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Village Enterprise and African Wildlife Foundation Team Up to
Alleviate Poverty and Protect Bonobos in the Democratic Republic of Congo

San Carlos, California. May 18, 2018— Village Enterprise and the African Wildlife Foundation announced a new partnership funded by the Arcus Foundation to reduce poverty and to protect the endangered Bonobo population in the biodiverse Lomako region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Bonobos, which are humankind's closest living relative, are only found in the DRC and are threatened due to poverty and conflict that fuel the hunting of wild animals for food.

The African Wildlife Foundation is the leading international conservation organization focused solely on Africa. Village Enterprise's graduation out-of-extreme poverty program targets people who live below $1.90 a day in rural sub-Saharan Africa and provides them with the tools and training to start sustainable, income-generating businesses and savings groups. Proven results through a recently completed randomized controlled trial by Innovations for Poverty Action include increases in income, savings, household and productive assets, and food security.

This first-of-its kind project unites the two organizations in a dual mission to improve the livelihoods of residents in the Lomako area while protecting the Bonobo population. "Village Enterprise's proven track record of training the ultra-poor to start businesses in highly sensitive conservation areas gives us confidence that this collaboration will increase both income and savings of local residents and support the long-term protection of the bonobos" said Jef Dupain of the African Wildlife Foundation.

The initial $270,000 Arcus Foundation grant provides pilot funding for Village Enterprise to train AWF to start 240 new sustainable businesses and provide 720 households with a path out of extreme poverty. "After three decades of success in Kenya and Uganda, we are thrilled to expand our work to the DRC, which has one of the highest poverty rates on the continent" said Village Enterprise CEO Dianne Calvi. "It is also our first partnership formed under the new Village Enterprise Extend. Extend was created to equip partners to replicate our evidence-based, cost-effective approach in new geographies and builds on our 10 years of experience training partners such as Geneva Global, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and the BOMA Project."

If successful, Village Enterprise and African Wildlife Foundation intend to explore how this partnership can be scaled to other regions.

About Village Enterprise

Village Enterprise seeks to end extreme poverty in rural Africa through innovation and entrepreneurship. Working in rural Sub Saharan Africa, the Village Enterprise "Graduation" program provides business and financial training, ongoing mentoring, seed capital and business savings networks to individuals who live on less than the international poverty line of 1.90/day. Village Enterprise has started over 39,000 businesses, trained over 156,000 new small business owners and positively impacted the lives of over 850,000 people. Village Enterprise has a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator and is endorsed by The Life You Can Save and ImpactMatters as a cost-effective, high-impact charity. Based on a recently completed Randomized Controlled Trial, Village Enterprise was selected from over 80 organizations to participate in the first development impact bond (DIB) for poverty alleviation in Africa.

About the African Wildlife Foundation

The African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) is the primary advocate for the protection of wildlife and wild lands as an essential part of a modern and prosperous Africa. Founded in 1961 to focus on Africa's unique conservation needs, we articulate a uniquely African vision, bridge science and public policy and demonstrate the benefits of conservation to ensure the survival of the continent's wildlife and wild lands.