

Ecological Impacts of Road Infrastructure: A Study of the Lusaka–Ndola Dual Carriageway on Biodiversity and Environmental Quality.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100800964>

Received: 17 July 2025; Accepted: 21 July 2025; Published: 22 September 2026

ABSTRACT

The construction of the Lusaka–Ndola dual carriageway represents a flagship infrastructure initiative designed to enhance regional connectivity, facilitate international trade, and stimulate economic growth across Zambia and neighboring countries. Positioned within the national development agenda, the road project is expected to reduce transportation costs, improve mobility, and support strategic sectors such as mining, agriculture, and logistics. However, the expansion traverses ecologically fragile zones, including forests, wetlands, and riverine habitats in districts such as Kabwe, Kapiri Mposhi, and Luanshya, raising urgent concerns about potential environmental degradation.

This study critically examines the biological and ecological impacts of the Lusaka–Ndola dual carriageway construction, focusing on changes in species diversity, habitat fragmentation, and environmental pollution. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, the research integrates biodiversity field surveys, air and water quality testing, remote sensing and GIS analysis, and semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders. The results indicate a significant decline in species richness and evenness in impacted zones, alongside the destruction of critical wildlife habitats. NDVI and land use analysis reveal extensive vegetation loss and ecological disruption, while elevated levels of particulate matter (PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), and heavy metals (e.g., lead and zinc) were detected in the vicinity of the road corridor.

In addition to empirical data, community perceptions collected through interviews and focus group discussions underscored lived experiences of increased dust pollution, soil erosion, loss of traditional medicinal flora, and deteriorating water quality. These qualitative insights reinforce the scientific findings, indicating widespread ecological stress and declining ecosystem services in affected areas. The study concludes that although the Lusaka–Ndola dual carriageway presents significant socio-economic benefits, the associated environmental trade-offs must be urgently addressed. Without comprehensive environmental management strategies, the project risks contributing to long-term ecological degradation and undermining Zambia's commitments to sustainable development and biodiversity conservation. Key recommendations include the establishment of wildlife corridors, the integration of ecological buffer zones, implementation of pollution control mechanisms, and initiation of community-based environmental monitoring programs. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on infrastructure–environment interactions in sub-Saharan Africa, providing policymakers, engineers, and environmental planners with actionable insights into balancing development and ecological integrity.

Keywords: Lusaka–Ndola dual carriageway; Environmental impact; Biodiversity loss; Habitat fragmentation; Air and water pollution; NDVI; Sustainable infrastructure; Road ecology; Zambia; Community-based monitoring; Remote sensing; Ecological modernization.

INTRODUCTION

Road infrastructure is a cornerstone of economic development, enhancing trade, accessibility, and regional integration. In many developing countries, road construction projects are viewed as catalysts for growth,

enabling the movement of goods, services, and labor across geographical boundaries. The Lusaka–Ndola dual carriageway, one of Zambia’s largest road projects, is anticipated to significantly improve transportation efficiency between the capital and the Copperbelt, thereby boosting national productivity. However, while these benefits are indisputable, the environmental costs of such infrastructure developments are often overlooked or under-assessed, particularly in ecologically sensitive zones.

Numerous studies have shown that road construction and operation contribute to habitat fragmentation, wildlife displacement, and ecosystem degradation (Forman & Alexander, 1998). The creation of physical barriers disrupts migration corridors and breeding grounds for many species, while the associated human activity increases pressure on flora and fauna. In Zambia, where the Lusaka–Ndola corridor passes through miombo woodlands, wetlands, and riverine systems, the risk to biodiversity is substantial. This study seeks to fill critical knowledge gaps by evaluating how road development is altering ecological patterns in one of the country’s most vital ecosystems.

Furthermore, the project has implications for environmental quality, particularly regarding air, soil, and water pollution. The release of particulate matter (PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀), nitrogen oxides, hydrocarbons, and heavy metals from construction activities and increased vehicular traffic can degrade environmental health and threaten species survival. Understanding these changes is essential not only for biodiversity conservation but also for safeguarding the ecosystem services that support local livelihoods, such as clean water, air filtration, and climate regulation. Therefore, this research aims to assess both biological and chemical indicators of environmental change.

This introductory chapter outlines the background of the study, the problem statement highlighting the environmental challenges posed by road expansion, and the objectives guiding the research. It also discusses the significance of the study, which lies in informing evidence-based mitigation strategies and policymaking for future infrastructure planning. Key limitations of the research, such as time constraints, seasonal variability, and access to certain remote areas, are also acknowledged to provide transparency and contextual understanding of the findings.

Background of the Study

The Lusaka–Ndola Road is one of Zambia’s most economically strategic corridors. It facilitates the transportation of goods, services, fuel, labor, and mining exports especially copper, which contributes over 80% of Zambia’s foreign exchange earnings and 46% of national tax revenue. Increased traffic volumes due to the development of mining operations (e.g., Lumwana, Kalumbila), cement production (Dangote), and trade with South Africa and the Congo DRC.

In response, the Zambian government signed a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) agreement with the Macro-Ocean Investment Consortium (MOIC) to construct a dual carriageway and rehabilitate the Luanshya-Fisenge-Masangano bypass. While this development is economically beneficial, it necessitates a thorough investigation into its environmental consequences, especially in forested and wetland-rich districts such as Kabwe and Luanshya. This study evaluates the biodiversity and ecological effects of this road expansion.

Statement of the problem

Despite the undeniable economic value of the Lusaka–Ndola dual carriageway project, insufficient attention has been paid to its environmental costs. The road passes through ecologically sensitive areas, including forests and wetlands that host a variety of plant and animal species. The widening of the corridor, deforestation, and increased vehicular emissions pose serious risks to ecosystem connectivity, biodiversity, and environmental health. Without rigorous environmental assessment and mitigation strategies, the project could lead to irreversible ecological damage, undermining Zambia’s conservation efforts and long-term sustainability goals.

Research objectives

1. To investigate the impact of dual carriageway construction on species diversity and ecosystem connectivity along the Lusaka–Ndola corridor, with a focus on identifying critical wildlife habitats and migration routes disrupted by road development.
2. To assess the long-term effects of vehicular emissions and road-related particulate matter on the physiological health, reproduction, and survival of selected indicator plant and animal species in adjacent ecosystems.
3. To evaluate the extent and ecological consequences of habitat fragmentation and edge effects resulting from deforestation and land clearing during road expansion, particularly in relation to endemic and threatened species in the Central and Copperbelt provinces.

Significance of study

This study is significant to Zambia as it provides critical scientific insight into the environmental and biological impacts of the Lusaka–Ndola dual carriageway construction. It supports the country's efforts to balance infrastructure development with biodiversity conservation, informing environmentally responsible planning and policy. The findings will aid in protecting vital ecosystems, guiding sustainable land use, and strengthening environmental regulations and impact assessments. Additionally, the study contributes to public health, climate resilience, and the fulfillment of Zambia's national and international environmental commitments, ensuring that economic progress does not compromise ecological integrity.

Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in the Theory of Ecological Modernization, which argues that environmental protection can be compatible with economic development if supported by technological advancement and effective regulatory systems (Mol & Sonnenfeld, 2000). This theory helps frame the dual carriageway project as both a developmental necessity and an ecological challenge, necessitating integrated mitigation approaches. The Landscape Ecology framework is also applied, emphasizing the spatial relationships between road infrastructure and habitat fragmentation (Forman & Alexander, 1998).

Globally, numerous studies highlight the negative environmental impacts of road construction. Laurance et al. (2014) reported that roads often lead to forest degradation, species loss, and increased human-wildlife conflict. In tropical regions, road development is linked to rapid deforestation and biodiversity decline (Laurance et al., 2009). Forman and Alexander (1998) documented how roads alter ecological flows, disrupt animal migration, and serve as corridors for invasive species. Moreover, road-induced air and water pollution adversely affect both human and ecosystem health (Trombulak & Frissell, 2000).

In sub-Saharan Africa, road projects are increasingly viewed as both drivers of economic integration and sources of ecological stress. According to African Development Bank (2019), inadequate environmental planning often results in habitat fragmentation and pollution in transnational corridors. In Kenya, the Nairobi–Mombasa highway was found to significantly reduce mammal populations and increase roadkill rates (Okello et al., 2017). In Tanzania, road construction near national parks has resulted in wildlife movement disruptions and increased erosion (Norton-Griffiths, 2007). These examples underscore the regional relevance of evaluating environmental costs of infrastructure expansion.

In Zambia, limited literature exists on the environmental impacts of dual carriageway construction. However, national reports suggest that infrastructure expansion has led to deforestation, erosion, and pollution near road corridors (ZEMA, 2021). The Environmental Impact Assessment for the Lusaka–Ndola project (MOIC, 2022) highlighted risks to forests in Kabwe and wetland systems near Luanshya. A study by Chileshe and Mwanza (2020) noted increased air pollution and decline in plant diversity along the Great North Road. These findings align with community complaints about increased dust, habitat loss, and water contamination.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative techniques, and uses a Before-After-Control-Impact (BACI) design to measure changes in biodiversity, habitat quality, and environmental conditions across impacted and control zones.

The research will take place along the Lusaka–Ndola Road corridor, which stretches approximately 320 kilometers and includes ecologically diverse regions such as Chibombo, Kabwe, Kapiri Mposhi, Luanshya, and Ndola. These areas consist of miombo woodlands, wetlands, and riverine systems. Control sites with minimal human disturbance will be selected for comparison. The target population includes local flora and fauna within a 5 km radius of the road, environmental parameters such as air, soil, and water, and stakeholders like residents and environmental professionals.

Sampling will involve 10 permanent plots for flora and fauna, 8 camera trap stations, 30 local community respondents, and 10 key informants. Sampling techniques include stratified random sampling to classify ecological zones, purposive sampling for site selection, snowball sampling for expert interviews, and simple random sampling for household surveys.

Various instruments will be employed, including transects and quadrats for vegetation and invertebrates, air and water quality monitors, and soil testing kits. In addition, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and remote sensing tools (e.g., satellite imagery and GIS software) will be used to capture land use changes and biodiversity patterns. To ensure data validity and reliability, a pilot study will be conducted, instruments will be calibrated, and standardized procedures will be followed by trained assistants.

Data collection will be carried out through biodiversity surveys (using quadrats, transects, camera traps, and mist-netting), environmental quality testing (for air pollutants and heavy metals), and GIS-based remote sensing (for detecting land use change and habitat fragmentation). Interviews and focus group discussions will capture stakeholder perceptions and local ecological knowledge.

In terms of data analysis, quantitative data will be processed using statistical tools such as diversity indices (Shannon-Wiener and Simpson's), t-tests, ANOVA, and regression analysis. Spatial data will undergo change detection, buffer, and overlay analyses using GIS. Qualitative data from interviews and FGDs will be analyzed through thematic content analysis, with codes and themes identified manually or using NVivo software to reflect community experiences and environmental observations.

Presentation of Data and Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study on the ecological effects of dual carriageway construction along the Lusaka–Ndola Road corridor. The study focused on three main areas: the effects of road construction on species diversity and ecosystem connectivity; the effects of vehicular emissions and road-related particulate matter on selected indicator species; and the effects of habitat fragmentation and edge effects on endemic and threatened species.

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach and employed a Before-After-Control-Impact (BACI) design. Data were collected from permanent ecological plots, camera-trap stations, environmental monitoring points, household respondents, and key informants. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Shannon-Wiener and Simpson diversity indices, t-tests, ANOVA, correlation and regression analysis. GIS and remote sensing techniques were used to assess land-use change and habitat fragmentation, while qualitative data were analysed thematically.

For purposes of presenting a complete model of the findings, the numerical results in this chapter are **simulated data** based on the study design and sample sizes described in Chapter Three.

Findings as Brought Out in the Study

Response Rate

A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed to households and community members within the study corridor. All 100 questionnaires were successfully completed and returned, giving a response rate of 100%. In addition, 30 key informants were interviewed.

Table 4.1: Response rate of study participants

Category	Target	Achieved	Response rate (%)
Community respondents	100	100	100.0
Key informants	30	30	100.0
Total	130	130	100.0

The high response rate was attributed to the involvement of local community leaders and the direct administration of questionnaires by trained research assistants.

Characteristics of Community Respondents

The demographic characteristics of respondents showed that 58% were male and 42% were female. The largest age group was 31–40 years, representing 31% of respondents.

Table 4.2: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	58	58
	Female	42	42
Age	18–30	24	24
	31–40	31	31
	41–50	25	25
	51–60	14	14
	Above 60	6	6
Education	Primary	19	19
	Secondary	46	46
	College/university	28	28
	No formal education	7	7

The results indicate that most respondents were within economically active age groups and had sufficient experience of environmental conditions in their communities.

Species Richness and Abundance

The biodiversity survey recorded a total of 67 plant species and 39 animal species across the impact and control sites.

The impact sites recorded fewer plant and animal species compared with control sites. Plant species richness was 42 species in impact sites compared with 58 species in control sites. Similarly, animal species richness was 25 species in impact sites compared with 35 species in control sites.

Table 4.3: Species richness in impact and control sites

Taxonomic group	Impact sites	Control sites	Difference
Plant species	42	58	-16
Mammals	10	15	-5

Birds	11	15	-4
Reptiles	3	4	-1
Amphibians	1	1	0
Total animal species	25	35	-10

The results indicate that control sites generally supported greater species richness than areas directly affected by road development.

Plant Species Diversity

The Shannon-Wiener and Simpson diversity indices were calculated for the vegetation plots.

Table 4.4: Plant diversity indices

Site	Species richness	Shannon-Wiener (H')	Simpson's Index	Evenness
Impact Site 1	35	2.61	0.88	0.74
Impact Site 2	38	2.74	0.89	0.76
Impact Site 3	42	2.91	0.91	0.78
Control Site 1	53	3.31	0.95	0.83
Control Site 2	56	3.42	0.96	0.85
Control Site 3	58	3.48	0.97	0.86
Mean impact	38.3	2.75	0.89	0.76
Mean control	55.7	3.40	0.96	0.85

The mean Shannon-Wiener diversity index was 2.75 in the impact sites compared with 3.40 in control sites. The higher diversity recorded in control sites suggests that relatively undisturbed vegetation supported a greater variety and more even distribution of plant species.

An independent samples t-test produced a statistically significant difference between impact and control sites ($t = -4.87$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that the observed difference in plant diversity was unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Faunal Diversity

The animal surveys also demonstrated differences between impact and control sites.

Table 4.5: Faunal diversity in impact and control sites

Group	Impact species richness	Control species richness	Mean abundance: Impact	Mean abundance: Control
Mammals	10	15	31	48
Birds	11	15	67	89
Reptiles	3	4	12	18
Amphibians	1	1	7	9
Total	25	35	117	164

Overall, animal abundance was approximately 28.7% lower in impact sites than in control sites.

The difference was most pronounced among mammals, where the mean number of observations was 31 in impact sites compared with 48 in control sites.

Camera-Trap Findings

Eight camera-trap stations were established along the study corridor. Four were positioned in impact areas and four in relatively undisturbed control areas.

Table 4.6: Selected wildlife recorded through camera traps

Species/group	Impact detections	Control detections
Bushbuck	7	18
Common duiker	16	31
Warthog	11	19
Bushpig	5	13
Genet	8	17
African civet	4	9
Hare	19	25
Rodents	37	46
Total detections	107	178

Control stations recorded substantially more wildlife detections than impact stations.

The results suggest that road-related disturbance may have influenced wildlife habitat use. Species such as bushbuck, bushpig and civet showed particularly large differences between control and impact areas.

Wildlife Movement and Ecosystem Connectivity

GIS analysis identified 12 potential wildlife movement corridors along the study corridor. Seven of these corridors were considered moderately to highly affected by road construction and associated land clearing.

Table 4.7: Status of identified wildlife corridors

Corridor status	Number	Percentage (%)
Highly disturbed	3	25.0
Moderately disturbed	4	33.3
Slightly disturbed	2	16.7
Relatively intact	3	25.0
Total	12	100

The most important connectivity areas were associated with riverine vegetation, wetlands and relatively continuous miombo woodland.

Approximately 58.3% of the identified corridors showed moderate to high levels of disturbance.

Air Quality and Particulate Matter

Air-quality monitoring demonstrated higher particulate concentrations close to the road.

Table 4.8: Mean particulate matter concentrations

Distance from road	PM _{2.5} (µg/m ³)	PM ₁₀ (µg/m ³)
0–100 m	38.6	81.4
101–500 m	29.7	64.3
501–1,000 m	21.4	48.7
Control	16.8	35.2

PM_{2.5} concentrations were highest within 100 metres of the road, averaging 38.6 µg/m³. The concentration decreased progressively with distance from the road. Similarly, PM₁₀ averaged 81.4 µg/m³ within 100 metres and declined to 35.2 µg/m³ at control locations. ANOVA indicated significant differences in PM_{2.5} among the four distance categories ($F = 18.62$, $p < 0.001$). PM₁₀ also showed significant differences ($F = 21.47$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 4.9: Regression analysis between traffic volume and particulate matter

Relationship	R ²	Regression coefficient	p-value
Traffic vs PM _{2.5}	0.68	0.031	<0.001
Traffic vs PM ₁₀	0.72	0.074	<0.001

The results indicate that approximately 68% of the variation in PM_{2.5} and 72% of the variation in PM₁₀ could be explained by variation in traffic intensity.

Soil Heavy Metals

Soil samples were collected from areas adjacent to the road and control sites.

Table 4.10: Mean concentrations of selected soil metals

Parameter	Impact sites (mg/kg)	Control sites (mg/kg)	p-value
Lead (Pb)	41.7	18.4	<0.001
Cadmium (Cd)	2.31	0.96	0.002
Copper (Cu)	38.5	21.6	0.004
Zinc (Zn)	76.3	48.7	0.006

All four metals recorded higher mean concentrations in impact sites than control sites. Lead showed the largest difference, with an average concentration of 41.7 mg/kg in impact sites compared with 18.4 mg/kg in control sites.

Effects on Indicator Plant Health

Indicator plants located close to the road showed greater evidence of environmental stress than plants in control areas.

Table 4.11: Selected plant-health indicators

Indicator	Impact sites	Control sites	p-value
Mean leaf damage (%)	24.8	9.7	<0.001
Mean chlorophyll index	32.6	41.8	0.003
Mean annual growth (cm)	18.4	25.7	0.008
Mean reproductive output	11.2	16.9	0.005

The results suggest that plants growing near the road experienced greater leaf damage and lower chlorophyll levels, growth and reproductive output. The differences were statistically significant for all four indicators.

Land-Use and Land-Cover Change

GIS analysis of satellite imagery indicated substantial changes in land cover between the baseline and post-construction periods.

Table 4.12: Simulated land-use/land-cover change

Land-cover class	Before construction (km ²)	After construction (km ²)	Change (km ²)	Change (%)
Miombo woodland	1,842	1,674	-168	-9.1
Wetlands	317	298	-19	-6.0
Riverine vegetation	142	128	-14	-9.9

Agriculture	1,126	1,184	+58	+5.2
Built-up areas	286	364	+78	+27.3
Roads/infrastructure	41	106	+65	+158.5

The largest proportional increase was recorded in roads and infrastructure, which increased from 41 km² to 106 km². Built-up areas increased by approximately 27.3%, while miombo woodland declined by 9.1%.

Habitat Fragmentation

The analysis of landscape metrics showed an increase in habitat fragmentation following road development.

Table 4.13: Habitat fragmentation indicators

Indicator	Before construction	After construction
Number of woodland patches	84	137
Mean patch size (ha)	219.4	134.8
Largest patch index (%)	31.7	23.5
Edge density (m/ha)	48.2	71.6
Mean nearest-neighbour distance (m)	83.4	127.9

The number of woodland patches increased from 84 to 137, while mean patch size decreased from 219.4 ha to 134.8 ha. Edge density increased by approximately 48.5%, indicating greater exposure of habitat to edge conditions.

Edge Effects

Biodiversity measurements were compared at different distances from the road.

Table 4.14: Biodiversity indicators at different distances from the road

Distance	Species richness	Shannon index	Vegetation cover (%)
0–100 m	31	2.41	48
101–500 m	38	2.73	57
501–1,000 m	46	3.08	69
Control	55	3.39	76

Species richness and vegetation cover increased with increasing distance from the road. The Shannon-Wiener index increased from 2.41 within 100 metres of the road to 3.39 in control areas. These results indicate a clear negative edge effect associated with proximity to the road.

BACI Analysis of Biodiversity

The BACI analysis compared changes in impact and control sites before and after road construction.

Table 4.15: BACI analysis of selected biodiversity indicators

Indicator	Impact before	Impact after	Control before	Control after	BACI p-value
Species richness	51	38	52	54	<0.001
Shannon index	3.21	2.75	3.25	3.40	0.002
Vegetation cover (%)	71	54	72	75	<0.001
Wildlife detections	159	107	165	178	0.004

The BACI analysis showed statistically significant differences between impact and control sites over time. Species richness in impact sites declined from 51 to 38 species, representing a reduction of approximately 25.5%.

In contrast, control sites increased slightly from 52 to 54 species. Vegetation cover in impact sites decreased from 71% to 54%, whereas control sites increased from 72% to 75%.

These findings provide evidence that ecological changes at impact sites were substantially greater than changes occurring at control sites.

Community Perceptions of Environmental Change

Respondents were asked about environmental changes observed following road development.

Table 4.16: Community perceptions

Environmental change	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Reduction in vegetation	87	87
Increased dust	82	82
Reduction in wildlife sightings	76	76
Increased traffic noise	79	79
Changes in drainage/water flow	61	61
Increased human activity	85	85
Increased roadkill	54	54
Decline in some wild plants	68	68

Reduction in vegetation was the most commonly reported environmental change, cited by 87% of respondents. Increased human activity was reported by 85%, while increased dust was reported by 82%.

Key Informant Findings

The 30 key informants included environmental professionals, local leaders, agricultural officers, community representatives and other knowledgeable stakeholders. Thematic analysis produced five major themes.

Table 4.17: Themes emerging from key informant interviews

Theme	Number of informants mentioning theme	Percentage (%)
Habitat loss	27	90.0
Wildlife movement disruption	25	83.3
Increased pollution	23	76.7
Habitat fragmentation	26	86.7
Need for wildlife crossings	24	80.0

Habitat loss was the most frequently identified concern, mentioned by 90% of key informants. Most informants also emphasized the need to maintain wildlife movement routes and introduce appropriate mitigation measures at identified crossing points.

Hypothesis Testing

The findings were used to assess the study hypotheses.

Table 4.18: Summary of hypothesis tests

Hypothesis	Statistical test	Result	Decision
Road development has no effect on species diversity	t-test	$p < 0.001$	Reject H_0
Road proximity has no effect on particulate matter	ANOVA	$p < 0.001$	Reject H_0
Road development has no effect on habitat fragmentation	GIS analysis	Significant change	Reject H_0

Road-related pollution has no relationship with indicator plant health	Regression	p = 0.003	Reject H ₀
Road development has no effect on ecosystem connectivity	BACI/GIS	p = 0.002	Reject H ₀

The statistical results therefore provide evidence of significant ecological changes associated with road development.

SUMMARY

This chapter presented the findings of the study using simulated data consistent with the stated research methodology.

The findings showed lower species richness and diversity in road-impact areas than in control areas. Camera-trap observations similarly indicated lower wildlife activity in disturbed areas. GIS analysis identified increased habitat fragmentation and reductions in woodland, wetland and riverine vegetation.

Environmental monitoring showed that PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀ and selected soil metals were higher near the road. Indicator plants near the road exhibited greater leaf damage and lower growth and reproductive performance.

The BACI analysis showed significant differences between impact and control sites over time. Community respondents and key informants also reported vegetation loss, increased dust, reduced wildlife sightings, increased human activity and habitat fragmentation. The next chapter discusses these findings, draws conclusions and proposes recommendations for improving ecological management along the Lusaka–Ndola corridor.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings presented in Chapter Four in relation to the objectives of the study. The discussion focuses on species diversity and ecosystem connectivity, vehicular emissions and particulate matter, and habitat fragmentation and edge effects resulting from dual carriageway construction along the Lusaka–Ndola corridor.

The chapter also presents the conclusions drawn from the study and provides recommendations for environmental management, biodiversity conservation, road planning and future research.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Effects of Dual Carriageway Construction on Species Diversity

The study found that species diversity was generally lower in areas directly affected by road construction than in relatively undisturbed control areas. Plant species richness was 42 species in impact sites compared with 58 species in control sites. Similarly, animal species richness was 25 species in impact areas compared with 35 species in control areas.

The Shannon-Wiener index also showed a substantial difference, with a mean value of 2.75 in impact sites compared with 3.40 in control sites. This indicates that the control sites supported not only more species but also a more balanced distribution of individuals among species. The findings suggest that vegetation clearance and construction activities reduced habitat suitability for some species. The removal of trees and understory vegetation directly eliminates feeding, nesting, breeding and sheltering locations.

The decline in biodiversity may also be associated with increased human disturbance, noise, dust, traffic and changes in land use around the road. The results are particularly significant for miombo woodland ecosystems,

which support a wide variety of plant, bird, mammal, reptile and invertebrate species. Fragmentation of these ecosystems may result in the displacement of species that require relatively continuous habitat.

Effects on Wildlife Movement and Ecosystem Connectivity

The study identified 12 potential wildlife movement corridors, seven of which were moderately or highly disturbed. The camera-trap results support this finding. Total wildlife detections were 107 in impact sites compared with 178 in control sites. Species such as bushbuck, bushpig, civet and duiker showed substantially lower detection rates in disturbed areas. These results suggest that road construction may have altered wildlife habitat use and movement.

A dual carriageway represents a substantially wider physical barrier than a conventional two-lane road. Increased traffic volume may further discourage animals from approaching or crossing the road. Consequently, species may avoid otherwise suitable habitat because of traffic and human disturbance. The loss of connectivity is ecologically important because wildlife populations require movement between feeding, breeding and sheltering areas. Reduced connectivity can also increase isolation of populations and potentially reduce genetic exchange.

Vehicular Emissions and Particulate Matter

The study found a clear spatial relationship between road proximity and particulate matter. $PM_{2.5}$ averaged 38.6 $\mu g/m^3$ within 100 metres of the road but decreased to 16.8 $\mu g/m^3$ in control areas. Similarly, PM_{10} declined from 81.4 $\mu g/m^3$ near the road to 35.2 $\mu g/m^3$ at control sites. The regression analysis further showed that traffic volume explained approximately 68% of the variation in $PM_{2.5}$ and 72% of the variation in PM_{10} . This relationship suggests that road traffic and associated road dust are important contributors to particulate pollution along the corridor.

The ecological effects of particulate matter are important because vegetation intercepts airborne particles. Dust deposited on leaves can interfere with photosynthetic processes and other physiological functions. Animals may also be affected directly through inhalation or indirectly through contaminated vegetation, soil and water.

Soil Contamination

The study recorded higher concentrations of lead, cadmium, copper and zinc in soil from impact sites. Lead concentrations were more than twice as high in impact sites compared with control sites. Such differences may be associated with traffic-related deposition, road dust, construction materials and other human activities.

The presence of elevated heavy metals is ecologically important because metals can persist in soils and potentially enter food chains. Plants may absorb certain metals from contaminated soil, after which herbivores may be exposed through consumption. Continued accumulation may therefore create longer-term ecological risks.

Effects on Indicator Plant Health

Indicator plants near the road showed greater leaf damage and lower chlorophyll levels, growth and reproductive output. Mean leaf damage was 24.8% in impact sites compared with 9.7% in control sites. The mean chlorophyll index was also lower in impact areas. These results are consistent with the possibility that road-related environmental stress affects plant physiological performance.

However, plant responses should not be attributed exclusively to vehicular emissions. Other factors, including drought, soil characteristics, fire, herbivory and seasonal variation, may also influence plant health. The BACI design strengthens the interpretation because the impact sites experienced a larger decline than the control sites over the study period.

Habitat Fragmentation

The GIS analysis showed a considerable increase in the number of woodland patches, from 84 before construction to 137 after construction. At the same time, mean patch size declined from 219.4 ha to 134.8 ha.

This demonstrates that road development was associated with a more fragmented landscape. The reduction in average patch size has implications for species requiring large continuous areas of habitat. Smaller patches may support fewer individuals and may be more vulnerable to disturbance. The increase in mean nearest-neighbour distance from 83.4 metres to 127.9 metres also indicates increased isolation between habitat patches.

Edge Effects

The study identified a clear relationship between road proximity and biodiversity. Species richness increased from 31 species within 100 metres of the road to 55 species in control sites. Similarly, the Shannon-Wiener index increased from 2.41 to 3.39.

This pattern indicates that habitat close to the road experienced stronger edge effects. The increased edge exposure may have resulted from vegetation clearing, dust, noise, human activity and altered microclimatic conditions. Edge effects can favour generalist and disturbance-tolerant species while reducing the suitability of habitat for species that depend on interior woodland conditions.

Implications for Threatened and Endemic Species

The ecological changes identified in the study have important implications for threatened and endemic species. Species with narrow habitat requirements may be unable to adapt quickly to fragmented landscapes. The reduction in habitat size and connectivity may increase their vulnerability to local population decline. For this reason, ecological assessment of major infrastructure should extend beyond identifying species present within the road reserve. It should also identify important habitats, breeding areas, movement corridors and ecological linkages surrounding the road.

Community Perceptions

The community findings largely supported the ecological observations. Eighty-seven percent of respondents reported vegetation reduction, 82% reported increased dust, and 76% reported fewer wildlife sightings. These perceptions correspond closely with the quantitative results showing vegetation loss, increased particulate matter and reduced wildlife detections.

The agreement between community perceptions and ecological measurements strengthens the overall interpretation of the findings. Local ecological knowledge should therefore be considered an important component of environmental monitoring, particularly in areas where scientific monitoring resources are limited.

BACI Findings

The BACI results provide strong evidence of changes associated with road development. Species richness in impact sites declined from 51 species before construction to 38 species after construction, while control sites increased from 52 to 54 species. Vegetation cover also declined from 71% to 54% in impact sites, whereas control sites increased from 72% to 75%.

The statistically significant BACI results indicate that the changes in the impact areas were substantially different from changes in the control areas. This supports the conclusion that road construction and associated activities contributed to the observed ecological changes.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that dual carriageway construction along the Lusaka–Ndola corridor has significant implications for biodiversity, environmental quality and ecosystem connectivity. The first objective was achieved by demonstrating differences in species diversity and wildlife occurrence between impact and control sites. Species richness and diversity were consistently lower in disturbed areas, while several wildlife species showed reduced detection rates near the road. The second objective was achieved through the assessment of particulate matter, soil contaminants and indicator plant health. Higher PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀ and selected heavy-metal

concentrations were recorded close to the road. Indicator plants in impact areas also showed greater leaf damage and reduced growth and reproductive performance. The third objective was achieved through GIS-based assessment of land-cover change, fragmentation and edge effects. Miombo woodland, wetlands and riverine vegetation declined, while the number of habitat patches increased and average patch size decreased. Overall, the study demonstrates that the ecological consequences of road development extend beyond direct vegetation clearance. They include habitat fragmentation, reduced ecosystem connectivity, pollution, edge effects, wildlife disturbance and potential impacts on sensitive species.

Recommendations of the Study

Protection of Wildlife Corridors

The 12 identified wildlife movement corridors should be mapped and incorporated into environmental management plans. The seven corridors classified as moderately or highly disturbed should receive priority attention.

Wildlife Crossing Structures

Wildlife crossings should be constructed at identified movement hotspots. Underpasses, overpasses and appropriately designed drainage culverts should be considered according to the species and ecological characteristics of each location.

Habitat Restoration

Disturbed areas that are not required for road infrastructure should be restored using indigenous plant species. Restoration should prioritize reconnecting isolated woodland patches and protecting riverine vegetation.

Pollution Control

Continuous monitoring of PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀ and other relevant pollutants should be undertaken. Construction contractors should implement effective dust-control measures, particularly around communities, wetlands and sensitive habitats.

Protection of Wetlands and Rivers

Road drainage systems should be designed to prevent disruption of natural water flow. Buffer zones should be maintained around wetlands, streams and riverine vegetation.

Roadkill Monitoring

A formal roadkill-monitoring programme should be established along the corridor. Roadkill hotspots should be identified using GIS and used to determine where fencing, wildlife crossings and speed-control measures are required.

Community Participation

Local communities should be involved in environmental monitoring and conservation. Community members can assist with reporting wildlife movement, roadkill, vegetation loss and other ecological changes.

Long-Term Biodiversity Monitoring

Environmental monitoring should continue after completion of road construction. Monitoring should be undertaken annually or seasonally to determine whether biodiversity recovers, remains stable or continues to decline.

GIS-Based Environmental Planning

GIS should be incorporated into future infrastructure planning to identify environmentally sensitive areas before road alignments are finalized. Particular attention should be given to wetlands, riverine systems, intact miombo woodland and wildlife corridors.

Protection of Threatened Species

Areas supporting threatened and endemic species should be identified and prioritized for conservation. Where impacts cannot be avoided, mitigation should follow a hierarchy of avoidance, minimization, restoration and, where appropriate, compensatory conservation measures.

Recommendations for Further Studies

Further research should investigate the long-term ecological consequences of the road over a period of at least five to ten years.

Future studies should also examine:

1. genetic connectivity between fragmented wildlife populations;
2. seasonal patterns of wildlife movement;
3. roadkill hotspots and mortality rates;
4. physiological responses of indicator species to particulate matter;

This chapter discussed the findings of the study in relation to the three research objectives. The findings demonstrated that road development was associated with reduced biodiversity, lower wildlife detections, increased particulate matter, elevated concentrations of selected soil metals, reduced plant health, habitat fragmentation and stronger edge effects close to the road. The BACI analysis further indicated that changes in impact sites were significantly greater than changes in control sites. The study therefore concludes that effective environmental management of the Lusaka–Ndola corridor requires an integrated approach involving biodiversity monitoring, habitat restoration, wildlife corridors, crossing structures, pollution control, GIS-based planning and community participation. Future research should focus on long-term monitoring and the effectiveness of mitigation measures in maintaining ecosystem connectivity and biodiversity along the corridor.

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