



ANNUAL REPORT 2025





Zambia

Republic of Zambia

 **Capital**
Lusaka

 **Languages**
English, Bemba, Tonga, Tumbuka

 **Area**
752,617 km²

 **Currency**
Zambian Kwacha (ZMW)

Population
19,473,125

 **58%**

 **42%**



**THIS IS
WHERE WE
LIVE AND WORK**





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2025 IN A NUTSHELL

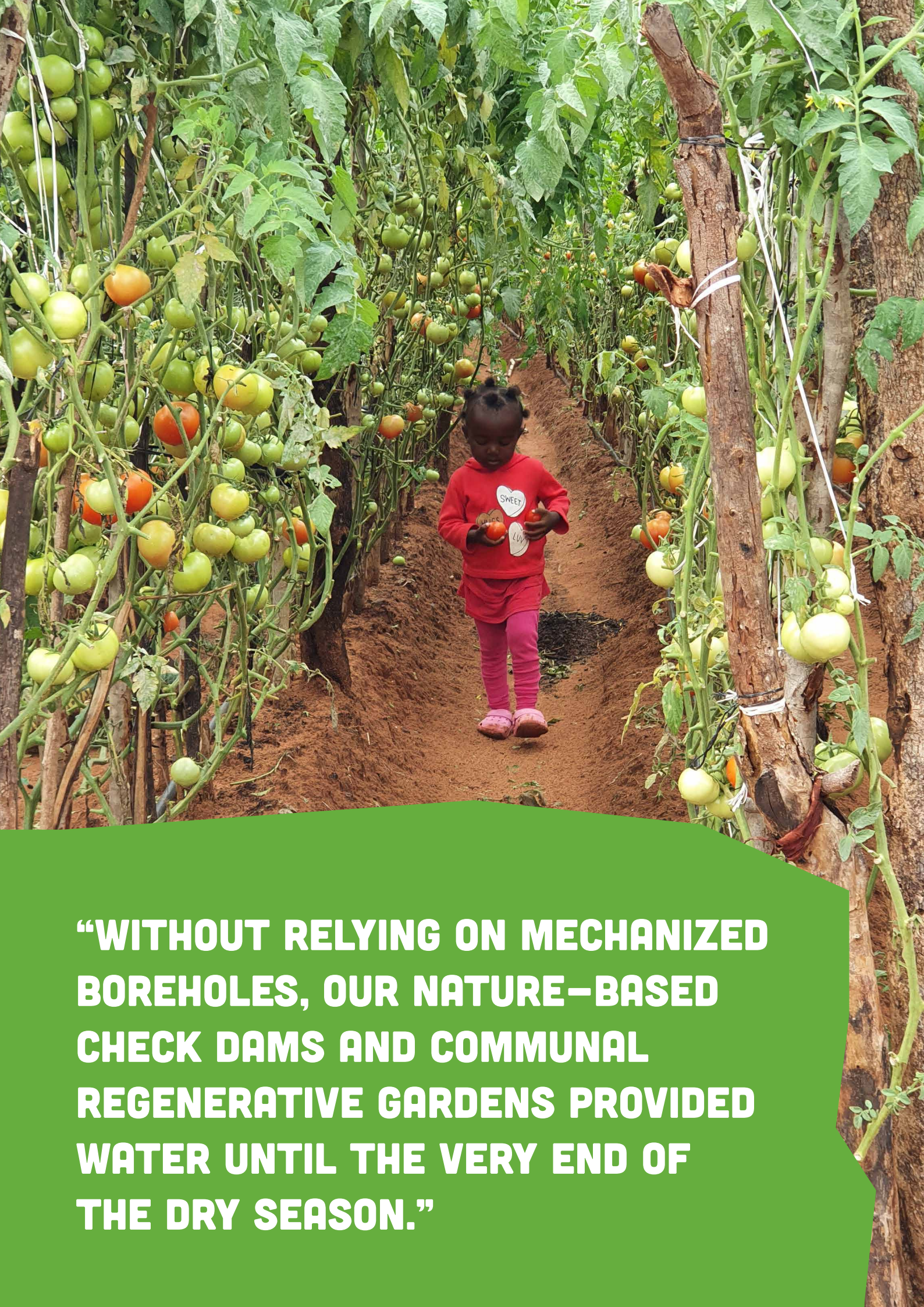
2025 was a year of major transformation for By Life Connected (BLC). After several years of startup experimentation, we focused on professionalizing the organization and strengthening our internal foundations. This shift has allowed BLC to mature into a more structured and resilient institution.

The region continued to struggle with the aftermath of a devastating drought. During this time, our project sites proved their effectiveness. Without relying on mechanized boreholes, our nature-based check dams and communal regenerative gardens provided water until the very end of the dry season. This success validated our approach to landscape management and community-led climate resilience.

This year was also defined by a major victory for the landscape: on December 2nd, 2025, the High Court dismissed claims by illegal settlers in the Mumbwa Game Management Area (GMA), ordering their eviction. This victory is a testament to the Conservation Partnership (CP) we have facilitated in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), proving that the rule of law can be upheld when Traditional Authorities, Government, and communities speak with one voice.

Crucially, we moved beyond guesswork by introducing the Community-Led Land Management System. Serving as our “information backbone,” this system empowers the community to collect real-time data on their land and wildlife using the Cluey smartphone app. By generating a “common truth” based on facts rather than assumptions, local leaders can now make informed, data-driven decisions to govern their natural resources effectively.

On a personal note, the BLC family grew significantly. In May, we welcomed twins! While navigating the bush with three children has brought new logistical adventures, it has also deepened our commitment to building systems that serve future generations.



“WITHOUT RELYING ON MECHANIZED BOREHOLES, OUR NATURE-BASED CHECK DAMS AND COMMUNAL REGENERATIVE GARDENS PROVIDED WATER UNTIL THE VERY END OF THE DRY SEASON.”

“HAVING PROVEN OUR MODEL’S RESILIENCE DURING THE DROUGHT, WE ARE SEEKING NEW PARTNERS”

Financial Headwinds

This year of high achievement was not without its shadows. We faced a critical funding gap toward the end of the year due to unexpected shifts in donor commitments. GIZ significantly reduced its promised funding, forcing a contraction in our planned activities. Additionally, the Green Safaris Conservation Foundation (GSCF) announced a significant lowering of support for 2026, creating an urgent need to diversify our revenue streams to protect the salaries of our dedicated team.

Looking Ahead to 2026

The path for 2026 is one of both challenge and opportunity. At a landscape scale, with the High Court ruling in hand, we have a clear legal mandate for restoration in the Mumbwa GMA. 2026 will show how this will be handled by the different partners.

Our primary focus now is financial diversification. Having proven our model’s resilience during the drought, we are seeking new partners. To ensure our team and projects continue to thrive, we have started a fundraising campaign to bridge the gap between the ending of finances from GSCF and the finalization of agreements with new partners. Our goal for this campaign is € 15,000, which will allow us to maintain our momentum as we secure BLC’s long-term financial future.

NATHALIE HOUTMAN

LARS VERMEER

KELLIE BOCXE

VINCENT KOUWENHOVEN

Chairman

Treasurer – Founder & CEO

Secretary – Founder & CEO

Board member

“THANKS TO BY LIFE CONNECTED WHO TAUGHT US ORGANIC GARDENING. THERE IS NO NEED TO BUY EXPENSIVE FERTILISERS BECAUSE WE HAVE COW DUNG, GOAT, AND CHICKEN MANURE. WITH THE TEACHING OF BY LIFE CONNECTED THAT ‘MONEY IS IN THE SOIL,’ ALL THAT IS NEEDED IS HARD WORK; WHY SHOULD WE SUFFER WITH POVERTY?”

Mrs. Nakusheka Lukoshi



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Balance Sheet

Assets	
Fixed Assets	\$ 25.582
Bank Balance Zambia Kwacha	\$ 963
Bank Balance Zambia Dollar	\$ 1.587
Bank Balance NL Euro	\$ 5.856
Donor Receivable	\$ 13.747
Total Income	\$ 47.735

Liabilities	
Equity	\$ 23.360
Commonland	\$ 24.375
Total Expenses	\$ 47.735

Statement of Activities

Income	
Unrestricted Donations	\$ 4.283
Commonland and TNC	\$ 7.373
Green Safaris Conservation Foundation	\$ 88.960
Commonland	\$ 62.013
The Nature Conservancy	\$ 26.055
People's Process on Housing and Poverty in Zambia	\$ 15.604
Musekese Conservation	\$ 1.218
Farm Produce Sales	\$ 20.026
Benefit & Tax Refund (UWV)	\$ 4.502
Gain on Disposal of Assets & Interest	\$ 983
Total Income	\$ 231.017

Expenses	
WWF	\$ 7.796
Commonland and TNC	\$ 17.060
Green Safaris Conservation Foundation	\$ 101.448
Commonland	\$ 40.092
The Nature Conservation	\$ 35.891
People's Process on Housing and Poverty in Zambia	\$ 15.597
By Life Connected	\$ 11.899
Foreign Exchange Loss	\$ 3.258
Depreciation of Fixed Assets	\$ 3.606
Farm Cost of Sales	\$ 10.105
Total Expenses	\$ 246.752



WHAT WE DO

THE CHALLENGE

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. Ineffective governance, extreme poverty, and limited resources drive unsustainable practices, creating a cycle of environmental degradation and economic instability.



THEORY OF CHANGE

In 2025, we formalized our model through a new Theory of Change. We integrate governance, livelihoods, and conservation into a holistic framework to foster systemic change. A core objective of our new model is to address the “governance vacuum” in rural Zambia, where neither traditional authorities nor government can effectively enforce sustainable limits. Our 2025 framework addresses this fracture through three interconnected mechanisms:

1. Unified Governance Structures:

We have established interconnected partnerships at three distinct levels to ensure plans created at the top are actionable at the grassroots:

- Landscape Level:
The Conservation Partnership (CP) brings together DNPW, CRBs, and NGOs to co-create a single management plan, replacing isolated decision-making with a permanent round table.
- Chiefdom Level:
We facilitate the creation of Chiefdom By-laws, empowering traditional authorities to enforce government policies and manage cultural norms within a recognized legal framework.
- Community Level:

We professionalized local leadership into the Communal Service Society (CSS), a registered NGO that uses Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) to design local solutions.



**“ULTIMATELY, SYSTEMIC
CHANGE REQUIRES A
CULTURAL SHIFT. WE AIM
FOR CONSERVATION
TO EVOLVE FROM A
SET OF RULES INTO
A SOURCE OF DIGNITY
AND BELONGING.”**



2. Legal and Spatial Clarity:

By combining new by-laws with participatory Land Use Zoning, we have categorized the landscape into Natural, Combined, and Economic Zones. This transforms planning from assumption into evidence, guiding investments toward areas of highest ecological return.

3. The Information Backbone:

To correct power imbalances, we introduced the Community-Led Land Management System. Using the Cluey smartphone app, communities collect their own data on illegal activity, wildlife, and project impact. This data feeds into a central dashboard, providing a “common truth” that allows traditional leaders to make evidence-based decisions rather than guessing



OUTCOMES

Our model is designed to achieve three specific systemic outcomes that progress through defined phases—Joint Action, Engine, and Identity. By integrating governance, livelihoods, and conservation, we aim to transform the landscape from a state of resource depletion to one of resilience and growth.

1. Phase 1: Joint Action

We replace the “governance vacuum” with shared legitimacy. By unifying traditional authorities, government (DNPW), and communities under a single framework, we ensure that land-use plans are not just documents, but enforceable laws.

- The Result: A transparent, data-driven governance structure where decisions are based on a “common truth” provided by the Community-Led Land Management System. This empowers local leaders to act as stewards rather than passive observers.

2. Phase 2: The Engine

We shift the economic logic of the landscape from extraction to restoration. Through Regenerative Livelihoods, communities generate income from activities that heal the land—such as beekeeping and water retention.

- The Result: A functioning Regenerative Economy of Scale. Financial reliance on external grants is replaced by a self-sustaining Revolving Fund, where loan repayments from successful enterprises are reinvested to fund new community initiatives, creating a circular flow of value.

3. Phase 3: Identity

Ultimately, systemic change requires a cultural shift. We aim for conservation to evolve from a set of rules into a source of dignity and belonging.

- The Result: Behavioral change becomes permanent as communities adopt the identity of “Guardian Villages.” Stewardship is no longer seen as extra work, but as a prestigious role that brings social recognition and economic access, ensuring that the protection of nature becomes self-perpetuating.

HOLISTIC MODEL: SYSTEMIC CHANGE IN THE GREATER KAFUE ECOSYSTEM



Figure 1. The By Life Connected model addresses ecological challenges through a phased, integrated approach. **Phase 1 (Joint Action)** establishes “Shared Legitimacy” by unifying traditional and official governance, supported by data. **Phase 2 (The Engine)** drives a “Restoration Economy” through regenerative livelihoods and revolving funds. Finally, **Phase 3 (Identity)** ensures permanent change by cultivating a “Stewardship Culture,” where communities proudly take on the role of Guardian Villages.



WHERE WE OPERATE

By Life Connected focuses its efforts on the Greater Kafue Ecosystem (GKE), a critical conservation landscape in Zambia. We operate in specific corridors where wildlife, agriculture, and communities intersect, dividing our work into two strategic clusters that secure the landscape from its centre to its southern connections

CENTRAL GREATER KAFUE ECOSYSTEM

Mumbwa Game Management Area (GMA)

Our primary operational hub remains the Mumbwa GMA, specifically within the Mulendema Chiefdom. Here, we work deeply with the Mponda Seniority to implement our full model of governance, livelihoods, and restoration.

- **Expansion in 2025:** Through the Conservation Partnership (CP), our governance facilitation has expanded beyond Mulendema to include the neighboring Chibuluma and Kabulwebulwe Chiefdoms, engaging stakeholders across the entire Mumbwa GMA landscape to address encroachment and land use.

Mufunta GMA

New for late 2025: In collaboration with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), we have expanded our Conservation Partnership model into the Mufunta GMA. This expansion allows us to replicate our governance framework in another critical buffer zone of the Central Kafue.

“ In the Simonga and Sinde communities, the goal is to reach and impact the entire population of around 5,000 people.

“ In the Mulendema Chiefdom, the project covers an area of about 80 km², impacting a population of around 2,500 people.

SOUTHERN GREATER KAFUE ECOSYSTEM

We have significantly scaled up our operations in the south to secure the vital wildlife corridors that connect the Kafue National Park (KNP) to the wider Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA).

Sichifulo & Mulobezi GMAs

New for late 2025: We launched Conservation Partnerships in these two critical GMAs. Working alongside TNC, we are facilitating governance and restoration initiatives here to secure the immediate southern buffer of the park.

Mukuni, Simonga & Sinde (The KAZA Connection)

Located further south, these communities form the essential bridge connecting the Kafue ecosystem to the rest of the KAZA states.

- **Simonga & Sinde:** Situated directly on a major elephant migratory route, this area serves as our pilot for Human-Elephant Coexistence. In 2025, we successfully proved that “elephant-proof” gardening is possible here using nature-based mitigation, handing the project over to the community to secure this corridor.
- **Mukuni Chiefdom:** Located near Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park, this area anchors the southern tip of the corridor. Together with Green Safaris Conservation Foundation, the work here focused on the Mukuni Community Farm, which we are currently handing over to the community as an independent training center for regenerative agriculture.

**“IT’S A GREAT HONOUR
THAT MY SENIORITY
HOUSES BY LIFE
CONNECTED, AS MANY
FROM MY VILLAGE
AND SENIORITY HAVE
BENEFITED WITH JOBS,
DEVELOPMENT, AND
MINDSET CHANGE.
I BELIEVE WE ARE
GOING FAR AS
DEVELOPMENT IS
CONCERNED.”**

Senior Mponda

GOVERNANCE

ASSET BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



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

Phase: 8. Transfer of Ownership

The cornerstone of our “Bottom-Up” approach is the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) model, which seeks to empower communities to drive their own development using local resources.

The Communal Service Society (CSS)

In 2025, the Mponda Core Group officially registered as the **Communal Service Society (CSS)**, a community-run NGO recognized under Zambian law. This marked the transition from an informal volunteer group to a legal entity capable of managing development.¹ The CSS took full ownership of bottom-up projects, mobilizing communities and coordinating implementation with remarkable dedication.

The “Headman Hat” Challenge

However, 2025 revealed a critical friction point in the human engagement of the CSS. An evaluation of the “Bottom-Up Approach” (Phase 1: April–October 2025) uncovered the **“Headman Hat”** phenomenon. CSS members, relying on their experience as traditional leaders, unintentionally reverted to a top-down authority

style rather than the intended facilitative stewardship. Leaders were found to be making decisions for community groups rather than with them. This created a “Representation Gap,” where community members felt projects belonged to the CSS or BLC, leading to a lack of ownership and lower uptake on livelihood initiatives.¹

Deepened Capacity Building

To address this, we recognized that professionalization could not proceed without deep psychological capacity building. We engaged the **Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC)** to facilitate a series of four trainings focused on “Internal Trust” and “Socratic Leadership.”

- **Training 1 & 2 (Completed 2025):** Focused on assessing baseline needs and strengthening group cohesion/identity.
- **Training 3 & 4 (Planned 2026):** Will focus on operational execution. This investment is crucial to transforming the CSS from “Headmen” into true “Community Stewards.”

CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS



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: 9. Scaling



Improving Governance

Historically, conservation in the Greater Kafue Ecosystem suffered from “fractured governance,” where blurred responsibilities between the state, traditional authorities, and NGOs led to inconsistent enforcement and minimal community benefit. To heal this fracture, By Life Connected (BLC)—in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy and Commonland—facilitates the **Conservation Partnership (CP)**. This unified framework acts as a permanent round table, bringing together the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW), the Forestry Department, Community Resources Boards (CRBs), NGOs and the private sector to manage the landscape under a single, shared GMA Business Plan.

Mumbwa Pilot

In 2025, the Mumbwa GMA pilot transitioned from a concept into a fully operational governance engine. A major milestone for long-term sustainability was reached in April when the DNPW officially assumed the chairmanship of the CP Steering Committee, signaling that the government has moved from a participant to the primary driver of this collaborative model. The power of this unified front was proven on December 2nd, when the High Court dismissed the claims of illegal settlers and ordered their eviction. This landmark victory was a direct result of the collective evidence and solidarity provided by the CP partners.

Strategic Innovation and Financial Transparency

To address encroachment, the partnership adopted a “Dual Strategy” that prioritizes strict protection and tourism development in the Western zones—physically marked by a new 60km cutline—while managing containment in the East. The CP also became more inclusive this year, integrating carbon credits and sustainable agriculture through partners like COMACO and various Community Forest Management Groups. To dismantle the perception of “closed-door” decision-making, the inaugural Annual Stakeholder Forum was held on December 4th, establishing a new standard for transparency by presenting financial reports directly to a wide variety of relevant stakeholders.

Regional Scaling and Landscape Connectivity

Building on the success in Mumbwa, 2025 marked the beginning of a regional scaling strategy. In partnership with TNC, we successfully launched the Conservation Partnership process in three new strategic landscapes: the Mufunta GMA in Central Kafue, and the Sichifulo and Mulobezi GMAs in the Southern Kafue. This expansion is a critical step in securing vital ecological connectivity to the wider KAZA Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA).

COMMUNITY-LED LAND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



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

Phase: 8. Transfer of Ownership

From Guesswork to Governance: The Information Backbone

In rural Zambia, the “governance vacuum” is often exacerbated by an “information bottleneck.” Government agencies lack the resources to monitor vast landscapes, and traditional leaders lack the data to prove what is happening on the ground. Without accurate information, natural resources are exploited in a “tragedy of the commons,” and decision-making relies on guesswork rather than evidence.

In 2025, By Life Connected, in partnership with Sensing Clues and WWF Zambia, operationalized a solution: the Community-Led Land Management System. This system serves as the “information backbone” of our model, linking legal authority, spatial planning, and real-time monitoring into a closed loop of self-governance.

The Legal Foundation: Chiefdom By-laws

The first step in managing land is defining the rules. Throughout 2024 and 2025, we facilitated a rigorous process to formalize the Mulendema Chiefdom By-laws.

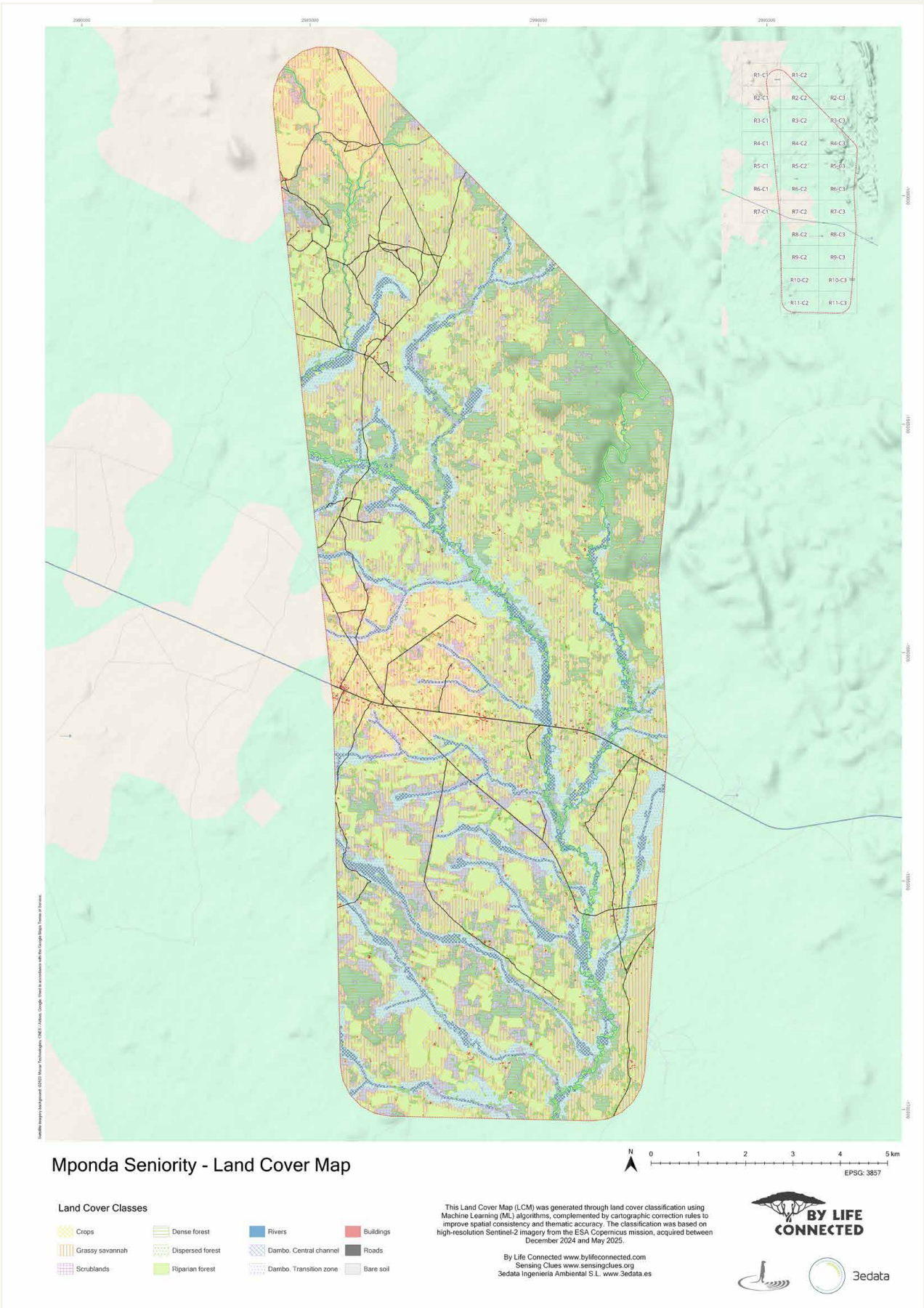
- **2025 Achievement:** We moved from drafting to validation. In a landmark event, approximately 100 Headmen and Senior Headmen gathered to review, debate, and validate the final by-laws.

- **Legal Standing:** These documents are not just guidelines; they are legally recognized instruments that empower the Traditional Authority to enforce government policies (such as the charcoal ban) and manage cultural norms. High-quality, protected copies have now been distributed to headmen, ensuring that the “law of the land” is physically present in every village.

Spatial Clarity: Participatory Land Use Zoning

Rules act best when applied to specific places. To transform the by-laws from text into action, we combined them with advanced **Satellite Intelligence** (using 10x10m resolution imagery) and community **Ground-Truthing**.

- **The Process:** Community teams walked their land to validate satellite data, training AI models to distinguish between forests, fields, and settlements.
- **The Result:** A detailed Land Use Map of the Mponda Seniority (figure 1). Based on this map, the community will assign designated **Land Use Zones** in 2026, categorized into three distinct types:
 - » **Natural Zones:** Strict conservation areas for biodiversity and carbon sequestration.
 - » **Combined Zones:** Areas for sustainable use, such as grazing or beekeeping.
 - » **Economic Zones:** Designated areas for agriculture, settlement, and infrastructure.



The Tool: Real-Time Monitoring via Cluey

With rules defined and zones mapped, the final component is enforcement. In late 2025, we equipped the Communal Service Society (CSS) with smartphones loaded with the Cluey app.

- **Community Ownership:** Unlike traditional models where external researchers extract data, this system is owned by the community. Local scouts collect data on animal sightings, human-wildlife conflict, and illegal activities (like charcoal kilns).
- **Informed Decision-Making:** This data feeds into a Central Dashboard that generates visual reports, such as “Charcoal Production Heatmaps”.

The Outcome: A Common Truth

This system creates a “Common Truth” that all parties—Traditional Authorities, Government, and NGOs—can trust. Instead of arguing over anecdotes, leaders can now look at the map and the data to make strategic decisions.

- **Proof of Impact:** We can now correlate land-use changes with project interventions, providing verifiable proof that our regenerative livelihoods are actually restoring the landscape.

By combining the authority of the By-laws with the visibility of the Cluey system, we have moved from passive observation to active, data-driven stewardship.

LIVELIHOOD PROJECTS

PROJECT PROGRESS OVERVIEW as per end 2025										
	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
Central Greater Kafue Ecosystem										
Check Dams										
Communal Regenerative Gardens										
Farm to Table Initiative										
Conservation Education Program										
Sustainable Stoves										
Beehives Project										
Bamboo Plantations										
Waste to Wealth										
Rotational Grazing										
Southern Greater Kafue Ecosystem										
Mukuni Regenerative Community Farm										
Human-Elephant Co-existence										

“5 active check dams successfully passed their first dry-season stress test, replenishing the water table for the communal gardens.

Central Greater Kafue Ecosystem

CHECK DAMS



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

Phase: 9. Scaling

The five active check dams—constructed in late 2024 and operational by the start of 2025—successfully passed their first dry-season stress test. By facilitating ground-water recharge during the wet season, these structures replenished the water table for the communal gardens (see next chapter).

However, a significant reduction in GIZ funding created a critical “funding gap,” preventing us from finishing the dams as planned. Vital components, such as spillway armoring and wing-wall extensions, remain incomplete.

The intense flash floods of the 2025 rainy season have now exposed these vulnerabilities. Currently, several dams are showing signs of structural damage, with water undercutting unfinished walls. Finalizing these repairs is a primary objective of our “Bridge Fund” campaign to ensure these essential water assets are not lost to the floods.

“Approximately 150 families now have direct access to fresh produce throughout the dry season thanks to the network of communal regenerative gardens.

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

Building upon the successful women-led pilots established in 2023, the network of Communal Regenerative Gardens expanded significantly in 2025. The seven additional gardens under construction at the end of 2024—primarily funded by WWF—became fully operational in March 2025, following the rainy season.

By utilizing check dams to facilitate groundwater recharge, 2025 saw each garden successfully equipped with shallow protected wells and manual foot pumps. By avoiding expensive machinery, this system provides affordable, year-round irrigation that the community can truly own and maintain.

This network now provides approximately 150 families with direct access to fresh produce throughout the dry season, a period where irrigation is traditionally impossible for smallholders without the prohibitive cost of a private borehole. We do like to increase communal engagement for some of the gardens, which we’re hoping to achieve through the SAWC training and accompanying Standard Operating Systems.

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

The Farm to Table Initiative continued to be the engine of our food security strategy. The Mulendema Demonstration Farm served as the hub for this initiative. In 2025, we implemented upgrades to increase its capacity:

- **Solar Upgrades:** Installation of solar panels to increase pump capacity, ensuring water availability during overcast days and expansion of the vegetable garden.
- **Soil Regeneration:** Soil improvement campaigns using manure and black soil were conducted to combat the nutrient depletion noted in 2024.
- **Supply Chain:** We continued to link communal gardens to the tourism market (Green Safaris lodges & ZCP), although the drought impacted the consistency of supplies. The focus shifted slightly from “profit” to “survival,” ensuring that the 150+ farmers involved had food for their own families first.



“The Conservation Education Clubs have 160 core members spread across 4 schools.

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 program remains active in four schools with 160 core members. By registering with the Wildlife and Environmental Conservation Society of Zambia (WECSZ), all clubs now follow an accredited curriculum for their weekly lessons. To bring these lessons to life, students participated in game drives and visited Ila Safari Lodge—for many, this was their first time seeing the wildlife they are learning to protect.

To improve the program in 2026, we are focusing on closer coordination with Musekese Conservation and securing “blanket approvals” from the Department of Education to prevent administrative delays. We also identified a need to better support our teachers with communication credits and branded club apparel to build a stronger identity. A key priority for early 2026 will be completing the trips postponed this year due to heavy rains and logistics, ensuring that schools like Lutale are fully included in the next cycle.

“120 students went on field trips to Ila Safari Lodge and into the Kafue National Park. For many, this was their first time seeing the wildlife they are learning to protect.

SUSTAINABLE STOVES



Objective: To mitigate deforestation at the household level by transitioning communities toward more efficient fuel consumption.
Phase: 4 -evaluation and monitoring

In 2025, the program distributed efficient cookstoves to 180 households, introducing a design that burns small branches instead of large logs. By shifting the fuel source away from mature timber, this mechanism eliminates the need to fell whole trees and allows local forests to regenerate naturally. Beyond the ecological benefits, these stoves significantly improve household health by reducing smoke inhalation, creating a safer and cleaner cooking environment for the whole household.

“Efficient cookstoves were distributed to 180 households, which eliminates the need to fell whole trees for fuel and allows local forests to regenerate.



“A total of 360 beehives were rolled out to four local women’s and youth groups.

BEEHIVES PROJECT



Objective: To empower women and youth through the deployment of 360 beehives, creating a sustainable and profitable income stream that serves as a direct economic alternative to charcoal production.

Phase: 4 -evaluation and monitoring

In 2025, BLC launched a major livelihood diversification initiative through bee-keeping, aimed at providing an alternative income stream for women and youth while discouraging charcoal production. Supported by funding from PPHPZ, the project delivered a massive rollout of 360 beehives across the Mponda Seniority.



- Target Groups: Four local groups successfully qualified for the grant: Tigwirizane Youth Group, Chamatete Women’s Group, Lungobe Women’s Group, and Luyando Women’s Group.
- Infrastructure: Each group received 90 hives. To support production, Bezaleel Carpentry and Beekeeping Company was engaged to construct the hives and provide training accessories.
- Training: BLC facilitated specialized workshops for the groups, covering sustainable hive management, protection from pests, and honey harvesting techniques.

Challenges and Outlook

The primary technical challenge encountered was a shortage of wire for hanging the hives, which meant that many groups could initially only hang 60 of their 90 allocated hives. Additional wire was secured through partner contributions, and plans are underway to complete the hanging of all 360 hives. The project is positioned to yield its first major harvest in 2026, with BLC providing ongoing market linkages to ensure profitability.

BAMBOO PLANTATIONS



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

Phase: 6. Possible 2nd development

Since 2023, 2,000 bamboo plants have been established across 20 locations. In 2025, the focus shifted to monitoring, which highlighted a 90% survival rate on the BLC demoplot due to intensive care and livestock management. Success was significantly lower at sites with less oversight, proving that dedicated stewardship is essential for successful establishment. These maturing woodlots remain on track to provide sustainable fuel and construction timber, ultimately reducing the pressure on indigenous hardwoods.

“By Life Connected has established 2,000 bamboo plants across 20 locations.

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

Following the completion of facilities in late 2024, the “Waste to Wealth” initiative launched in 2025 to transform local waste into economic opportunity. The project empowers a collective—over 80% women—by upcycling glass and bush seeds into high-end artisan products like chandeliers, providing a stable income stream independent of agriculture. Assisted by technical volunteers Jet and Dionne, the team has refined its production processes and finalized the first prototypes, which are now moving into the market-testing phase.



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 Rotational Grazing project was poised to be a major flagship activity for 2025, designed to regenerate degraded grasslands using livestock.

The GIZ Setback

Unfortunately, this project became the primary casualty of the funding crisis. We had planned a comprehensive rollout based on a \$50,000 commitment from GIZ. When this funding was abruptly reduced to \$10,000, we were forced to stall the full implementation.

- Current Status: Despite the funding cut, the groundwork laid in 2024 (including the learning exchange to Rufunsa) remains valid. The community interest is high, as evidenced by the attendance at the “Rotational Grazing Indaba,” but the project remains in a “Concept/Pilot” phase awaiting new funding.
- Advantage: Because we were able to create a land-use map this year, we now have the right tool and information to create a holistic grazing plan.



Southern Greater Kafue Ecosystem

THE MUKUNI REGENERATIVE
COMMUNITY FARM



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

Phase: 8. Transfer of ownership

2025 marked a pivotal year as the Mukuni Community Farm transitioned to full local ownership. In collaboration with the Mukuni Cooperative, we finalized a model for long-term independence, ensuring the project’s future remains community-led.

Due to ecological constraints—including limited water availability and soil health challenges—we worked with Traditional Leadership to reassess the farm’s economic carrying capacity. To ensure the farm remains financially viable for its participants, the team was streamlined from 20 to 8 members (including 4 new recruits). In November 2025, all physical assets and land rights were formally transferred to the Mukuni Cooperative through a signed handover agreement.

2026 Strategy: From Operations to Mentorship

In 2026, BLC and GSCF will shift focus exclusively to technical training for the 8-person team. Operational facilitation and allowances will cease, transferring full financial responsibility to the Cooperative. Following an assessment of the team’s commitment at the end of Q1, GSCF remains open to final strategic investments to ensure the farm is fully equipped for long-term success.

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.

Phase: 8. Transfer of ownership

The Human-Elephant Co-existence project in Simonga-Sinde villages proved in 2025 that human-wildlife coexistence is achievable through nature-based innovation and community-led action.

“ A 1.2 km single-strand electric fence was installed to protect crops and boost farmer confidence.

“A strategic “Buffer System” was created by planting elephant-resilient crops like okra, chili, onion, and coriander on the outer edges of the garden.



Vegetable sales began in March 2025, with okra and eggplant as key crops. The garden was strategically designed with a “Buffer System”: elephant-resilient crops (okra, chili, onion, coriander) were planted on the outer edges, while more attractive crops (tomatoes, carrots, pumpkins) were protected in the inner zones. This model successfully deterred elephant intrusions and has even opened possibilities for farm tours for guests from nearby Tongabezi Lodge.

The farm’s security and productivity were significantly enhanced in 2025 through several key investments:

- **Electric Fence:** Elephant Connection donated and installed a low-cost, maintainable single-strand electric wire system. This 1.2km fence has drastically boosted farmer confidence.
- **Bamboo Barrier:** A rows-based bamboo fence (250 plants) was planted to act as a physical and scent-masking barrier.
- **Solar Irrigation:** A solar-powered booster pump was installed to solve low-pressure issues, allowing the entire garden to be cultivable for the first time.
- **Beekeeping:** To test the area’s carrying capacity, 15 beehives were installed in the surrounding forest to support pollination and potential honey production.

This project shows another significant milestone for By Life Connected and Green Safaris Conservation Foundation. Besides demonstrating a scale-able concept of human-wildlife co-existence in one of the key wildlife corridors in the KAZA region, it was also handed over to the community for full local ownership in September 2025.



“A barrier of 250 bamboo plants was planted to act as a physical and scent-masking defense.



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GOING INTO 2026

As we step into 2026, By Life Connected stands at a pivotal threshold. 2025 was the year we proved our concept works; 2026 will be the year we prove it can last.

Operationalizing the Victory

The High Court judgment on December 2nd, 2025, changed the reality of the Mumbwa landscape overnight. For the first time in years, the law is explicitly on the side of conservation.

- The 2026 Priority: Our focus shifts immediately from legal advocacy to operational enforcement. Through the CP, we will support the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) and the Community Resources Boards (CRBs) in managing the eviction of illegal settlers ordered by the court.
- Restoration: With the land secure, the members of the Conservation Partnerships Steering Committee will move from “holding the line” to active physical restoration of the wildlife corridors in the western zones.

Financial Sustainability: A Make-or-Break Year

While our impact is growing, the financial landscape remains our steepest mountain. The drastic reduction in pledged funding at the end of 2025, combined with the planned phasing out of support from the Green Safaris Conservation Foundation (GSCF) starting in 2026, has created an urgent need for stability. Our immediate priority is securing the “Bridge to 2026” fund to retain our dedicated local staff and complete the infrastructure projects currently under construction.

Scaling Our Footprint

Building on the success of the Mumbwa pilot, we are expanding our reach in the Greater Kafue Ecosystem. In collaboration with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), 2026 will see the full inception of Conservation Partnerships in the Mufunta, Sichifulo, and Mulobezi GMAs. We will apply the governance frameworks and data systems refined in Mumbwa to secure these critical buffers and corridors.

Organizational Maturity

BLC is no longer a startup. We enter 2026 with a crystal-clear Theory of Change, a professionalized Zambian Board, and a “Community-Led Land Management System” that provides irrefutable data on our impact. Internally, we are structuring a leadership transition, with our Chief Operating Officer (COO) taking on expanded responsibilities to ensure operational excellence while the Founders focus on strategic growth and partnerships.

A Personal Note

On a personal level, the arrival of our twins in May 2025 has profoundly deepened our connection to this work. Navigating the bush with three children is its own wild adventure, but it serves as a daily reminder of why we are here: to build systems that protect nature and empower people, not just for today, but for the generations that will follow.

**THE PATH AHEAD IS STEEP,
BUT THE VIEW IS CLEAR.
WE ARE READY.**



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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