

**TULI CONSERVATION TRUST  
DONOR REPORT**

**For the Year Ended 30th June 2024**



[www.tulitrust.org](http://www.tulitrust.org)

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## **BACKGROUND**



*Roger de la Harpe*

Tuli Conservation Trust (TCT) was originally established in Botswana in 1993 by the Northern Tuli Game Reserve (Notugre) Landowners Association with the current objectives being updated in 2019. The focus of TCT is the protection of Notugre wildlife, and environment and community enhancement. All of the Trustees act without remuneration.

The Tuli Conservation Trust UK (TCTUK), TCT's UK 'sister' trust, and a registered charity, was originally established in 2006 and re-invigorated in 2019 with the appointment of new Trustees who have a strong focus on fundraising for activities.

TCT's original mandate sought to raise funds to support its three priority projects - creating an anti-poaching team, fence upgrade and extension and a community outreach, education, and empowerment program. With the fence upgrade completed and the anti-poaching team having been established, going forward the continuing focus of the Trustees is on the third pillar – the community outreach, education, and empowerment program. To this end, a Community Engagement Programme was established in early 2022 and a permanent Community Liaison Officer appointed in January 2023.

Long-term conservation depends on local communities, government and conservation organisations being united in partnerships and finding solutions to enable viable and sustainable human-wildlife co-existence. This report highlights some of TCT's achievements to the end of the reporting period.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME**

As a result of the success of the pilot Community Engagement Programme ('CEP') during 2022/3, it was decided that a permanent resource on the ground was required to scale the activities of the CEP and to ensure sustainability of the programme. After an extensive recruitment process (which saw the receipt of 122 applications) the Trustees appointed Morulaganyi Reuben Kokole (Reuben) to the role of Community Liaison Officer (CLO). Reuben meets ordinarily weekly online with the TCT administrator and the TCT Community Engagement Trustee, who report regularly to the board of Trustees. Reuben is introduced below.

Reuben is employed under a formal contract and role description, with a mandate to expand the CEP by engaging with the six communities surrounding Notugre to understand the needs of those communities and to assess priorities and sustainability of possible solutions, so to identify where support from TCT may make the most impact. The CLO's role encompasses, amongst other duties:-

- Identifying potential projects for TCT to support and, after due evaluation and if appropriate, assisting applicants in completing a Grant Application Form for submission to TCT.
- Providing oversight on successful projects, evaluating their sustainability, and ensuring comprehensive reporting from grant recipients is received by TCT in a timely manner - quality assuring the reporting prior to submission to TCT Trustees.
- Where required, project-managing TCT funded projects.

The CEP's engagement with the beneficiaries of grants awarded does not cease with the distribution of funds as grantees are required to confirm that certain criteria will be met with regard to the maintenance and long-term care of equipment donated, regular reporting schedules agreed, and inspection rights granted so that TCT may verify the impact of any donation. To this end, on-site evaluation visits were conducted in January 2024 to many of the projects funded.

The CEP to date has resulted in the delivery of a major community healthcare project, a horticultural project addressing human-elephant conflict, a repeat of the eye-care project, a joint community project to combat livestock rustling and preserve livelihoods, and the provision of the flooring to a new school playground shelter. As a result of the activity created by the CEP and the arrival of Reuben as a permanent resource, grant enquiries have increased and whilst each enquiry and/or application is generally considered on its own merit, the Trustees have agreed in principle that no political projects will be supported, and neither will projects that are not scalable (i.e. no one community will be shown significant long-term preference). Any faith-based applications will be given careful consideration.

We would like to extend a formal note of thanks to Safari Ranches (Pty) Ltd and Dopotta Reserve (Pty) Ltd whereby both facilitated the pilot CEP by the secondment, on a cost basis, of two staff members as part-time Community Liaison Officers.

**COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICER**



We would like to introduce TCT's new permanent CLO:-

Reuben holds a Master of Science degree in Nature Conservation from the University of South Africa, a B-Tech degree from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, and a National Diploma in Nature Conservation from Tshwane University of Technology. He has extensive experience in various conservation-related matters such as community outreach, human-wildlife conflict interventions, and research. Reuben has a proven track record in community engagement and project implementation, as demonstrated by his previous work in the community conservation field.

We asked Reuben to give a few words on his background:-

"I was born and raised in the village of Molepolole, Botswana and I first fell in love with nature when I was still at Secondary School during our environment club visit to Khutse Game Reserve. During that time, I started to dream of being like the men and women who drove us around and showed us various animal species while also imparting some fascinating knowledge about the behaviour of various wildlife species. Their awareness of biodiversity piqued my curiosity and influenced me to pursue a career in conservation studies. When I

completed secondary school, I didn't hesitate to go after my National diploma in Conservation and I later pursued a B-Tech.

After that, I was permanently employed for approximately 16 years as a Community Conservation Coordinator in Botswana, working with various community groups and organisations to support local biodiversity conservation. My passion for conservation only became stronger, so I eventually enrolled in an MSc program in conservation at the University of South Africa. I started working as a Community Liaison Officer at TCT in January 2024.

In order to maintain and develop my conservation skills, I often volunteer in conservation projects during my free time. Being a family man, I also enjoy spending the weekends with my spouse and two young children"

We welcome Reuben to the team, and with his arrival as a permanent resource on the ground are looking forward to further developing our CEP.

When out and about on TCT activities, Reuben will proudly display the TCT branding so he is visible to the communities in which he works. Should you spot him out and about, please do say Hello and ask him to tell you more about the CEP and its impact.

We would like to wholeheartedly thank the very generous donor who has kindly agreed to provide financial support to cover the CLO costs.

## **ONGOING COMMUNITY PROJECTS**

### **Gobojango Horticulture Project**

A major project which continued during the year under review was dedicated towards the village of Gobojango where the electrification of a fence, which had been sponsored by TCT, required further attention.

The Gobojango Community Horticultural Garden ('the Garden') is under the custodianship of the Village Development Committee (VDC), which ploughs a variety of vegetable crops, and a portion of the harvest is donated to the elderly and the local primary school to help supplement their diets. The residual yield is thereafter vended to community members in order to raise funds that are subsequently reinvested in other community initiatives carried out by the VDC.

Prior to TCT's involvement, the Garden already had an existing water reservoir and small irrigation system in place, however the water infrastructure and the crops the community wished to grow faced the constant threat of roaming elephants. Although the Garden was fenced, and the community did everything they could to deter these imposing creatures, the need for further protection of their village horticulture project was evident.

TCT agreed to electrify the 1.5ha plot through a set of quality, solar-based, elephant protection wires to try and mitigate the risk of human-elephant conflict occurring at this horticulture plot in the future. Human-elephant conflict is a common problem in villages that surround Notugre; community members can spend days and months ploughing and planting their crops for them to be destroyed in just a few short hours by a group of passing elephants. By developing ways to protect these horticultural areas we not only provide a safe place for community members to grow their crops, but we also protect our elephants living within this unique open system.

Earlier in 2024, the VDC contacted TCT to request further assistance with the solar electric fence battery because their battery, also funded by TCT, was getting older and nearing its life span. The battery is essential for electrifying the fence surrounding the Garden, thereby protecting infrastructure, including crops, from potential wildlife damage as the area is known to be home to a variety of wildlife species, including elephants.

On 12 June 2024, the community received the solar lithium battery which was proudly funded by TCT, and which replaced the previous battery which had by now come to the end of its useful life. Various community leadership including five headmen from the various wards in Gobojango, members of the VDC and local Social and Community Development officers attended the handover event to appreciate the donation. In his speech, Kgosi Keaboka Odirile of Mandelo Ward thanked and applauded TCT for its continuous support for his community. He also mentioned how delighted the Gobojango community is to be partnering with an organisation that prioritises the needs of local communities. He concluded by urging the VDC to take care of the Garden's equipment since anything to the contrary will defeat the efforts

of all stakeholders involved in fostering increased food security and self-sufficiency in the community.

This project has brought a lot of pride to the people of Gobojango, and TCT. By alleviating the threat that elephants pose, protecting a precious water resource, and allowing a safe place to plant crops we have moved one step closer to establishing coexistence between communities and wildlife areas. This plot was always earmarked to provide food for schools, clinics and for people who are less fortunate in the village. We hope that by securing its presence, the Gobojango community can maximize its efforts and achieve what TCT set out to do – a project for the community, owned by the community.

The next phase of the project is the provision of a sustainable watering system, followed in the longer term by horticultural training, to increase the crop yield, followed by a feasibility study to be undertaken to evaluate the scalability of the project across the other communities neighbouring Notugre.



*Healthy crops growing successfully, and fully protected from wildlife*

*Handover ceremony of the new lithium battery*



**Amount granted in the year: BWP7,657.84**



### **Notugre Independence Day Soccer Tournament**

This is a long-standing tournament, which brought together in September 2023 eight football teams from communities neighbouring Notugre. Each team put forward a member to be part of the organising committee and a chairman was chosen by its members. The committee worked with Notugre representatives to organise the items needed to stage the tournament, and the grant given was applied towards the prize money, trophies, medals, referee and game coordinator fees and some small miscellaneous items. Some very competitive games took place, and the event was enjoyed by players and supporters alike.

The overall winners of the tournament were Dikwena (Crocodiles) from Lentswe Le Moriti.

**Amount granted: BWP30,000**



### **Gobojango Primary School Shelter Paving**

Gobojango Primary School, with the assistance of funding from the American Embassy, had constructed a 15 by 12-meter shelter in the school grounds, enabling them to hold assemblies and other activities under shelter from the sun and rain.

The shelter was not paved and so became very dusty during dry weather, proving a health hazard to the school community. During the rainy season, the floor of the shelter became very muddy with water flowing through the shelter. To increase the usage of the shelter, the School Head requested the funding to enable the shelter to be paved in concrete.

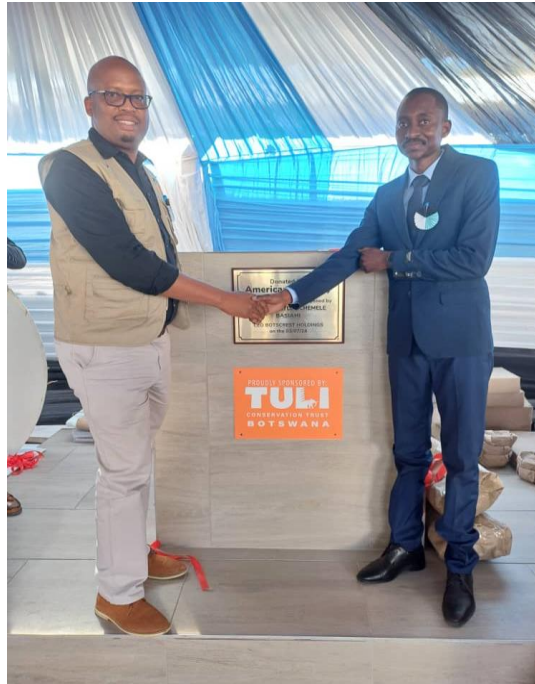
The Trustees were impressed by the commitment of the school staff in undertaking some of the construction work of the shelter themselves and were pleased to be a co-funder of this project, enabling the students and teachers to undertake school activities in greater comfort with greater productivity.

At the time of writing, the handover ceremony had just taken place, so do look out on TCT's social media channels for coverage of the event.



The finished flooring of the school shelter.

Gobojango Primary School's Victory Party Celebration for the handover of the project.



**Amount granted:** BWP28,975.20

### **Bana ba Bobirwa**

Bana ba Bobirwa (BbB) is an environmental education program initiative based in the communities neighbouring the Northern Tuli Game Reserve in Botswana. The programme's mission is to cultivate motivated young environmentalists who are committed to sustaining and protecting Botswana's natural heritage. Through extra-curricular Eco-warrior Clubs, primary school children in the Bobirwa district are taught about the importance of wildlife conservation and the vital role it plays in our ecosystem, providing them with a unique opportunity to engage with conservation activities. They learn about the value of tourism, develop leadership and life skills, and work collaboratively as a team. By exposing them to the conservation and tourism activities within the Northern Tuli Game Reserve, the programme aims to inspire a deep appreciation and understanding of our natural world.

BbB is dedicated to developing children into conservation advocates, striving to instil a strong understanding of conservation practices and encourage vocational interests within the conservation sector. This vision aligns with the wisdom of Sir David Attenborough, who once said, "If children grow up not knowing about nature and appreciating it, they will not understand it, and if they don't understand it, they won't protect it, and if they don't protect it, who will?"

The annual voluntary Eco-warrior Camps are the highlight of the programme but, as with the Clubs, they rely heavily on the generosity of supporters to continue and expand the offering. As such, the Trustees have agreed to support this initiative which will help provide these invaluable educational experiences, ensuring that the next generation is equipped to take on

the challenges of conservation, and the inaugural Eco-warrior Camps will take place in December 2024 thanks to the generous donation by Mashatu Game Reserve of a two week stay at one of its lodges in Notugre together with transport and secondment of its staff to help run the camps and assist with activities.

### **ANTI-POACHING TEAM (AP team)**

As the frontline defence and deterrent in efforts to combat poaching, well-trained and highly mobile teams of armed rangers act throughout Notugre and the neighbouring areas. Although no funds were requested or granted to the AP Team during the year under review, we can report that the funding previously granted (capital expenditure BWP2,034,086.43, operational expenditure BWP4,955,771.00) has co-enabled the firm establishment and operation of the AP Team which now stands at:-

- 14 x AP team members (based at the two AP camps)
- 2 x AP camps (Central and East)
- 1 x Mobile camp used as and when required to stay and patrol less accessible areas
- Vehicle and mobile radios with AP and Notugre channels

The AP team engages in gathering intelligence, conducting surveillance, and patrolling in both targeted and random operations. In addition to their anti-poaching responsibilities, the AP team also responds to reports of human-induced wildlife injuries or deaths in close collaboration with the Department of Wildlife and National Parks.



### **FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE**

TCT and TCTUK have constituted a joint Fundraising Committee to seek external funding and to market the Trusts. This committee has been formed to provide the Trusts with insight, fulfil the necessary governance requirements and undertake the raising of charitable funds from Grant Making Trusts, Corporations, and Individuals to support the Objects of TCTUK and TCT. Details of the Fundraising Committee can be found on the website. As a result of the fall-out from the Covid-19 situation all events had been postponed over the preceding years. This moratorium on fundraising activities has naturally impacted the funding program, but reserves built to date fortunately allow all committed grants to continue.

One fundraising initiative that did proceed in 2023, in conjunction with Afzelia's<sup>1</sup> entry into the Tusk Wildlife Ranger Challenge, was a fundraising programme undertaken in Guernsey, Channel Islands, with funds raised contributing towards topping the Notugre AP team's target of USD10,000. Over 100 ranger teams competed in the challenge and the Afzelia team did incredibly well to complete the 21kms race in a very credible time, all whilst carrying a 22kg backpack.

Afzelia will again be entering a team into the 2024 Tusk Wildlife Ranger Challenge <https://www.tusk.org/our-events/wildlife-ranger-challenge/> so keep an eye on our website for updates on their training progress and in the event itself to be held on 21 September 2024. We would like to thank Tusk for giving the AP team this opportunity to participate in another very successful, and very necessary, fundraiser.



*Francois du Toit*

The Fundraising Committee are currently considering various methods for fundraising, and will be progressing these initiatives in the near future.

## OTHER SUPPORT

The TCT Trustees are assisted by two individuals, part-time, who donate their skills to TCT – an administrator, who acts as Trust Secretary and writes TCT funding applications and a social media officer who updates the TCT website and other social media accounts with the aim of a) attracting further donors and b) highlighting community and conservation issues. Both these individuals are employed by a donor who generously donates their time to TCT activities.

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<sup>1</sup> The Botswana company set up to establish and manage a reserve-wide Anti-Poaching team.

## FUTURE PLANS

TCT'S future plans include, as mentioned above, the expansion of the Community Engagement Programme.

In addition, the Trustees have approached the Ministry of Education and Skills Development in Gaborone regarding facilitating the creation of a Higher Education Facility offering conservation-focused vocational courses that provide the best opportunity for future employment, thereby providing economic uplift to those communities in need. Although development on this initiative has been slow, some positive progress has been made.

Alongside looking to work with the Ministry of Education and Skills, the Trustees aim to develop mutually beneficial partnerships with organisations that align closely with TCT's values and objectives.

*Through education and empowerment, the local community will not only be able to value pristine wilderness but also share fairly in its benefits.*

## THANK YOU

TCT has a long-term vision beyond the initial three-year programme and priority projects and the Trustees (whose details can be found on the website) are very grateful for your generous and continued support. Positive impact can only be achieved when we have the right people in the right roles, from having excellent partners to passionate stakeholders to improve the reach and output of our work. The generosity of donors continues to be invaluable in funding our conservation efforts on the ground and has to date created several jobs in the local communities. This, TCT can achieve only with your donations, so **we thank you**, and hope that you will choose to continue to support us as we strive to achieve more.



*Pat de la Harpe*

Please visit [www.tulitrust.org](http://www.tulitrust.org) for further information.