

The Chongololo programme was in its infancy when I was first employed by the Wildlife Conservation Society of Zambia. It existed as a small A4 magazine which had been included with the Society's occasional wildlife magazine, 'Black Lechwe'.

During my first couple of months the Society met, discussed, created and adopted what became 'The Chembe Declaration'. It identified the education of Zambia's young schoolchildren as the most valuable and effective way to start to change people's perception and valuation of wildlife across the country. The Chongololo magazine was to be the cornerstone of that work, aimed at children in upper primary school classes across Zambia.

It was compiled by volunteers. I was no part of that, though I had a successful teaching career behind me, my principal interests and knowledge being biological sciences!

No; I was employed to develop the Society, but that also involved helping to find the funds for Chongololo.

To market and support Chongololo I needed to have a tight definition of what it was going to be and its cost, so I became 'involved'. In the very early days I sat through two hours of a meeting, too much of it spent discussing perspective and proportion as seen through the imagined eyes of a young Zambian child aged around eight or nine. A distant elephant is drawn small; a dog in the foreground occupies a much larger area on the page. So the dog is seen as bigger than the elephant. I quietly wondered how far back in anthropological time we had travelled to find this child. The issue was not resolved that night.

The next meeting again agreed to differ on the elephant/dog size issue, and instead talked about a coloured edition as being more attractive. I pointed out that it would be more expensive, but that wasn't their concern. The phrase 'airy-fairy' filled my dreams.

After two months I was in possession of no facts that could inform a costing, and little information that would assist any funding approaches. I had a copy of the first two historic magazines, a hundred embryo ideas awaiting development and a split creativity group. I answered to a frantic Director of the Executive Committee, whom I respected greatly. He told me in no uncertain terms to start weeding out the ditherers and pedants and find some facts. I could invent them if needs be. (How the hell do you weed out volunteers?)

I became the management 'red rag' to the totally well-intentioned but amorphous voluntary bull. I was always seen as trying to destroy, to subvert, to belittle. They were not good days.

Finally, after a week spent obtaining quotes and working on spreadsheets, I went back to the group, took over their dog/elephant meeting, laid out the facts which I had, and also confirmed what was needed to give Chongololo its shape.

Costs for b/w v colour. Annual costs for two magazines v for three, for four. Costs for four sides, eight sides, twelve sides, sixteen sides of print. Time the copy had to be with the printer for delivery to us on a certain day. When in the school term did they want the

magazine to arrive? Who would pack them? Who would post them? Who held the addresses? ("Well, the Society members who had introduced it to their local schools".) But to go 'national' we need addresses for all schools, not just 130 schools. Who is going to the Ministry of Education to get them? And on and on.

Eventually the penny dropped. This had to be a professional enterprise, albeit fed by volunteers. I made other suggestions; an expert on the existing science syllabus could advise on language levels, perhaps even on dog v elephant in terms of square inches. It was realised that sending only magazines to a school could put the teacher on the spot: they were not ecologists or biologists, so an accompanying informative Teacher's Guide was required.

And we sat long, and we cogitated on numbers and when I crawled home they had not created one word of Chongololo text but there was a growing realisation of what they had let themselves in for. And I also had a schedule of their final proposed choices. I costed this and took it to the Executive Committee. We had something to work on, and even in its pared back form it would need a hell of a lot of money, and now we knew just how much.

Funding bids were made. In due course a pretty good Chongololo magazine was produced and sent out to our list of schools.

Chongololo quickly became a tight process, and the creators grew handsomely into their appointed tasks. One or two individuals left the group, but more-focussed and specifically-skilled members joined and the quality grew.

Funds were sought and funds were raised. The programme became reliable, the quality of the content was excellent, the plaudits were earned and well received.

Chongololo soon reached the point where it created its own space and need for expansion into initiatives that Society branches could, and did, develop and run.

My own contribution was now reduced to an occasional apt reminder when 'go to print day' was approaching and final copy had not yet been proof-read, and of securing funding.

A year later Chongololo was an internationally recognised and applauded initiative, and I never had to sink to 'management bastard' level again. But the reputation stuck, and festered long in some of the tinier minds.

I was so proud of that programme, and of the many stalwarts who kept at it through the dark days and nights and on into the sunshine of success.

You can see for yourself.....

Chongololo

If you are not sure what a chongololo is, or why it was the species chosen as the hero and flag-bearer of this education programme: if you would have backed the hyena, the lion, the elephant, the sable, the kudu, or any other of a long list of creatures from the cuddly bush baby to the armoured pangolin... let me explain.

The splendid elephant goes by a variety of different local names, which could be a problem. And the magnificent sable antelope is found in Western Zambia, but not in other areas, another problem!

But the chongololo is found in every corner of Zambia, in each and every one of the ten Provinces. It is found in most environments, including inhabited areas. You don't have to book a safari to find a chongololo: just keep living and you'll meet up with one sometime soon. And when you find one you will call it a 'chongololo', or a name sounding almost identical.

So we have a ubiquitous giant African millipede which may well live on your doorstep* and whose name is recognisable by anyone speaking one of the seven major native languages of Zambia, or of the other 65 local dialect languages. They call it a chongololo in Zimbabwe too.

Chongololos are easy to see, and they don't attack you. They are the thickness of a little finger, give or take a bit, and are about 12cms in length, though you will find some as long as 25cms. They have segmented bodies which are most frequently shiny black to shiny dark brown in colour, though some of the chongololo family can be a warm brown or even a handsome warm red. Oh! I nearly forgot.... they have a lot of legs.

Left alone they will move slowly through the undergrowth or across the lawn, their several hundred feet working busily, rippling along each side and giving the illusion of speed. In some areas the children call them 'Jungle Trains'.

Children seem to enjoy poking them with sticks, and then they, the chongololos that is, curl up into a defensive coil.

What's not to love? Kids love them. Found everywhere. Some children keep them as pets. And everyone knows them!

Yes, the chongololo is very popular.

- If you have never seen one there is a photo on the next page of not one, but of two chongololos. And, believe it or not, it was taken next to my Lusaka doorway, on the ground beside the step, on the earth amongst the flakes of concrete and cement that once, long ago, were 'step'.

One chongololo with another chongololo

(= two chongololos)



Yes.

And they are in the process of mating. The milky fluid at 10 o'clock is being transferred from one to the other.

(10 o'clock here is used as a 'navigation' term. The photo was taken in the mid-afternoon.)

Body segments and myriad legs are clearly visible and the head of one chongololo is clearly seen at 2 o'clock. There was a lot of slow wrestling going on. I left them to it. Two hours later there was no sign of them.

Enough! On to the serious bit.....

Chongololo, the magazine and the programme

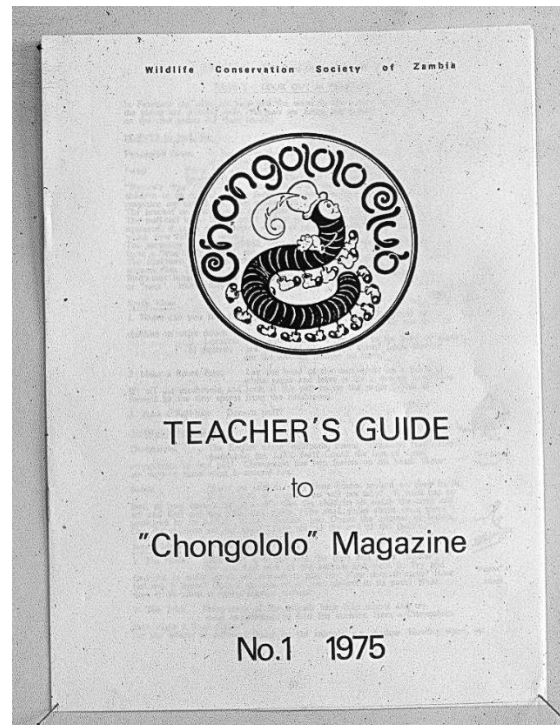
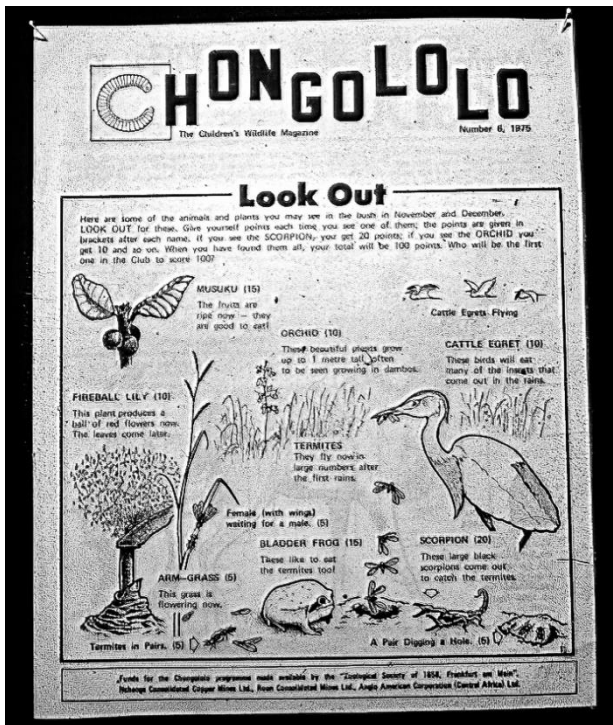
Below are pictures (scrappy in places as some were taken from long neglected transparencies). They paint a little of the picture!

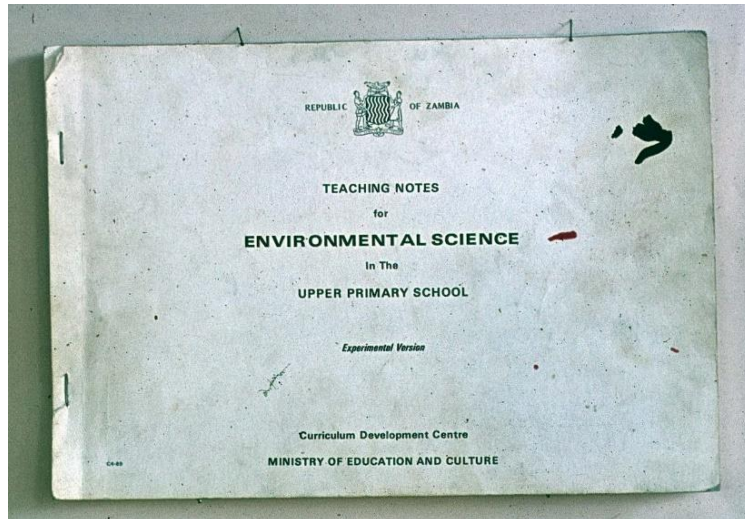
In January **1972** there was just **one** Chongololo Club in a primary school. An embryo Chongololo magazine was circulated as a supplement to the Wildlife Conservation Society of Zambia's occasional Black Lechwe magazine.

At the end of **1973** there were around **100** clubs. Editions of the Chongololo magazine were being taken to around 130 schools.

Early in 1974, funds were sorely needed, sought and found (documented elsewhere).

The Chongololo programme now proposed six editions of a black and white magazine each year, with schools to receive two editions in each of the three school terms. These were to be mailed to schools free of charge, courtesy of the government. With each school's batch of magazines there was an accompanying Teacher's Guide. This provided in depth information on the topics covered in that edition of the magazine and suggested experiments and activities that the children could undertake. In addition it listed references linking any topics covered in that issue to the government's Environmental Science Curriculum, in force in all upper primary classes. It proved invaluable, keeping teachers 'ahead' of their pupils and opening up creative potential for their Chongololo Club activities.





In May 1974 Chongololo went nationwide with its first mailing of magazines to all 2,680 primary schools. This represented a huge leap of faith by the Wildlife Conservation Society of Zambia, and an unbelievable commitment on behalf of those Society members and other educators who voluntarily contributed to researching, writing and illustrating the magazine.



It also reflected the GRZ (Government of the Republic of Zambia) support now being received through the provision of the 'post free' pre-addressed labels for each of their primary schools.

Many of these were in or around towns and the larger regional centres of population, but as many, or more, were in rural areas. The word 'rural' needs qualifying: one might get a clearer picture by saying that most of these were 'remote'. These schools frequently lacked electricity and piped water. They might be a single schoolroom of mud-brick and thatch construction, usually built by the villagers themselves. Elsewhere a typical breeze-block with corrugated-roof government-constructed classroom, or classrooms, served the area.

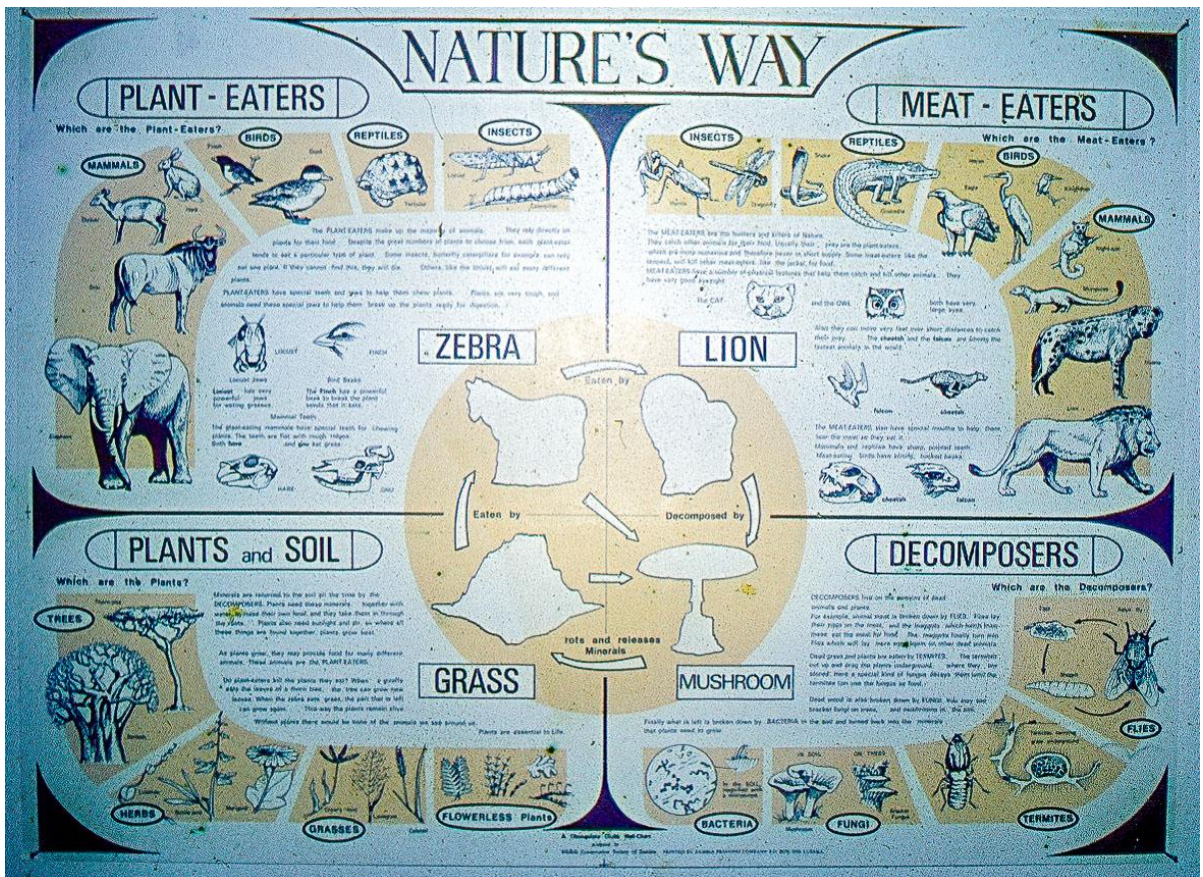
Education was valued in Zambia. It was far from unusual for children to have to walk four or five miles to get to their school. Uniforms were basic. Any exercise books or school books they were fortunate enough to have would be carried in large envelopes, in plastic bags, or very occasionally in a smart cardboard briefcase. Writing paper and pens were fairly common, but drawing paper, coloured crayons or paints, rarely seen. The nearest store that just might have these luxuries would be some miles away; the nearest well-served town perhaps fifty or more miles away. Bad roads, seasonal flooding, subsistence level incomes of families; all impacted on the challenge of providing a good quality of education, and the pupils' ability to benefit. Yet they did. And Chongololo found them, and found them willing.

In January 1975 the funds began to arrive. Chongololo would have 'wings'.

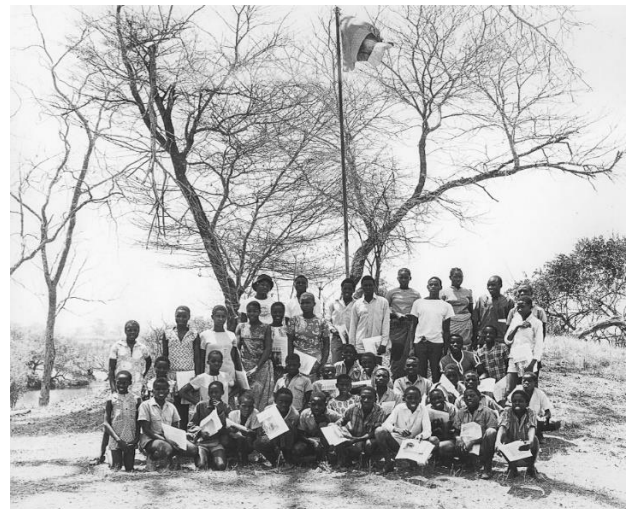
By June 1975 not only were all primary schools receiving 40 copies of each edition; the number of schools which had registered their Chongololo Clubs with WCSZ was just over 600. And the numbers continued to grow.



There were additional Chongololo Club benefits for members, such as free entry to the local Botanic Gardens. Wall charts were produced.

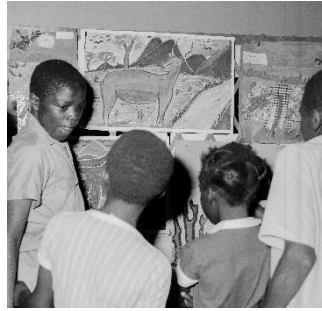


Card games with conservation themes were devised and marketed. Remember 'Poacher'?!
Trips to School Camps in two major National Parks were encouraged, often assisted by WCSZ branches. The National Parks and Wildlife Service had provided a seasonally resident expert, John Hazam, to run Treetops, the Schools Camp in Kafue National Park.

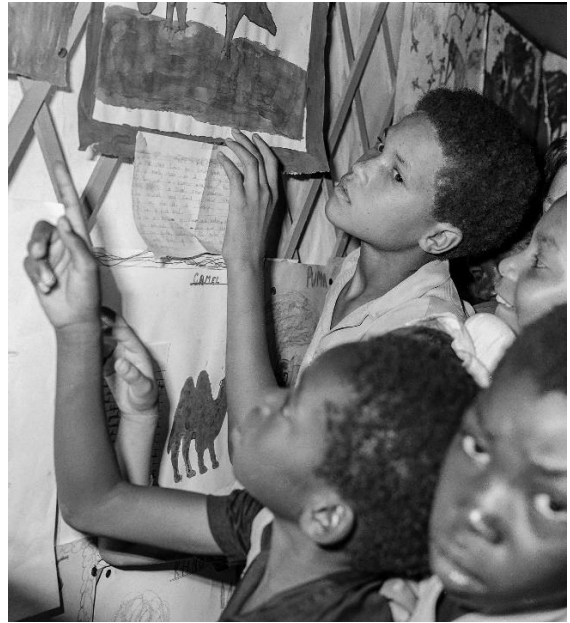


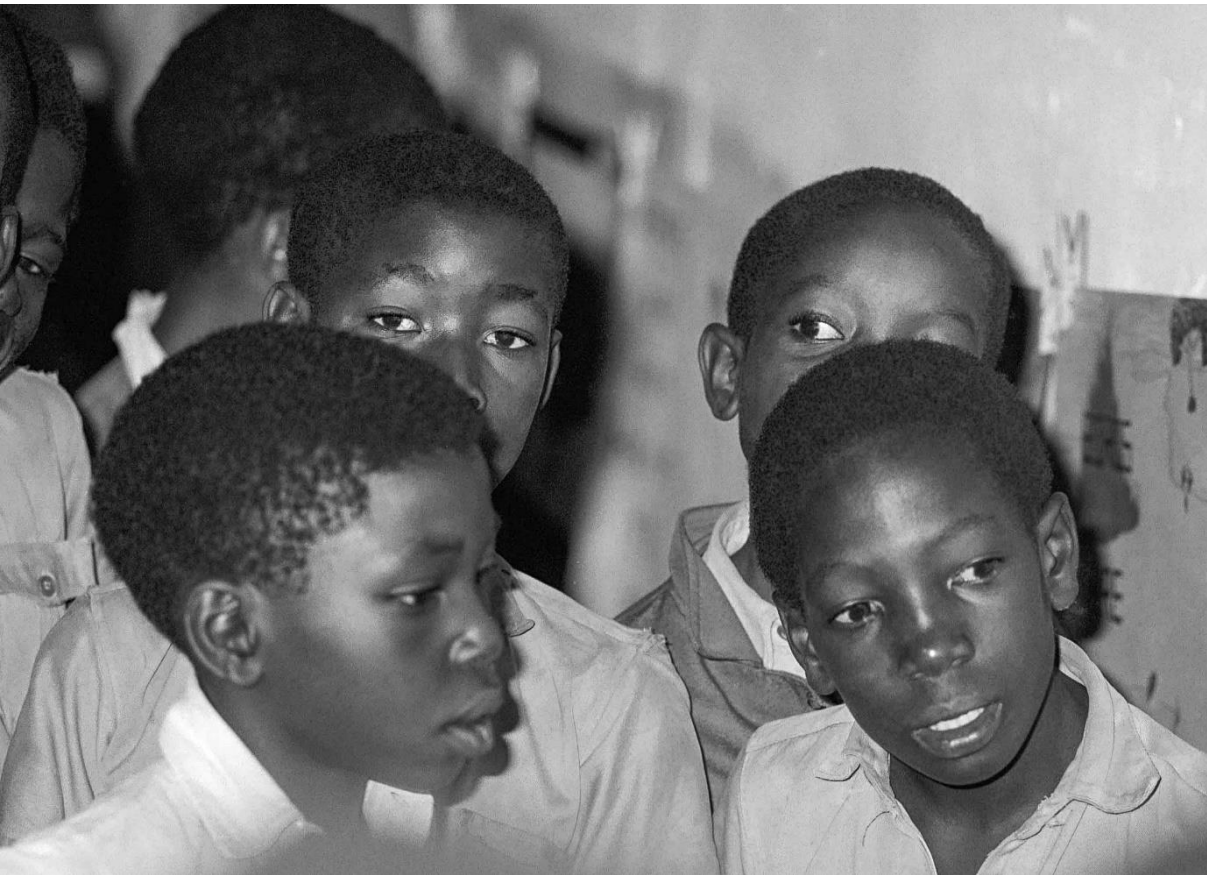
The programme just kept growing. Society branches developed their own outreach programmes, holding Wildlife Weeks, art exhibitions, bird walks, competitions and so on. In Kabwe a 'Wildlife Week' attracted around 4000 visitors of all ages!

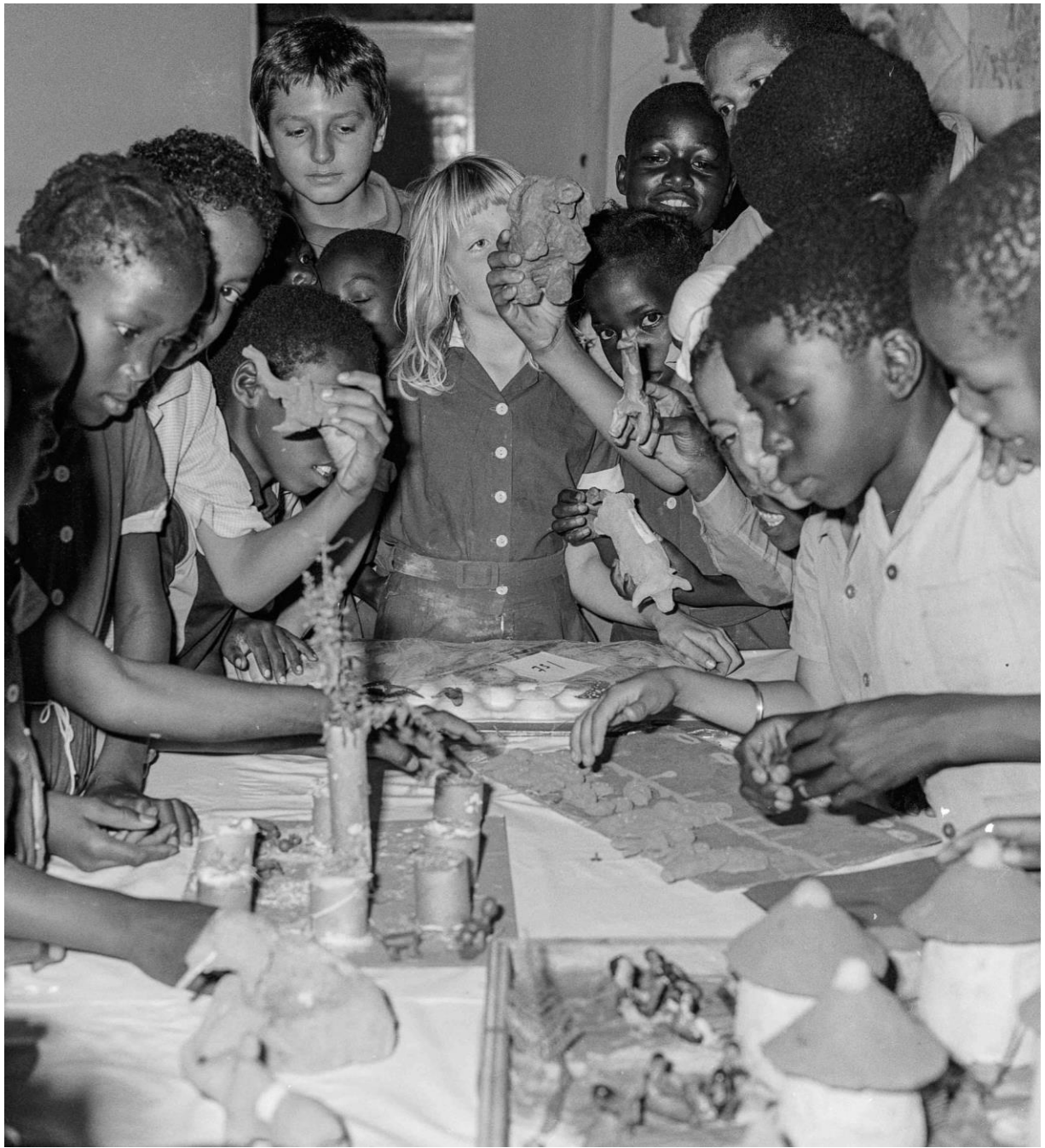
Pictures of the Kabwe Schools' Competition held during that week give a flavour of the enthusiasm aroused.

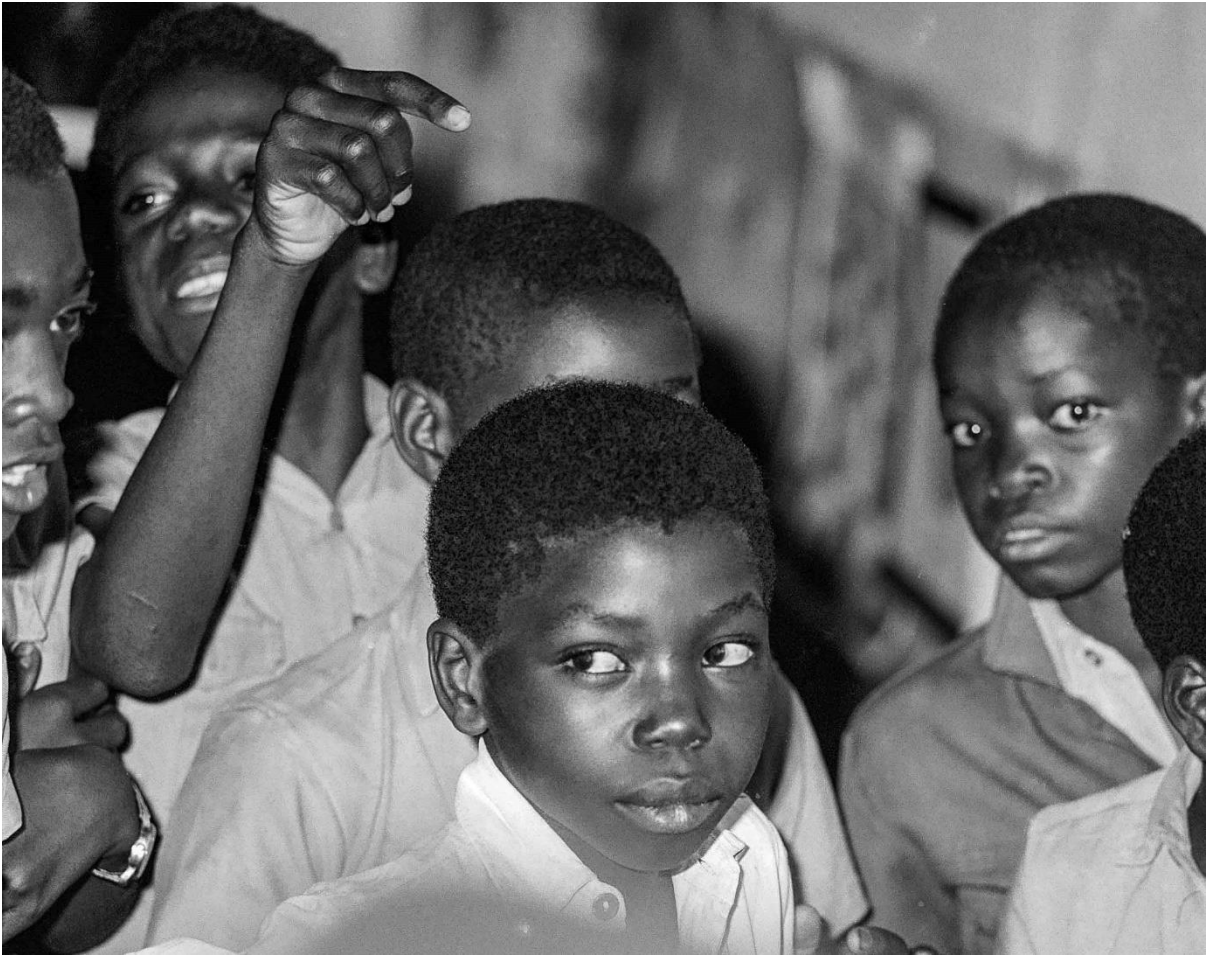












In Lusaka preparations for a Chongololo event called for the creation of a real giant!



Missing something? My son, Duncan, was on the scene (extreme right), but keeping well away from the action as Mr Chongololo's second ear was affixed!



Now, with over 600 Chongololo Clubs to respond to, the Chongololo creation team and other branch members had their work cut out. The responses from the Clubs were excellent feedback and their reports reflected the common needs of the clubs, the range of activities they undertook and the styles of Club leadership by their teachers!

Chongololo Club,
Chikakala Primary School,
Private Bag No. 24,
MPIKA

MR. CHONGOLOLO,
Chongololo Clubs,
P.O. Box 255,
LUSAKA.

ART EQUIPMENT.

Mr. Chongololo,

We can send coloured sketches to cover our discoveries, so as to illustrate the exact appearance of a specimen in question. But the trouble is where to obtain paints. We are a school far away from shops where such facilities can easily be obtained.

Does the Wild Life sell anything concerning painting?
If there's a possibility of buying these things may we know exactly how to approach you, sir.

Yours faithfully,



CLUB LEADER.



1 am

23/4/76

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This is one
of them
com

MKOWE CHONGOLOLO CLUB,
P.O. BOX 116,
CHIPATA

25TH MARCH, 1976.

MR. CHONGOLOLO,
P.O. BOX 255,
LUSAKA.

DEAR SIR,

RECEIVE MY SINCERE APOLOGIES FOR NOT
SENDING TERMLY REPORTS FOR TERMS 2 AND 3 OF
1975. ALL ABOUT THE CLUB IS WELL.

AN IMPORTANT POINT TO MENTION IS THAT
SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS SCHOOL TERM, CHONGOLOLO
HAS MADE K110.00. WE HAVE HOPE THAT BY HARVEST
TIME WE SHALL RISE UP TO K200.00 THROUGH PIECES
OF WORK. OUR INTENTION IS TO VISIT THE LUANGWA
GAME RESERVE BY AUGUST.

ONE MORE POINT WORTH MENTIONING IS THIS:
ON THE 19TH OF MARCH WE BOUGHT 100 YOUNG TREES
FROM THE FORESTRY DEPARTMENT AND PLANTED THEM
ALL WITH SCHOOL CHILDREN ON SUNDAY, THE 21ST OF
MARCH, 1976, WHICH IS THE WORLD FORESTRY DAY. OUR
SCHOOL VIEW HAS REMARKABLY CHANGED.

YOURS S.A. CHIUTIKA,
CLUB LEADER.

MWENEWIYA CHONGOLOLO CLUB" NO 1263

CLUB LEADER'S REPORT OF 26/2/74

On this Thursday Morning We saw a chameleon in a small hole. Its hinder part together with legs were inside the hole while the front ones were outside. We pulled it out of the hole and saw a lot of white long eggs. We left it outside near the hole and went back to school as the bell rang to stop the morning work.

At break we went back to see what had happened. When we reached the place, we found it busy covering the eggs with its mouth and fore legs digging the dug out soil. He didn't interfere with work, but left it and went back to class. Then at lunch I went there together with some of my members to observe the situation again. He found her busy covering the eggs in the hole but this time it had buried them completely and the hole was almost levelled.

In the afternoon we went back to see the final result but found that she had gone after levelling the hole. So we wanted to know the number of eggs she had laid. Steadily we counted the eggs after uncovering the hole and found forty-seven eggs. We took four of them to show every child at school.

Finally we put two in a tin with a lid on top not to allow any air or light to go in. Two were put in another tin without a lid and after some days there was a change in shape mostly on those in a tin without a lid on. It was a very interesting game to watch as most of us it was our first time to see the eggs of a chameleon. I have enclosed one egg for you, and one for Orbit.

W.M. Siame Club Leader

I cannot recall what we did with our chameleon egg!

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CHONGOLOLO CLUB
LUDIVA Primary School
P.O. Box 1526.

NDOLA.

18th April 1975.

CHONGOLOLO CLUBS
P.O. Box 255,
LUSAKA.

CLUB PROGRESS REPORT 1st TERM 1975

- 1 4th March 1975 The club leader conducted the first meeting. All members were present, he told the members the privileges of being Chongololo club member.
 - 2 11th March 1975. Members and their leader went out for research work. Children found grasshoppers, various insects, lizards, chameleons and birds. They took some to the classroom for discussions. They discussed about colours, wings, parts of the body etc. Children were very interested in discussion.
 - 3 18th March 1975. Club leader bought two rabbits for the club.
 - 4 25th March children were taught the usefulness of natural resources and how to protect them.
 - 5 1st April Members and the leader visited Kalulushi Village where they saw cattle and goats.
 - 6 8th April 1975 Children drew and painted pictures of animals, birds, insects, and snakes.
- Children have shown interest in the club but the school has a shortage of materials such as crayons, paint and manilla paper. I tried to raise money through selling school bananas.

Differing styles of leadership and activities indeed, but commonly a request for the simplest of commodities; crayons and paints and even just 'manilla' paper. These four reports were among the hundreds received annually by the Chongololo team. They were forwarded to me to 'act' on, both by informing the Executive Committee of the quality of the programme, and also illustrating the need for even more support, and therefore funding.

If the only the value of our volunteer efforts had been calculable and matched Kwacha for Kwacha by donors then..... where would we have been?

At least two Society branches acquired their own vehicles and organised field trips for Chongololo Club Members as regular events.



Kabwe not only excelled in Chongololo support, the branch also annually opened and closed 'Kafwala', the Society's Members camp in Kafue National Park, maintaining it throughout the open season and also looking after the resident staff at the camp.

And finally: Ian Bullock, an expatriate from the UK, was appointed on a two-year contract as the National Chongololo Co-ordinator. Yes, Chongololo had wings!

Soon there would be weekly radio programmes and a half hour TV programme for Chongololo Clubs, organised, scripted and delivered by the Kitwe branch in the Copperbelt.

And across much of the country remote schools were now being visited by a Society Education Officer.

Richard Lumbe and I took a rare 'day out' from the rigours of our Lusaka Office, simply to see the Chongololo programme at work in a remote area, something very few Society members would have been lucky enough to enjoy.

It was an eye-opener, the sort of occasion that reminds you where you are, what you are, and why you are what you are.



WCSZ Education Officer and vehicle en route to a rural school 70 miles from the nearest town, Lusaka.

This was sometime in 1977-78.

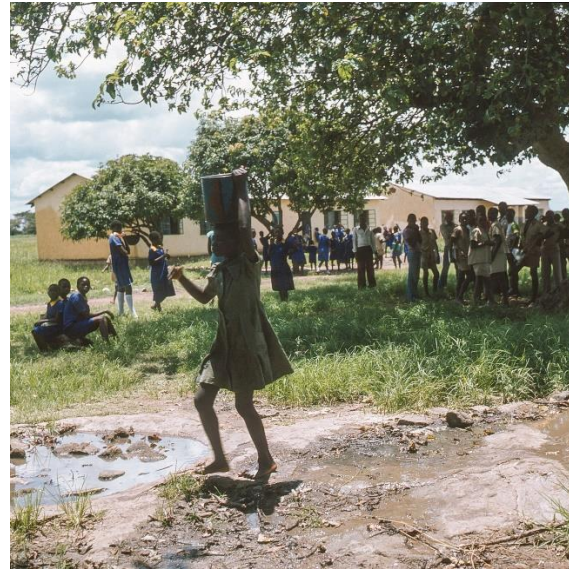


Richard Lumbe and the Education Officer on our 'experience Chongololo' trip.

This was early in Richard's wildlife career. We rarely had the chance to see the 'peripheral' activities in action. It was an opportunity for us both to see what the theory looked like in practice, and to enjoy a day out 'in the field'

Richard was one of the nicest guys you could ever hope to meet. I was lucky to find him and welcome him to work for WCSZ. He rapidly became an expert, was totally committed to what we were trying to achieve through the Chongololo programme, and remained with the Society long after my departure. In due course he worked with Government Projects and on United Nations programmes in Zambia and deservedly gained a high reputation. Top man. Top friend.

The Education Officer was a Scandinavian, employed by one of the WCSZ branches. I met him just twice and, to my shame, I have forgotten his name. He worked hard, travelled widely and was the outward face of Chongololo to many, many hundreds of children in rural areas.



It is lunch break: village life goes on while schoolchildren rest in the shade



An impromptu lesson on insects, good, bad and indifferent, for the villagers.

An amazing amount of interest was shown, animated questions asked and answers greeted noisily with 'Oohs' and 'Eehs'. It reminded me of Saturday morning pictures in the late 1940's and the cheers and boos for the goodies and baddies! Great fun: seriously effective.



The last few scholars hurrying back for the afternoon class.

The Chongololo Club film show

Later the Chongololo Club members made their way to a classroom set aside that day for our visit. There were window embrasures, but no windows, and a doorway, but no door. There was no electricity in the school. The projector was powered by a generator placed as far away from the classroom as extension leads would allow.

Generator, projector, screen, speakers, all cabling and films travelled with the Education Officer, along with any display boards and other materials that might be currently available. On this hot afternoon twenty or so Chongololo members watched, entranced, the speaker volume set to 'loud' to cancel the drone of the generator. Sunlight poured in. The films available to be shown ranged from short training films on tropical agriculture or wildlife

themes to, on occasion, real wildlife blockbusters. 'Year of the Wildebeest', filmed by Alan Root and released in 1974, was being shown to Chongololo clubs just a few weeks after it was first shown by Anglia TV in Britain, this, courtesy of WCSZ connections with that company. The day's film was on wildlife in a Tanzanian National Park, 50 uninterrupted TV minutes, as the advertisements had been stripped out and the film re-spliced.



I sat to the side of the room, facing inwards; more interested in facial reactions than in the film itself. It was not a great film. I have never seen such rapt attention anywhere, let alone in a classroom. I was about five feet from this boy. I picked up my bulky camera, focussed, made adjustments and took just the one photo; an audible click and then a whirring noise. The camera was returned to the bag at my feet. No-one had even glanced my way. It was several weeks before my processed film was returned from the UK. Only then did I realise that I had taken one of the best pictures of my life.

And THIS is the one that encapsulates all that drove me on through my work in Zambia. Each time I look at it a cascade of memories is unleashed. I call him my "*Chongololo Boy.*"