As the Country Director of WWF Zambia, I am writing my farewell message in this edition of the newsletter. It has been an incredible six years partnering with you to protect the planet’s natural resources and mitigate the greatest dangers to life as we know it.

Thanks to our joint unrelenting efforts, we are now ahead of the curve when it comes to conservation in Zambia. We have placed our citizens’ agency first by reimagining, reinforcing, and modernising our method of conservation delivery at WWF Zambia that includes everyone.

During my tenure at WWF Zambia, we overcame seemingly insurmountable environmental challenges and witnessed numerous unexpected twists and turns of events. Through it all, I’ve witnessed our joint teams resolve in the defence of nature. They navigated many internal and external mountains in ways that have not only made WWF Zambia a better organisation, but also laid stronger foundations for a safe and sustainable future.

Our conservation projects, community engagement, and policy advocacy have made a lasting positive impact on the environment and the people of Zambia. I am grateful to you for your everyday inspiration to serve nature. I look back at where we started from and I am extremely proud of all that we have accomplished during this era in the pursuit of our country’s sustainable development priorities.

It was always energising to secure so many conservation wins with you against all odds.

I am extremely proud of the team we built as we together forged even more meaningful relationships with local communities, government agencies, and other stakeholders around shared goals for nature’s preservation and our country’s prosperity.

Looking back on these accomplishments, I want to express my deepest gratitude as well to every single employee, both current and former, of WWF Zambia for their contributions. For everything you’ve sacrificed, I am eternally thankful as you helped write a beautiful Zambian chapter of what’s possible when conservation is everyone’s business and is locally led!

As I commence my new chapter, I will take with me all that I have learnt from you since I left the bright lights of Johannesburg for my motherland six years ago. My heart is full of optimism regarding conservation efforts in Zambia as I know it will continue being in safe hands with you doing what you do best, under the new leadership of WWF Zambia.

Thank you for the partnership opportunities to drive conservation of our country’s valuable natural endowments. I am confident that our shared commitment to a thriving natural environment will guarantee stronger shared futures for all.

Happy new year, happy new era!

Nachilala Nkombo
Country Director
WWF Zambia
Nachilala Nkombo is a celebrated multi-award-winning sustainability and innovation leader with a remarkable track record of achievements since joining the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) as Country Director in Zambia in 2018. With over 20 years of international experience, she has excelled in advancing sustainable development initiatives at both national and international levels.

Ms. Nkombo’s leadership at WWF Zambia has been marked by her ability to drive the sustainable development agenda while protecting the country's rich biodiversity. Through innovative science, policy, green finance, and field initiatives, she has effectively implemented the WWF International conservation strategy in Zambia.

Known as a leading voice on biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in Zambia and Africa, Ms. Nkombo has successfully brought together policymakers, business leaders, and community leaders to spearhead national-level sustainable development policy initiatives. Moreover, she has fostered collaborations for green economy innovations within the public, private, and civil society sectors. Her impact extends beyond WWF Zambia as she is an influential member of the Malabo Montpellier Panel, contributing to policy innovation for food systems transformation in Africa since 2016. Additionally, Ms. Nkombo co-founded the CAADP non-state actors platform and the Women Leaders on Climate Action, further establishing her role as a catalyst for positive change in the region.

Prior to joining WWF, Ms. Nkombo held significant positions in other renowned organizations, such as Deputy Director and Africa Director for ONE.org, Africa Regional Coordinator for Action Aid International, and Country Director for MS ActionAid Denmark in Zambia. Her extensive Africa experience has provided her with valuable insights and expertise in driving sustainable development initiatives.

With a bachelor's degree in Economics and a master's degree in Public Policy and management from the University of Potsdam in Germany, Ms. Nkombo possesses the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the complex landscape of sustainable development effectively. Not only has she been an influential figure within the conservation community in Zambia, Ms. Nkombo has also had the privilege of speaking at prominent events, including the World Economic Forum on Africa, The African Green Revolution Forum, The African Public Private Partnerships Network, the Africa Union Agriculture and Trade Ministers Conference, and the Open Government Partnership Forum in Africa. In 2018 she gave up her job working for one of the world's biggest rock stars and activist - BONO to serve her beloved country through a little known WWF program in Zambia.
A ROUND-UP OF MESSAGES FROM STAKEHOLDERS HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPACT AND ADMIRATION FOR NACHILALA’S WORK AT WWF-ZAMBIA:

Evans Muhanga, Ministry of Tourism GRZ: "Madam Nachilala Nkombo is a passionate supporter of biodiversity, conservation, and the sustainable management of our natural resources. She has been a dependable source of knowledge within WWF for the Ministry of Tourism."

Prof. Andrew Nambota, Peace Parks Foundation: "Under your leadership, the operations of WWF in Zambia grew to unprecedented levels. Your hard work, contribution, and dedication to conservation in Zambia are evident to all."

Hon. Eng. Collins Nzovu, Minister of Green Economy and Environment, MP: "Your tireless efforts have not only advanced environmental conservation but also fostered a strong partnership between the Ministry, CSOs, WWF and the private sector. We sincerely appreciate your contributions."

Mwape Sichilongo, International Crane Foundation: "Championing an approach at a landscape level, Nachilala has integrated conservation into broader development planning and successfully claimed space for conservation within the context of sustainable development. Her work in the Luangwa, Zambezi, and Kafue landscapes is commendable."
Crispin Mutambo, WWF Zambia: “Under Nachilala’s leadership, notable projects have been implemented, such as the FAO GEF and the decentralization of project implementation through the opening of landscape offices. We have seen enhanced partnerships with the Zambian government.”

Moses Nyirenda, WWF Zambia: Nachilala is a strategic and visionary leader who propelled growth at WWF Zambia. Under her leadership WWF Zambia opened doors to a wide spectrum of partners in conservation such as the government ministries, traditional leaders parliamentarians, Civil Society Organisations, the Private sector and new funding partners (donors). She lived to the emerging ideology of “making conservation everyone's business”

Mukwandi Chibesakunda, ZANACO CEO: ”Nachilala is one of the most determined people I know. She has single-handedly raised awareness about climate action and our responsibility for the future of our planet. Her joint efforts with national stakeholders at COP26 and COP27 have laid the foundation for impactful action. It's a privilege to know her and be part of her amazing journey.

James Milanzi, Country Director African Parks: Nachilala Nkombo has a focused personality that aims to achieve any goal set put forward to her to achieve. This she does without fear of the hurdles set up by any institution. We saw this on the mining issues of Lower Zambezi, a dam on Luangwa River, and anything that tampered with the success of biodiversity and compromising the livelihoods of people at household level and contributing to the GDP of the country. She opened up new frontiers that previous WWF CEOs never ventured as seriously as she did. Sioma Ngwezi, KNP and the almost forgotten Kafue flats she ventured in and now we have a new story. All in all she is a personality you need on your side otherwise you will be a hurdle she will easily jump over. I know you will resurface somewhere else and work with us again especially in the current climate change status we are in.
Itai Chibaya, WWF Zimbabwe Acting Country Director: It is with mixed emotions that we pen down this farewell letter to bid you goodbye as you embark on a new chapter of your professional journey. WWF Zimbabwe would like to express our sincerest appreciation for your leadership, unwavering dedication, and invaluable contributions in driving the conservation agenda forward.

Throughout our collaboration, you have demonstrated exceptional strategic thinking and effective decision-making. Your commitment to excellence and innovation has pushed the WWF brand to new heights in the region. Beyond your impressive contribution, it is your willingness to collaborate with our country office and respect for our technical contribution to programming that truly sets you apart as a remarkable leader. Your supportive nature has created an environment that fosters partnership and growth.

As you embrace this exciting new chapter in your career, please remember that the relationships you built and the accomplishments you achieved will always be cherished by those fortunate enough to have worked with you. Thank you once again for your exemplary collaboration contributions, and I hope our paths will cross again someday. - Twalumba loko (thank you very much) and wishing you all the best.

Florence Mulenga, Youth-Stem Foundation: Nachilala Nkombo is a stellar that shines her light on others to shine. She believes in people, even before they can believe in themselves. She’s such a forward thinker and highly innovative. She’s a leader that gives quick feedback and ensures that her team is efficient and effective. My favourite trait about her is that she believes in young people. She gives young people the right platform to rise and shine and allows them to take centre stage in their strengths. It was such an honour to work with such a leader.

On behalf of the members of the Advisory Board of WWF Zambia we extend our sincere gratitude to Ms Nachilala Nkombo for her contributions to WWF Zambia and the nation. She worked closely with us on organizational structures and evolution, strategy implementation, management team building, and institutional effectiveness. Nachilala engaged very well in linking public and private stakeholders of all kinds into conservation and effective responses to climate change. Her successes will be felt in all the years to come. We wish her well in her next engagements and trust that her innovation and successes will be carried forward by WWF. - Ella’s Chipomo. WWF zambia Advisory Board Chairman
LET'S SECURE ZAMBEZI PROJECT:
STANBIC BANK COLLABORATES WITH WWF ZAMBIA, GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES FOR THE ZAMBEZI RIVER SOURCE

Through our partnership with Stanbic Bank Zambia Limited on the protection of the Zambezi source, we are calling for intensified efforts to combat deforestation and address climate change. Through the Stanbic Music Festival in which American singer Neyo performed live in Lusaka, Stanbic bank raised 10,000 trees from ticket sales.

Over 10,000 indigenous tree seedlings bought from the proceeds of the music festival were planted at the Zambezi River Source Area in Ikelenge District. This activity was preceded by community engagement which allowed for members of the surrounding community to take ownership of the trees being planted.

Stanbic Bank Chief Executive, Mr. Mwindwa Siakalima, emphasized the importance of restoring the ecosystem that has been degraded by deforestation. Interested stakeholders are encouraged to join in securing the Zambezi River, which we believe is a vital resource driving the country's economy.

The Government of the Republic of Zambia through the Ministries of Tourism as well as Green Economy and Environment are committed to ensure the protection of the Zambezi River source using a double protection status as a National Heritage site and Forest Reserve respectively.

The Government plans to involve local communities in the protection of the forest through the recognition of a Community Forest Management Group (CFMG).

MILESTONES & COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Since its launch in 2022, the Let's Secure Zambezi project has achieved significant milestones. In addition to establishing a nursery plant, the project has formed strong relationships with local communities who play a crucial role in conservation efforts.

We are working on updating the general management plan for the Zambezi Source Heritage Site and our aim is to create tangible livelihood
opportunities and leadership positions for youth and women affected by climate change.

For us, education is a priority, and the establishment of the Zambezi Source Community School by locals showcases the community's commitment and resilience.

We have also noted the rich cultural heritage in the community which is cardinal to passing down messages through edutainment. Cultural entrepreneurs such as Mr Paul Kanema are able to command the crowd through his cultural recitals. We believe youths need to learn these cultural performances to avoid erasing of indigenous knowledge.

We have since called on our partners on this project, Stanbic Bank and other corporates in Zambia to join-in and provide long-term support that will focus on sustainable management of natural resources, including climate-smart agriculture.

We believe that together, we can build resilience and protect the Zambezi headwaters region.

The community nursery for sustainable Zambezi

Pupils and Teachers at Zambezi Source Community School pose for a picture in front of their classroom build by the community. The nearest Government School is about 7kilometers Away
COP-28 outcomes mark significant strides for Zambia’s climate action and economic growth. WWF Zambia and the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment (MGEE) led impactful discussions, reflecting financial commitments, green initiatives, and partnerships for sustainability. Here are some highlights:

**ZAMBIA’S FIRST US$200 MILLION GREEN BOND**

"We celebrate the registration of Zambia’s first $200 million Green Bond by Copperbelt Energy Corporation. Leveraging established regulatory frameworks, this landmark initiative accelerates our renewable energy goals, aiming to generate 200 Megawatts of solar power with potential storage. This move signifies Zambia’s commitment to mobilize funds for national climate change programs, capitalizing on increased financial flows post-conference. " Hon. Eng. Collins Nzovu: Minister of Green Economy and Environment, MP

**LOSS & DAMAGE, FOSIL FUELS**

"At COP28, a landmark agreement emerged to phase out fossil fuels, a key driver of climate change. This shapes the future agenda for Voices for Just Climate Action, aligning with the imperative to limit warming to 1.5°C and prioritize renewable energy. Pledges surpassing $700 million for the Loss and Damage fund signal progress, urging swift implementation to assist communities most impacted by climate upheavals." - Rowen Jani: WWF- Zambia Voices for Just Climate Action Programs Manager
"Shamma Al Mazrui, United Arab Emirate’s Youth Climate Champion, led exemplary youth engagement at COP28. The event spotlighted youth as planetary stewards, emphasizing their crucial role. Commitments to climate education in NDCs and the inaugural Youth Stocktake marked crucial steps for global youth involvement. The $220 million for African health stands as a pivotal outcome, empowering our youth." - Florence Jedidiah Mulenga: WWF Zambia Conservation Administrative Support

"As WWF Zambia’s Freshwater Program Lead, witnessing Zambia deliver keynote remarks at the High-Level Ministerial Roundtable during COP28 was momentous. The inclusion of 37 new countries in the global effort to restore freshwater ecosystems signifies a collective commitment crucial for climate adaptation. Zambia’s leadership role in this initiative marks a significant stride toward restoring over 300,000 km of rivers and 350 million hectares of wetlands by 2030, vital for freshwater sustainability." - Beauty Mbale: WWF-Zambia’s FreshWater Systems Programs Lead

The Multi-Country VCA Team at COP28 in Dubai

Florence Mulenga (middle) at COP28 in Dubai
The Mafinga Hills, the source of the Luangwa River — Zambia’s fourth largest river, hold immense importance for our ecosystems and the communities reliant on them. These hills not only shape our landscapes but also offer significant tourism potential, such as mountain climbing and exploration of their breathtaking beauty.

Through the Sustainable Luangwa Project funded by the Global Environment Facility, we are working with the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment and the Local communities to protect the Mafinga Hills.

“By protecting the Mafinga Hills, our picture of success includes attracting nature enthusiasts, adventure seekers, and tourists, thus boosting local tourism and providing sustainable economic opportunities to the surrounding communities,” said Lazarous Sichone, the Sustainable Luangwa project manager.

He said that in addition to tourism, the Mafinga Hills hold many other possibilities for sustainable economic activities such as eco-friendly farming, agro-tourism, and the development of small businesses centered around nature-based products. To kickstart the activities, a District Technical Team has been put together and they will collaborate with us to achieve success. Embracing these opportunities will not only protect the Mafinga Hills but also empower the local communities and ensure a sustainable future for all.

Ensuring Sustainable Water Resources

The Luangwa River is one of the major tributaries of the Zambezi and is one of the four major rivers of Zambia, forming the core of the middle Zambezi-Luangwa freshwater ecoregion.

The Luangwa river, one of the longest free-flowing rivers and one of the largest unaltered river systems in Southern Africa is an essential source of water for various economic activities to about 1.8 million people. However, the river is facing significant threats, including overexploitation of forest resources and siltation leading to limited access to drinking water by communities that live downstream of the Luangwa catchment.

To safeguard this invaluable water source, WWF Zambia’s Sustainable Luangwa Project led by Lazarous Sichone through the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, are advocating for the registration of the source of the Luangwa River, in Mafinga, as a National heritage site.

We believe that this will enhance the river’s protection status and ensure the uninterrupted flow of water.

Join us in supporting this initiative and making a difference for the future of the Luangwa River and the communities depending on it.

Protecting the Mafinga Hills: Unlocking Tourism Potential & Ensuring Sustainable Livelihoods

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STAFF CORNER: WELCOME NEW PANDA

We extend a warm welcome to Edward Meleki, our newest addition to the team, assuming the role of Programs Manager for the Climate Adaptation and Protected Areas initiative.

With over a decade of experience in empowering smallholder farmers across Malawi and Zambia.

His proficiency spans various nature-based technologies, including agroforestry, beekeeping, home gardens, orchards, forestry practices, crop diversification, aquaculture, livestock management, and innovative irrigation systems.

WWF-ZAMBIA, PIN TEAM UP
TO ENHANCE LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES ON THE BAROTSE FLOOD PLAINS

WWF-Zambia and People in Need Zambia (PIN) with support from Jersey Overseas Aid (JOA) in November partnered to launch the Enhancing Livelihood Opportunities through Ecosystem Protection (ELEP) in The Barotse Floodplain of Western Zambia. The project aims at contributing to the environmental sustainability, human development and economic transformation of Mongu and Limulunga districts of the Western province in Zambia.

During the launch, WWF-Zambia Country Director Nachilala Nkombo emphasized the significance of traditional governance in sustaining livelihoods and conserving nature. She stated that recognizing the critical role of the Barotse people’s traditional governance system was paramount for the project.

"WWF Zambia will facilitate the enhancement of rangeland and forest management within the Barotse Floodplains. The ambitious plan aims to cover over 40,000 hectares of land under rangeland and form more than four (4) community forest management groups, and enhance the eradication of invasive species such as Mimosa Pigra" she stated.

And Stefania Lagonigro, Country Director of People in Need Zambia emphasized that by preserving this distinctive legacy of the province for future generations, the initiative can uplift the province’s level of self-sufficiency. "The project will contribute to the conservation of the local ecosystem, restoration of the biodiversity, and alleviation of poverty in the Barotse Floodplain," Stefania mentioned.

The PIN Zambia Country Director emphasized that the joint efforts between PIN, WWF, local authorities, and communities should address poverty, improve livelihoods, and mitigate climate change impacts in the region.
NACHILALA’S NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS AT WWF:

1. Making conservation everyone's business from community members, to politicians and business. Placed combating deforestation and building a climate resilience economy on top of the national agenda at the highest levels.

2. Securing Lower Zambezi from destruction through the Save Zambezi, Safe Zambezi campaign.

3. Support to securing Kasanka National Park, the home of the largest mamma migration in the world

4. Investments to promote sustainable agriculture and forest livelihoods in western and eastern provinces benefitting approximately 10,000 people

5. Afr 100 mobilization of GRZ, traditional leaders, corporates and communities to combat deforestation and build resilience to climate change

6. Strengthened Partnerships with Zambia Sugar and ABEinBEV and LUSWI on promotion of the Kafue water stewardship sustainability practises and ecosystem restoration directly and through KFJAF

7. Mobilisation of new donors and investors to support transformative conservation and climate action such as two large grants with GEF, Canadian government, Jersey Overseas aid, KFW, Zanaco, FCDO and ABSA- doubling the annual budget of WWF Zambia from $5 million in 2018 go over $10 million today

8. Stronger support to community contribute conservation organisations such as Community Resource Boards, Community Forest Management groups bringing over 300,000 ha of threaten forests under community management

9. Supported the developed of the new renewable energy focused policy regime for the country

10. Strengthened the Lusaka Water Security Initiative as its Board chair for 5 year. Chairperson of the board of directors of Mulonga water and sanitation company

SHE HAS ALSO BEEN RECOGNISED INTERNATIONALLY AND LOCALLY. HERE ARE A FEW AWARDS TO REMEMBER, SOME WHICH WE SHARED TOGETHER:

1. CSR 2022 award to secure Zambezi alongside Stanbic bank

2. Afrisafe 2023 Africa Safety and Sustainability CEO Awards

3. 2023 Push women awards - Inaugural Green leadership Award winner

4. Inaugural ZANACO 2023 Zee Woman Sustainability leadership award

5. 2023 Tech trends awards for innovation and climate change

6. 2023 WWF Zambian peoples choice conservation careers fair

7. 2015 Outstanding African Organisation - ONE Africa

8. 2006 Best of Class | University of Potsdam Master of Public Policy and Global Public Policy
Nachilala Nkombo’s passion, dedication, and ability to create authentic partnerships have undoubtedly made her a prominent figure in the field of sustainability and innovation in Africa. Her achievements since joining WWF in 2018 reflect her commitment to driving sustainable development and supporting locally led conservation of our natural resources for the benefit of current and future generations.

*CAPTION: Nachilala with the WWF Zambia members of staff during the Push Women’s Awards.*

*CAPTION: Nachilala with Frank Sipilanyambe and Stella mumoneka during the AFRISAFE Awards in Nigeria.*

*CAPTION: Nachilala’s son react to some of her numberous awards displayed in her home.*
Nachilala with ZANACO CEO Mukwandi Chibesakunda & South African Actress Connie Ferguson during ZEE women awards

Nachilala with Mukwandi Chibesakunda ZANACO CEO / Mzinga Melu ABSA CEO / Natasha Mwansa WWF-Zambia board member (in red) and other women leaders during the WWF-Zambia 60 Years celebration in Lusaka in 2022

Nachilala planting a tree at the source of Zambezi in Ikelenge district

Nachilala with Mukwandi Chibesakunda ZANACO CEO / Mzinga Melu ABSA CEO / Natasha Mwansa WWF-Zambia board member (in red) and other women leaders during the WWF-Zambia 60 Years celebration in Lusaka in 2022