

Natural  
Climate  
Solutions  
Alliance

An NCS Lighthouse

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# Luangwa Community Forests Project

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**Project/Programme  
Type**

Landscape-scale community-based project for forest protection under the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) mechanism. Landscape-scale community-based project for forest protection under the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) mechanism.

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**Description**

The Luangwa Community Forests Project (LCFP) is Africa's largest REDD+ Project. The Luangwa River is one of Africa's longest undammed, free flowing rivers and is also a pivotal lifeline for wildlife. LCFP acts as an important, protective buffer to the South Luangwa, Luambe, Lower Zambezi and Lukusuzi National Parks, providing safe habitat and protected migration paths for wildlife. Activities work to address key drivers of deforestation while benefitting local communities by reducing poverty, creating sustainable incomes, improving social services, and encouraging conservation. The project benefits over 217,000 people in some of Zambia's most impoverished provinces through income generation and social services development.

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**Location**

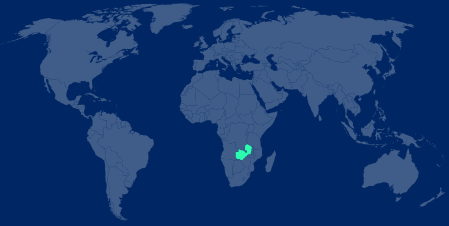
The project extends from Eastern Province in Zambia through to Lusaka Province, Zambia in one of the last greatest wildlife strongholds remaining on Earth, home to African wild dogs, elephants, leopards and lions.

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**Scale**

Protecting 1,036,636 hectares of threatened forest.

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# Impacts

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## Impact To-Date

Through the distribution of performance-based Forest Carbon Fees, communities are incentivized to protect their forest and conserve its wildlife. The project supports 217,000 community beneficiaries across 12 Chiefdoms and 36,000 households through direct investments into community projects and livelihood initiatives that seek to improve the quality of life. Beyond its community and biodiversity impacts, the LCFP protects over 514 million trees from deforestation and contributed to the reduction of 1.4 million tons of carbon emissions from being released into the environment in 2020. The project has been successfully verified three times through the Verified Carbon Standard and has achieved CCB Triple Gold Validation for its exceptional impacts.

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## Projected Longer-Term Impact

The scaling target by 2024 is to protect 1,600,000 hectares of forest, with the associated scaling of societal benefits. The project is also part of BioCarbon Partners long term goal for 2030 known as the "30 cubed" which aims to enter into co-management agreements across 11 million hectares of globally biodiversity important African forests, to benefit 3 million people and to reduce up to 30 million tons of carbon annually.

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# A REDD+ Project Gives Communities a Say in Conservation

A few years ago, the forest and wildlife were disappearing near Veronica Banda’s farm in the Mnkhanya Chiefdom of Zambia’s Eastern Province. Many of her neighbors extended their fields by razing forest. Others burned trees for charcoal or hunted illegally in the woods. “We saw a lot of people get arrested for poaching,” she remembers, “because they were facing desperate circumstances and couldn’t even find enough money to take their children to school.”

That all started to change in 2019 when, through the [Luangwa Community Forests Project \(LCFP\)](#), the Mnkhanya Chiefdom was supported in obtaining carbon rights for the community forest from the Zambian Government. The Luangwa Community Forests Project partners with local communities and the Zambian Government to create a contiguous wildlife corridor for wildlife, such as elephants, lions and wild dogs between five national parks in Zambia’s Eastern to Lusaka Provinces—an area covering over one million hectares where more than 217,000 people are benefiting directly under REDD+. In order to protect so much forest and tackle the root causes of why deforestation was taking place, the LCFP needed to create alternative livelihoods for communities to the unsustainable slash-and-burn agriculture traditionally used, and to hunting. It saw an opportunity in the United Nation’s Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) initiative.

Through REDD+, the LCFP generates and sells carbon credits to companies that want to offset their greenhouse gas emissions. The LCFP allocates revenue between communities within the project

area based on the amount of forest they protect. The LCFP has helped all 12 Chiefdoms in the project area obtain forest rights from the government, set up Community Forest Management Groups and provided technical support to create annual work plans for spending the money within the community, based on needs assessments at a village level. In total, it has distributed more than \$8 million to the 12 Chiefdoms since 2017. “REDD+ puts development into the hands of the communities and allows them to determine where they want to take their lives,” says Nchimunya Haambote, the Project Coordinator for the Luangwa Community Forests Project.

Before joining the LCFP, Haambote had worked in the public sector on sanitation and water issues. “It was predominantly funded by international organizations or governments, and communities did not necessarily have ownership in terms of what programs would be funded or where the supplies would go. REDD+ gives communities this ownership” he recalls.



Veronica Banda  
Farmer,  
Mnkhanya  
Chiefdom

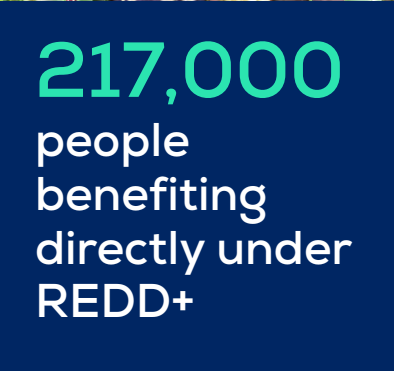
**We saw a lot of people get arrested for poaching, because they were facing desperate circumstances and couldn’t even find enough money to take their children to school.**



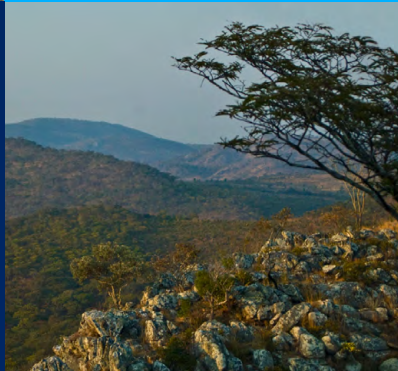
**more than \$8 million distributed to the 12 Chiefdoms since 2017**



**345 Lead Farmers trained in Climate-Smart Agriculture**



**217,000 people benefiting directly under REDD+**



**171% growth in local incomes since project’s start**

**Follow the progress**



Within LCFP, the communities choose which forests to protect. The project measures the avoided carbon emissions using Verra's Verified Carbon Standard and distributes the revenues to the Community Forest Management Groups. Each group then decides how the money can best be spent in the community—from education or health to sanitation. Communities have used the money to dig borehole wells for water, hire teachers and open health clinics. They have supported poultry farming, beekeeping and sustainable charcoal production. Since the project's start, local incomes have grown 171 percent.



Nchimunya  
Haambote

Project Coordinator,  
Luangwa Community  
Forests Project

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One of LCFP's main projects in all the Chiefdoms has been to work with farmers like Banda to adopt Climate-Smart Agriculture. The project has trained 345 Lead Farmers to teach conservation agriculture to more than 8,625 Follower Farmers. As a Lead Farmer in her community, Banda helps 25 other local farmers implement agricultural practices like crop rotation, early planting, reaping, better-quality seeds and residue retention. With better techniques, farmers no longer need to convert forest. "We don't cut down trees anymore because on a small piece of land we're able to produce good yields," Banda says. "I am very proud to be a Lead Farmer, especially as a woman because I am a role model in the community – empowering women to lead and grow in confidence by providing for our families and bringing additional revenue into our homes."

Most farmers in the project area now grow maize and soybeans in rotation. Maize can be kept for home consumption, while soy beans are a cash crop that can be sold at market. "People can really see the difference between climate-smart agriculture and the old ways," says Alice Zulu, a Lead Farmer from Nsefu Chiefdom. "With conservation farming, a crop can do well even during drought or a lot of rain."



Alice Zulu

Lead Farmer,  
Nsefu Chiefdom

**People can really see the difference between climate-smart agriculture and the old ways.**

**With conservation farming, a crop can do well even during drought or a lot of rain.**

As farmers use their land more efficiently, it is allowing biodiversity to recover and grow within the forests—including the vulnerable Southern ground hornbills and endangered wild dogs—all while creating opportunities for ecotourism in communities. "We've seen a huge change in the way communities regard the forest," Haambote says. "Communities now have an incentive to protect an area of forest."

LCFP plans include to add 20 new Chiefdoms to the project and protect a total of 1.6 million hectares by 2024. Eventually, its operating company, BioCarbon Partners, hopes to protect 11 million hectares of forest in Africa.



Nchimunya  
Haambote

Project Coordinator,  
Luangwa Community  
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For Banda and her neighbors, protection of the forest in Mnkhanya Chiefdom has become both a shared responsibility and opportunity. "If trees are cut down, then money won't come to the community," Banda says. "It means children won't be able to go to school, and poverty will spread. It affects the whole community. It is in our best interest to preserve the forests – for our community and in the fight against climate change."



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## About the NCS Alliance

The NCS Alliance (NCSA) conveys the voice of businesses, NGOs and solution providers on the need to mobilize a high integrity demand for high quality Natural Climate Solutions (NCS). The Alliance focuses on to identify opportunities and barriers to investment in the NCS voluntary carbon market and also serves as a forum for knowledge sharing and technical capacity building to ensure natural climate solutions reach their full potential in abating climate change. In an effort to build trust in high quality NCS, the NCSA has established the NCS Lighthouse programme.

For more information visit [www.wbcsd.org/nca](http://www.wbcsd.org/nca) and follow us on LinkedIn.



## About NCS Lighthouse Programme

The NCS Lighthouse Programme aims at shining a light on projects and programmes that can be used as examples of good practice for supply and are a beacon in the path to developing trust in NCS for people, nature and climate. The NCS Lighthouses aim to help elevate the successful human, environmental, and climate stories behind these initiatives.

The NCS Lighthouses, selected based on screening criteria developed by an NCSA Taskforce comprising NGOs, businesses and solution providers, have demonstrated alignment to the NCSA's quality principles for NCS credits, as presented within 'Natural Climate Solutions for Corporates'.

The NCS Lighthouse Programme is made possible with generous funding support from the We Mean Business Coalition.

## Disclaimer

Inclusion of an NCS project or programme in the NCS Lighthouse Programme does not imply a recommendation to purchase, trade or retire credits associated with the Lighthouse.

The NCS Alliance and its members take no responsibility for the purchase, trade or retirement of credits from these projects and programmes. Instead, it recommends that individuals, companies and other organisations procuring credits as part of their climate strategies conduct their own independent due diligence to validate the quality and environmental integrity of their purchases.

The NCS Alliance secretariat in no way benefits financially or by other means from the selection.

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Citation: NSCA (2022) NCS Lighthouse Programme - Luangwa Community Forests Project. Natural Climate Solutions Alliance.

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