Project Luangwa

Tourism supporting Education
About Project Luangwa

How it all started
Towards the end of 2009 the global recession caused a decline in tourism in the Luangwa Valley resulting in many local safari operators reducing their staff and placing at risk their own small ‘lodge funded and managed’ school support programmes. These projects operated in isolation and required considerable effort and manpower to manage. Around this time lodge owners got together to discuss how they could best raise money to support the local community and promote conservation, whilst at the same time be kept free to focus on their day to day businesses. It was agreed between them that they would start charging clients a small levy on top of their bed rates and this became the Luangwa Community and Conservation Fund (LCCF) with the proceeds split equally between community projects and conservation.

This prompted five safari operators to get together and form Project Luangwa, a charity with the sole purpose of managing all their community projects through the use of dedicated staff and using the LCCF funds for administration. From this simple idea Project Luangwa has grown into an NGO supporting many schools over a wide area of the Luangwa Valley, arranging the sponsorship of a growing number of school pupils and tertiary students and encouraging more girls to complete school and realise their potential.

Who is involved with Project Luangwa?
Project Luangwa has an excellent working relationship with the Ministry of Education and receives their full support. Both the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS), who is responsible for overseeing all education provision in the Mambwe District and the Chair of the Head Teachers’ Association are members of PL Board.

Project Luangwa works in partnership with USAid in an advisory role to USAid SPLASH and has an MoU to jointly work on issues surrounding Menstrual Hygiene Management. We are a member of the D-WASHE (District Water Sanitation Health Education) committee assisting with the identification of new borehole sites and their installation. Project Luangwa is a preferred partner for the UK National Police Aid Convoy. During the 4 years Project Luangwa has been supporting schools in the Luangwa Valley we have formed successful partnerships with donors, Trusts and companies seeking to help schools and communities in Zambia through their Corporate Social Responsibility policy programmes. More information can be supplied to potential donors on request.

Founding and supporting Safari Camps and Lodges:
• Flatdogs Camp
• Robin Pope Safaris
• Shenton Safaris
• Kafunta Safaris
• Croc Valley Camp

Project Luangwa is an NGO registered in:
• Zambia: Trust (Zambia), CI1027 with Ministry of Lands and Deeds
• UK: Charity Commission № 1119335
• USA: Non-Profit Organisation with 501(c) 3 status in Seattle, Washington.
Project Luangwa is based and operates in the Luangwa Valley in the Eastern Province of Zambia. The valley itself is the tail end of the Great Rift Valley; rich in wildlife but harsh and unforgiving for the people in the local communities. The South Luangwa National Park lies within the valley and forms the western border of the area where we work. To the east is a range of hills and, sandwiched between are 2500 sq. km. of bush land dotted with small villages of mud brick houses with grass thatched roofs and some very remote schools.

Whilst the Luangwa River forms a natural border to the park it does not restrict the animals. Elephant, lion and other wildlife regularly cross the river and cause human wildlife conflict in the area.

Project Luangwa’s office is close to the park and community at the Zambian Wildlife Authority Offices at Chinzombo. We welcome visitors but it is always advisable to get your lodge or camp to telephone ahead to make sure we are available.
The local people living in the Luangwa Valley face many challenges. There is no industry, no natural resources and almost no livestock due the presence of tsetse flies. Most people survive by subsistence farming but even this is difficult when an elephant can destroy a whole year’s supply of maize in a single night. The lucky few may find work at a safari lodge but for the majority there is no hope of employment.

HIV/AIDS and all its secondary diseases, malaria and, to some extent, malnutrition, are all present. People are often killed by the local wildlife. The number of orphans is high; for example at one small community school of 318 pupils, 210 are orphans.

As in many rural areas of Zambia there are too few teachers and not enough school places. Many classes have over a hundred kids sitting on the floor as there are not enough desks. In 2013 the number of pupils in the grade 7 class at Mfuwe Basic School reached 134. Often there is just one text book . . . and that is for the teacher.

Girls, in particular, face many problems that put their health in danger and prevents them for realising their potential.

Scope of our work

Our work is focused on supporting schools, increasing the standards of education and encouraging communities to find sustainable ways to support themselves. To this end we try and evaluate all possible causes for poor educational standards and children being unable to attend school and implement plans to overcome those problems.

This includes: building new school infrastructure and refurbishing the old; sponsoring school pupils and tertiary students; encouraging girls and helping with their problems; providing funds for teachers in community schools; buying text books; providing new desks; installing and ensuring that bore holes are maintained.

Whilst we at Project Luangwa do not believe in hand-outs we do believe in working with the community to give a hand up. This means we do not say, “What can we do for you?” but rather “How can we work together to help you achieve what you need?”
The total spend by Project Luangwa on education and community projects in 2012 was US$400,000 and in 2013 it reached US$484,000.

Here is a list of just some of our achievements since 2011 and our on-going projects:

- Completion of 3 1x3 secondary size classroom blocks,
- 3 dormitory buildings each housing 48 pupils;
- 2 ablation blocks with showers, flush toilets and laundry facilities - one for girls and one for boys;
- 2 blocks of ‘the first of their kind’ female menstrual hygiene toilets;
- The largest school library in the eastern province and stocked it with thousands of books, a pc and a barcode scanner for cataloguing and lending. We are continuing to source books for this project;
- Sunk a bore hole and installed an electric pump to this, and another borehole, to provide running water to a boarding secondary school of over 1000 pupils.
- Refurbished an old school dormitory
- Constructed a 1x3 classroom block at Mnkhanya Community School;
- Complete refurbishment of a run-down 1x3 classroom block at Uyoba Community School;
- Converted an office and store into libraries at 2 primary schools and filled them with books;
- Provided funding enabling the completion of a 1 x 4 classroom and administration block at Matula Secondary School;
- Provided wheelchairs to disabled children enabling them to attend school;
- Provided text books to the value of over $50,000 to 6 government and community schools;
• Working with the school on a ‘keep mfuwe school clean’ and building maintenance programme;
• Running a successful girls’ club at mfuwe secondary. Late 2014 sees the start of this pilot project being extended to 20 other schools over a 5 years programme. Girls’ clubs help address some of the problems faced by girls in Africa. You can find out more about this topic on the gender support pages of our website.
• Expanding our drama based project addressing the issues of girls in education. In 2012 we commissioned a local drama group to produce a play and have an ongoing programme taking this play to schools and villages throughout the area;
• Encouraging reading and a love of books with our Literacy scheme;
• Developing menstrual hygiene kits and reusable washable sanitary pads. This project will be in full production in 2015 and will become a self-sustaining nonprofit business for local women:
• We have supplied 2 schools with an exciting new e-learning system using iSchool ZeduPads and installed solar power to these schools in order to charge the tablets.

You can find out more about these and other projects on our website - www.projectluangwa.org

Over 95% of the funds raised by Project Luangwa are spent within Zambia.
We take pride in utilising local skills wherever possible and currently employ 5 permanent staff as well as up to 60 more on a more casual basis for the building work.
In conjunction with our building programme we encourage all our unskilled workers to shadow an experienced builder to gain skills that will enable them to become a builder in their own right.
Future Projects and why we need funds

Project Luangwa is always looking ahead and planning projects for the future . . . and, wherever we look, we see a need for more classrooms and resources at schools and for local kids to have better access to good quality education in order to fulfil their potential.

There are over 20 schools in our area and every one of them is in need of more support. Some require more classroom space whilst at others the greater need is for teachers’ housing, desks or text books. In some schools it may appear from a distance that there are sufficient classrooms but sometimes the classrooms are, quite literally, falling down around the pupils and many are derelict and have been condemned as unsafe. Schools are often forced to hold classes for some grades in the morning and for different grades in the afternoon.

Recent changes in the Government Education Policy have put an extra strain on all schools in the Mfuwe area. As from January 2014 all primary schools were instructed to phase out teaching grade 8 and 9 classes (or Junior Secondary level) and to send those pupils to recognised secondary schools. In an area of over 2500 sq km there are just two secondary schools serving nearly 30 primary schools. The Zambian Government has also sent out a directive to all schools instructing them to start both early learning (pre-school) and adult classes putting further strains on the system. Both ideas are admirable and PL would like to help.

So, as you see the needs are great and, whilst we have achieved a huge amount since the birth of PL, we still need your help and support in order that we can continue to improve schools and make a difference to the communities and children in South Luangwa.

WORKING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

With increasing regularity we see that families are relying on women as the providers and, in order for them to fulfil this role and help their families survive women and girls need to believe in themselves and their abilities.

Young girls in rural areas of Africa face many problems that prevent them getting an education and realising their potential.

These problems may range from forced early marriages, teenage pregnancy, sexual abuse and little or no access to sanitary products to a simple lack of self esteem.

In order to help you understand these and their other problems and to see what we are trying to do to help please visit our gender support pages at www.projectluangwa.org/gendersupport

There is also a downloadable booklet - Girls’ Issues in Rural Zambia.

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2014 HIGHLY COMMENDED