

Seasons Greetings from the Chole Mjini Trust Fund



Chole Mjini Trust Fund: 2023 Update

Over 25 years ago, Anne and Jean de Villiers began an ambitious project to leverage the benefits of tourism to guide the local community on Chole towards self sufficiency. The local community believed that education was the route to improving their lives, but at that time children from Chole had to cross to Juani Island to attend primary school, and only one child in Chole's history had ever successfully passed through secondary school.

This year, over 100 students received funding to enable their attendance at secondary school, with 7 students achieving form 4 passes, and 11 students being funded for diploma or degree level studies.

Over time, better education provision has led to improved opportunities for the youth of the island, increased empowerment of women, stimulated awareness of the importance of their environment for their future, improved economic prospects for their families, and delivered better health outcomes and longer life expectancy.

As our world sinks into ever greater turmoil, the Chole Project seems to reveal so many lessons for us all about the importance of education and knowledge for sustainable development, and this perhaps explains why we all feel so committed to its continued success.

As we approach the end of the 2023, we are pleased to provide some news about events in Chole and the continued progress achieved through support for education and development.

Introducing the new Chole team

At the heart of the progress made by the Chole community over the last 25 years has been the enthusiasm and determination of Anne and Jean. Despite all the challenges thrown their way over recent years, their desire to make a difference remains undimmed, and they are keen to ensure that their business and their commitment to the community leaves the legacy it deserves.

They were therefore delighted to find people who share their values and ambitions to join the team as investors. Together they have developed a plan for a new phase for the lodge, and an ambition to build a sustainable platform for the future of their work in the community. **New shareholders Kevin Convard and Flore Millet are committed to Anne and Jean's ethical mission** and have joined the management team alongside new management intern Rajabu Makungu. We look forward to working with them all.



Chole Mjini Lodge has recently been treated to a major refurbishment. Further plans are in the pipeline.

Rajabu Makungu: Management Intern

Rajabu attended kindergarten and primary school on Chole before moving on to secondary school on Mafia with the benefit of a bursary from the Trust. He was one of only 7 who passed the Form 4 exam out of 65 who took it. Forms 5 and 6 were in Ravuma, close to the border between Mozambique and Tanzania, where he achieved outstanding marks in the national exam.

Rajabu then decided to study Sociology at the University of Dodoma. This was made possible by a further bursary from the Trust, and he graduated in 2022. After a frustrating and ultimately fruitless search for employment, he returned to Chole where he was immediately asked to assist at the Learning Centre. In November he started as a management intern at the Lodge and hopes this will provide him with invaluable experience and prospects for the future.

Introducing our new trustees

As Anne and Jean have been looking to the future, so has the Trust. We are delighted to announce that, this year, the Trust Board has been joined by new Trustees Sarah Morris, Lucy Osborn and Flore Millet. They bring a wide range of new skills to the Trust and are already bringing a fresh view and new energy into our shared ambitions for the future.

We have prepared a short introduction to the Trustees at the end of the newsletter. You will see that there are many years of experience in business, entrepreneurship, the third sector, the environment, community development and education amongst the Trustees. We are committed to sustaining support for the Chole community as it seeks economic resilience and balance with their environment.

Chole Mjini Alumni

There is much still to be done. In the spirit of sustainable action, we are keen to involve the younger generation in supporting this work. Since the beginning of the Chole Project, the Trust has supported up to 120 students per year through school. In more recent years there have been up to 15 students per year through higher or further education leading to over 40 students with diplomas and degrees from Chole. There have also been many young people who have worked on Chole as interns who have contributed to the Chole project over the years and benefited from the experience.

These are extraordinary achievements, and it is now important that this next generation begin to lead the development of Chole towards being a truly sustainable community.



Rajabu Makungu



Flore Millet. After securing Bachelors and Masters Degrees in science, Flore has worked in the wine industry across Europe since 2012. She says:

"Acquiring shares in Chole Mjini company has given me a profound sense of moral responsibility to continue the invaluable work initiated by Jean and Anne within the community." Her aim is to ensure that the hotel remains deeply connected to and supportive of the community that sustains it.

So, next year we aim to create an alumni working group, led by one of our graduates - Rajabu. He will reach out to those who have either graduated through the CMTF bursaries, or who have benefited by visiting Chole for internships. The program will aim to provide valuable skills and experience to our alumni and offer the opportunity for them to be involved with activities of the Trust.

This could mean helping in the Learning Centre, helping with communication and social media, creating podcasts and videos, providing personal stories, or supporting fund raising.

We would be interested to hear from anyone who is interested in getting involved, or knows somebody who might!

New challenges, new projects

When Jean and Anne first arrived in Chole, global concerns about climate change and the biodiversity crisis were just beginning to surface. Now, we are in the grip of changes brought about by the realities of climate change, bringing a need to respond both through mitigation and adaptation.

SMILO (The Small Islands Organisation)

As we reported last year, Chole and Jibondo have joined SMILO <https://smilo-program.org/>, a French NGO that networks small islands worldwide to help local communities manage their environmental challenges and plan for a better and more sustainable future.

Both islands are now participating in an excellent labelling process which employs external evaluation aimed at incentivising the island communities to develop robust plans and strategies to tackle the impacts of climate change and biodiversity depletion, and to see these as integral to their economic future.

The Ropes of Hope

Jean's coral restoration programme, [The Ropes of Hope](#), is now established and has begun to make significant progress. A team of local people has been trained to work in the coral nurseries. There are now four of these groaning with coral ready to be planted out.

Education is the thing that connects The Ropes of Hope and the Trust. Anne and Jean are currently supporting one of the teachers at the secondary school who will be setting up the environment clubs which will begin the process of teaching local children about the impacts on their environment and what it might mean for their future.

New Secondary School on Jibondo

A new secondary school has recently opened in Jibondo to cater for the islands of Chole, Jibondo and Juani. The Ropes of Hope is aiming to invest in this school to make it a focus for marine education so that our children become familiar and comfortable with the academic language of marine environmental and conservation challenges facing us and eventually go on becoming equipped to take their part in managing their major asset.

The school fabric still needs much attention to make it functional, but it has got the best results of Form 1 and Form 2 in Mafia so far these last two years. So, they are starting well and the children funded by the Trust will have the benefit of this education in future years.



The SMILO Stakeholder Group

The **Ropes of Hope** programme is based on three pillars:

- To inspire local communities about the need to protect and restore damaged reefs among small island communities by training local divers, setting up coral nurseries and replanting on destroyed reef.
- To raise awareness, empower and educate local communities to take responsibility for the management of their reefs and address the root causes of habitat destruction whilst meeting their needs through economic diversification.
- To monitor biodiversity using cutting-edge molecular biology, machine learning and other cost effective new technologies to enable coral reef use and to inform Marine Protected Area management decisions.



The Ropes of Hope: Coral Gardening Team



Jibondo School

Managing our way through the post pandemic financial crisis

2023 budget and expenditure

The annual CMTF budget for 2023 was Tshs 76,320,000, (around £23,000). This was a small increase on the originally agreed amount to account for additional Year 5 and diploma level students. The budget provided funds for the kindergarten, and secondary school, diploma and degree level bursaries. No funding was available for staffing the learning centre or supporting the health centre. It was decided by the local community that the available funding should continue to be provided for all qualifying students, but to reduce the level of support per person.

It is with gratitude that we can report that our income this year has increased sufficiently to cover the planned level of expenditure, with income in the eleven months of the year so far being just over £23,000. Whilst this is a much better position to report than last year, we remain determined to return to our previous funding levels, and in particular to return the Learning Centre to fully active service.

As part of our strategy, we are looking for potential sponsors for the kindergarten and/ or Learning Centre. We have been approaching UK schools to explore the development of a school's partnership to support this work. **If you know of any school or other organisation that might be interested, please let us know.**

We would also like to play a more proactive part in the support of the environmental education which will underpin the long-term sustainability of life on the islands. **Trustees are in discussions with the new shareholders about how we can work together to better support the promotion of the Trust and its activities among guests and visitors.**



The Kindergarten provides children with a sound educational start, a daily balanced meal and regular health checks. It also empowers mothers to develop their own lives, knowing their children are in a happy and secure environment.

Introducing the Trustees of Chole Mjini Trust Fund



Robin Cooke-Hurle: Robin was brought up in Kenya. He has a science degree from Oxford, and worked across a range of industrial businesses until setting up a software company which was sold to the Sage Group in 1999. Since then, he has been involved with a wide range of

small enterprises, including a number of not for profits. His connection with Chole began in 2008 when he visited the Lodge. After another visit in 2010, he agreed to set up a formal UK charity to support the Chole Project. Robin was Chairman of the Trust until 2022, and has had a deep interest in climate issues for over 25 years.



Ivo Hesmondhalgh: Ivo is a veteran entrepreneur. Starting life as a lawyer, he moved on to property, running clubs and arranging art exhibitions for young artists. He founded the Cobden Club in the mid 1990s. He is still involved with property and has recently become involved

with the renewable energy sector, assembling sites for large scale battery storage schemes. He first met Jean and Anne when he was on honeymoon in Zanzibar some 29 years ago and was present when the lodge was first opened. From those early days, he has seen what an incredible force for good the lodge and then the Trust have been for the local community.



Flore Millet: Flore has recently been elected to become a Trustee. After securing Bachelors and Masters Degrees in science, Flore has worked in the wine industry across Europe since 2012 and has held a number of senior positions

with winemakers, vineyards and distilleries. In 2023, Flore acquired shares in the Chole Mjini Conservation and Development Co. Ltd. and is due to move to Chole to take her place in the local management team in December 2023. Acquiring shares in Chole Mjini company has given her a profound sense of moral responsibility to continue the invaluable work initiated by Jean and Anne within the community. She says "Our community's understanding of environmental preservation can serve as a unique selling point, attracting environmentally conscious tourists and contributing to the growth of our tourism sector".



Keith Mitchell: Keith is an Infrastructure Consultant. He began his career working in construction in 1979. He joined a small design consultancy in 1984 and remained until he retired in 2023 having taken a range of leadership positions. Keith is now leading

research into the role of people and place in the decarbonisation of transport with a range of UK universities and local authorities. He is a vigorous supporter of education, apprenticeships and professional development, and has taken leading roles in the development of qualifications and apprenticeships in the transport sector and is currently a Trustee of a Multi-Academy Trust in the UK.

Keith has visited Chole with his family twice, and his eldest benefitted from spending a summer working with the local community. He has been inspired by the impact of education on people's lives on Chole. He joined the Trust in 2010 and became Chair in 2022.



Sarah Morris: Sarah is a business consultant and board advisor with a background in retail, where she held senior commercial roles in companies such as Marks and Spencer, Tesco and the John Lewis Partnership. With her husband Cliff, she has visited Africa many times.

She first came to Chole in 2010. Enchanted by its magic, Jean and Anne's commitment to the Chole project and the compelling progress made, they started regular donations to the Chole Trust

On a return visit in 2015, they visited the learning centre and met a group of alumni to hear first-hand how the Chole Trust's support had transformed their lives, capturing the experience in a newsletter for Chole Trust supporters. Sarah became a Trustee in 2022. She believes in the power of education and local communities shaping their development.



Lucy Osborn: Lucy has over 30 years experience working in natural resource management and community development in Africa. With a PhD in Geography from the University of

Cambridge, she provides high level strategic advice to environmental, educational and business mentorship organisations in Africa. She was also the chairperson of Fair Trade in South Africa for 10 years. Currently based in the United States.

Lucy and her family have visited Chole several times over the years and her son has volunteered on the whale shark and coral growing programs there. Lucy is inspired by the opportunity that the Chole program offers its young people, and that by nurturing students in this way, a bright future for the island and its inhabitants can be secured.



Anne de Villiers: Anne started her professional life with the UK Overseas Development Administration working in development and agricultural research. Via a Masters degree in Agricultural Science and a Post Grad in Farming

Systems Research, Anne has worked in development over the last thirty years with various consultancies in the project cycle. She has worked in the Windward Islands, Solomon Islands, and East and West Africa. Anne met Jean in Namibia and soon moved to Zanzibar for work. In 1992 they visited Chole and were invited to set up a hotel on the island.

Anne and Jean moved to live on Chole Island with their young family in 1997. They dreamt that the concept of 'responsible tourism' would bring real benefits to the community and that it would support conservation of the environment and the heritage of the island. The Chole Mjini Conservation and Development Co. Ltd. was built on the tenant of local employment, local procurement and raising of funds to support development projects in collaboration with the local community. With the company, the community and the Chole Mjini Trust Fund, Anne and Jean have worked hand in hand to empower the local community to grow and manage change.