

Zerofootprint School Nutrition Project Tshivanga, Democratic Republic of Congo

The Zerofootprint School Nutrition Project is an initiative that builds on the increasingly successful micro-finance model, which is serving to create a culture of grass-roots sustainable development in pockets of the developing and impoverished world. The cooperative proposed for Tshivanga in the Democratic Republic of Congo is the pilot project for a series of worker-owned poultry-raising cooperatives linked to nursery schools to provide an egg-a-day to each child in attendance.

In Tshivanga, the project will have wide-reaching benefits throughout the community, their environment and their commitment to conservation in their region. Tshivanga Station is the headquarters of Kahuzi-Biega National Park, a United Nations World Heritage Site and the last remaining habitat of the eastern lowland gorillas. Described by Dr. Jefferson Hall as “true conservation heroes,” the park guards have given their lives to defend this habitat from rebel armies and poachers. However, this has left the widows and children of these defenders without a social safety net or infrastructure to provide for themselves.

The 17 women who will own and operate the cooperative are the widows of these park rangers. Through this initiative, these women will have the opportunity to generate a sustainable livelihood while providing desperately needed nutritional supplements to the children at the nursery school, who are currently sustained on a porridge of corn flour, sugar and water. Funding will be focused on the initial infrastructure, such as chicken coops, nesting boxes, Rhode Island Red chickens and extensive training in both egg production and poultry care as well as best practices for running the business and generating growth and sustainability. Structured in the form of micro-credit, the funding will be a loan that the women will be required to pay back and thus gain full independence and ownership of their business. They will have the opportunity to grow their income through an assured long-term purchase agreement with the nursery school and by marketing their surplus to the rest of the community. This type of funding structure has proven to foster a culture of self-reliance, empowerment and development, while enabling the capital to be leveraged and cycled through additional projects of this kind.

In addition, the wood stove used to boil the eggs for the school children will model an alternative design that uses 70% less wood than traditional models. This is another key example of the commitment to conservation, sustainability and positive growth development that forms the basis of this project and the ethos of this specific community, positioned as the last line of defense for the endangered eastern lowland gorillas.

Funding for this project will come primarily from the sale of carbon credits through the Zerofootprint CDM Initiative in the region and from donations.

Donors:

Anonymous, \$15,000.00

The Zerofootprint School Nutrition Project is a joint initiative of the Canadian Ape Alliance, its partner in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo called the Pole Pole Foundation and Zerofootprint. For more information about these organizations, please visit www.great-apes.com and www.zerofootprint.net.