Botswana (East, 2019). The head of the BTO can ensure local actors are aware this threatens jobs in the tourist industry, livelihoods and overall quality of life as tourism is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest industry accounting for 13.1% of total GDP in 2019 (BW, 2021).

Rural communities hold '*invisible power*'. They are against the aims of this strategy and support the killing of elephants. This is because of their social norm that it is acceptable to kill elephants as they think it will help protect their crop and manage the high numbers of elephants. Informing them of the reality of such action and alternative ways to manage large elephant numbers is vital to the success of this strategy - this is not something they have heard before from the government.

However, within these communities, there are a few 'forward-thinking' communities who truly understand the drawbacks and reality of allowing elephants to be killed. They can educate other

communities on the effects of not making it illegal to kill elephants in any circumstance and hold '*invisible power*'.

Lastly, NGOs such as Elephants For Africa hold '*hidden power*'. They are in support of preventing the killing of elephants and want to see legislation enforced that better protects these animals.

## Critical Juncture

The election in 2024 is an important critical juncture for this influencing strategy. Since it was made easier to kill elephants in Botswana, there have been protests by people condemning the decision (view fig.3). If this strategy garners support from rural communities to introduce legislation make it illegal to kill elephants, the president will need to change his manifesto and decide to support the introduction of such legislation. If he does not, it is uncertain what will happen.

**Figure 3. Locals protesting in Gaborone (Botswana’s capital) against making it easier to kill elephants by lifting the hunting ban.**

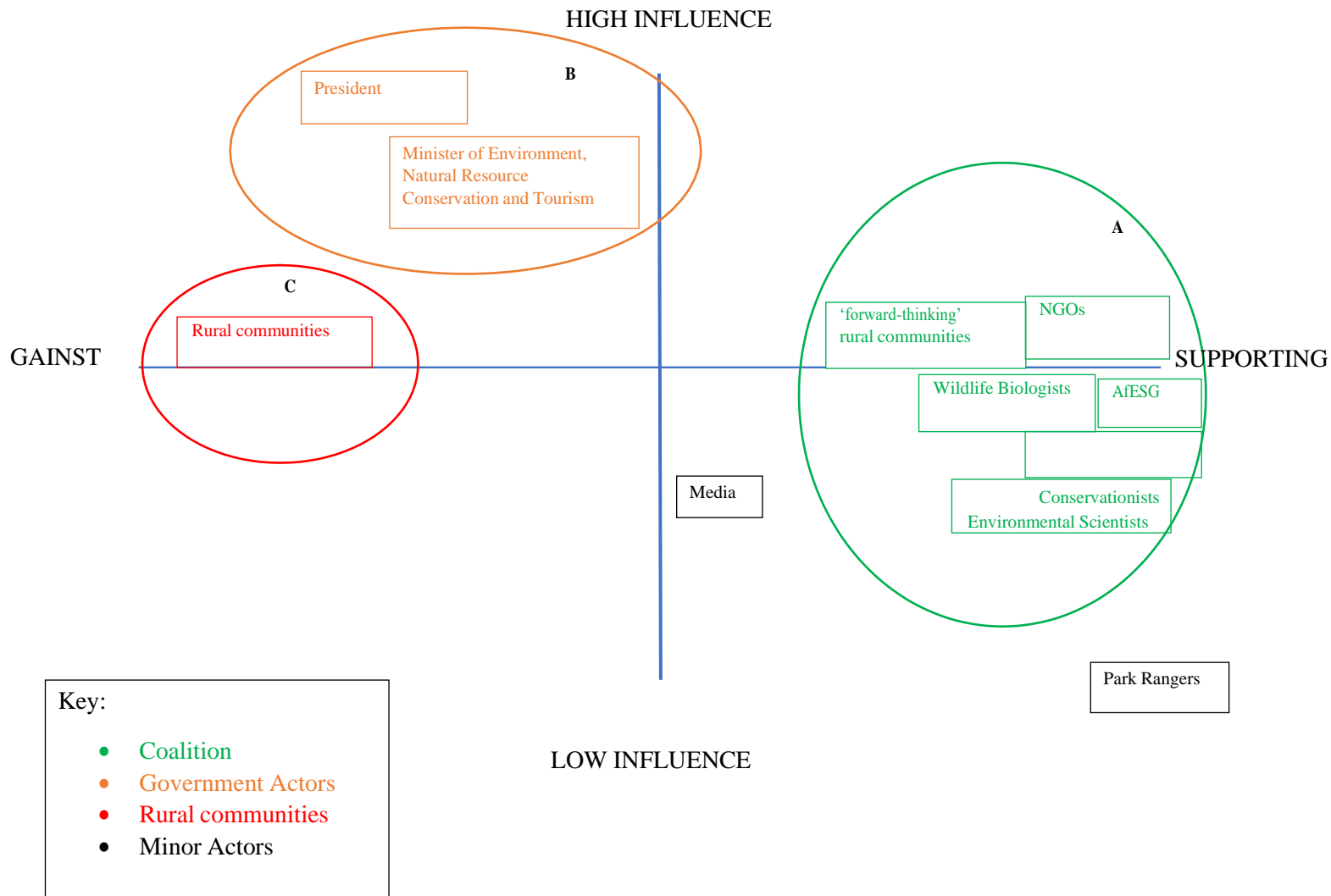


Source: Smithsonian

Additionally, the evidence that in 2019, 87 elephants were found dead between the Okavango and Chobe rivers from poaching will be utilised as a critical juncture to drive change.

## Stakeholder Mapping

**Figure 4. Diagram displaying a stakeholder map of KEY actors with regards to introducing legislation making it illegal to kill elephants in any circumstance in Botswana.**





## **Influencing Strategy**

In Botswana, it is mainly rural communities who are against introducing legislation making it unlawful to kill elephants in any circumstance. However, people in all parts of the country are affected by decisions on elephants. Therefore, the following strategy will be portrayed as tackling a national scale issue with the goal of benefitting the people and elephants of the country.

### ***Approach 1:***

#### *Build a coalition*

As seen from the stakeholder map, actors in 'Group A' are very supportive of introducing legislation making it illegal to kill elephants. Each actor in this group has a high level of support but a fairly low level of influence. Therefore, it is important to build a coalition to ensure they can increase their overall presence in Botswana and get the support of the rural communities by getting loud.

The power analysis did not highlight an actor from 'Group A' who holds significantly more power than others. Therefore, all the actors in this coalition are vital. If a head of the coalition were to be chosen, the NGOs would be best. In the past, they have demonstrated an ability to organise the assembly of multiple stakeholders and ensure they work together efficiently.

#### *Shifting social norms*

The coalition (Group A) will essentially be a social movement. It will target 'Group C' - the rural communities. A social norm in these communities is high numbers of elephants must be dealt with by killing them (Solly, 2019). If these communities understand alternative ways to manage high populations exist and the negative impacts killing elephants has on their livelihoods because of the affect it has on tourism, it will lead to support for legislation that makes it unlawful to kill elephants in any circumstance.

The aim is to ensure rural communities 1) understand the impact allowing elephants to be killed can have on their livelihoods 2) are aware of alternative ways to manage high elephant numbers. A challenge posed is this group has not heard this information from government actors, who keep it away from them, so it may initially be met with scepticism. Therefore to raise awareness/support, using their knowledge, each actor in the coalition will inform them.

Many people from rural communities have jobs in the tourism industry. Therefore, the BTO plays an important role in informing them on the following:

- their livelihoods are at risk if legislation making it unlawful to kill elephants in any circumstance is not implemented.

- This is because tourists who visit are often opposed to the killing of these mammals. In turn, they decide not to visit countries where such acts are occurring (East, 2019).

The decline in tourist numbers then has the following negative spin-offs:

- individuals may lose their job in tourism thus placing livelihoods at risk and they may not be able to provide for their families ultimately plunging them into the cycle of poverty.
- tourism is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest industry in the country so a decrease in revenue will cause government cuts to public services and an overall poorer quality of life.

Evidence from research will be used to exemplify how over \$25 million of revenue from tourism is lost annually in Africa due to the killing of elephants (Naidoo et al. 2016).

A concern from the communities might be if it becomes unlawful to kill elephants then how will the high numbers of elephants that threaten crops be tackled? Therefore, conservationists and AfESG will address these rural communities. They are experts on the species and can explain other methods to manage elephants. This includes adaptive management, contraception, range expansion and translocation (Balfour et al. 2007). Rural communities from other African nations (e.g. Kenya) that have successfully managed high elephant numbers without killing will be invited to share their success stories and experiences. Another worry communities may have from changing practices of managing elephants is they lack the economic resources. However, NGOs can help with this by fundraising.

Additionally, the coalition contains 'forward-thinking' rural communities in Botswana who already understand the importance of introducing legislation making it illegal to kill elephants. They will be invited to talk with rural communities on how they manage elephants and the overall benefits of making it unlawful to kill elephants such as saving their jobs in tourism.

Ultimately, the action above by the coalition will in turn help get many rural communities in support of not killing elephants.

*Get LOUD!*

A challenge the campaign faces is there are large numbers of locals from rural communities who are in support of killing elephants. This is because the state does not tell them about the damaging effects such action has. Therefore, *getting loud* will not only lead to the campaign being well-known and increase its profile but also ensure key information is relayed so they support this strategy.

A 30-second video will be created and shown. It will include members from the coalition briefly explaining the benefits of introducing legislation making it unlawful to kill elephants. Local people will be asked to share the short clip on all forms of social media and send it to friends/family and include #ProtectOurElephants #ProtectOurCountry in their posts.

A large festival will tour the country and be held in rural communities. It will include artists hosting activities like allowing people to paint elephants, playing of the 30-second video, key speakers who support legislation making it unlawful to kill elephants and promotion of the hashtags.

The elephant below will be the symbol of this campaign with the hope it becomes recognisable in rural communities. It's as if the elephant is looking directly at you and asking for help which will likely make people somewhat emotional and potentially more supportive of not killing these mammals. The symbol will be displayed on everything to do with the campaign. This includes posters, banners, leaflets and before/after the 30-second video clip is played.

**Figure 5. The baby elephant that will become a symbol.**



*Source: National Geographic*

To further increase awareness amongst rural communities, posters and leaflets with key facts about the negative impacts of killing elephants will be handed out at the festival. This will include “killing of elephants threatens you AND your family”, “manage elephants in OTHER ways” and “help Botswana BUILD BACK BETTER”.

## ***Approach 2***

### *Influencing the government:*

The Minister of ENT is identified as having a high level of influence. She has expressed some support for not killing elephants as it may harm the species, lead to increased poaching and affect tourism (MM, 2019). Considering the minister's level of influence, this strategy will try to get her in full support of legislation making it illegal to kill elephants.

Obtaining her support will help this influencing strategy move in the right direction and the coalition will aid with this. NGOs, will use ‘insider tactics’ and inform her on the evidence ‘for’ the introduction of legislation making it unlawful to kill these elephants. They can present her with data from other countries in sub-Saharan Africa that have made it illegal to kill these animals in any circumstance. For instance, the NGOs can use the example of Kenya where the killing of animals is illegal (Sifuna, 2012). This legal prohibition was imposed in 1977 by the Kenyan Government and remains in force to this date (Sifuna, 2021).

Environmental scientist and wildlife biologists are experts so will also provide scientific evidence to the minister about the negative impacts killing elephants has on the species/ecosystems. This includes rapid reduction of the species, decrease in biodiversity and decline of other wildlife populations (IAPF, 2021).

The BTO will provide data and examples of how introducing legislation making it illegal to kill elephants can positively impact the tourism industry.

The minister of ENT might argue:

- 1) many rural communities are against making it illegal to kill elephants therefore potentially leading to civil unrest if legislation is introduced.
- 2) there should be a focus on enforcing existing regulations that currently make it illegal to poach.

Regarding point 1, support from rural communities to introduce legislation making it illegal to kill elephants as a result of ‘Approach 1’, will be apparent. To address point 2, conservationists, AfESG and NGOs will validate the coalition’s position by providing evidence on how despite laws that make it illegal to poach, having other legal ways to kill elephants (i.e. allowing hunting) leads to an increase in poaching (Somerville, 2019). Therefore, legislation making it illegal to kill elephants in any circumstance must be introduced across the country. The example of elephants poached between the Okavango & Chobe rivers will be used to illustrate (Somerville, 2019).

Once approach 2 has been conducted, it will likely lead to the minister of ENT introducing legislation making it illegal to kill elephants in any circumstance.

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