

Dear Everybody

November 2017

If you look across the vast continent of Africa, or anywhere on earth, you will see that where natural resources have been conserved, human populations prosper. On the other hand, where vast desertification has occurred due to overgrazing by domestic stock, or enormous tracks of forests have been felled, or mining for minerals has churned the landscape, you will see frequent human famines, displaced migrants, political unrest and disease.



It is not complicated: everything we need comes from nature.



When we first arrived in the remote areas of northern Zambia in the early 1980s, we found a verdant paradise of forested, misty mountains, green meadows, wide rich rivers and fertile ground. The poaching of wildlife by professionals was horrific, and that valuable resource – which was essential for the welfare of the local people -- would have been completely lost in a few short years. As you know, we were able to greatly reduce the poaching by offering jobs, loans, training, education, and health care to thousands of villagers – including the poachers.

But just as important was to protect the other natural resources. At that time, deforestation was just beginning: hundreds of trees were being cut to produce charcoal; herders introduced too many head of cattle and goats per acre; well-intentioned, but ill-informed farmers were ripping up hillsides and creating erosion. Yet, most of these efforts did not produce enough food or money for the survival of the families.

So, as you also know, we brought in an agricultural expert, a Zambian, Hammer Simwinga, to train the farmers, assist the herders, and help the families with a wide variety of agricultural pursuits that **would support their families but not harm the environment**. How simple is that, and how rare across the globe.

Today, Hammer is still working, introducing and supporting: tree planting; agricultural training; assistance, and loans; seed programs, a special crop and clover experimental program (based on advice from the University of Georgia); the management of the Mukungule Community Nature Conservancy, and expanding his bee-keeping program.



Here is an update from Hammer:

We are all doing well. Yes we are also working on women empowerment program. In Kaluba village, the community members are organizing themselves so that they increase crop marketing bargaining power. This year we have seen the worst crop marketing and price distortion for the major cash crop which is maize. Despite, the local people having produced over 30,000 x 50 kg of maize, the market price has been terribly reduced to as low as K65 compared to the last year's price which was at K75. This is despite the high production costs.

- 1. FWHC, is now working with the rural farmers to diversify from the maize crop to finger millet production. This finger millet has a more attractive market demand and has potential for easy cottage processing and packaging. It's hoped that this way the finger millet will have value addition and increase household incomes compared to maize production. There is a huge regional and country demand for finger millet pounded meal powder.***
- 2. The other project which FWHC is promoting is fruit tree planting as another tree conservation strategy.***
- 3. We are also helping farmers to adopt conservation agriculture, helping in soil and water conservation.***

The other interesting strong [story] is that the Mukungule Community Nature Conservancy, an area which in the last few months was highly trespassed by poachers entering the North Luangwa national park, is now safe and quiet. Elephants are reported and sighted by locals to have come back to places where they were last seen four decades ago. This has really excited a lot of people in the area and one poacher has voluntary given up poaching and handed over his home made muzzle loader to the head man and now wants to work with the project. I will be meeting this man next time I travel to Kaluba to get more details on the turn of events by this "poacher".



From the time we held the stakeholder conference last June, we have been working slowly towards developing strategic programs in the area. I will be providing a detailed work plan when we finally conclude the community meeting taking place now.



Hope to get back to you soon. Hammer

Hammer's son, Ando, continues his efforts to contribute human development without contributing to global climate change. All of these programs promote better lives for people without harming nature.

So today, many of the villagers in Mukungule still live in mud and thatch bomas much as they did when we arrived in 1984. They do not have television sets or cars. Most still walk or bicycle on sand tracks to the other villages. But unlike many places in Africa, they have food they have produced themselves, healthy babies, crops and products such as maize, honey or fruit to sell, jobs such as oil pressing and sewing. They look out over thriving green forests, hear birds singing, occasionally see elephants, and sing their melodic songs that lift across the mountains with the mist. There are many people in Africa and across the globe who do not have this because the local natural resources are gone. You help make this success possible.

We are still working to fund a new truck for Hammer. Transportation empowers so much good and lack of it prevents progress for the people and wildlife of North Zambia. Thank you for any help you can give.

Meanwhile, in the beautiful mountains of North America we are still very concerned about the wolf population, which has declined drastically in northern Idaho due to trapping. With current regulations in place there is little hope for change. The grizzly bears, on the other hand, hold on to their slight numbers and have a chance. Please help us continue to support these species and all other life in North Idaho.

You are among those who care about wild things and wild places. We greatly appreciate your assistance over all these many long years. Without you, none of this would be possible.

Cheers,

Delia and Mark



Please select The Owens Foundation (Tax ID 58-1749339) as your Amazon Smile Charity.

A percentage of each dollar you spend will be donated to the OFWC and costs you not one penny.

Owens Foundation, P.O. Box 870530, Stone Mountain, GA 30087, www.owens-foundation.org, 678-648-1267