

Natural  
Climate  
Solutions  
Alliance

## Natural Climate Solutions in Action

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# Luangwa Community Forests Project

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**Project/Program 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

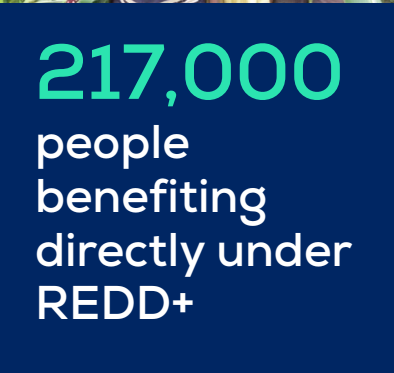
**We saw a lot of people get arrested for poaching, because they were facing desperate circumstances and couldn't even find enough money to take their children to school.**



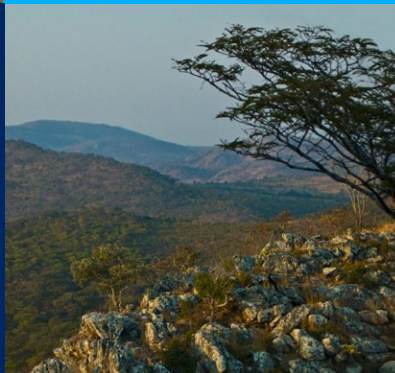
more than  
**\$8 million**  
distributed  
to the 12  
Chiefdoms  
since 2017



**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

**REDD+ puts development into the hands of the communities and allows them to determine where they want to take their lives.**

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  
Forests Project

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**Communities now have an incentive to protect an area of forest.**

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 identifying opportunities and barriers to investment in the NCS voluntary carbon market and serves as a forum for knowledge sharing and technical capacity building to ensure natural climate solutions reach their full potential in abating climate change, while also tackling nature loss and socio-economic issues. NCS in Action was established to showcase how NCS are making a real difference in the world today.

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



## Statement of Acknowledgment

The NCS in Action are testimonials designed to highlight the benefits for people and nature associated with NCS projects and programs financed through the voluntary carbon market. The NCS Alliance strongly believes that the voluntary carbon market is necessary for financing NCS projects and programs. It is critical however that it rests on the integrity of the climate benefits, i.e. the ability of credits to truly represent real and verifiable carbon reductions.

The NCS Alliance recognizes the importance of staying up-to-date with the latest science and best practices as carbon-crediting programs evolve. We acknowledge that there have been challenges with certain methodologies and that improvements have not always been made as quickly as necessary. However, we believe that this is a valuable learning-by-doing process and that scaling up NCS is crucial in achieving global 1.5C goals. In support of this, the NCS Alliance will continue to highlight projects and programs in this space while also advocating for consistent improvement in standards and methodologies. For more information about how and when these methodologies are updated see [Verra](#), [Plan Vivo](#), [ACR](#), [ART](#).

NCS in Action is made possible with generous funding support from the We Mean Business Coalition.

## Disclaimer

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

The NCS Alliance and its members take no responsibility for the purchase, trade or retirement of credits from these projects and programs. 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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