



# Chitungulu Foundation

community outreach - nature conservation

Newsletter # 14

December 2025

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Dear Friends of Chitungulu,

Welcome to our 2025 Newsletter with the latest briefing on our projects in Chitungulu, a remote village situated in one of Africa's greatest wilderness areas. Despite our very short stay in Chitungulu which, like last year, was sadly again due to unforeseen circumstances, this year has seen some exciting developments especially in the area of environmental/conservation education. Our local team on the ground has been great in helping monitoring our various projects, facilitated by improved communication lines which we have set up in the course of this year.

Due to prioritization our focus in 2025 was, mainly, on conservation education and the construction of the conservation centre. The organic vegetable gardeners have been able to sell most of their produce to Luambe Camp which, besides their camp in Luambe National Park, now also operates a second camp in North Luangwa National Park. Obviously, our sponsorships program was continued as well as the annual provision of boreholes to the community. Our beekeeping project and crafts shop, however, had been put on hold but we shall definitely take up and further extend those projects in 2026.

We wish you happy reading. May 2026 bring happiness and peace to all of you.



*As in previous years, one of our Dutch sponsors funded the drilling of new boreholes for the community. This year two boreholes have been drilled in the Nthumbe neighborhood, and one water tank on a 5 metres' steel stand was built for rainwater harvesting in the organic vegetable garden of lead gardener Evans Ngulube. With one borehole about ten households get access to clean and safe drinking water.*



### 1.1 Education: sponsorship program

This year we've been sponsoring a total number of eleven students, the latest of whom, Precious, being our 40th student on our student sponsorship program since 2013.

Precious confirms the trend we've been noting after more than a decade of involvement with student sponsorships in Chitungulu: girls have become more confident, and are more determined and eager to finish their secondary education. A decade ago, girls who made it all the way to their final secondary school exams were thin on the ground in Chitungulu. Many girls used to drop out due to early marriage arrangements or pregnancies, making our girl-student sponsorships quite challenging if not downright frustrating – even in the realization that the girls had already obtained more formal education than their mothers. But things have changed and we now see a lot more girls determined to get a good education, as they realize this is their pathway to a career that may lift them out of the cycle of poverty. Now Precious not only managed to graduate from Lumimba Secondary School, she did so with excellent grades for maths, science and biology. So when one of our assistants tipped us about Precious earlier this year, we did not hesitate and offered Precious a BSc scholarship in her field of interest. Eventually, she chose to pursue a BSc in Medicine, following student Maliko who's studying medicine since 2024. Our project manager Chris had a meet-up with the two young and eager students at the campus of the Lusaka Apex Medical University in July. We are happy to see Precious settling in the capital city nicely and remarkably quickly.



Our other three BSc students are studying Business and Project Management (1) and Sustainable Natural Resources Management and Climate Change (2) at the Copperbelt University in Kitwe, central-Zambia. All three students have passed the 2024/5 academic year.

Two of our students at the Chikowa Youth Development Centre have successfully completed their General Agriculture (two years) and Catering (one year) studies by end of 2025.

A one year-tailoring and design course was funded for one young lady who participated in our 2024 six weeks' Conservation Training.

This year, like the previous year, we've been sponsoring three students taking professional nature guiding courses. Rabson passed his Transfer Guide exam in February and is due to write his Driving Guide exam in March 2026. Brian started his Wildlife Safari Transfer Guide training in April 2025 and Chuwa has been studying and preparing for the Transfer Guide intake in March 2026.



Chitungulu's nature conservation project has reached an important milestone in 2025 with conservation educator Stephen Nkhata passing his Driving Guide exam in April 2025. As a result, Stephen has become the first fully Zambian licensed nature guide hailing from Chitungulu. Truly a major achievement!

The majority of this year's sponsored students from Chitungulu have been male students (8 against 3 females). We are therefore happy to be able to sponsor four new, all female students by January 2026. Two of them will take up a Diploma course in Food and Nutrition whilst the other two will pursue the two years' Automotive Mechanics course at Chikowa as the first step in their ambitious goal to become Chitungulu's first female nature guides.

## 2.1 Food security & nutrition: general

The 2024/2025 rainy season had been good for the farmers, though elephants continue to pose a threat to local food security both by means of raids in the agricultural fields during the farming season and plunder of family maize storage systems in the dry season.

## 2.2 Food security & nutrition: vegetable gardens (organic)

Our three lead organic vegetable gardeners have been doing very well in the 2025 vegetable season. The vermicompost units, run by two gardeners since 2024, are providing a steady flow of 100% organic fertilizer and superb soil conditioner, which visibly boosts plant growth and plant health. As our project manager could personally observe, the gardens have become genuine biodiversity hotspots, attracting bees, butterflies and wasps all necessary for both pollination and pest management purposes. Luambe Lodge has been the main customer of

organically grown vegetables while the Chitungulu Community Resource Board (CRB) very kindly lent their solar electric fence to the organic gardeners in this year's dry season. This protection against raiding elephants lasted almost the entire tourist season during which the gardeners were able to sell off most of their produce. However, eventually the elephants figured out how to short out the fence by placing a log over the wires, after which they freely helped themselves to the last remaining vegetables. Now with the onset of the 2025/2026 rainy season we have begun planting rows of sisal plants around several vegetable gardens. The sisal plants bear razor-sharp edges which are seemingly unpleasant to the elephants' soles when they step on the plants. The goal is to create an impenetrable thick bio-fence of sisal plants around gardens to help warding off the elephants (a method also used in other countries). New, very hot chili seed varieties were provided in August so that the gardeners can continue experimenting with chili fires and chili fences. For 2026 we plan to combine the sisal bio-fences with additional barriers including solar lights, beehives, and prickly lemon bio-fences.



Learning, experimenting and constant fine-tuning of elephant deterrent methods is an ever-present factor in the lives of both gardeners and farmers seeking to eke out a living at the edge of wildlife areas such as Chitungulu. We hope we can support them next year with new, additional methods to keep the elephants out of the fields.



In 2025 we received great support from Kokopelli Semences, a French organization which, through their Seeds Without Borders Campaign, provides free, reproducible open-pollinated vegetable seeds to communities all over the world. The aim of Kokopelli is much in line with the goals of Chitungulu's organic gardeners: food security, food autonomy and biodiversity conservation, so we took great pleasure in our role as matchmaker to bring the two parties together.

We asked the gardeners to send a list of their preferred vegetable seeds, which we forwarded to Kokopelli and they very kindly sent us their open-pollinated seed varieties.



All lead organic gardeners and their families in Evans' garden

In August we sat down with the three lead-gardening families and two new organic gardeners, and explained to them the concept of open-pollinated seeds. OP-seeds, unlike F1 hybrid seeds, allow for seed-saving, enabling the reuse of seeds from year to year. Not only is this a cost saving win for the gardeners, who no longer need to rely on commercial agri-shops for their seeds. Through successive true-to-type plant generations, vegetable plants can adapt to local growing conditions over the years, which boosts plant health, contributing to food security. In addition, through their greater genetic diversity, the practice of growing vegetables from OP seeds

also contributes to agricultural biodiversity, potentially strengthening local ecosystems and enhancing resilience to environmental stressors. After our workshop each gardener received a different OP variety of green bean, sweet pepper, carrot, eggplant, cucumber, okra, beetroot, swisschard and watermelon.



*The Roma tomato, introduced by us some years ago, is a firm favourite with gardeners Whysen and Fallace*

Our own contribution of seeds included tomato and cabbage seedlings which we also provided to several new gardeners experimenting with organic gardening methods. A new vegetable was introduced to the lead-gardeners: the nutritious long-stem broccoli.



This year we also assisted gardener Evans with a water tank since his water supply had run very low. The water tank will help him harvesting water in the rainy season for use in the dry season.

At the time of publication of this newsletter, we received messages from residents about extremely heavy rains in the area, causing severe floods that threaten to wash away crops. Vertical trenches are being dug to prevent rapid runoff in the agricultural fields.



### **2.3 Food security & nutrition: the Four Sisters farming method**

This year we distributed mung beans and sunflower seeds to several families. Promotion of the Four Sisters farming method will be further continued in 2026.

#### **3.1 Income-generating projects: Beekeeping**

Due to unforeseen expenses made for our conservation education program we had to put the beekeeping project on hold for 2025. We have started fundraising for new, locally made beehives to extend this project in 2026.

#### **3.2 Income-generating: Crafts Shop**

This project has also been put on hold pending the completion of the construction of our conservation centre.

### **4. Conservation Centre**

#### **4.1 Environmental education**

Our environmental education program for school children has been given a great boost with the unexpected purchase of a second-hand Toyota Landcruiser, which was converted into a game drive vehicle in the course of six, rather hectic, weeks in Lusaka. Despite frequent power cuts due to load shedding, making welding a tedious night job, and unexpected diesel shortages at the filling stations, we managed to get the game drive vehicle in Chitungulu by the start of the August holiday month.



After a few intense weeks of preparing the children of seven schools (the training involved safety briefs, binocular training, identification of mammals, birds and trees, and understanding of the roles in their ecosystems of various selected animals), the children were taken on game drives in Luambe National Park for the rest of the holiday month, and after holidays the game drives were continued in the weekends until the onset of rains in October. In total over 100 school children of six primary schools and one secondary school have been taken on an excursion into the national park, under the guidance of fully qualified nature guide Stephen and one armed park scout. For the children, who hardly ever get a chance to visit a national park, the game drives present a unique opportunity to observe wildlife in their natural habitat. The children invariably love the whole learning experience. We hope that, in this way, we can help fostering a new generation of environmentally conscious children.



Ultimately, we hope our conservation education program will enhance the children's understanding of the complex, inter-dependent connections within ecosystems, where species rely on each other for survival, food and habitat. And, of course, in time we hope our program will even fuel some children's interest in pursuing a nature conservation career.



Unfortunately, since we are still in the process of constructing our conservation centre, we had to defer our annual six weeks' Conservation Training until next year. It's the first time that we had to postpone this training since we started in 2019 (even in the Covid-19 years the training was continued). The Conservation Training has been set up for recent secondary school graduates with high grades in the core subjects English, maths and science. In the training we enable them to compete for a sponsored BSc program, a nature guide training or other vocational/skills training while they explore, for the duration of six weeks, various topics revolving around the themes of nature conservation and climate change adaptation. We believe the program functions effectively as we monitor the students' progress and interests very closely during the training, which enables us to make informed decisions on the final sponsorships awards. Despite the deferral of the training this year, we still continue our sponsorships program in 2026 with a good number of students (13), including the four new young ladies mentioned earlier, who have all been involved in our conservation training program in previous years.

#### 4.2 Construction Conservation Centre



As we mentioned in our 2024 newsletter, construction of our conservation centre has started in the final months of 2024, and by December 2024 one classroom with adjacent library had been built up to ring beam level. Roofing of the classroom/library took place in

September this year and one month later the classroom was finished apart from the interior painting. A second classroom with adjacent office has been built up to ring beam level in October. We aim to connect the two classrooms in 2026, and we'll proceed with the toilets and the inner courtyard as soon as enough funds have been raised. Fundraising has already started for furniture (desks for the students and shelves for the library). We aim to open the first classroom for new students in our conservation training in the course of August 2026. Construction works have been made possible with the assistance of various sponsors from the Netherlands and Germany, including the illustrious Zambian fundraising organization Elephant Charge, which sponsors local initiatives focusing on environmental education. This year we have also been greatly assisted by farmer Peter, who regularly buys crops from the community.



We felt it was rather appropriate to give our centre a distinctive 'face' and so we got in touch with artist and designer Jessie of By Jess Studio (based in Cape Town but with Zambian roots) who very kindly designed a fitting logo for both the centre and the game drive vehicle. We are most pleased with the end result (see next page) as we feel it exactly tells what we stand for in our holistic approach to nature conservation.





#### 4.3 Tree conservation

This year local trees were grown by Chitungulu resident Lizzie, who raised 300 Gliricidia trees (the leaves are excellent 'green manure' for the gardeners), 50 highly nutritious Moringa oleifera trees (which are distributed to various households), 50 Faidherbia albida trees (great nitrogen fixers in agricultural fields), 10 baobab trees and 90 sisal plants for bio-fences against elephants around vegetable gardens.

In order to beautify the grounds of our conservation centre, several indigenous trees were bought from Chunyu Nursery in Mfuwe, among others the Croton gratissimus, Cassia abbreviata and the Pink jacaranda. The trees were planted and watered by several children living nearby the centre.



#### 4.4 Solar lamps

Due to lack of funds we have, regrettably, been unable to provide the popular solar-powered lamps to the community at subsidized prices. We hope to revive the revolving fund for solar lamps by next year. The lamps contribute to the protection of the environment in Chitungulu in that they are a battery-free option of lighting for communities without access to the national power grid.

**Finally...**

As always, we like to thank everybody for their ongoing support. Do keep following us on Instagram @ conservation.chitungulu

Any questions or comments, do let us know at:

[info@chitungulu.nl](mailto:info@chitungulu.nl)

The Board of Chitungulu Foundation

**Our sincere thanks in 2025 to our following partners:**

- ❖ Our friends and sponsors in:  
the Netherlands, Zambia, Germany, Belgium
- ❖ The Elephant Charge Organization Zambia
- ❖ Stichting De Paardestal, Netherlands
- ❖ Stichting Uden WereldWijd, Netherlands
- ❖ Stichting Trap-In, Netherlands
- ❖ Kokopelli Semences, France
- ❖ By Jess Studio, Cape Town, South Africa
- ❖ Bedrock Africa Safari Training, Zambia
- ❖ Chunyu Nursery, Mfuwe
- ❖ Peter Jungle Beat, Zambia
- ❖ Ecobiz Farms, Lusaka
- ❖ EMD Eastern Manual Drilling, Lundazi
- ❖ Chikowa Youth Dev Centre, Mambwe
- ❖ Zgangani Kachinga, Lundazi

