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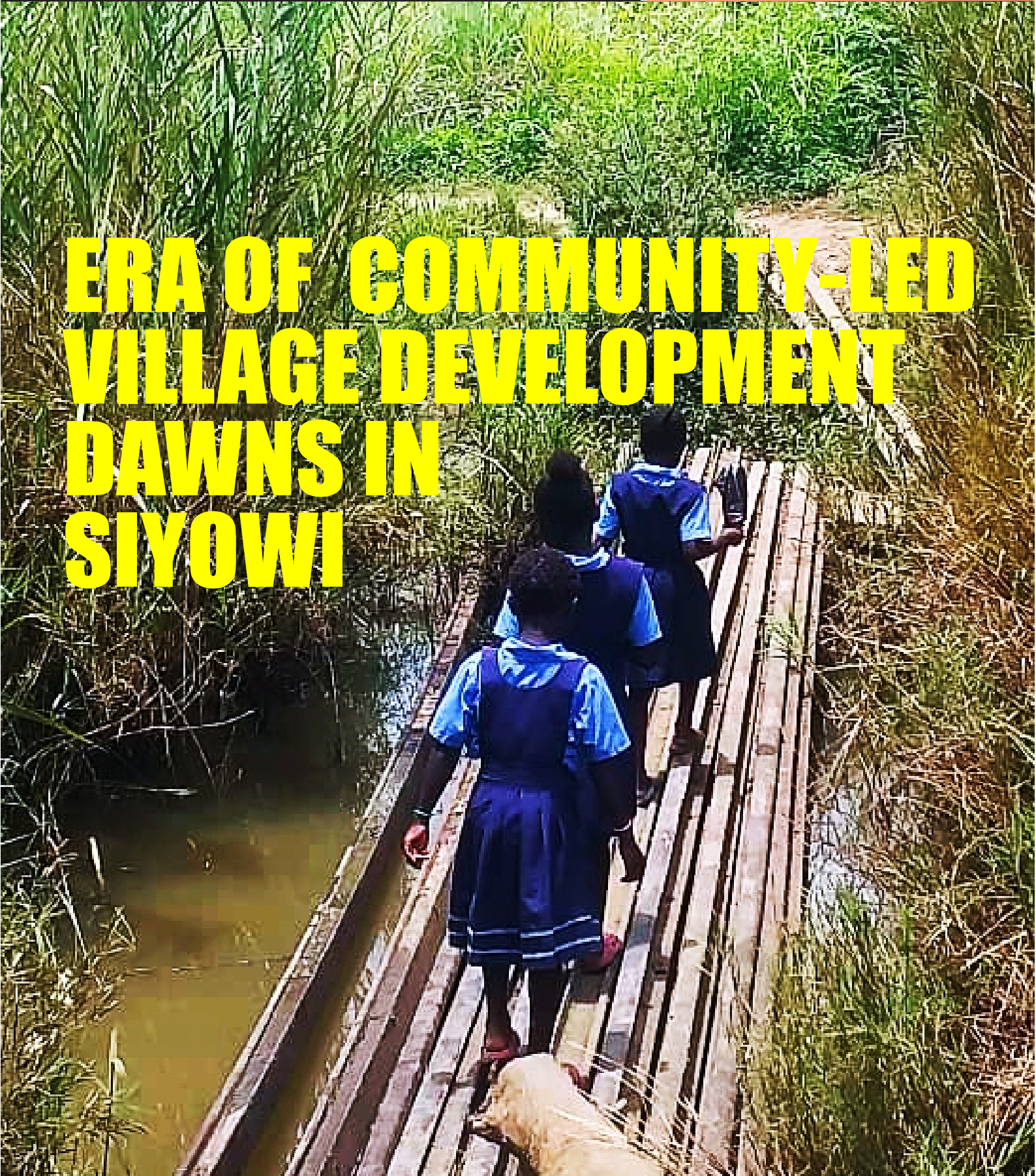
4th Edition

2023

ZAMBIA

NEWSLETTER

ERA OF COMMUNITY-LED VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT DAWNS IN SIYOWI



Executive Director's Foreword



Finally, after a year of getting to know each other and finding critical common ground in approaches, Shanta Foundation and People's Action Forum came into partnership to bring about sustainable change in Siyowi, Chief Mwanachingwala's area, through Shanta's Village Development Model. The work officially began in January 2023.

Shanta Foundation, having successfully implemented its model found a matching partner in PAF in its first partner outside of Myanmar where the model was developed. The project is looking to promote community driven development in line with PAF's mission to empower rural communities to initiate and manage their own development. The first year of the project has started under the theme 'Girls Education Support Through Community-led Village Development' for the empowerment of women and girls, through education and promoting reproductive health. The many activities include its pillar, the setting up of a community bank with community contribution, which we are keenly looking forward to growing year by year. The project will oversee infrastructural projects and also looks to improving the reading culture in children and adults.

Welcome Shanta, we look forward to working with you, and to a strengthening partnership. This promises to be a very exciting journey of growth for the partner villages, and yes, most certainly for PAF!! Our friends, partners and stakeholders; we share with you in this newsletter our first few months on the project. It shows forth why we are pleased to have embarked on this journey, and anxious, in the community's lead, to "get our hands dirty"! Do enjoy the read.

Gina Chiwela
Executive Director
PAF

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PEOPLE'S ACTION FORUM



ABOUT PAF

Peoples Action Forum, PAF, is an indigenous organization that has supported rural communities and schools in Zambia since 1994 through community learning centres established in seven rural districts of Eastern (Chadiza, Chipata, Mambwe), Southern (Mazabuka, Monze), and Central (Mumbwa, Namayani) Provinces. PAF has provided direct project support to schools in 14 other districts of Chipangali, Isoka, Kafue, Kalomo, Kapiri Mposhi, Kasama, Kasenengwa, Kawambwa, Mbala, Mpulungu, Mungwi, Namwala, Solwezi, Vubwi.

OUR VISION

A peaceful society where people are empowered and have attained equity.

OUR MISSION

To promote empowerment through advocacy, education and other innovative approaches for sustainable development

PAF aspires to be a self-sustaining organisation that empowers rural communities to initiate and manage their own development. Our work in Zambia aims at achieving a people-centred, community-led development in which people will be aware of their rights, be able to put demands on their claims so that duty bearers at various levels will be able to uphold and support the rights of the targeted poor and marginalized groups in rural communities in Zambia for a fair, equal and sustainable development through both formal and non-formal education.

PUTTING PEN TO PAPER

“ PAF,
Shanta
Sign a
Historical
Memorandum
of
Understanding ”

After a series of meetings and an intensive six-day training on Village Partnership Model (VPM), People's Action Forum (PAF) and SHANTA Foundation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to implement a six-year community-led village development project in Siyowi area of Mazabuka.

The agreement established a formal partnership with the shared goal of bringing Shanta's Village Development Model to Zambia.

In the MoU, SHANTA Foundation is providing capacity support to PAF for the implementation of the project in the first year in three villages of Siyowi, Kabanje and Nachili.

After the first year project activities, PAF and SHANTA would enter into another agreement to extend the period and expand the number of villages.

The signing ceremony was witnessed by Myanmar Country Manager, Dr. Khaing Zar Oo (Nge Nge), SHANTA Foundation Executive Director, Mr Wade Griffith, PAF Executive Director, Ms Gina Chiwela, PAF Board Treasurer, Mr Mussa Malupande and PAF Programme Manager Ms Janet Nyoni.

Others were PAF Administration Manager, Ms Chipo Zulu and PAF staff.

This is the first time SHANTA Foundation has supported a project in Africa.



Mr Wade and Ms Chiwela signing the MoU as Mr Malupande (far left) witnesses



Mr Choomba- Chief Mwanachingwala Representative

Chief Mwanachingwala of the Tonga Speaking people of Mazabuka District has praised People's Action Forum (PAF) and SHANTA Foundation for initiating a Community-led Village Development Project in Siyowi area. Mr Gristen Choomba, who spoke on behalf of the Chief, noted that Siyowi people have lagged behind in development resulting in households failing to have decent livelihoods which would enable them meet basic daily needs. Mr Choomba, who is Chief Mwanachingwala's representative,

said the poor living standards in Siyowi have been compounded by their vulnerability to impacts of climate change.

"The Siyowi community is prone to seasonal floods which often times leave a trail of destruction to household assets and community infrastructure. As a result of excess precipitation, people have experienced crop failure which has affected food security, damage to houses, roads and other infrastructure. Mr Choomba said the traditional leadership will support all initiatives which aim at improving the living conditions of the people in Siyowi and the rest of the chiefdom.

"We attach great importance to developmental projects which empower the community with skills, knowledge and resources to improve their well-being.

"As you will see when you get on the ground, people in Siyowi are lacking in many areas such as inadequate drinking water points, poor health and education services and unsustainable livelihoods.

"I am optimistic that this project will be embraced by the Siyowi community which has not enjoyed the same standards of living as the majority of communities in Mazabuka."

Mr Choomba was confident that PAF will implement a successful project going by the previous programmes undertaken in different rural parts of Mazabuka.

"PAF is a 'Game Changer', where ever they have a project, they leave an indelible impact for everyone to see, and this is what I believe will happen in Siyowi," Mr Choomba said.

PAF IS A GAME CHANGER - CHIEF MWANACHINGWALA



A combined team of PAF and SHANTA staff pose for a photo with Mr Choomba (sixth from the left) at his residence

“For Donkey’s Years, we have Remained Stuck in the Doldrums, with no sight of Possible Development”



One of the foot bridges in Siyowi

ERA OF COMMUNITY LED DEVELOPMENT DAWNS IN SIYOWI

In the northern part of Mazabuka, across the sugarcane fields, lies a community called Siyowi. The Siyowi inhabitants were displaced to pave way for the expansion of the Nakambala Sugarcane Estate, more than half a century ago. The Siyowi people who are in Mwanachingwala Chiefdom have led a pitiable life exacerbated by low household income, deplorable road infrastructure, stressful water and sanitation facilities and gloomy education, health services.

However, this year, Siyowi is stepping into new horizon as People's Action Forum (PAF) in partnership with SHANTA Foundation have started implementing a community led village development project, which seeks to work towards relieving the plight of the communities living in poverty. Three villages which include Siyowi, Kabanje and Nachili have been selected to pioneer a six-year project, poised to uplift the lives of people living in the flood prone area of the Kafue River.

Senior Headman Siyowi could not hide his excitement during the launch of the project in his village, “I can hardly believe that an organization has come to help us redeem ourselves from the grip of poverty.

“For donkey's years, we have remained stuck in the doldrums, deprived from all possible sights of development. Our children take marathon walks to school while women do not have pre-birth services,” Headman Siyowi narrated.

The traditional leader disclosed that his subjects are yearning for development but lack capacity to initiate community projects which may free them from the bondage of poverty.

Under the model, some of the planned projects include establishment of a community bank, library activities, formation of Girls' Action Forum, Reproductive Health Services and construction of a mothers' shelter.

It is envisaged that the projects will improve the living standards of the Siyowi community.



Ms Chiwela (second from left) and Mr Wade (next) signing the MoU



A group photo after signing the MoU at the PAF Head Office



A girl drawing water from a well in Nachili Village



A Kabanje CB committee member during group work of CB training



(From left) Nachili, Kabanje and Siyowi VDT chairpersons, Mr Trust Nachili, Mr Milcent Hantolongo and Mr Progress Hamoonga respectively



Mr Wade, Ms Nge nge and Ms Zulu buying some cobs of maize at Mr Pama's garden in Kabanje village



CB committee members from the three villages during the training



Participants engage in a group work activity during the CB training



Chief Mwanachingwala's representative, Mr Choongo pose for a photo with water engineers Matthew Lema (l) and Laurie Williams at his residence



Siyowi School Headteacher, Ms Kanene (left) pose with her learners, Ms Nge nge and Mr Wade



'Leaving no one behind' a girl-child takes part in the village mapping activity in Kabanje



Women of Nachili community listen attentively during the village launch



Siyowi community members gather to witness a village launch activity



Engineer Matthew Lema crossing Kaleya Stream in Siyowi



Mrs Zulu joins the women in a dance during the village launch in Siyowi Village

THREE VILLAGE LAUNCHES SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCTED

Siyowi came alive with a hive of activities to mark the start of implementing the 6-year Community-Led Village Development Project.

Hundreds of residents gathered at the Senior Headman Siyowi's residence to celebrate the commencement of the project which is expected to foster developmental activities that will improve the socio-economic status of the underserved community.

The Siyowi community has welcomed the project which includes establishment of a community bank that will drive the development agenda of the area.

The first launch took place in Siyowi Village at a colorful ceremony graced by SHANTA Foundation Executive Director, Wade Griffith, PAF Executive Director, Gina Chiwela and Myanmar Country Manager, Dr. Khaing Zar Oo. Others present were PAF Programme Manager Ms Janet Nyoni, PAF Administration Manager, Ms Chipso Zulu and some PAF staff members.

During the launch, Senior Headman Siyowi thanked PAF and SHANTA for the plans to empower his subjects with skills and knowledge which will facilitate development in the area.

The traditional leader assured the organizations that the planned project activities will be successfully implemented by the community members who are yearning for development.


Subsequent launches were conducted in Kabanje and Nachili Villages.

In the first year, three villages have been selected to pioneer the project.



Ms Janet Nyoni talking to the people during the Whole Village meeting in Nachili Village

GIRL-CHILD MISSES 21 WEEKS LEARNING TIME IN SIYOWI



One of the foot bridges learners use to cross the Kaleya Stream on their way to school

Each year, a girl-child in Siyowi misses three weeks learning time as the Kaleya Stream gets flooded during the peak of the rainy season. This translates to 21 weeks for the seven years the girl will be in school for the primary course.

School head teacher, Rosario Kanene disclosed that learners, especially girls have no access to the school because the improvised foot bridges are submerged while others get washed away.

“Learners across the Kaleya Stream are cut off from the school for three weeks or more during the rainy season because the makeshift foot bridges are either submerged or washed away making it impossible for girls and small boys to cross.

“Crossing the foot bridges during rain season is a nightmare for most of the learners. We lost a five year old boy who slipped off the logs and was swept away by the strong current last year. The incident has traumatised the learners so much that they do not attempt to cross when the stream overflows,” Mrs Kanene said.

**Education
can't Wait for
Seasonal Flood
affected Girls
in Siyowi**

“The continuity of education for girls is severely affected by lack of proper foot bridge infrastructure to provide access to the school when the stream floods. This has increased barriers to education for a girl child,” Mrs Kanene complained.

“Even if the girls return to school when the situation normalises after the rainy season, their tests scores are poorer due to falling behind in curriculum and facing difficulty in catching up with their counterparts who were not affected by the floods.

“School absenteeism resulting from the floods has the propensity to inflict a long term effect of loss of interest in education and consequently lead to early marriages and teenage pregnancies.”

The head teacher further disclosed that teachers who commute to school daily are also affected when the stream floods.

“Owing to lack of staff houses, teachers reside in town and the road is impassable. Learners who live within the school vicinity sometimes have no teachers.”



Nachili village community members raise their hands to support the introduction of a Community Bank

“SIYOWI
PEOPLE
UPBEAT
WITH
COMMUNITY
BANK”

CB TO SHAPE THE ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

According to the baseline survey conducted by People’s Action Forum (PAF), gardening is the major source of livelihood and economic mainstay of the Siyowi community.

Over the years, however, the gardening enterprise has not grown or expanded to offer the community more resources to improve their living conditions.

Among other headwinds highlighted in the survey is lack of adequate capital to facilitate the much needed farming growth and improved living standards.

“For over ten years, I have been cultivating vegetables on the same size of my garden and making about the same amount of money. I have been planting 100g of rape and 100g of tomatoes since 2013,” one of the respondents said and added, “Several times, I have tried to borrow money for boosting my farming activities, but to no avail.”

Evidently, lack of financial services in Siyowi is one of the critical constraints to local economic growth and poverty reduction in the area.

However, with the commencement of the Community-Led Village Development Project in the area, lack of access to financial services may be in the rear view.

The project has introduced a Community Bank (CB) to promote financial inclusion among the Siyowi community. The CB is at the heart of the project, emerging as the engine to shape the socio-economic landscape of the Siyowi Community.

The CB, managed by the community and for the community, is expected to propel growth of both community and household assets in each of the three villages of Kabanje, Nachili and Siyowi.

“The Siyowi community can’t wait for the Community Bank. Our people have been effectively excluded from financial services they need to support their resilience and improve their livelihood opportunities. This has limited investment in gardening production,” Nachili Village Headman, remarked at a meeting where the whole village gathered to have a conceptual understanding and processes of the CB.

Unlike the Village Banking where the benefits are enjoyed by individuals, the CB’s accumulated interests are ploughed back to the community in form of infrastructure development which may include construction of footbridges, protected water sources and other projects which the community will decide to undertake.

The CB is expected to enhance financial inclusion which is necessary to increase agricultural productivity and build resilience to climate related shocks in Siyowi.

Each of the three villages has already put in place a CB committee comprising 13 members. The villages have also started contributing their matching funds.

The committee members had a two day capacity building on CB project cycle, CB rules & regulations, use of development fund, book keeping, auditing, roles & responsibilities of CB committee members among other topics.

Drinking Water is Not Safe

“The Majority of Water Points in Siyowi have Contaminated Water”

Most water points in Siyowi are contaminated, and the water is not suitable for drinking - an assessment conducted by two American Engineers from Village Aid Project based in Durango, Colorado has revealed. Dr Matthew Lema and Laurie Williams were on a seven-day assessment visit to Siyowi, to conduct a feasibility study of a potential water system to be constructed in the area where PAF and SHANTA are implementing a community-led village development project. The duo visited each and every household in the three villages to get a clear picture and ascertain the water situation in Siyowi, a rural area situated in the Northern part of Mazabuka. As a matter of protocol, the engineers accompanied by PAF Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant, Chipso Mubambe paid a courtesy call on Chief Mwanachingwala before going round the villages. During the assessment, the engineers collected water samples for both protected and unprotected six water points from the three villages. The water samples were later taken to the Ministry of Health laboratory for water quality analysis looking at three parameters - physical, chemical and biological.



A girl drawing water from a shallow well in Kabanje Village

After the water quality assessment, the overall results indicated that the majority of the water points in Siyowi have contaminated water in exception of the borehole at Siyowi Primary School. Siyowi is parched up during summer, with acute drinking water scarcity, forcing the communities to either fetch water from canals which irrigate sugar cane fields or make shallow and unprotected wells.

Despite being aware of the health hazard posed by the water from the shallow and unprotected wells, long distance to the protected water points has also compelled the Siyowi people to continue drink the unsafe water.

Attainment of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 6, which targets to achieve equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all may be a pipe dream in Siyowi.

The engineers also assessed five foot bridges in the area and found that they were not safe for use.

During seasonal flooding, people in Siyowi are often cut off from markets, income-generating opportunities, health and education facilities because of poor foot bridges.

A lack of access to markets has a significant impact on household livelihood and ultimately hampers local economic growth.

Construction of sustainable footbridges will ensure access to markets all year round and consequently trigger development for communities on either side of the Kaleya Stream which transverses the area.

