

CONSERVATION IN ACTION

Creating community value in conservation

A collaborative partnership between an NGO and the Sekute Community has resulted in community-led conservation, with benefits going directly back to Sekute's men, women and children

In a region that spans parts of Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia and Zambia, a richly diverse landscape plays host to an array of wildlife – including the largest population of elephants in Africa. Important wildlife corridors connect disparate habitats, allowing wildlife to roam freely, especially in areas south of the Zambezi River in Botswana and Zimbabwe.

For communities living in southern Zambia along the northern banks of the Zambezi River, however, population growth has led to unplanned and expanding settlements and intensified competition for vital resources. Dependency on natural resources for food, income and livelihood security is common here, with the result being widespread human–wildlife conflict that in many cases impedes regional initiatives to protect wildlife and sustainably manage natural resources.

Sixty kilometres west of Livingstone, the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) is working with the Sekute Community to find value in conservation. In 2002, AWF facilitated the establishment

to ensure that our wildlife and wild lands endure forever. While the protection of wildlife and habitat is at the core of AWF's work, we cannot do it in isolation. The communities and local stakeholders are vital to conservation, not just in this region but in all of Africa," says Mr Nasson Tembo, director of the Kazungula region for AWF.

Over the past 12 years, AWF and the Sekute Community have forged a strong relationship by working together to identify opportunities in improved resource management that would also result in benefits to the community. They have achieved numerous initiatives. Among the most noteworthy has been the realisation of a common vision to set aside 40,000ha of land strictly for conservation. In late 2009, AWF signed this landmark conservation agreement with the Sekute Community to establish the Sekute Community Conservation Area. The community agreed to manage and protect this important conservation area in exchange for a host of community and economic benefits.

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of the Sekute Community Development Trust, a community-based organisation that oversees the sustainable use and management of the area's natural resources. AWF and the Trust then developed an integrated, landscape-level conservation plan with input from a broad range of stakeholders, including government, private sector and local community members.

"Our organisation's mission is to work with fellow Africans

FIRST COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AREA IN ZAMBIA

The Sekute Community Conservation Area is located at the point where Zambia, Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe meet, otherwise known as the 'Four Corners'. It features 40km of Zambezi River frontage, including two important wildlife corridors linking Botswana and Zambia. As the first community conservation areas in Zam-



AWF and the Sekute Community created Zambia's first community conservation area, allowing locals to benefit from having to share their lands with Africa's largest population of elephants. Here, elephants cross the Zambezi River from Botswana into Zambia

bia, it is not only allowing the Sekute Community to benefit from increased land conservation but has also empowered members to manage the conservancy themselves.

For example, 19 local youths have been employed and trained as community scouts under the supervision of Zambia Wildlife Authority. A wildlife protection and monitoring system was developed with community input and is routinely used during foot patrols and data analysis. The success of this has already been proven by the seizure in 2012 of 21 pieces of elephant ivory totalling 600 kgs and subsequent arrests of seven illegal wildlife traffickers.

"This area for many years has served as a transit point for ivory and rhino horn from Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe," notes Mr Jones Masonde, Ecologist for AWF's Kazungula landscape. "The presence of highly motivated community scouts in Sekute is now helping to curb this."

AWF and the SCDT

FACTfile ▶ African Wildlife Foundation

The African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) is an international non-governmental organisation with more than 50 years of conservation experience focused solely on the continent of Africa. AWF's strategy involves an integrated landscape-scale approach to conservation, addressing threats and opportunities in conservation and livelihoods at the ecosystem level. AWF is committed in the belief that conservation should be 'African-led'. Thus, AWF ensures that community participation is meaningful throughout project development, partnerships are established with government and local institutions, and the capacity of partners is built to sustain deliverables beyond project timeframes.

Working in more than 15 countries throughout Africa, AWF works at the landscape, site-specific and country level, implementing programmes related to the broad categories of people (specifically, education and enterprise), wildlife protection and land conservation. All of AWF's work addresses the issues of climate change and policy.

are now continuing to work together to meet the development needs of the community, demonstrating the complexity of the strategies needed to help communities realise benefits from wildlife and natural resource conservation. As a

way of finding that balance between conservation and development, AWF has reconstructed the local community school (see 'Easements for Education') to incentivise sustainable natural resource management and established

a fishing lodge (see Conservation-Driven Enterprise) to generate income.

"Conservation for the sake of conservation is no longer an effective means to managing Africa's natural resources," says Tembo. "Sustainably creating value in conservation by working with communities and putting in place short- and long-term benefits is an essential element to ensuring conservation throughout Africa."

Adds Mr Mulele, chairman of the Trust, "Conserving natural resources attracts tourism and generates employment. Because of conservation, we have access to boys' and girls' school scholarships, we have an office overseeing natural resource management, we have trained and employed village scouts, and we have constructed a lodge that will generate resources for the communities. The management of natural resources has made the communities realise its benefits."

Conservation-driven enterprise

The new Machenje Fishing Lodge offers community income, conservation outcomes – and a new model for how communities and the private sector can work together

Alongside tranquil and unspoiled fishing waters on the Upper Zambezi River, AWF facilitated the establishment of Machenje Fishing Lodge, a community-owned tourism facility in Sekute Chiefdom. Working with Chief Sekute via the Sekute Community Development Trust, additional land was secured on the southern edge of the Sekute Community Conservation

Area for the development of Machenje. While this is just one component of AWF's broader relationship with the Sekute Community, it helped secure land for the movement of wildlife from Botswana into southern Zambia.

Machenje Fishing Lodge is a high-end sport fishing lodge – and a long-term strategy implemented by AWF to enable the Sekute Community to generate

revenue to use toward local development projects. AWF helped negotiate a partnership agreement with Taonga Safaris, a private sector operator who will manage daily operations of the lodge. The community retains ownership of the lodge and will earn a portion of revenues from visitors, but the private sector will manage the marketing and clientele. While the immediate

beneficiary of Machenje is the Sekute Community, Machenje Fishing Lodge can act as a model for communities who stand to potentially benefit from conservation-driven enterprises. Indeed, this innovative partnership agreement – community ownership, private sector management – has been recognised and supported by Zambia's Minister of Tourism, the Honourable Ms

Easements for education

Within the western part of the Sekute Community Conservation Area, Lupani Village is home to the only primary school in the area, Lupani Community School. In recognition of high levels of illiteracy in the area and the need to demonstrate further social benefits from conservation to the Sekute Community, AWF launched an 'Easements for Education' programme to help students and families who conserve land meet their educational needs.

Only a few years ago, this community had an illiteracy rate of 80%. Now, local children and adults have found new opportunities for education – and are taking new initiative in caring for their natural environment.

1ST COMPONENT

The first component provides support to Lupani Community School. Lupani was once a one-room dilapidated schoolhouse, where enrolment was limited to only 50 students due to the size of the room. After the establishment of the Sekute Community Conservation Area, AWF rebuilt Lupani as an incentive for community members to protect the area from unsustainable use of natural resources. Lupani, which officially opened in February 2011, is now a modern facility equipped with six classrooms, several offices, and five on-site teachers' houses. Solar panels provide electricity to all the houses and two classrooms, which will allow for adult literacy classes in the evening and the future establishment of a computer lab. The school boasts an involved and passionate parent-teacher association that is looking after the school and grounds and tracking the children's progress.

Lupani Community School is now officially recognised under the Ministry of Education as a primary school

and has been made into an exam centre, reducing the costs and time for students to travel to their applicable exam centres – which for some was up to 60km away. In the past two years, school enrolment has increased up to 140 students from grades 1–7, with a significant improvement in test results. According to head teacher Mrs Lwambi, the students love learning and are eager to come to school. She adds that their performance keeps improving year after year.

"My child was poor in class when he first came to Lupani on transfer in grade 3," acknowledges Mr Mulongo, father of a Lupani student. "He is now in grade 5 and one of the best in his class and in school."

Ambition has also increased at Lupani: "I like my school," says Joyce, a pupil in grade 4. "I want to work hard so I can go to college when I grow up."

2ND COMPONENT

AWF has additionally assisted the Sekute Community Development Trust, the community organisation that oversees the sustainable management of the area's natural resources, in setting up and administering an education trust fund, the second component to 'Easements for Education.' The fund guarantees school fees and expenses, allowing eligible children to continue their schooling. A designated committee within the Trust selects students based on proximity to the Sekute Conservation Area, previous performance, and financial need, and then



PHOTO: AWF/BECKY WALTER

Since AWF rebuilt the Lupani Community School, the Sekute children take pride in earning an education and show greater engagement in conservation initiatives

makes recommendations for approval by the full board. The review also identifies needs of the most vulnerable students in order to provide assistance that can enable them to perform at an optimal level.

The Trust is committed to delivering high-impact, multi-year scholarships, ensuring long-term commitments to conservation while supporting students throughout their entire secondary education. During this past year, the fund sponsored 120 students – 61 girls and 59 boys – from Sekute. All but one student were in secondary school, and together with their guardians, all signed a conservation agreement committing to protect the area's natural resources. During this time, one sponsored student graduated from tertiary school as a nurse while six others successfully completed high school.

Only a few years ago, this



PHOTO: AWF/CRAIG R. SHOLLEY

As part of a broad strategy to help communities realise benefits from wildlife and natural resource conservation, AWF rebuilt the Lupani Community School and is providing scholarships to older students continuing their education

community had an illiteracy rate of 80%. Now, local children and adults have found new opportunities for education – and are taking new initiative in caring for their natural environment.

"Conserving all natural

resources is important so that when our great-grandchildren are born, they will get to see them and appreciate that we have helped in conserving them," notes Benjamin Masale, a grade 10 scholarship recipient.



PHOTO: AWF/PERRIN BANKS

Machenje Fishing Lodge takes advantage of the unspoiled fishing waters of the Upper Zambezi River – shown here from the deck of the second chalet – to generate tourism income for the Sekute Community

Sylvia Masebo, amongst other tourism ministries within the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA).

Machenje Fishing Lodge is set to launch in August during the UNWTO. Going forward, it will continue to exemplify what innovative thinking and an alliance between communities and the private sector can achieve for conservation – while also accruing real income for communities.

AWFs Conservation Enterprise Programme

The partnership arrangement between the Sekute Community Development Trust and Taonga Safaris is based on the African Wildlife Foundation's (AWF's) experience and expertise in conservation enterprises – businesses that are premised on conserving land and protecting wildlife while simultaneously generating income for the local community. With more than 15 years of experience in conservation enterprise, AWF has developed a toolkit based on lessons learned and best practices, allowing communities such as Sekute to find value in conservation through revenue-generating opportunities. While many of these opportunities are based on the wildlife tourism common in Africa, AWF implements other enterprises, such as livestock and honey production. AWF utilises a systematic methodology to identify the conservation objective and assess the community's capacities and needs to determine the applicable conservation enterprise. It also acts as a broker and community representative when a private sector partner is called for to ensure the highest capacity for success.

AT A GLANCE

The Sekute Community Conservation Area

In 2009, African Wildlife Foundation and the Sekute Community signed a landmark conservation agreement that established the Sekute Community Conservation Area.

WHAT IT IS

The first community conservation area in Zambia

SIZE OF THE CONSERVATION AREA
40,000ha

WHO OWNS

Sekute Community through the Sekute Community Development Trust

WHO MANAGES

Sekute Community through the Sekute Community Development Trust, with support from the Zambia Wildlife Authority

CONSERVATION BENEFITS

Since the establishment of the community conservation area, more habitat is being preserved, and there has been an increase in the presence of wildlife, such as elephants, buffalo, kudu, waterbuck, bushbuck and impala. This is being monitored and reported by the community scouts, who have also noted that while charcoal production is widespread, deforestation has reduced within the conservation area.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Employment for up to 20 youths as community scouts; improved education through the reconstruction of Lupani Community School; improved access to secondary education through the Easements for Education scholarships; employment for the construction of Machenje Fishing Lodge; and foreseen economic benefits for development projects upon opening of the Lodge and establishment of a Wildlife Breeding Sanctuary.

NO. OF RESIDENTS BENEFITING

Approximately 10,000 people residing in the Sekute Community

FOR MORE INFO

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