



Luembe Palace,
P.O. Box
Nyimba, Z

SENIOR CHIEF LUEMBE

Cell:
Cell:
Cell:
E-mail:
30th June, 2023

The Editor
Italian TV Rai 3
REDD Monitor Website
Italy

Dear Editor

Subject: Addressing Concerns and Providing Clarity: The Luangwa Community Forests Project

I recently learnt with great sadness the publication of a wounding report by Italian TV Rai 3 and subsequent article on the REDD-Monitor website titled "*The Luangwa Community Forest Project, Zambia "The Project shouldn't issue any credits because it's not really reducing deforestation"*".

published on 20th June 2023 by Chris LANGI. (https://reddmonitor.substack.com/p/the-luangwa-community-forest-project?publication_id=1442627&isfreemail=true) wish to categorically state that the views and concerns expressed in the write up do not represent my views as Senior Chief, nor that of my Chiefdom and goes against what we stand for as Luangwa Community Forest Project Stakeholder.

Luangwa Community Forests Project (LCFP) is driven by a strong commitment to conservation, community development, and reducing threat of deforestation not only in Luembe Chiefdom, but across the entire project area covering 17 chiefdoms. Our goal is to create a sustainable and balanced ecosystem while fostering the well-being of local communities.

The article incorrectly suggests that white tourists are allowed to engage in hunting activities within the protected area. We want to clarify that the LCFP, an avoided deforestation carbon project, is in no way involved in the hunting industry. As a community, we do allow commercial hunting on some of our lands which strictly adheres to vigorous licensing and regulatory

framework that ensures hunting activities are conducted legally and responsibly, with the utmost respect for ecological balance and conservation goals. The well-being of wildlife and the preservation of the ecosystem are paramount to our efforts.

Another false claim in the article is related to the issuance of carbon credits. The Luangwa Community Forests Project follows a rigorous methodology, considering various factors such as baseline deforestation rates, project activities, and emissions reduction contributions. We work closely with recognized standards and certifications, such as Verra, to ensure credibility and transparency in the calculation and issuance of carbon credits. Our commitment to upholding these standards is unwavering.

Furthermore, the article implies that the project has failed to deliver significant benefits to local communities. On the contrary, we have witnessed tangible positive impacts in various areas. These include improved access to education, infrastructure development, access to clean drinking water and support for local economic activities. You presented our last bi-annual payment as if it was the sum of benefits to date. You failed to understand our benefit sharing mechanism that includes, cash distribution, forest protection, livelihood activities, capacity building and employment creation. We actively engage with community members, seeking their input and involving them in decision-making processes to ensure that the benefits of the project are equitably distributed.

I must also make it very clear that projects are arrived at through a consultative process involving the communities and they themselves identify and choose projects to be implemented in their communities as guided by their urgent needs, with this the Community Forest Management Groups (CFMGs), proceed to implementing these activities/projects on behalf of the community, it must thus be made very clear that neither our partners or ENI implement these activities on our behalf.

We understand that false claims can be unsettling and may raise questions or concerns. We are committed to transparency and accountability as a valued stakeholder in the Luangwa Community Forests Project. We encourage you to reach out to us in writing with any specific concerns you may have. We are here to address them, provide accurate and complete information, and collaborate with you to ensure the success and positive impact of this vital project.

Luangwa community forest project, is a community forest project by the community and for the community, supported by our development partners and investors. Disbursements of carbon revenues began in 2019 and was a lifeline for many communities in Zambia during the downturn of the country impacted by Covid 19. I can't imagine where we would be without it. While other initiatives were in readiness stage, we were already delivering benefits to nature and people.

For the reporters that visited our project, I do think you have an alternative for us? Or are you simply finding a problem with our solution. Post Cop 26 the world is talking about loss and damage and climate adaptation, we are practicing what is currently being preached. You have misrepresented us and taken advantage our good nature to welcome you to our chiefdom. This approach taken by Rai is neo-colonialism and interfering in domestic matters as if you have a right to dictate. This is our project and weather we wish to remain in it or not is the right of the indigenous communities not a news channel in Italy.

We hope that we can rectify this situation and perhaps partner with us to ensure this market remains valuable and sustainable as initially designed. Together, we can overcome misinformation and work towards a sustainable future for the environment and the communities.

Sincerely,

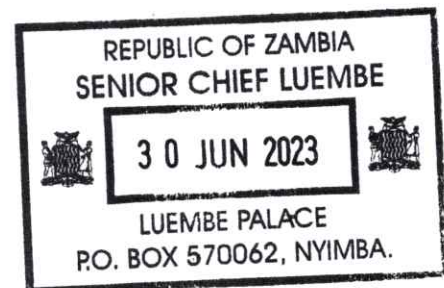


His Royal Highness-Senior Chief Luembe
Patron-Luangwa Community Forest Project

CC: CEO Bio Carbon Partners. -Zambia

CC: Chairperson Luembe CFMG

CC: CEO ENI - Italy





Report

Via Teulada, 66 – 00195 Roma

Tel. 06-

Email: r

Sito: www.report.rai.it

Rome, 3rd of August 2023

His Royal Highness-Senior Chief Luembe Patron-Luangwa Community Forest Project, we thank you for sending your kind note to the "Report" newsroom and Rai management.

To provide our viewers with the broadest information on the issue, we will publish your letter on the web page of our website, where the video of the "Luangwa Project" investigation is.

We apologize for the concerns you have expressed. On the other end, we emphasize that the conclusions we have arrived at result from a careful and articulate work of verification. In the field, through direct testimonies in Zambia and with an in-depth study of the project thanks to the intervention of well-known experts who have studied the case of the "Luangwa Project" by publishing specific works on the subject before our interest in it.

Regarding the critics that made to our story -like the one related to hunting activities- we would like to underline that we reported that hunting is allowed within the protected area. We have never said that the LCFP is involved in the hunting industry or that it is illegal.

Secondly, regarding the methodology used and the standards employed, we would like to remind Royal Highness that an in-depth journalistic investigation by the Guardian, the German weekly Die Zeit, and SourceMaterial already questioned the validity of the certifications issued by Verra.

The news outlets argued that more than 90 percent of rainforest carbon offsets by the largest certifier may be worthless. As a result of this journalistic investigation, a dynamic discussion began about the new criteria to follow in carbon certifications.

In the specific case related to LCFP, we spoke with some university researchers who analyzed the project data and arrived at the same conclusions as the journalistic investigation about the methodology used by Verra on certifications.

In addition, we read the report of London-based agency Bezero, one of the world's leading rating agencies dealing with the carbon credit market, and interviewed its managing director.

The agency BeZero last year certified a downgrade from A to B for the project.

Finally, about the critics related to the involvement of the population in the projects and the benefits received, we just collected their thoughts on the ground: in our story, we never

claimed that the infrastructure was built by your partners or by Eni, but financed with money from the LCFP project in which Eni is part of the governance.

There is no neo-colonialist intent on Rai's side, only a careful and complimentary review of projects dealing with the carbon credit market that involve both your communities at the local level and our national oil company. This element represents a reason for public interest: the impact these projects should have on our environment that is neither ours nor yours, but everyone's.

Our sincerest regards,
Report Editorial Staff