

# THE LENGAU CONSERVATION CLUBS OF BOPHUTHATSWANA — A COMMUNITY SERVICE

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The activities of the Lengau Conservation Clubs of Bophuthatswana (LCC) are primarily community orientated. This approach and various community projects are described.

The Environmental Education programme of Bophuthatswana's National Parks Board is at present three-pronged. The sections described briefly below should not be viewed in isolation as they are complementary, each contributing towards a sustained programme.

Firstly there is the Mobile Film Van which operates both as an 'introductory' and a back-up system for the environmental education courses offered in the field study centres and Lengau Conservation Clubs (LCC). Following the visits of the film van to schools throughout Bophuthatswana, many respond by sending their pupils to the field centres where they undergo an intensive course on environmental education and conservation. (Mochusi & Hancock 1986).

The Lengau Conservation Clubs of Bophuthatswana were formed to keep the conservation message alive within the school groups following their visit to the field centres. These clubs are seen as a pivot around which projects to protect the environment revolve; they are watchdogs against abuse of the environment. The aims of the conservation clubs are *inter alia* to:

- Spread interest and knowledge about conservation and the environment among the people of Bophuthatswana in particular and Southern Africa in general.
- Develop an awareness of the economic, cultural and aesthetic value of natural resources.
- Develop a better understanding of the need to conserve natural resources for the benefit of the nation and its people.
- Get people actively involved in conservation i.e. to physically do something, such as reclaiming a donga or recycling litter.

There are at present 115 active Lengau Conservation Clubs whose involvement in community projects may be described under five major headings:

## Schoolgrounds

The development of schoolgrounds for environmental education of both pupils and the wider community is currently the primary project of the LCC's. In developing the grounds the clubs have concentrated on the construction of small 'bio-parks' with ponds, museums, starting wildlife libraries and promoting vegetable gardening.

## Tree planting

From the initial stages tree planting has been a major project. Clubs started with the establishment of a nursery at Pilanesberg National Park to provide for their needs for trees. A booklet entitled *Trees for People* was produced and distributed to the clubs. It outlines the importance of trees and also gives guidelines on how to plant and care for them.

Every year clubs are involved in tree planting in different areas of Bophuthatswana and take the responsibility for creating an awareness of the value of trees among the people. For example a club at a Mmabatho high school last year organised a campaign to save 46 mature camelthorns (*Acacia erioloba*) which were earmarked to be bulldozed for the con-

struction of sportsfields. This was an exceptional project which won first prize in the Enviro '86 competition.

As 1987 has been declared a 'tree year' by National Parks, the clubs have been used to carry this message across to the community. The success of this venture is illustrated by the poster which the clubs produced showing the importance of trees in daily life, with the slogan 'a land with no trees is a land with no soul'. (Figure 1).

## Anti-litter Campaigns

Littering is one of the community problems which clubs are concentrating on. To create an awareness among the people about the health and ecological problems emanating from littering several anti-littering campaigns have been conducted throughout the country. In conducting these campaigns clubs are not themselves taking on the responsibility of keeping their areas clean, but rather of teaching the community how much better life can be without litter. Some clubs have involved themselves with the collection of tins and cans for recycling and by so doing keep their areas clean and raise funds.

## Work Parties

Clubs have been involved in the development of all the newly established National Parks, Game and Nature Reserves in Bophuthatswana. Work parties are regularly organised to create a feeling among club members that they belong to the park and that the park belongs to them. This improves the image of our parks among the community.

## Reclamation of Eroded Areas

Soil erosion is one of the major ecological problems facing Africa. Clubs conduct surveys of eroded areas and draft plans for reclaiming them. Their main contribution is however in preventing erosion through the creation of awareness among the local people about the dangers of overgrazing, cutting down trees without a programme of replanting and the unnecessary formation of footpaths and minor roads.

In conclusion, the aims and objectives of the Bophuthatswana environmental education programme has two main thrusts. Firstly, to teach people ecological principles so that they understand and use this knowledge to know their position in nature and to live within the constraints which nature imposes upon them. Secondly, through the process of learning, people should use natural resources wisely for their own benefit and thus improve their standard of living.

The Lengau Conservation Clubs of Bophuthatswana is a steadily growing movement which is gaining in popularity and it is hoped that in the near future all the schools will be affiliated and that the 'environmental war' will then be fought on a full scale national level.

## REFERENCES

- BOPHUTHATSWANA NATIONAL PARKS undated: *Trees for People*. Communications Section, Conservation Clubs.
- MDCHUSI T. & HANCOCK P. 1986: 'The Mobile Film Van as a Communications Medium in Environmental Education'. *Southern African Journal of Environmental Education*. No. 2 May.