



BY LIFE CONNECTED



PEOPLE



NATURE



ANIMALS

Annual Report 2024

By Life Connected

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This report gives an overview of all the projects implemented in 2024.

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2024 IN A NUTSHELL

The year was marked by an extensive and devastating drought—one of the worst dry seasons in decades. It was heartbreaking to witness the suffering of many Zambians. Yet, for By Life Connected, it also became an opportunity to demonstrate the power of water security and our regenerative approach. Without a borehole, our check dam and communal regenerative garden still provided water until the very end of the dry season—proving the strength and resilience of this model.

2024 was also a pivotal year in advancing systemic, landscape-level change. While continuing our bottom-up work, we launched several top-down initiatives, including a Collaborative Management Partnership in the Mumbwa Game Management Area, by-law development, and land use planning in Mulendema Chiefdom. You can read more about the BLC model in the chapter “What We Do.”

One of the most challenging aspects of 2024 was working toward the operational sustainability of BLC’s business components—namely the Mukuni Community Farm and the Mulendema Farm-to-Table Initiative (which includes the Demonstration Garden, communal regenerative gardens, and the supply chain to local lodges). Much of the year was spent navigating a series of tough issues, particularly around leadership struggles and the misuse of chemicals at Mukuni Community Farm. Despite these setbacks, we ended the year on a hopeful note. Key changes were made, including the replacement of community farmers at Mukuni and the successful construction of seven additional communal gardens as part of the Farm-to-Table program. With these foundational elements now in place, both initiatives are well positioned to become operationally sustainable in 2025.

We successfully attracted new partners who share our vision for lasting change. In addition to the ongoing support from Green Safaris Conservation Foundation, we began collaborations with The Nature Conservancy, Commonland, WWF, Sensing Clues, and Musekese Conservation.

Our team also grew. We welcomed:

- Tash Zulu, Accountant
- Joseph Kapitango, Content Creator
- Kaluba Chitunga, Agricultural Extension Officer
- Mulela Kayaya, Mukuni Farm Foreman
- Patience Chewa, Assistant Accountant

A special acknowledgment goes to our longstanding partnership with the Green Safaris Conservation Foundation. As our primary funder since the beginning, their unwavering commitment to community development has been instrumental. We are deeply grateful for their continued support.

Looking Ahead to 2025

The path ahead is uncertain. Our current partnerships with Commonland, The Nature Conservancy, and WWF are set to end in March/April 2025. While all have expressed interest in continuing the collaboration, nothing is guaranteed yet.

Starting in 2025, we will begin phasing out our partnership with the Green Safaris Conservation Foundation. Most collaborative projects will conclude by the end of 2025. The final scope of our partnership for 2026 will be determined in October 2025.

We're also exploring a potential partnership with GIZ, though progress is slow due to their bureaucratic processes.

2025 will also be a pivotal year for the business components of BLC. It's a make-or-break moment for achieving true financial sustainability across our key initiatives.

On a personal note, our co-founder Kellie is expecting twins. While this is a joyful and exciting time, it will also bring unique challenges for the organization.

NATHALIE HOUTMAN

Chairman

LARS VERMEER

Treasurer - Founder & CEO

KELLIE BOCXE

Secretary – Founder & CEO

VINCENT KOUWENHOVEN

Board member

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Balance Sheet

<i>Assets</i>	
Fixed Assets	\$21.686
Bank Balance Zambia Kwacha	\$702
Bank Balance Zambia Dollar	\$5.100
Bank Balance NL Euro	\$7.925
Donor Receivable	\$7.492
Total Income	\$42.905

<i>Liabilities</i>	
Equity	\$27.130
WWF	\$6.907
Commonland and TNC	\$8.700
Green Safaris Conservation Foundation	\$168
Total Expenses	\$42.905

Statement of Activities

<i>Income</i>	
Unrestricted Donations	\$24.480
WWF	\$37.736
Commonland and TNC	\$48.291
Green Safaris Conservation Foundation	\$127.257
Foreign Exchange Gain	\$2.120
Total Income	\$239.883

<i>Expenses</i>	
By Life Connected	\$27.849
WWF	\$30.829
WWF INNO	\$168
Commonland and TNC	\$48.304
Green Safaris Conservation Foundation	\$124.154
Foreign Exchange Loss	\$1.888
Depreciation	\$2.225
Total Expenses	\$235.417



WHAT WE DO

The Problem

The Greater Kafue Ecosystem (GKE) and its surrounding chiefdoms face severe ecological and socio-economic challenges, including deforestation, poaching, and unsustainable agriculture, which threaten both local communities and the preservation of nature. Weak governance, extreme poverty, and limited resources drive unsustainable practices, creating a cycle of environmental degradation and economic instability.

A Collaborative Solution

Achieving **systemic change** on a landscape scale requires a holistic strategy that integrates top-down and bottom-up governance, bringing together traditional leaders, government agencies, community representatives, and NGOs to co-create a sustainable future. The collaborative solution incorporates Commonland's 4 Returns Framework and focuses on:

- **Strengthening governance** through chiefdom by-laws, land-use plans, and collective management and developmental frameworks (Return of Inspiration).
- **Empowering communities** with the capacity, skills, and resources to lead their own development sustainably (Return of Social Capital).
- **Developing sustainable revenue streams** to reduce reliance on extractive practices (Return of Financial Capital).
- **Promoting nature-based livelihoods** tailored to each community's environment, traditions, and market opportunities (Return of Natural Capital).

Through pilot programs in Mumbwa GMA Landscape, and expansion in Livingstone area, BLC demonstrates how a stakeholder-led approach can break the cycle of resource depletion and poverty.

Outcomes

The outcomes of the model include i.) effective governance systems and ii.) infrastructural development for sustainable growth, both driving systemic change. Changing the system will iii.) encourage people to change their behaviour to more sustainable practices. These three key outcomes are structured into progressive phases:

Phase 1: Joint Action - Leadership transformation and active stakeholder engagement lead to stronger governance and the establishment of developmental frameworks, with a network of change agents driving progress.

Phase 2: Movement - Developmental strategies focused on nature-based solutions and infrastructure improvements create sustainable economic opportunities and enhance quality of life for the community.

Phase 3: Momentum - Sustainable practices and collaborative governance become the norm, driving systemic change that reduces reliance on external support and fosters resilience to future challenges.

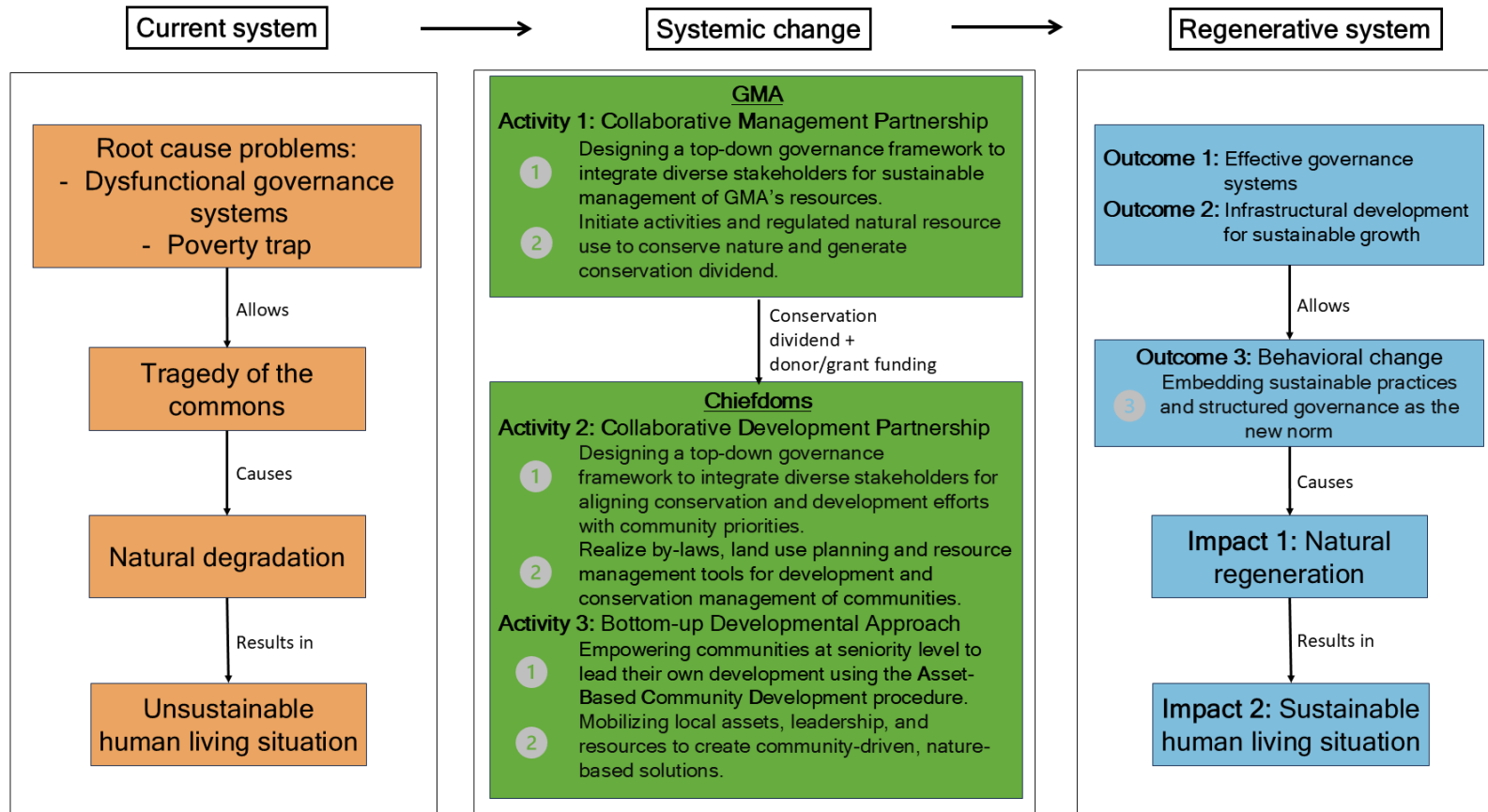


Figure 1. An overview of the status quo and proposed changes for system and behavioural change. The numbers represent different phases of Theory of Change: 1 = joint action (creating collective governance frameworks), 2 = movement (implementation of developmental strategies) and 3 = momentum (new system becomes the norm). GMA = Game Management Area.

Activities

This section outlines three interconnected activities in Phase 1: Joint Action and Phase 2: Movement, aimed at strengthening governance and socio-economic development. Implementation of these various models drive systemic change by building governance structures and developmental infrastructure to support behavioral shifts in the landscape.

Collaborative Management Partnership (CMP)

The CMP model is a governance framework that integrates diverse stakeholders for the sustainable management of a GMA's natural resources. It aligns conservation with socio-economic development through collaboration, accountability, and shared responsibility. The model is under review and will be updated in 2025.

Key Features of the CMP model:

- **Stakeholder Integration:** Involves traditional leaders, community representatives, government agencies, NGOs, and private sector partners to ensure inclusive decision-making.
- **Collaborative Planning:** Develops a Collective Management Plan that balances ecological sustainability with economic needs.
- **Shared Governance:** A CMP board, representing key stakeholders, oversees implementation, fosters trust, and ensures accountability.
- **Sustainable Funding:** Uses conservation dividends from eco-tourism and resource use to fund community and conservation projects, reducing donor dependency.
- **Legal & Policy Support:** Advocates for reforms to formalize partnerships, strengthen resource management, and enhance enforcement.

Collaborative Developmental Partnership

The CDP model is a governance framework for resource management, land-use planning, and socio-economic development within a chiefdom. It strengthens traditional and governmental leadership through structured collaboration and participatory planning, aligning conservation and development with community priorities.

Key Features of the CDP model:

- **Stakeholder-Led Planning:** A participatory process involving traditional leaders, government, communities, NGOs, and experts to ensure diverse priorities are addressed.
- **Comprehensive By-Laws:** Enforceable regulations rooted in tradition and supported by formal legal structures to promote sustainable resource use.
- **Land-Use Planning:** A structured zoning system for agriculture, conservation, and settlements to ensure sustainable resource allocation and minimize conflicts.

- **Digital Resource Management:** Tools like digital maps and mobile technology empower Traditional Authorities to monitor and track resource use.
- **Governance Integration:** Aligns chiefdom-level plans with broader frameworks (e.g., Mumbwa GMA CMP) to contribute to regional conservation and development goals.

Bottom-up Developmental Approach

The bottom-up approach empowers communities at the seniority level to lead their own development using the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) model. It mobilizes local assets, leadership, and resources to create sustainable, community-driven solutions while complementing the top-down Collaborative Developmental Partnership by addressing grassroots needs.

Key Features of the Bottom-up Developmental Approach:

- **Rural Development Centres (RDCs):** Each chiefdom has an RDC serving as BLC's hub for administration, logistics, and project implementation, while showcasing tailored livelihood opportunities.
- **Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD):** BLC applies the ABCD model to build on local strengths, forming a Communal Service Society (a community-led NGO) and developing a communal development plan for systemic change.
- **Capacity Building:** The Communal Service Society receives training, funding, transport, communication tools, and meeting spaces to lead development independently, reducing reliance on BLC.
- **Nature-Based Solutions & Regenerative Livelihoods:** Context-specific interventions address ecological and socio-economic challenges, including water security, regenerative agriculture, reforestation, and sustainable grazing, ensuring long-term sustainability.



WHERE WE OPERATE

By Life Connected operates in three different communities throughout Zambia.

Mulendema Chiefdom

The first location is in Mulendema Chiefdom, located next to Kafue National Park and a part of the Mumbwa Game Management Area (GMA). A GMA is a zone for wildlife conservation and regulated human activities like hunting and tourism. In this chiefdom we work with the Mponda Seniority in an area of about 80 km² with a population of around 2500 people. The goal of applying our model in this area is to reach and impact the entire community.

Mukuni Chiefdom

The second location is in Mukuni Chiefdom. This chiefdom is located next to Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park and the Victoria Falls in Livingstone. In this chiefdom we work directly with twenty community members on a communally owned organic farm. The goal of the farm is to not only teach these twenty members, but to also be a training centre for the entire community of Mukuni.

Simonga & Sinde Communities

The third location are the Simonga and Sinde villages. A semi-rural area next to Livingstone and located directly on an elephant corridor. The goal of applying our model in this area is to reach and impact the entire community, which consists of around 5000 people.



KAFUE NATIONAL PARK

PROJECT PROGRESS OVERVIEW AS PER END 2023	1 - concept development	2 - implementation	3 - hiring and training	4 - evaluation and monitoring	5 - adjustment	6 - possible 2nd development	7 - results	8 - transfer of ownership	9 - scaling	10 - conclusion of project
KAFUE NATIONAL PARK										
Asset Based Community Development										
Farm to Table Initiative										
Check Dams										
Communal Gardens										
Conservation Education Clubs										
Bamboo Project										
Waste to Wealth										
Rotational Grazing										
By-laws creation and Land Use Planning										
Collaborative Management Partnership										

Asset Based Community Development



Objective: To mobilize community members in taking the lead over their own development through facilitation and capacity building.

Phase: 7. Results

In 2024, the core group officially registered as a Communal Service Society with the Registrar of Societies. This structure—recognized under Zambian law—functions as a community-run NGO dedicated to the development of its local area.

The dedication and commitment of its members have been remarkable. Throughout the year, all members operated entirely as volunteers. This aligns well with rural Zambian culture, where traditional leaders often take an active role in uplifting their communities. In 2024, the Communal Service Society took full ownership of all BLC bottom-up projects. They excelled in mobilizing communities and, in most cases, successfully coordinated implementation. Their efforts – through the continuous support of Green Safaris Conservation Foundation (GSCF) - have made it possible for BLC and the Society, working as one team, to achieve more impact with fewer resources.

Recognizing the importance of empowering a group that is leading its own development, BLC—together with WWF and The Nature Conservancy (TNC)—facilitated a series of targeted capacity-building workshops. These focused on conservation education, youth and women engagement, and fire management.

Looking ahead to 2025, additional training sessions are planned to further strengthen the group's effectiveness, including workshops on leadership, financial literacy, and natural resource management. Another critical next step is transitioning from a purely volunteer-based structure to a more sustainable model. Providing members with stipends, mobile phones, and bicycles will enable them to increase their impact without compromising their ability to care for their families. This shift will help transform their service into a mutually beneficial, win-win arrangement.



Farm to Table Initiative



Objective: I) To educate and train community members in small-scale regenerative farming through interactive workshops, II) facilitate sustainable livelihoods by establishing communal regenerative gardens and linking them to the tourism market through a BLC run supply chain and III) making the whole initiative financially sustainable.

Phase: 9. Scaling

In 2024, the Mulendema Demonstration Farm continued to serve as a vital hub for sustainable agriculture training, reaching nearly 150 farmers—primarily women—from communal regenerative gardens across Mponda Seniority. Supported by WWF, these farmers participated in hands-on workshops covering composting, crop rotation, and natural pest control, strengthening both their technical skills and understanding of regenerative farming practices.

The year also saw several key infrastructure developments, supported by GSCF. A biodigester was constructed to transform organic waste from Ila Safari Lodge into both biogas and nutrient-rich slurry for soil enrichment. In addition, a cold storage unit and a cleaning and packaging facility were installed to enhance post-harvest handling and support the expanding Farm-to-Table initiative—improving both produce quality and market readiness.

The vision for this initiative is clear: vegetables produced in communal regenerative gardens can be purchased from local farmers, processed and stored at the demonstration farm, and sold—primarily to Green Safaris lodges. Financial sustainability will be reached when income from produce sales fully covers the costs of labor managing the demonstration farm and supporting the gardens, as well as operational expenses.



However, 2024 also highlighted key challenges. The demonstration farm's small size, combined with high demand from Ila Safari Lodge, placed pressure on the soil and led to increased pest and disease vulnerability. This emphasized the urgent need for improved soil management and the expansion of the communal garden network to better distribute production and reduce stress on the demo farm.

Check Dams



Objective: To provide a sustainable, year-round water supply to the community through nature-based solutions.

Phase: 9. Scaling

The plan is to establish a cascading system of 35 check dams, designed to capture and retain large volumes of rainwater that would otherwise drain into the Indian Ocean. This harvested water will support numerous communal organic gardens.

The first check dam, funded by GSCF, was constructed in 2021 alongside a communal organic garden. The project proved highly successful, inspiring more ambitious expansion targets in the years that followed.

By the end of 2024, seven additional check dams are under construction with funding and support from TNC, bringing the total to 11 dams by 2025. Notably, one of these is being built in a *dambo*—a wide, shallow tributary of a larger river. This marks a first for BLC and, due to the larger scale of the site, required the use of machinery alongside manual labour.



Communal Regenerative Gardens



Objective: To provide nutritious, organically grown vegetables for consumption year-round, with a potential of scaling and providing a livelihood income.

Phase: 9. Scaling

In 2023 two women-led communal gardens have been created with funding from GSCF. The combination of a check dam, a shallow protected well and communal regenerative garden was shown to be effective here, even under extensive drought period.

Another seven communal gardens are under construction by the end of 2024, with funding coming from WWF, and expected to begin operation by the end of the rainy season in 2025. This milestone represents significant progress in addressing food security and strengthening community resilience.

Progress in each communal garden largely depends on the strength of local leadership. Each garden is coordinated by a member of the Communal Service Society who resides in that specific area. While some gardens have quickly established strong foundations, others continue to lag behind. In some cases, this variation reflects differences in natural community cohesion—with certain areas showing a stronger tradition of collaboration, making it easier for people to work together.

These disparities are regularly discussed during Communal Service Society meetings, where members share experiences, identify challenges, and work together to find solutions that can help underperforming gardens catch up.



Conservation Education Program



Objective: To create a mind-shift change in children and youth towards the unsustainable use of natural resources.

Phase: 7. Results

The Conservation Education Clubs exceeded expectations in 2024, with over 150 students participating across four schools. This was made possible by the continuous support by GSCF.

This year also marked a shift in the program’s approach, as the matrons and patrons of the clubs were equipped with training at the beginning of the year. This training provided them with the tools to teach conservation lessons independently, while the BLC conservation coordinator monitored the schools throughout the year. This adjustment improved the students’ understanding and engagement.

Field trips to Ila Safari Lodge and game drives in the Kafue National Park, allowed 120 students to witness firsthand the importance of conservation. Additionally, in collaboration with Musekese Conservation, an end-of-year initiative rewarded the two best-performing students of each school with an exclusive visit to Musekese Camp. There, they learned about anti-poaching strategies and conservation practices, further inspiring their commitment to protecting Zambia’s natural heritage.



Bamboo plantations



Objective: To provide an alternative for wood used as fuel for cooking and construction, thereby decreasing deforestation.

Phase: 6. Possible 2nd development

The 2023 goal to monitor and potentially expand the bamboo planting initiative to combat deforestation achieved steady progress in 2024. One hundred new bamboo plants were added, including a new species introduced to assess optimal suitability.

Improved livestock management ensured that these young plants could establish themselves without interference. Although challenges remain, such as ensuring adequate water during dry spells, the plantations are on track to provide sustainable alternatives for fuel and construction. The lessons learned from this successful pilot have laid the groundwork for implementing communal bamboo plantations on a larger scale in the future.



Waste to Wealth



Objective: To provide a sustainable livelihood for women by upcycling waste into art products and to create waste awareness in the process.

Phase: 2. Implementation

The Waste-to-Wealth (W2W) Initiative made strong strides in 2024 with the completion of key infrastructure: a storage area for sorting five waste categories, a workshop, and an enclosed office/shop. This progress was made possible through the support of the GSCF, the WWF INNO Fund, and BLC's own fundraising efforts.

A community Creative Day was held to identify and engage local participants—particularly women—interested in joining the program. In its initial phase, the initiative will focus on testing product feasibility, refining production processes, and developing a robust business case to ensure long-term sustainability.

Sorting, cleaning, and storing waste will require piecework support, alongside facility maintenance. Following a waste separation workshop at Ila Safari Lodge, organic waste collection was active for a bit until the wheelie bins broke. The initiative also awaits supplies of other waste categories to begin production.

Two volunteers from the Netherlands will assist in launching operations in February 2025, aiming to reduce waste and create sustainable income streams.



Rotational Grazing



Objective: Improve land health, livestock productivity, and sustainable resource use by systematically moving livestock between different grazing areas.

Phase: 1. Concept Development

The trip to the Mpanshya cattle herd in Rufunsa aimed to inspire the core group to start a rotational grazing project. Over three days, the group, along with BLC and WWF representatives, attended a workshop on rotational grazing, sparking enthusiasm for the project in Mponda Seniority.

This led to a rotational grazing indaba, where cattle and crop farmers from Mponda Seniority, along with local leaders and officials, gathered to discuss the benefits of rotational grazing and plan the next steps. With strong support from the 45 attendees, the project is set to begin in 2025 when the



partnership with GIZ is finalized. Both the trip to Rufunsa and the Rotational Grazing Indaba were funded by WWF.

By-law creation and Land Use Planning



Objective: To empower rural communities with an effective natural resource management system

Phase: 2. Implementation

Through years of living and working in rural Zambia, we identified a critical yet overlooked opportunity: the traditional leadership system—made up of Headmen, Senior Headmen, and Chiefs—has immense potential to guide sustainable natural resource management but remains largely underutilized. In rural settings, government enforcement of environmental laws (such as the charcoal ban) is often absent, while traditional leaders lack the tools, resources and authority to fill that gap. The result is a governance vacuum marked by neglect and environmental degradation.

To address this, we began exploring how communities could be empowered—through their own leadership structures—to take ownership of local resource management. Our journey started with a learning exchange to Serenje District, where a forward-thinking Chief has implemented effective by-laws to manage natural resources. This visit underscored a key takeaway: rural Zambia urgently needs locally relevant by-laws combined with participatory land use planning.

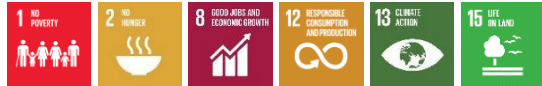
Working alongside traditional authorities, we developed a plan to support the creation of Chiefdom-specific by-laws, clearly outlining rules for natural resource use. These are integrated with a community-led land use planning system, providing a visual map of the chiefdom that defines where and how various resources can be used.

To ensure these rules can be actively enforced, we are partnering with the Dutch NGO Sensing Clues to introduce a geospatial mobile app. This tool equips Headmen with real-time access to land use maps and by-laws, enabling them to patrol and manage their areas more effectively and proactively.



The full initiative—including the Serenje exposure visit—was made possible by funding from WWF. Implementation began in the fourth quarter of 2024, with initial outcomes expected after the second quarter of 2025.

Collaborative Management Partnership model



Objective: To create an inclusive, stakeholder-driven governance structure that unites traditional authorities, government agencies, and NGOs to collaboratively manage natural resources, restore degraded landscapes, and improve local livelihoods through conservation-based development.

Phase: 5. Adjustment

The Collaborative Management Partnership (CMP) model—facilitated by BLC, initiated by TNC and funded by Commonland and TNC—is at the heart of efforts to drive systemic change in the Mumbwa Game Management Area (GMA). At its core, the model emphasizes inclusive, community-driven governance by actively engaging chiefs, Community Resource Boards (CRBs), government bodies, and conservation NGOs.

Currently, the governance landscape in Mumbwa GMA is fragmented and ineffective. Rules and responsibilities are often vague, and limited resources prevent key actors—such as government agencies, CRBs, and traditional leadership—from taking decisive action. This lack of clarity creates a vacuum that encourages unchecked exploitation of natural resources. If this continues, the ecological integrity of Mumbwa GMA could be irreversibly damaged within a decade.

To prevent this, a complete system shift is needed, beginning with the collective establishment of a governance framework that works. That is the central purpose of the CMP model: to create a collaborative structure that fosters accountability, coordination, and conservation-focused development.

In 2024, several practical steps were taken to implement the CMP model:

- Stakeholder Mapping & Sensitization**
 Conducted across the three chiefdoms (Mulendema, Chibuluma, Kabulwebulwe) and all Village Action Groups (VAGs), this exercise raised awareness of governance gaps, encroachment, and environmental degradation. Communities were introduced to the CMP model as a unifying solution to strengthen governance.
- Formation of the CMP Working Group**
 The Working Group includes representatives from the three CRBs, three chiefs, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW), the Forestry Department, TNC, Musekese Conservation, African Parks, Game Rangers International, and BLC. This diverse group drives coordination, decentralization, and decision-making.

- **Application of the 4 Returns Diagnostic Tool**
This framework was used to assess and guide interventions based on four pillars: inspiration, social capital, natural capital, and financial capital. It shaped the design of key projects such as check dams and regenerative gardens.
- **Governance Framework Development**
Through a series of CMP meetings, the Working Group finalized a Terms of Reference (ToR) and drafted a CMP Board Constitution, establishing transparent structures to guide collaborative governance and decision-making.
- **Shared Vision for Restoration**
Stakeholders aligned around a collective vision to restore and sustainably manage Mumbwa GMA through joint planning and action.
- **Community Engagement through Sport**
In October 2024, the “Conserve Nature for Everyone” Conservation Tournament brought together communities from all three chiefdoms for football and netball matches, using sport as a vehicle for conservation education and community pride.
- **Learning Exchange at Musekese Conservation Base**
The Working Group visited Musekese to observe anti-poaching operations and ecological research in action. The visit strengthened practical understanding of conservation and built trust and collaboration among CMP partners.

LIVINGSTONE

Project implementation in two semi-urban communities around Livingstone town: Mukuni Chiefdom and village, and Simonga & Sinde village.

PROJECT PROGRESS OVERVIEW AS PER END 2023	1 - concept development	2 - implementation	3 - hiring and training	4 - evaluation and monitoring	5 - adjustment	6 - possible 2nd development	7 - results	8 - transfer of ownership	9 - Scaling	10 - conclusion of project
LIVINGSTONE										
Mukuni Regenerative Community Farm										
Human-Elephant Co-existence										

The Mukuni Regenerative Community Farm



Objective: To provide a sustainable livelihood for twenty local community members through regenerative farming

Phase: 6. Possible 2nd development

2024 was a defining year for Mukuni Community Farm, shaped by hard-earned lessons, essential structural reforms, and a determined shift toward long-term sustainability.

Leadership Shift and a Fresh Start

At the start of the year, the farm faced serious challenges: disorganization, poor productivity, and a lack of accountability. In response, a new foreman was appointed—bringing valuable experience in agriculture and community development. His leadership immediately made a difference, boosting teamwork, motivation, and day-to-day efficiency across the farm.

Uncovering the Root Problem

As efforts to restore productivity began, a major issue came to light: chemical pesticides had been used by the previous management, damaging the soil biology in what was supposed to be an organic garden. The discovery of buried pesticide containers confirmed the suspicion. Years of soil-

building work had been undermined—explaining the garden's vulnerability to pests, diseases, and declining yields.

This setback, while frustrating, provided clarity. The team decided to shift operations to a new 1-hectare organic garden on uncontaminated land. Early signs were encouraging—crops were healthier and more resilient. In the original garden, the addition of compost and black soil began to show promise, as the return of worms signaled a slow but hopeful recovery.

Regenerating the Land

The vegetable garden remained the centerpiece of daily work. Though plagued by grasshopper and caterpillar infestations, the team kept fulfilling orders for Livingstone Island. A learning visit to an organic farm in Kazungula brought new ideas for pest management and regenerative practices, which were quickly implemented back at Mukuni.

Poultry: A Quiet but Steady Success

While crop production faced ups and downs, poultry production consistently improved. Mortality rates dropped, hygiene practices were strengthened, and Q3 marked one of the best-selling cycles to date.

Infrastructure and Irrigation: Filling the Gaps

A new borehole was installed to improve irrigation for the expanding organic section. However, extreme weather damaged the greenhouse, revealing a need for more resilient infrastructure which was implemented. Transport also became a major bottleneck: the old utility vehicle repeatedly broke down, forcing the team to hire transport at high cost. Plans were made to secure a more reliable vehicle to restore logistical efficiency.

All Pieces in Place—Except One

By the end of Q3, nearly every condition for success had been met:

- Competent leadership
- Access to water
- Improving soil quality
- Necessary infrastructure, tools, and equipment
- Market access through Green Safaris
- Financial support from GSCF and management support from BLC
- A formalized shared vision, captured in a new cooperative constitution, which included a future pathway to community ownership
- Continuous training and capacity-building

With all external factors in place, lack of commitment within the team emerged as the final barrier to success.



To assess individual performance, the foreman divided the garden into separate plots, assigning responsibility to each team member. The results were telling: six individuals clearly underperformed, while ten were identified as passive followers, showing limited initiative. Only two members consistently demonstrated strong commitment and work ethic.

Our strategy was to replace the six underperformers with more motivated individuals, in the hope that the followers would be positively influenced by stronger role models. After a very challenging but well-structured process—facilitated by community Headmen and supported by Prince Siasiloka—the replacements were made.

Financial Reality and the Road to Profitability

By Q4, financial records showed a monthly shortfall of K11,000 (approx. \$400). Yet, the solution was clear:

- Double the number of monthly chicken batches
- Increase vegetable output from the new organic garden
- Lower transport costs by replacing the utility vehicle

Looking Ahead: Positioned for Sustainability

By the end of 2024, Mukuni Community Farm had shifted from survival mode to strategic growth. With committed leadership, a restructured team, improved farming systems, and a clear financial path forward, the farm is now on track to become a financially sustainable and regenerative community enterprise in 2025.



Human-Elephant Co-existence



Objective: To provide a pilot communal farm that will guide which elephant mitigation measures work in this area, so that the local community members can start up agricultural initiatives as a livelihood (again).

Phase: 2. Implementation

In 2024, the communities of Simoonga and Sinde began laying the foundation for a long-term solution to one of the region's most pressing challenges: conflict between elephants and farmers.

For decades, elephants have roamed through these areas, often destroying crops and putting food security at risk. In response, the Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) Mitigation Farm was launched with the support of the Green Safaris Conservation Foundation—not as a quick fix, but as a place to build and prove a model for peaceful coexistence between communities and wildlife.

Starting with Demonstration

Rather than spreading limited resources thinly across many households, the project began with a single demonstration site—a carefully chosen piece of land on the edge of elephant territory in the Simoonga/Sinde area. The purpose was to showcase, in real conditions, how elephant deterrents and regenerative farming techniques can work together to protect crops and improve livelihoods.

Establishing the Foundations: Infrastructure First

Throughout 2024, the focus was on building the physical backbone of the demonstration farm. Step by step, the team and community volunteers worked to make the site functional and secure:

- A strong perimeter fence was erected—an essential first layer of protection in an elephant corridor.
- Basic structures were constructed, including a storage unit and shelter for tools and activities. All were built using earth bags.
- A gravity-fed irrigation system was installed to enable consistent watering and year-round growing.
- 30 beehives were built for a beehive fence

Progress was slow at times—not due to a lack of will, but because the work was almost entirely volunteer-driven. Community members gave their time and energy between other personal and farming responsibilities, which meant that tasks often moved forward in short bursts rather than at a

continuous pace. Coordination required patience, flexibility, and frequent on-the-ground communication.

Adding to the challenge was the absence of clear local leadership. Friction occasionally arose within the team, especially when decisions were needed or conflicts emerged. These tensions were compounded by a larger unresolved issue: a dispute between government and traditional authorities over the land's jurisdiction. Simoonga and Sinde sit in a legal grey area—claimed by both government and traditional leadership. As a result, we didn't have clear leaders who could resolve the friction. In response, valuable time that could have been spent developing the farm was sometimes redirected toward mediating local disputes.

One notable setback occurred when the roof of one structure was blown off during a storm, requiring repair and reinforcing. Yet the team pushed forward.

Food for Work program

To support progress on the farm during a time of widespread hardship, a food-for-work program was introduced in 2024 as a drought response initiative. The region was facing severe food insecurity due to failed harvests, and many community members were struggling to meet basic needs.

Rather than offer handouts, the program took a dignified and practical approach: staple food items—such as mealie meal, beans, and cooking oil—were provided in exchange for labor on the farm. Priority was given to the most vulnerable households, identified through a community-based selection process. In return, participants contributed to critical tasks like clearing the land, removing some trees stumps, and preparing beds.

This initiative served multiple purposes. It helped alleviate hunger, ensured steady progress on the demonstration site, and built a sense of ownership and mutual support.

Preparing for Production

By mid-2024, with most major infrastructure in place, attention turned to land preparation:

- The farm team began clearing the land, removing invasive grasses and debris.
- Garden beds were laid out, composting was initiated, and soil was improved with organic inputs.
- Support came from Mulela, the foreman of the Mukuni Community Farm, who provided practical training to local volunteers on regenerative techniques and crop management.

This phase was equally foundational—not just in terms of crops, but in building local ownership and knowledge that would sustain the farm beyond its initial setup.

Looking Ahead: Ready for Production in 2025

By the end of 2024, the Human-Elephant Conflict Mitigation Farm in Simoonga/Sinde was fully prepared to transition from setup to production. With core infrastructure in place—including fencing, irrigation, 30 beehives, and trained local volunteers—the site is ready to begin planting in early 2025. What was once just a concept is now set to become a functioning model of coexistence between humans and elephants.

Several key end of year developments point to a promising year ahead:

- **Stronger local leadership:** Under the guidance of Chief Sekute, longstanding land tenure uncertainties were resolved. The Chief appointed new traditional leaders for the area, putting an end to the power vacuum that had previously hindered coordination and decision-making.
- **Formalized community commitment:** A signed agreement with the core farm team has helped solidify accountability. Each member committed to working for K40 (\$1.50) per day, striking a balance between compensation and sustainability. This contract marked a shift from informal volunteerism to structured engagement.
- **Improved attendance and momentum:** Since the agreement was signed, daily attendance has improved significantly, and meaningful progress followed. Seeds were planted and preparations for the bamboo perimeter fence are underway, timed to coincide with the first rains.
- **Excellent soil quality:** Unlike other farm sites such as Mukuni and Mulendema, Simoonga/Sinde boasts naturally fertile soil, allowing cultivation to begin immediately—without the need for heavy soil regeneration work.

Together, these developments signal that 2025 will be a year of transformation: from planning to planting, from setup to results, and from vision to visible impact.



GOING INTO 2025

As we enter 2025, our top priority is ensuring the financial sustainability of BLC's business components—especially those developed in collaboration with the Green Safaris Conservation Foundation. This includes the Mukuni Community Farm, the Farm-to-Table supply chain, and the Sinde Human-Elephant Coexistence Farm, which may evolve into a viable community enterprise. This makes 2025 a make-or-break year for the business side of our operations. Achieving true sustainability is an urgent necessity.

In the Mumbwa GMA landscape, we intend to build on the momentum gained in 2024. With a clear long-term strategy in place, we are well-positioned to deepen our impact and expand partnerships to strengthen our collaborative governance model. Discussions with GIZ offer promise, though progress has been slow due to bureaucratic processes. At the same time, our current partnerships with Commonland, The Nature Conservancy, and WWF are set to conclude by March/April 2025. While all have expressed interest in continuing, no formal agreements have been secured, leaving a significant degree of uncertainty.

Starting in 2025, we will begin phasing out our partnership with the Green Safaris Conservation Foundation for both Mumbwa GMA Landscape as Livingstone area. Most collaborative projects will conclude by the end of 2025. The final scope of our partnership for 2026 will be determined in October 2025.

This makes the need for new partnerships in Livingstone area even more pressing. For 2025 the foundation is still strong, but ongoing support in the coming years is essential to maintain progress. We are actively engaging with WWF KAZA and WWF Zambia, and while conversations are promising, nothing is yet confirmed.

On a personal note, our co-founder Kellie is expecting twins in 2025—a joyful moment that will bring both excitement and new challenges to the organization. It's also a powerful reminder of what drives our work: to build systems that serve both people and planet, for generations to come.

