

...**AFRICAN**...

PROVERBS ON

**GIVING &**

**GENEROSITY,**

JULY 2020

**CHARITY,  
GIVING,  
GENEROSITY,  
COMPASSION,  
UNITY**

# About CivSource Africa

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CivSource Africa is a philanthropy support and advisory organization committed to nurturing a more sustainable, effective and connected civil society that advances the dignity and voices of all people. We do this through promoting reflective, responsive, and accountable philanthropic practice.

CivSource Africa is also passionate about promoting African philanthropy and telling the stories of African giving and generosity.

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# Foreword

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"Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten."

– Chinua Achebe

In the months just after CivSource Africa was born, one of the things we knew we wanted to do was to understand and tell stories of giving in Africa broadly and in Uganda in particular, since that is where we are located.

We started a campaign called #OmutimaOmugabi (A Heart that Gives), to enable us find, highlight, document and celebrate the ways in which we as Africans give.

Our intention was to spark a conversation on how giving is done in Africa, to spark a conversation on what makes our/African giving distinct and unique. In Uganda, we took to the streets, armed with questions and a camera, to ask all manner of people how giving is done.

Our journey of gathering stories of giving also led us to think about compiling proverbs on giving. Proverbs are a key part of the African way of life. Proverbs form part of the avenues through which we pass on our values and generosity is a fundamental value in Africa. Thus, we embarked on collecting proverbs about giving both from across Africa. Whenever we held or attended meetings, we asked people to share proverbs on giving from their different languages.

This little 'Book of Proverbs' is the outcome of that effort. We hope you will enjoy the proverbs; we hope you will share them as widely as you can and we also hope you will share more proverbs with us. Given our vast continent, we are sure we did not gather all the proverbs there are. So please share more proverbs with us.

It is important to continuously remind ourselves and posterity that we are a giving people. Additionally, we don't stop at just reminding ourselves, we document our giving and we celebrate it!

Africans are givers!

CivSource Team



# Acknowledgements

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While compiling this book of proverbs, we reached out on social media, asking people to send us proverbs. We would like to especially thank those who answered our call including: Dr. Daniel Ruhweza, Peter Magelah, Kangere Amooti, Grace Ruvimbo Chirenje, Nicholas Sengoba, Annet Koote, Helen Namulwana, Benson Obua-Ogwal, Agnes Kabajuni, Uwe Habbi, James Muhindo, Uwineza Jeanne, Maxwell Kamanyire, Samuel Bakutana, Kiiza Wa'Ugungu, Eddie Kigozi, Sonia Rosem Karungi, Wakib Bunnya, Lydia N Schubert, Persist Ushindi, Robinah Nazziwa,

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This book would not have been possible without the generous support of Global Fund for Community Foundations. We thank you heartily!

We also thank Mr. Stuart Nsingwire, who helped design the book.

These proverbs were curated by Ms Jacqueline Asiiimwe.



Acholi Proverb

Two  
friends  
share the  
white ant.





Akan Proverb

**A VILLAGE  
UNITED  
IN FRATERNITY  
IS PROSPEROUS.**

**THE OLD WOMAN LOOKS AFTER  
THE CHILD TO GROW IT'S TEETH.  
THE YOUNG ONE LOOKS AFTER  
THE OLD WOMAN WHEN SHE  
LOSES HER TEETH.**



Akan Proverb

**One hand is never  
enough to lift  
a heavy load.**

**A single hand  
cannot cover  
the sky.**





Alur Proverb

**Women**

give birth  
with other

**women**.....





Amhara Proverb



**When the webs  
of the spider join,  
they can trap a lion.**



Berber Proverb

**The cleverness  
of one alone is  
a shallow well  
that soon dries up.**



Chagga Proverb

**There is always  
room for one more  
at the supper table.**



Chewa Proverb

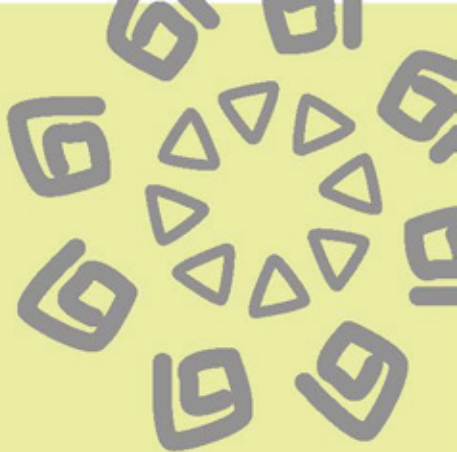
**Kindness calls  
for a return of  
kindness.**

**The helpfulness  
of your friend is  
your provision  
for your journey.**

**The spoon full of relish gets  
tasty if it goes around from  
one to another.**

**To give is  
to invest.**

Egyptian Proverb



**An onion shared  
with a friend tastes  
like roast lamb.**



**One foot isn't  
enough to  
walk with.**



Giriama Proverb

**It is obvious  
when you  
receive a visitor  
and you cook  
for him or her  
you will eat too.**



## Luganda Proverbs

Being quick to give makes you give even to one who will never give to you.

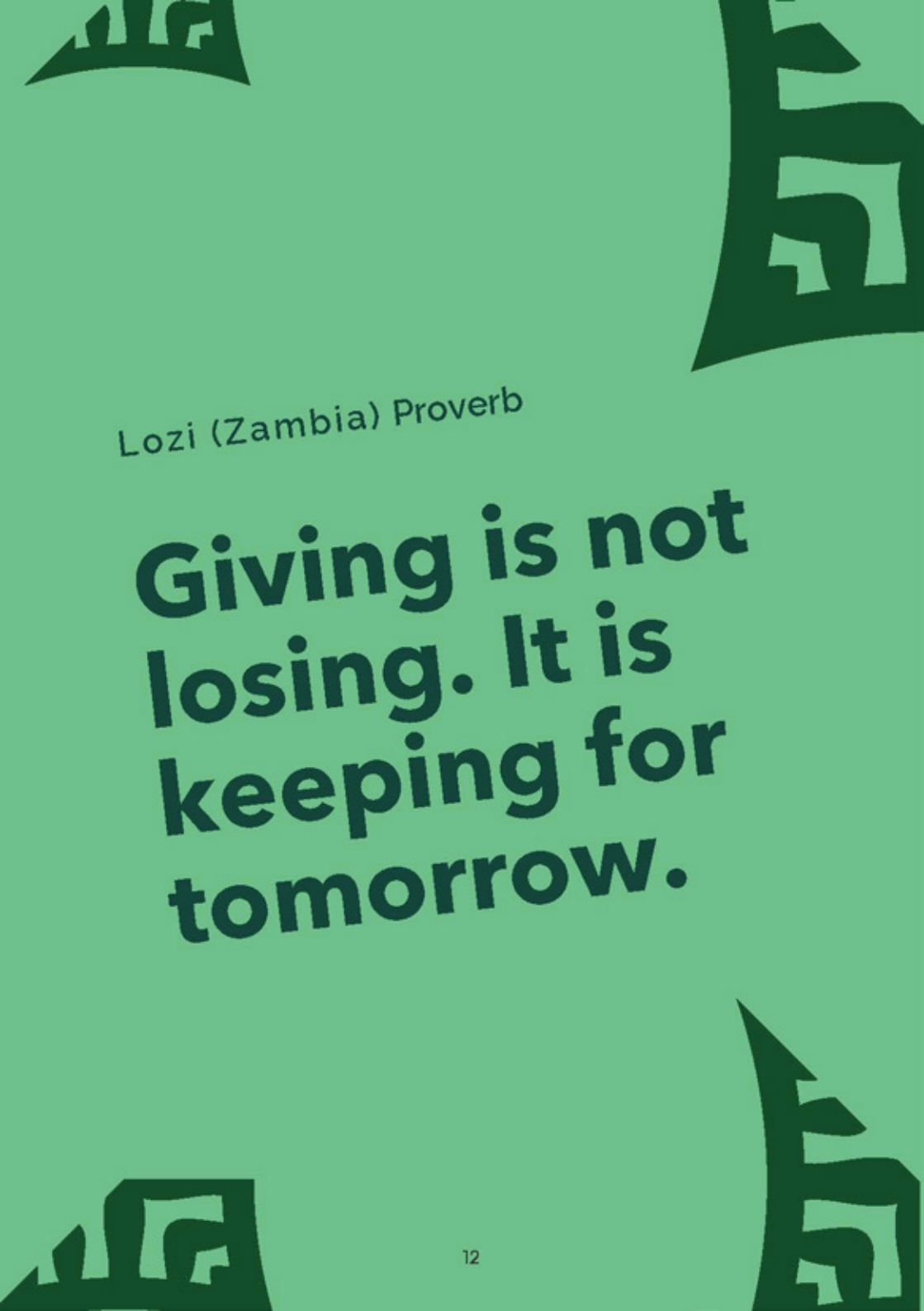
One by one makes a bundle.

One who does not ask, does not receive.

The man you offered no coffee will be the one you will meet when you are in need.







Lozi (Zambia) Proverb

**Giving is not  
losing. It is  
keeping for  
tomorrow.**



## Lusoga Proverbs

Those that are together  
will bite the meat or the bone.

What is not shared  
burns the hands.

What your friend has  
is what they give you.

Your friend who gives,  
you also give.





Lumasaba Proverb




Mountains  
never meet,  
but people do.



Malagasy Proverb

However little  
food we have,  
we will share it,  
even if it's only  
one locust.





Samia Proverb


A good heart  
will make you  
eat hidden  
things...



African proverb

**You don't give  
someone a  
goat for a gift  
and still hold  
onto the rope.**

Egyptian Proverb



**The best act  
of generosity  
is that which  
is quickly done.**



## Swahili Proverbs

Charity is a matter of the heart not of the pocket.

Compassion is like a well.

Concern is like medicine.

Giving is only a matter of willingness, not of wealth.

Kindness does not go rotten.



## Swahili Proverbs

Happiness requires something to do, something to love and something to hope for.

If somebody covers the roof badly, throw up bundles of grass.

A [good] farmer does not forget the old worn out hoe.



## Swahili Proverbs

One does not refuse  
water to the digger  
of the wells.

One knee does not bring  
up a child.

Responsibility never dies.

The beehive cannot be raised  
without being pulled up  
with a rope.

The one who visits you is  
better than the one who  
sends you greetings.







## Swahili Proverbs

The reward of kindness is kindness.

The sieve does good, [even though] bad things fall upon it.

To give to your friend is not to cast away; it is to store for the future.

Two hands wash each other.

## Unattributed African

A good deed is something one returns.

A good deed will make a good neighbour.

A water pot cannot stand on its own without support.

Gold is a debt we can repay, but kindness not till our dying day.  
He who eats alone, dies alone - without mourners.

He who gives a gift does not measure it.



## Unattributed African

If you have, give; if you need,  
seek.

It is better to be kind to our  
neighbours than to cross the  
world to offer incense to our  
ancestors.

It is hard for even the most  
selfish man to eat fish in  
darkness.

Kindness is a language which  
the blind can see and the deaf  
can hear.

Unattributed African

Success is a ladder which  
cannot be climbed with your  
hands in your pockets.

The man who remembers  
others remembers also his  
creator.

The sun does not forget  
the village just because it is  
small.

Unattributed African


He who allows his day to pass  
by without practicing generosity  
and enjoying life's pleasures is  
like a blacksmith's bellows:  
he breathes but does not live.

The generous man enriches  
himself by giving; the miser  
boards himself poor.

Between true friends,  
even water drunk together  
is sweet enough


Happiness is not perfected  
until it's shared.



The background is a dark blue color, decorated with various geometric shapes in shades of yellow and orange. These shapes include squares, diamonds, and triangles, some of which contain smaller, solid-colored versions of themselves. The shapes are scattered across the page, creating a patterned effect.

Yoruba Proverb

**When you  
give you get  
ten times over.**



## Luganda Proverbs

### Luo Proverbs

**Cing ma miyo, nongo**

The hand that gives, receives.

**Gum tye imic**

There are blessings in giving.

**Mii wek inong**

Give then you will be given.

**Otwong wile ki otwong**

You give to the one that has  
ever given you.



## **Engalo Enjerere ( Enkalu) Ziwomera Nyinizo**

The hands that have nothing in them( that do not give) are just good for the owner.

## **Omukwano gubasaza mu kabu.**

When you love someone you can share the smallest thing like a little insect smaller than a white ant.


## **Emeeme egabagaba enegejjanga.**

A generous soul will always increase...





Luganda Proverbs



**Munno mukabi,  
ye munno ddala**

Friend in need is a friend indeed



**Etasiima ebula  
agiwa**

An ungrateful person receives  
nothing from anyone



**oluganda kulya oluganda  
enjala teludda.**

Sharing food is the foundation of kinship. If  
you get a visitor and you don't give them  
something to eat they will never come back.





## **Akusuubiza akira akumma.**

Better is a promise than an outright rejection

## **Ono alya noli alya gwe mukuto.**

True satisfaction is achieved when everyone is eating

## **Okuddiza guba mwoyo.**

To give back something without being asked ( a gift, food, drink) is a sign of appreciation (love, sacrifice, noble spirit, generosity)

## **Namukadde kyabanakyo kyawa munyanyiwe.**

One gives to a friend what they have.  
You don't wait to get much.







## **Asaba Aweebwa**

Ask and you will receive.

## **Namukadde kyabanakyo kyawa munyanyiwe.**

One gives to a friend what they have.  
You don't wait to get much.

## **Ali vaamu yali yitta 'ekyatto.'**

When an ungrateful person comes to the end of a journey, they speak derogatively about the boat that landed them safely. (Do not speak ill of those that help you).

## **Ono alya noli alya gwe mukuto.**

True satisfaction is achieved when everyone is eating





## **Akuwera omwana akila akwenda.**

The one who gives something to your child is better than the one who professes love for you

## **Omukwano gubasaza mu kabu.**

When you love someone you can share the smallest thing like a little insect smaller than a white ant.

## **Wagumbulizi kyabanakyo kyawa munywanyiwe**

There is always something everyone can share. A caterpillar will give you it's fur.

## **Olugend'enjala terudda.**

The stomach that goes hungry is unlikely to return on a visit.






## Luganda Proverbs

### **Oluganda kulya oluganda enjala teludda.**

Sharing food is the foundation of kinship.  
If you get a visitor and you don't give them  
something to eat they will never come back.



### **Gwo suus'emywanyi, gwo sanga ku mayanja nga wungula.**

The person with whom you refuse to share  
the coffee beans as a sign of friendship  
may be the same person whose boat  
you will want to board at the shore  
of the lake.

### **Bwangu bwakuwa, bukuwesa alikumma**

Speedy generosity, makes you donate to a person  
who will refuse to give you anything in the future.  
if you don't give thought to your role as a benefactor,  
your generosity will be exploited by shrewd  
opportunists.





Runyankore - Rukiga Proverbs

## **Mutuure niyo murongoore**

The hand that receives a gift from a friend should give back one as well.

## **Efurankye ebura owagiha**

Stingy selfish people receive no help in their time of need.

## **Akiibo kaza owanyamugarura!!**

A basket of giving is usually given to those who are generous.



Runyankore - Rukiga Proverbs

## **Hakyiri Nekyira Kangwaha.**

A small contribution is  
better than nothing.


## **Obufura Nobutungyi**

Generosity is riches

## **Entasiima ebura agiha.**

An ungrateful person doesn't  
receive anything.





Runyankore - Rukiga Proverbs

**Owakuha kakye,  
Niwe waawe.**

He/she that shares the little  
they have with you, is your  
best friend (your dear own)

**Entasiima Eburagyiha.**

She that doesn't appreciate,  
eventually fails to get help. Always say  
thank you when you get help lest, you  
fail to get help in future!

**Kanwe kamwe Nigwe  
Muganda.**

One by one makes a bundle



Runyankore - Rukiga Proverbs

**Gabiraga zoonu  
tomanya eyoliihamu.**

Feed all, you never know who  
will be useful in future.

**Enyongyeserezo  
teba nkye**

Give and give for it is  
never too little.

**Emitima teshaga munju**

A house can never be too small to  
accommodate anyone in need.



Runyakore - Rukiga Proverbs

**Kwobura ekyiwaha  
owanyoko oti tora  
akonyo onyuhoho**

Even when you have nothing to offer a person, salt to taste is more than enough.

**Kwooba nooha  
biri noobiika**

He who generously gives and shares is in effect investing.



Runyankore - Rukiga Proverbs

## **Ezitahaire tizakiira**


Hands that do not give do not receive.

## **Engaro eziha nizo zaakiira**

The hands that give are the ones that receive.







Runyankore - Rukiga Proverbs

**Akaanna kagezi  
kabegera omukuru  
ekyenju.**

An intelligent child  
provides for the elder.

**Entasiima ebura agiha**

An ungrateful person doesn't  
receive anything.





Runyankore - Rukiga Proverbs

**Akaibo kagya nju  
eri , kagya  
kwendayo akandi.**

If someone does good to you, you have a duty to do good.


**Aine ebyokulya  
tahoibwaho bantu.**



Anyone with food will always have people with him/her.

## Akarungi okalya na ndikatebya


The proverb calls for sharing not necessarily for gains but social capital. You share with one who will talk about the good you have done.



It calls for sharing for the good of man kind and not necessarily for profit or selfish benefits.

# **Akiibo kaza owayamugarura!!**

A basket of giving is usually given to those who are generous.



Runyankore - Rukiga Proverbs

## **Okuheeka n'okuguzana**

Someday, your generosity will be repaid.

## **Owakutonagye omutonagye**

Always reciprocate the generosity you have received.





Runyankore - Rukiga Proverbs

## **Akakyekaryan'owaawe**

People share what they have with close relations ( bosom friends, relatives ) however little is.

## **Akakyekaziraomurisho**

Share even a speck for it only harms the eye





## Runyoro Proverbs

### **Araakuha emyongo, omuroora ahabisunsa**

If one cannot give you the little they have in times of scarcity; surely, you can't expect them to give you more in times of plenty!

### **Asaba, (nuwe) aheebwa**

In case of need, one should never be coy in asking for something or expressing their vulnerability.





## Runyoro Proverbs

### **Araalya (akanyama/ ak'okulya) ak'omukaikuru, amuberebenja**

If he/she can give you pumpkin leaves;  
surely, he/she will give you the whole  
pumpkin.

### **Entasiima, eburwa agiha.**

It is he who seeks/asks that is always  
given. Put another way: If you do not  
ask, you'll not be given.



## Runyoro Proverbs

**Akuha n'omuha, nizo engonzi ezitafa.**

**6. Ija ninyija, niryo eirembo eritafa.**

The one with the highest chances to feed at the old woman's home is the one who will be humble and always treat her right.

**Ekyanika nsimbi, kizaara mporaho.**

If you do not intend to give or extend charity; then do not display your wealth for all and sundry to see.





Runyoro Proverbs

## **Entasiima, eburwa agiha**

The fountains of charity always run dry for those that do not express gratitude.

## **Aburwa ekyokuha enzini, tagiteera**

The one to whom you give and they return the favor: that is the foundation of true friendship.





## Runyoro Proverbs

### **Ekyanika nsimbi, kizaara mporaho.**

One who displays his wealth/money for all to see should not get agitated if he is asked for a loan.

### **Aburwa ekyokuha enzini, tagiteera**

One who fails to get what to reward the dancer with should not instead resort to beating him.





## Swahili Proverbs

Hatusaida kwa sababu tunavyo vingi lakini sababu wenzetu wana uhtaji zaidi yetu

We don't help others because we are rich but because they are in need.

Umeja ni Nguvu,  
Wengano ni udhaifu

Working together is stronger than working in silos



Swahili Proverbs

Muguldedo neguno  
chomjiet.

A good heart gives endlessly

Kutoa ni moyana sia  
utajiri

Giving comes from the heart  
not from surplus

Hisani haiozi

Kindness does not go bad.



Swahili Proverbs

**Jamala yako haipotei:**

Your kindness will not be lost.

**Jaza ya ihsani ni  
ihsani**

The reward of kindness is kindness. A person who receives kindness should give kindness in turn.

**Kila kitendo chema  
sadaka**

Every good deed is an act of charity.





Swahili Proverbs

## Kufaa hakudhuru

Giving service does no harm.  
A good deed is never lost.

## Kwendako mema, hurudi mema

Where good things go, there  
good things return from.  
Doing good is receiving good  
in return.

## Kufaa hakudhuru

Giving service does no harm.  
A good deed is never lost.

## Muchwezi njuna nagawe otaireho

To be helped, your efforts are necessary.

## Adui aangukapo mnyanyue

When [your] enemy falls, lift him/her up. Helping an enemy in trouble may make a friend.





## Wema hauozi

Kindness [good deeds] never goes bad. They will receive their reward. It is like storing something. Even if you forget the good deed, the one who received your kindness will not forget.

## Wema na upole zashinda ukali

Goodness and kindness are stronger than harshness.





Swahili Proverbs

Mwenye kumridhi  
mwenziwe, na mungu  
humridhi

God is gracious also to a person  
who is gracious to others.

Rehema, kisima

Compassion is [like] a well.

Si lazima kuzimia taa ya  
mwenzio ili yako ionekane

It is not necessary to blow out the  
other person's lantern to let yours shine.

## Chujio hutenda mema, mabaya huliangukia:

The sieve does good, [even though]  
bad things fall upon it.

## Daraja lililokuvusha usilitukane

Do not despise a bridge on which  
you have crossed. Do not despise  
somebody who has helped you.

## Asokumbuka fadhila si mtu ni hayawani

One who does not remember a kindness is not a human being but an animal.

## Mkulima hasahau jembe kiselema

A [good] farmer does not forget the old worn out hoe. Don't throw away people who have been useful to you.





Rwandese proverbs

**Ndaguha iruta ndagukunze**

One I give you is worth more  
than one I love you



**Kumpa aliyekupa si kupa,  
ni kulipa**

To give him that gave you is  
not giving, it's repaying



**Ahatari umwaga, uruhu**

**rw'imbaragasa rwisasira batanu**

Where there is no greed, even the  
skin of a mosquito can cover 5  
people. (You dont have to have alot  
to give.)





Shona proverbs

## **Kupa kuturika**

To give is to bank.

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## **Gumwe rimwe haritswanyiri inda**

A single thump does  
not kill a louse.

---

## **Rume rimwe harikombi churu**


A single male person  
no matter how big,  
does not surround  
an anti-hill alone.



Shona proverbs


## **Muromo haupi chinopa maoko**

The mouth does not give  
What gives are the hands.




## **Atswinya arwa**

One who has pinched  
has fought; Every little  
contribution counts.



## **Kandiro kanoenda kunobva kamwe**

A small dish goes whence  
comes another small one;  
One good turn deserves another.





Shona proverbs

**Chirere mangwana  
chigozokurerawo**

Care for it and it will care  
for you tomorrow;

Care for your child that he  
may care for you.

**Chinogova ruoko  
muromo haugovi**

What gives away is the hand.

The mouth does not give away;

Deeds speak louder than words.

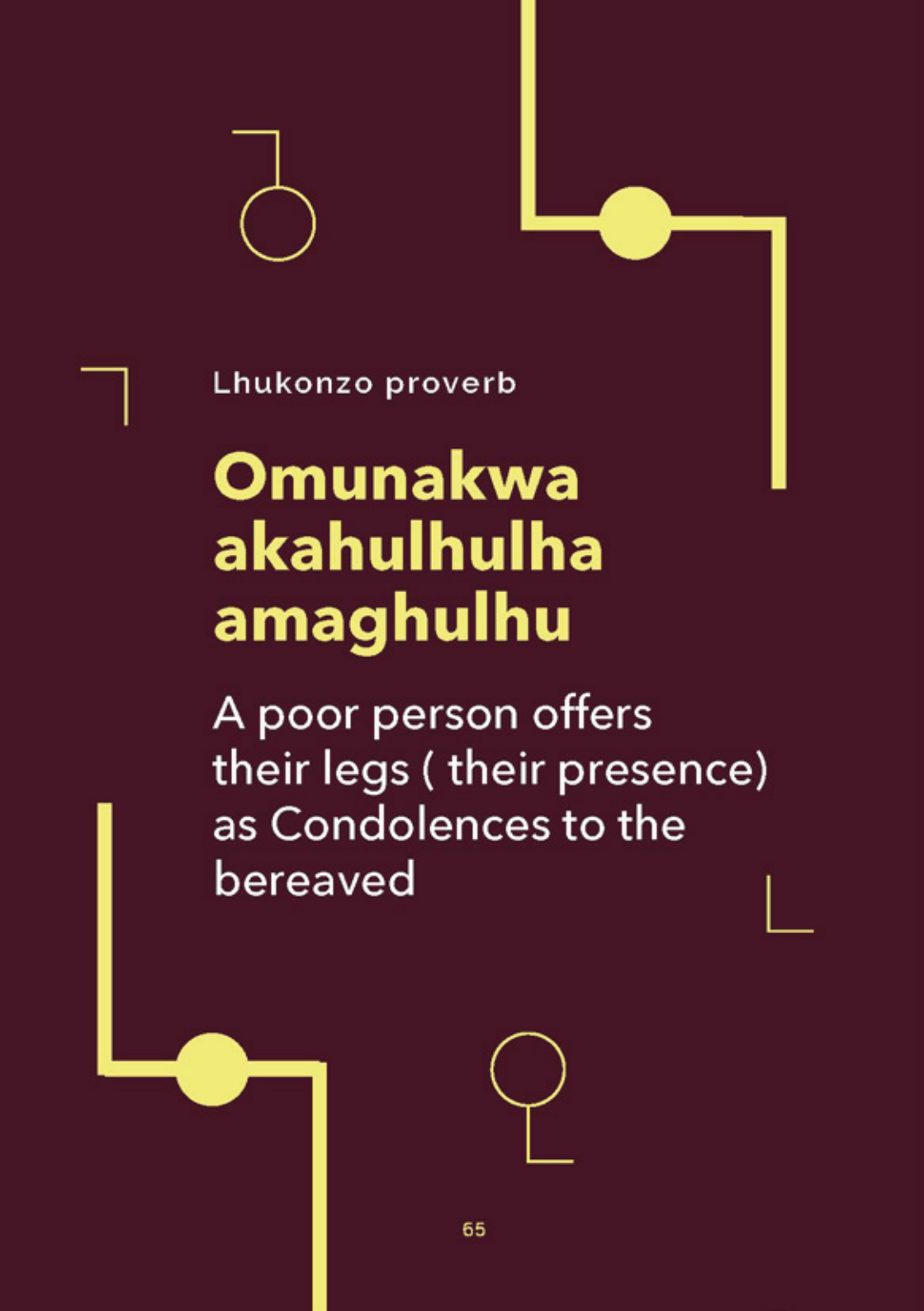




Lugungu proverb.

**Naali na maawe,  
adyambe  
bumukaabbawe**

Even the one who  
has a mother can eat  
at her stepmother's...



Lhukonzo proverb

# **Omunakwa akahulhulha amaghulhu**

A poor person offers  
their legs ( their presence)  
as Condolences to the  
bereaved



Lugisu proverb

# Kyomudyasi kidya imonye

Things of a selfish  
person are eaten by  
insects.



Lusoga


**Mwino  
akuwaha  
yo waha**

Return good will with good.

**Akatono kalya  
bagwaine.**

Whatever little you have, you share it with those who  
are deserving.





Acholi proverbs



**Dako nywal  
ki nyeke**

The women bears the  
child for the co-wife.



**Layomcwiny kigero  
ki nywach**

When you give, do not expect a  
return. Don't give to get.



**Otwong wile**

One good deed  
deserves another!



Lango Proverbs

**Ipito Aweno Ipito  
gweno**

Feed your child and feed other  
people's children as well

**Akwat dyang mato cakere**

Feed the guinea fowl, but feed the hens too.

**Gwok pe lelo I cak iyi  
awotere**

A dog can't jubilate over the fact that  
his friend is full with milk



**Akake kabura mu liiso**  
He only place you cannot share something  
small is the eye

**akaibo kagenda nju  
eri tikagaruka busa**  
He who gives will receive

**Akarungi okalya na  
ndikatebya**  
You share good with those who will  
appreciate it

**Otalimugaya Munywani  
waawe akuhaire akatiito  
rundi akakooto**  
Never undermine/ underestimate a friend who  
has given you little or much.



## **Agaba Taferwa**

S/he who gives makes no loss

## **Embibo basiga emu, bageza nyingi.**

Plant one seed and reap many OR a seed is sown as one and harvested as many.

## **Gabira zoonu, tomanyire eriba yawe/eyolitaahya**

Give to all (in context of livestock in your care) for you never know which one will be given to you.

## **Arakwisa Enjara, ati kanu konka araalyahoki**

One that will starve you says they have too little to share with you.

**akaibo kagenda nju  
eri tikagaruka busa**

A basket that goes to the neighbor's house does not return empty.

**Akake okaheebwa  
owawe**

The one who is close to you or loves you shares the little they have.

**Munywani wawe  
akuhaire otalimugaya**

Never despise what a friend gives you.

**Mpa nkuhe Nizo  
engonzi etahwa**

Sharing creates endless love



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