

HIGH FIVE CLUB

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Reducing Hunger and Food Insecurity in rural Zambia



With several years in the planning and implementation, our most wide ranging, far reaching and ambitious initiative to date 😊

After securing funding a few years ago from the **Rotary Club of Canterbury Sunrise** for the sinking of a water well in Zambia's Luangwa Valley, the High Five Club was approached in 2022 by the same Rotarians to see if we would be interested in working with their Rotary Club to develop a **Rotary Global Grant** proposal – the first time their club had stepped out to try and secure such a prestigious grant from **Rotary International**. We of course jumped at this opportunity to partner with them.

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We were asked to propose a High Five Club project that would benefit from such a grant. Taking into account the strict requirements of Rotary International, and knowing the struggles and priorities of the communities we work with in Africa, we proposed a programme of interventions and initiatives to tackle the challenges of “hunger and food insecurity” that would have a significant impact on the welfare of the rural communities we partner with in Zambia’s wildlife-rich Luangwa Valley.

Background

Of ten “extreme hunger hotspots” cited in an Oxfam report on global food insecurity, five are in Africa. It is estimated that **239 million people in sub-Saharan Africa** are currently at risk of malnutrition, and this number is increasing.

There are several overlapping and interconnected causes of the global food crisis that is afflicting Africa so deeply.

Natural disasters, which are set to become more frequent due to the climate emergency, are having a devastating impact. Persistent drought and desertification have led to repeated failed harvests.

Conflicts around the world also cause food poverty, and in wildlife-rich areas of Africa competition between people and wild animals for scarce food resources is an added conflict.

Economic shocks also drive hunger. The global economic downturn caused by COVID and the war in Ukraine has had a disproportionate effect on Africa. And at the centre of all this are marginalised communities – mothers seeing their children go hungry to the point of malnutrition and children not going to school as they scavenge for food.

In the last decade, Zambia has suffered greatly from the impact of climate change, with frequent, prolonged dry spells, extreme high temperatures, and floods that have undermined food security and caused untold hunger and suffering amongst local communities living in rural areas.

Rotary International Global Grant

During 2024 we worked with the rural community in Lupande Game Management Area in Zambia bordering South Luangwa National Park to undertake a community needs assessment and scope potential solutions to their food security issues, including running community workshops with the help of Mnkhanya Community Resources Board and the Rotary Club of Mfuwe in Zambia. The outcome of this work was High Five Club working up a fully-costed proposal that **aimed to reduce hunger and food insecurity in Zambia’s Luangwa Valley.**

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Guided by the High Five Club, the Rotary Club of Canterbury Sunrise partnered with the Rotary Club of Mfuwe in Zambia and H5C, to raise the funds needed to deliver a **project that seeks to improve food security and reduce hunger for 20,000 people living the Luangwa Valley bordering the wildlife-rich South Luangwa National Park.**

Rotary
Club of Canterbury Sunrise



At High Five Club, we worked up a detailed project proposal that sought to tackle the causes of food insecurity, that empowered the local community to take responsibility for their own food security, and at the same time actively conserved the natural environment and wildlife in this protected area. A truly life-transforming, holistic approach was sought.

On submitting the proposal to Rotary International for a Global Grant in 2024, the Rotary Club of Canterbury Sunrise was successful in securing the **USD \$85,000** needed to implement the project over the following 18 months. This is when the extremely hard work, trials, tribulations and the project's ultimate success began. Nothing is plain sailing or easy when working in Africa!

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Outputs

The project has 6 streams at its core, all aimed at reducing hunger and improving food security for rural villagers living in Lupande Game Management Area. These are:

1. Community tractor, plough, harrow, conservation ripper and trailer service. The outcome sought through the provision of this service is a significant increase in the yield of community land already set aside for subsistence farming. This is being achieved through the purchase of a community tractor and associated equipment, operated by H5C's long-term Zambian-owned conservation partner in Zambia **Mizu Eco-Care**. This is available for hire at an affordable rate by subsistence farmers with land over a certain size, for the land's initial ploughing – ploughing land for the first time by hand using hoes is back breaking work for the women and as a result much land was laying inactive.



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The hiring of the tractor at a commercial rate to others in the valley (safari lodges and NGOs) means a heavily subsidised, affordable tractor hire rate has been made available to villagers. The provision of a trailer also means that the tractor is hired out all year round (not just during the ploughing season), generating the income needed for the community tractor service to achieve self-sustainability. The tractor and trailer is also being deployed to secure farmers' harvested maize crop and transport it to safe storage areas away from fields that are being raided by elephants - thereby safeguarding the farmers' food security for the next 6 months.

A grant was also provided to Mizu Eco-Care for spare parts and the servicing/maintenance of the tractor and equipment over its first year, giving time to build sustainability, along with the provision of a security tracking system to prevent the mis-use or theft of the tractor. Training for local tractor operators employed for this initiative by Mizu Eco-Care was also provided to ensure the tractor and associated equipment was operated safely. H5C also worked together with Mizu Eco-Care to produce a business plan for the sustainable operation of the community tractor hire service into the future.

2. New community hammermill. A high quality diesel hammer mill machine was purchased along with a dehuller machine for separating the bran from the husk (which is used for animal feed). Land was secured by our chosen local partner, Mizu Eco-Care, in Kakumbi Chiefdom to site a new hammermill building to house the community hammermill machinery secured by the Rotary grant, and affordable prices set for this milling service. Before the advent of this service villagers in this area had to walk long distances to get the maize they grow ground into flour for cooking their staple food *nshima* at a private hammermill powered by electricity, which was often not operating due to the significant power outages in Zambia. Hence the choice of a diesel machine (solar being beyond our budget).



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The hammermill building has been secured via a solar powered CCTV system installed as part of this programme along with drums purchased for the storage of diesel on site to run the hammermill. H5C worked together with Mizu Eco-Care to produce a business plan for the sustainable operation of the community hammermill into the future.

3. Training in agroecology and conservation farming. 10 workshops were run for community leaders in the valley by Mizu Eco-Care. 200 villagers were trained in planting drought resistant indigenous crops alongside their traditional maize (which is not drought resilient and requires costly fertilizer inputs). They were also trained in agroecology methods and conservation farming, including how to make their own natural, organic (chemical-free) fertilizer *bokashi*.

Those attending these workshops were then challenged with passing the lessons learnt onto other subsistence farmers in their own communities.



The Rotary Global grant also funded outreach work to enable Mizu Eco-Care to sensitise the local community about this food security initiative, the community tractor hire service and the new community hammermill.

4. Community Seed Bank / Agroecology Office. A seed bank and field office for Mizu Eco-Care was designed and manufactured, using local welders, out of a second-hand shipping container purchased by this grant and transported to site. Local carpenters in the valley were also contracted to make furniture and other essential office items to equip the new community agroecology field office and seed bank.

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Funds were also provided to Mizu Eco-Care for the collection of indigenous seeds throughout Zambia to stock the new seedbank. Seeds were made available to subsistence farmers with each farmer agreeing to give back to the seed bank 3 times the quantity they were given when they harvest their crops. In this way



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the seed bank will grow organically and will be able to provide more small-scale farmers with drought resilient, indigenous seeds. Mizu Eco-Care was chosen by The Zambia Alliance for Agroecology and

Biodiversity (ZAAB) to host their inaugural Seed and Food Festival in 2025 in Mfuwe as a result of Mizu Eco-Care's pioneering activities in the Luangwa Valley as a direct result of this Rotary Grant. What a great accolade!



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5. Reducing human-wildlife conflict and protecting crops. As elephant numbers have increased in the valey due to enhanced protection, this has resulted in escalating conflict between people and elephants when elephants leave the national park and raid people's fields and eat their crops. This grant enabled High Five Club's long-term conservation partner Conservation South Luangwa (CSL) to erect solar and smelly fences around farmer's fields and vegetable plots in key elephant conflict hot spot areas to protect their crops from elephants. In total 5.46km of fencing was erected, protecting 24 hectares for 75 farmers small-scale farmers. CSL also installed a solar fence around Mizu Eco-Care's agroecology / conservation community demonstration plot. The grant also funded essential equipment, work overalls, T-shirts and



supplies for
12 'Chilli

Patrollers' in Mnkhanya Chiefdom, local villagers trained and deployed by CSL to patrol the hotspot areas and deter elephants from entering farmers' fields by firing chilli filled ping pong balls at the elephants using innovative, hand-made chilli bombers to fire them. We were able to additionally trial a new mitigation measure to deter elephants, namely marine foghorns.



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This grant also funded replacement parts and repairs to their bicycles to enable the chilli patrollers to travel to locations where there were 'problem' elephants. A fibreglass canoe was also purchased and delivered to Nsefu chiefdom at a crossing point on the Musandile River between Mponde and Muyembe villages enabling safe passage from crocodiles and hippos for both adults and children.

Finally, four SEKA local theatre group performances were conducted as a result of this grant, 2 in Mnkhanya chiefdom to introduce the solar fence mitigations, and 2 were in Nsefu Chiefdom before delivering the canoe. The total attendance for the 4 performances was 676 villagers.



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6. Tiny Forest Project (Reforestation). High Five Club implemented a reforestation initiative at each of the 3 High Five Club-constructed primary schools in Mnkhanya Chiefdom, as part of this initiative. Working with a very talented local community member Moloson Banda, who is fast becoming through this initiative

a tree planting specialist, we set up and established a High Five Club “Tiny Forest Project” at each school and facilitated through Moloson the provision of conservation education lessons at each school. The children have learnt of the importance to people, wildlife and the planet of conserving trees, along with practically learning how to develop their Tiny Forests at each school. 150 indigenous tree saplings (of 20-30 different species) were initially planted at each school using our ‘Tiny Forest’ method of close planting to stimulate rapid growth through increased competition between the different trees



species planted, with the children taking ownership for caring and watering their trees. The children also collected seed pods from the bush and were taught how to grow their own tree saplings, initially in nursery beds and then in black plastics, before planting out into their Tiny Forest. In this way each Tiny Forest has grown rapidly over the year of the Rotary grant and this initiative is such a huge success that we as H5C have continued to

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fund this initiative for a second year (will be subject to a separate H5C update). Each Tiny Forest has radically improving the school environment.



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High Five Club Support

Alonging with identifying the need for this programme and developing the fully costed proposal that enabled our Rotary Club partner to submit a Global Grant application to Rotary International, H5C supported the Rotary Club of Canterbury Sunrise in writing the grant application and co-ordinated the implementation of the project on the ground in Zambia. Using our local knowledge and community development skills, refined over many years of working alongside rural communities in Africa, H5C also was able to navigate and find solutions to the many challenges faced in the project's implementation,

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along with identifying and working with the most amazing Zambian-owned conservation organisation, Mizu Eco-Care, to make this project a reality.

Financially, in addition to the Rotary Global Grant of USD \$85,000, High Five Club members joined hands to contribute the additional funding that was needed to deliver this food security programme as Rotary cannot fund building projects.

High Five Club members collectively provided:

- **£2,023 for the construction of the community hammermill building**, located on the Agroecology/Conservation demonstration plot acquired by Mizu Eco-Care in Kakumbi Chiefdom, to house the new hammer mill and dehuller machines purchased via the Rotary grant. Materials for the build were purchased locally and local builders used, ensuring that these funds had a knock on effect into the local rural economy.



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Additionally a generous member of the High Five Club, who is also a member of Rotary Club of Canterbury Sunrise, provided a donation to the High Five Club to:

- Provide £2,523 to Mizu Eco-Care for the **renting of temporary premises** for the first 6 months of the project to house the tractor and associated equipment securely. Thereafter, this donation enabled H5C to fund **the construction of a permanent, secure tractor storage building** with metal security gates on Mizu Eco-Care's Agroecology/Conservation demonstration plot in Kakumbi chiefdon, alongside the hammermill building.



We are so thrilled to have worked in partnership with the Rotary Club of Canterbury Sunrise to deliver H5C's most ambitious project to date 😊 So many people's lives living in this wildlife area of Africa have been changed for the better as a result.

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Thanks

We are so grateful to the Rotary Club of Canterbury Sunrise for trusting in us to deliver this ground-breaking food security initiative in Zambia. It is still early days in the life of this initiative but it is moving from strength to strength in the capable and safe hands of our amazing local conservation partner Mizu Eco-Care. The team at Mizu Eco-Care is already taking this initiative to the next level by securing further international grants to develop it still further for the benefit of the thousands of subsistence farmers in the Luangwa Valley.

We are also thankful to the Rotary Club of Mfuwe in Zambia for partnering with us on the ground, along with Conservation South Luangwa for delivering the human wildlife conflict mitigation aspects of this initiative. Finally, we would like to acknowledge and thanks Moloson Banda of Malambo Forest Nursery for going above and beyond in making a success of the H5C Tiny Forest Project. What great teamwork.

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