



"HAYI LAA!" - NOT HERE!

**GROUND-BREAKING PROJECT TO TACKLE SOCIAL AND WILDLIFE CRIME IN RURAL COMMUNITY**  
**A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE ENDANGERED WILDLIFE TRUST AND THE THOHOYANDOU**  
**VICTIM EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME**

28<sup>th</sup> May 2014

*Start*

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) is excited to announce the commencement of a new project, with women's rights partner NGO, the Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme (TVEP). The EWT / TVEP project aims to eradicate a range of social and wildlife crimes which negatively impact the people and wildlife in and around Hluvukani, a village west of the Manyeleti Game Reserve section of the Kruger National Park. The project is possible because of the financial support of the UK Prosperity Fund, which is administered by the British High Commission.

Yolan Friedmann, CEO of the EWT, said, *"The majority of the EWT's conservation work is located in rural areas where communities face appalling rights abuses and suffer high rates of social crime. Rural crime, including wildlife crime, affects entire communities and engaging communities is an important, and often overlooked, element in the fight against wildlife poaching."* Friedmann continued, *"The EWT has extensive experience undertaking community-based projects to address wildlife crime, and we believe by partnering TVEP, and incorporating our work with TVEP's, our two organisations will be able to achieve even greater results than if either NGO worked alone."*

TVEP seeks to generate an attitude of zero tolerance towards all forms of sexual assault, domestic violence, child abuse and HIV/AIDS stigma (the "TVEP themes"). TVEP's "Zero Tolerance Village Alliance" (ZTVA) model, which forms the basis of the joint EWT / TVEP project, includes campaigns and community workshops on the TVEP themes (led by trained community members); interventions with SAPS and other state service providers to ensure they comply with their departmental mandates; the opening of a safe house for abuse victims; and provision of information on sexual and reproductive health rights and services.

Fiona Nicholson, TVEP's Programme Director explained, *"There are two particularly important facets of the ZTVA model which make it unique. Firstly, each ZTVA village project is run by a community elected forum, to ensure real community ownership. Secondly, the programme's design leads to increased women's agency, that is, in effect, women's ability to make effective choices and to transform those choices into desired outcomes"*. Fiona continued, *"Sexual and gender based violence is rife in rural South Africa and data from existing ZTVA villages shows that after project completion there is an increase in reporting of human rights abuses of greater than 500%, with ZTVA village residents over ten times more likely to report crimes than the regional average. We know our model works"*.

Given the evidence demonstrating the TVEP approach leads to such substantial increases in reporting social crimes, the EWT and TVEP believe that integrating the EWT's wildlife theme within the TVEP themes will also lead to increased reporting of wildlife crimes, with subsequent reductions in wildlife crime over the long term.

In December 2014 the British High Commission called for innovative project ideas to combat the illegal wildlife trade. David Johnson, who is designing integrated community and conservation programmes for the EWT, TVEP and other NGOs, thought there were similarities between the social crimes which are of particular concern to TVEP and the wildlife crimes of particular concern to the EWT. David explained, *"In patriarchal rural communities social crimes are often largely accepted by the community, female rape victims often don't report the crime through fear, they doubt their family or community will support them, they anticipate a negative response from SAPS [the police] and have a lack of knowledge of their rights. Similarly, wildlife crimes are also generally accepted by these same communities, who might not know the law and might be fearful of reporting criminal activity. We thought the TVEP approach could be developed to include wildlife crime."*

Six hundred adults will each benefit from five days of workshops on project themes and two hundred school learners will benefit from similar, although age appropriate, classes at school. As the project integrates environmental and human health actions, workshops will also cover voluntary family planning options, to empower women to be able to determine the number and timing of their pregnancies, based on World Health Organisation guidance. By avoiding unwanted pregnancies women will be likely to have fewer and healthier children, benefiting family health and reducing long term environmental pressures – another integrated outcome.

The Manyeleti Development Foundation (MDF), the NGO promoting development in the Manyeleti area, including Hluvukani, supports the project and is assisting with community liaison. Ruth Mthabane of the MDF said, *"The community of Hluvukani faces so many challenges. We see this project as a way to truly help the village. Hluvukani will become the very first member of the Zero Tolerance Village Alliance to say "no" to both social and wildlife crimes. Where else can one claim that? This is why the project will be known as "Hayi Laa!" meaning – "not here!" in Shangaan, the predominant local language."*

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