

CONSERVATION ENDOWMENT FUND UPDATE

GLOBAL CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP PROGRAM FOR YOUTH BOTSWANA
THE HUMAN DIMENSIONS OF CONSERVATION

Botswana's subsistence farmers often lose their crops, their property, and sometimes their lives when elephants move outside protected areas. The country's economy has become increasingly reliant on wildlife-based tourism, but most community members lack opportunities to benefit from this industry.

With funding from the AZA Conservation Endowment Fund (CEF), the Chicago Zoological Society (CZS) and Elephants for Africa launched the Global Conservation Leadership Program for Youth Botswana in 2012. This capacity-building project focuses on children ages 8-to-12 and their Environmental Club mentors in the villages around the Makgadikgadi Pans National Park.

The long-term goals of this program are to develop inquiry skills and engage students in monitoring projects, using those skills to solve challenges relevant to them and their families. We expect to see increased capacity for innovation, increased chances for students to access higher

education and better jobs related to conservation, and, ultimately, coexistence with elephants and other wildlife.

The very successful first year of this project was conducted in 2012 in the villages of Moreomaoto and Khumaga, in the area with the highest human-elephant conflict in the country. CZS's Cycle of Inquiry workshop, which forms the basis for this program, develops the mentors' capacity to facilitate learning through small-scale research projects based on the interests of the students. Two Elephun Weekends brought local children into the Makgadikgadi Pans National Park across the Boteti River for two days of fun, team-based research. Students learned to identify evidence of elephant presence, track elephants, explore ecological interactions, discuss elephants' relationships with humans, and reflect on how they relate to elephants and wildlife.

This first year of the Global Conservation Leadership Program for Youth Botswana opened doors for dialogue with civic, governmental, and nongovernmental organizations that share a common, overarching goal of developing conservation capacity in Botswana.

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