

Stepping up Lolesha Luangwa

Working for North Luangwa Conservation Programme since 2019 has provided me with the opportunity to witness some real strides forward in the evolution of Lolesha Luangwa – our conservation education programme.

Henry Sikapite | Community Education Coordinator, North Luangwa Conservation Programme

Lolesha Luangwa (meaning 'look after Luangwa' in the local Bemba language) started in 2001 with a handful of schools in one area to the west of the North Luangwa National Park in northern Zambia. Today, it has grown to reach over 20 schools and 2,000 children around the North Luangwa ecosystem.

It has given the kids a great opportunity to embark on a robust conservation journey, learning about the ecosystem in which they live and the benefits it provides. Visits into North Luangwa National Park to see wildlife first-hand and black rhino-related outreach activities have developed a real passion and urge for conservation. The students understand there is a responsibility; one student from Kasela School stated, "Conservation helps us to stop killing fish by using poison and mosquito nets in rivers". It's not always about the big stuff.

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My greatest delight is that Lolesha Luangwa has now stepped up its conservation efforts to include adults in our community. When the Covid-19 pandemic began and our work in schools reduced due to closures and revised timetables to maintain social distancing, it was apparent that our model for Lolesha Luangwa needed a rethink.

In March 2021, we developed a new Conservation Education Framework (CEF) adapted from UNESCO's 'Sustainability Starts with Teachers'. The CEF allows us to form mini-change project groups for adults and school conservation clubs facilitated by our Community Conservation Educators. Our model recognises that both adults and children can participate, adding value to their wildlife resources and the community.

We've only just started to implement the project and I am excited to see our new strategy involving communities more, enabling them to take the lead in creating their small-scale conservation projects.

We are beginning the mini-change project model with 34 adults (13 males and 21 females) in Chipmudu village. So far, a group has been formed with their membership and group 'rules' and we'll soon begin designing the first mini-change project, based on the idea of bringing education and awareness full circle into real action and change.

