

A WIN-WIN FOR ELEPHANTS AND COMMUNITIES: Examining models of community driven elephant conservation throughout Africa

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Most people today are aware of the poaching crisis: 1 elephant dies every 15 minutes. Fewer people know why. While poaching is still rampant, media rarely addresses the complexity of why the demand for the ivory industry continues. My capstone project is a two-part exploration, recording the core issues continuing to drive the poaching crisis (mostly social and economic) and recording examples of conservation methods that address them. The project unveiled that many long-term successful conservation methods meet the needs of both local communities and wildlife conservationists. Through live video and written interviews, this capstone shares three months of face-to-face interviews via skype and in-person collected from this exploration addressing the two exploration topics. Interviewees ranged from conservationists and animal activists to local community members and anthropologists. This small interview collection is nothing short of diverse in the perspectives shared surrounding the conservation of African Elephants and the relevant discourse. A few highlights include interviews with the Nigerian director at African Wildlife Foundation, a Japanese anthropologist who lives with tribal people and a herd of elephants near Kenya, and a U.S.-based creative activist using murals to make a global statement about elephant conservation. The next step after this interview series is to further share the core issues and big picture solution community-driven conservation methods with more of the public through social media and directly to other conservation organizations. Overall, this will foster social awareness as well as contribute to the greater academic conversation on community-driven conservation.