



## Benson Besa Conservation Awards 2022

### Olivia Petre CEO

The first ever Benson Beza Conservation Awards ceremony, which will become an annual event, was held on Sunday 16th October 2022 in the sports ground of Mfuwe Primary School. This new initiative was inspired by the passing of Benson Beza, a young Zambian Chipembele-sponsored University student who touched the lives of so many with his passion for conservation and determination to make a difference. This year a Step-Up for Conservation event also took place, linked to a fundraising event for Chipembele of the same name that was been held in Australia, organised by Creating for Conservation Inc. The Management of Chipembele gratefully acknowledges the generous donations from Schulprojekte Sambia (SPS) and Creating for Conservation Inc to support the launch of this new initiative.



#### *Background*

Benson Beza was born in Chitambo Village, Mfuwe on 17th October 1999. His mother and father separated when he was very small and his father remarried. His mother sold fritters to make some money to help feed the family. He was the first born in the family and had 3 younger sisters. He attended Mfuwe Primary School, then Mfuwe Day Secondary School and was sponsored by

Chipembele from Grade 8 to 12 (2014 to 2018). During this time, he became an increasingly active participant in his school Conservation Club and was passionate about conserving wildlife and the natural environment. In 2017 he was selected to attend a 5-day Youth Development course at Ndubaluba Outdoor Centre near Mkushi. During 2018 and 2019, Benson participated in the 'Tisamale' Student Conservation Exchange Programme and was selected on merit as one of 14 students to visit Australia for 3 weeks in 2019. He fully immersed himself in the experience and energetically participated in all the activities. He also made lots of new friends and connections. Benson passed his Grade 12 examinations with good results and was very determined to continue with his education and improve his life. His enthusiasm and focus led him to become the first school leaver from 2018 who had been in the Chipembele programme to be offered a place at university and in September 2019 he commenced a 4-year degree course in Environmental Studies at Mulungushi University near Kabwe. Two other Chipembele students (Meya Sakala and Jacob Mphasi) enrolled in the same course and they formed the first ever Environmental Club at the University. He was a model Conservation Club member and a reliable and hardworking sponsored student throughout school and university. He was always honest, open, respectful and had deep personal values that he always adhered to.

In July 2021, Benson returned home after completing his second year at Mulungushi. He passed all his second-year exams and was set to enter the third year the following month. However, whilst in Mfuwe he developed an illness, which was never fully diagnosed, and very sadly he passed away in Chipata General Hospital on 16th July 2021.

Benson left a legacy that we should all remember. He was not exceptionally academic but he always tried his hardest, he participated fully in every opportunity that came his way and he showed integrity and passion in everything he did. We can always remember him with these few simple words 'Always Be your Best'.



#### *The award winner's selection process*

We spent the year working with Conservation Clubs at 19 local schools to select the top pupils embodying Benson's key attributes (determination, passion, leadership, creative thinking, integrity, change making and teamwork). The award programme is a motivational way to select and support the most promising conservation club students to change attitudes and improve behaviour for the benefit of all. The Benson awards and what the different attributes mean were explained to the club members by the CCEs early in the year, and the expression of these attributes during the clubs was recorded by the CCEs on a chart with different coloured stars representing the different attributes. Each student was awarded a star each time they showed that attribute. Just before the award ceremony, the

number of stars for each student was counted. The top students from each club were invited to join the award ceremony and received a certificate, wrist band and T-shirt. The top students from the Senior clubs were also invited to 'winners day' which included an adventure outdoor morning during which they participated in several activities with the aim of determining which 7 would receive attribute awards and who would receive the top Spirit award. After the activities, all the students were rewarded for their hard work over the course of the year with an interactive 'behind-the-scenes' session with the other conservation NGOs. They listened to talk and had the opportunity to ask many questions and also experience a demo with the CSL detection dogs. This was followed by lunch and a game drive in the park. The winners have also been earmarked for future training opportunities such as our year-long professional development programme and university sponsorship. The winners were announced on the event day so none of the participants were aware in advance who would be awarded the spirit prizes.

### *The award ceremony event*

The event was opened by Olivia Petre, the CEO, who thanked everyone for coming, especially the guest of honour and Benson's family. The Step-Up for Conservation event preceded the main awards and involved some fun activities for 32 specially selected students. On the same day in Australia, our long-term supporters, Creating for Conservation, ran a similar event raising much needed funds for Chipembele. First, the students were asked to paint a rock that showed how they were 'stepping up for conservation', which was then judged for prizes. Secondly, they had fun painting their feet and leaving their footprints on a long cloth banner to show how Chipembele students are taking action for conservation one step at a time. Finally, there was a challenging obstacle course with 10 different races across 3 lengths of the school football field. Prizes were awarded to the fastest 3 boys and fastest 3 girls to complete the course.



Once the Step-Up event was concluded, the main Benson Beza Award ceremony began with students and our Aspiring Conservation Leaders performing some creative and moving songs and poems all about Benson as a role model for what is possible when you try.



A total of 31 'Student of the Year' awards were presented to the best student in each of our Junior and Senior Conservation Clubs in the core Chipembele programme by the guest of honour from the DEBS office and Olivia Petre, the CEO. Four teachers were each awarded a prize for being the best Conservation Club Patron or Matron in their zone. Corey Jeal explained about the different spirit awards and then seven students were awarded prizes for each of the 'Benson Attributes' listed above. And finally, two students were awarded the very top prize for demonstrating the most attributes. These are called the 'Spirit of Benson' awards and were presented by members of Benson's family.



The winners from the different clubs were as follows:

*Central zone*

- Brilliance Chulu (Uyoba Primary School)
- Francis Malipita (Mfuwe primary School)
- Davison Mwanza (Mfuwe primary School)
- Proud Muombo (Yosefe Primary)
- Chisomo D Zulu (Yosefe Day)

Ben Kaputo (Mfuwe day Kakuli)  
Philimon Njobvu (Mfuwe day Mimbulu)  
Martha Banda (Chiwawatala Primary)  
Christable Ngoma (Chiwawatala Primary)

*Kakumbi zone*

Samuneti Allan (Kakumbi Primary)  
Zulu Lottie (Kakumbi Primary)  
Chamoto Atiness (Mwandakwisano Primary)  
Zulu Peter (Mwandakwisano Primary)  
Zulu Abigail (Katemo Primary)  
Banda Elijah (Katemo Secondary)

*Nsefu zone*

Daiman Mphasi (Nsefu day)  
Triphonia Zulu (Nsefu day)  
Azalia Banda (Katapila Primary)  
Mary A Chulu (Katapila Primary)  
Isaac Nkhata (Katapila Primary)  
Lutricia Ngoma (Katapila Primary)  
Benard .M. Ngoma (Nsefu Primary)  
Julias Ngoma (Kawaza Primary)

*Mkhanya zone*

Mktiwa Lungu (Matula Day)  
Stella Nkweto (Matula Day)  
Beatrice Phiri (Matula Primary)  
Ethel Mbene (Matula Primary)  
Paul Zulu (Chiutika Primary)  
Patience (Chiutika Primary)  
Charles Mbewe (Malimba Primary)  
Stanley Banda (Mnkhanya Primary)



The spirit winners were:

NAME	AWARD
Daiman Mphasi	Integrity
Triphonia Zulu	Team work
Mwitwa Lungu	Creative thinking
Stella Nkweto	Determination
Christabel Ngoma	Passion & SPIRIT
Philimon Njobvu	Leadership
Ben Kupto	SPIRIT
Chisomo Zulu	Change maker

Banda Elijah and Patience Phiri participated in the experience as they were top of their conservation clubs but they did not receive Spirit awards.



The patrons/matrons of the year were: Gift Jere (Mfuwe Central Zone); Robson Tembo (Mnkhanya Zone); Winnet Tembo (Nsefu Zone); Zirimba Nkhoma (Kakumbi Zone).

Following the awards, there was food and drinks for all the winners, participants in the Step-Up activities, guests of honour, partners and staff.



The event was very successful and we look forward to holding it again next year. As this was the first time it was held, there was a large focus on Benson and his story, but for future years there will be more of an emphasis on his attributes and what he represented.

