



## NACSO PICTURE STORIES

### SELF HELP IN SIKUNGA

#### Rural electricity supplied by conservancies



There is a buzz of activity at Sikunga Conservancy office. As always, people are gathered under the huge Mahogany tree, which gives shade on even the hottest day. The conservancy office is a small, dark hut, used only for paperwork. But that's set to change. Up above is an electricity transformer with two cables, one running to the new conservancy office and another to the Khuta: the traditional authority office.

It is usually the government that provides rural electrification. Sikunga is only 30 kilometres away from Zambezi Region's capital, Katima Mulilo, but up to now, candles and fires provided most of the evening light. Tired of waiting, the conservancy has stepped in and used its revenue from hunting and tourism to pay for transformers, poles and cables. Impressed, the Regional Council has added finance to bring electricity to the villages.

Martha Simata lives in Siya and has a small shop selling bread, pickards, oil, salt, biscuits and toilet paper. She has been in business since 2006. She hasn't exactly prospered. But since she invested in a connection to the transformer, she can now sell cool drinks and has applied for a licence to sell beer. Business is expanding.



Namibia's north eastern region of Zambezi has led the way in bringing electricity to conservancy residents. Sikunga was formed in 2009, and had benefitted its residents with cash payments over the years. But Zambezi conservancies are moving towards a new concept: investing their revenues in social infrastructure such as electricity.



In 2014 Sikunga Conservancy bought two transformers for N\$ 72,000, with a top-up grant from the Regional Council, which also did the connection work to the Khuta free of charge. In 2016 two villages close to the conservancy office were connected.

Keeping business in the conservancy, so that people do not have to go to Katima Mulilo for all their shopping, means that people see their future in the village.

That's the guiding principle of Ernest Lishokomosi & Alice Muhongo in Luoma Village, which also now has electricity. Music belts out from two black speakers inside their bar-cum-shop.



Beer may not be the development dream, but “it brings money in quickly” says Ernest, who intends to follow up with refrigeration for fish and meat. They started up in 2016 as soon as electricity came on stream



There's another advantage for bride-to-be Alice, who says that she can now cook on an electric stove inside the house. Outside there is no shade, and cooking on a fire is not convenient.

The residents of Sikunga Conservancy have decided to pool their income and to bring development to their villages.

