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CHASEYAMA AGROECOLOGY NEWSLETTER



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CHASEYAMA PERMCULTURE CLUB PUT YOUTH AT HEART OF ITS PROJECTS

Youth empowerment should be at the centre of development in any country or community. Young people, both girls and boys, are the future leaders, so they must participating in major economic activities.

In Chaseyama community, the youth are involved in a number of activities to try and improve their livelihoods. Such projects include, horticulture, food processing and small livestock production.

As part of empowering youth, Chaseyama Permaculture Club (CPC), in collaboration with PORET, has embarked on a series of activities catering for young people. From March to May, there are activities which were done towards youth participation in agroecology.

Firstly, a meeting was held on the 28th of March at PORET's Learning Centre. The meeting aimed to raise awareness among youth on the importance of agroecology as well as the value of participating in PORET's Permaculture Design Course (PDC). The meeting was attended by youths from 5 wards - 2, 3, 5, 6 and 20. Participants saw the need to be active in agroecology.

The organiser of this meeting, PORET's programs manager Mr Chamudondo said that, PORET saw it fit to start by having an awareness raising with young people so that they understand what agroecology is and why it is important for them to practise it. He further emphasised how crucial the meeting was for ensuring that those who participate in the PDC understand what it's all about.

Secondly, 30 youths were taken on a tour to Harare where they visited Fambidzanai and SCOPE. 11 young women and 19 young men made the trip.

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Above: Youth take in a nursery garden on a tour of PORET.

DIRECTORS MESSAGE

As PORET, we are on a drive to involve young people from Chaseyama, both girls and boys, to participate in projects and programs that improve their living conditions. For the past few years, we have been working with youth through organising soccer tournaments where our outreach officers use the opportunity to share the importance of agroecology. Through our campaigns, young people are now showing more interest in agroecology. We are now working to make sure that they actively participate in agroecology. We do this through permaculture courses, site visits and dialogues. *Julious Piti, Director.*

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According to Kumbirai Dube, outreach officer at PORET, it was important to take youth to witness permaculture designs that were done at Fambidzanai and SCOPE so that when they participate in the PDC at PORET, they will greatly appreciate the content of the course.

Vimbikai, one of the youth who visited Fambidzanai said that the visit was fruitful. She said that she learnt about managing natural resources such as trees to create a conducive environment for people and animals.

Another participant Kembo Tinashe reiterated that visiting SCOPE and Fambidzanai made him realise how important it is to keep our natural forest. He added that he also learnt about the production of fishponds which he said he wants to do back home.

Encouraging youth to practise agroecology is one thing which PORET has been advocating for over the past few years. Among the programs which PORET is spearheading towards youth empowerment is its soccer tournament. This event helps young people to come together and learn about agroecology whilst taking part in sporting activities.

According to Mr Chamudondo, there are a number of activities which the youths are requesting from PORET. He has promised that these will be done so that food production and sustainable livelihood won't only be for old people but should be a responsibility for every Zimbabwean citizen, both young and old.

PORET OFFERS A PDC FOR THE YOUTH

PORET's Permaculture Design Course is a ten to fourteen day course conducted to educate farmers about various aspects of permaculture – an approach to land management that adopts arrangements observed in flourishing natural ecosystems. The course is designed to demonstrate all important elements of permaculture within these days so that all participants understand it.

The lessons taught during the course include: introduction to permaculture, alternative sources of energy, watershed management, indigenous knowledge system, plant propagation, and food and seed sovereignty among others. These lessons are critical for developing a mind-set that focuses on sustainable living.

With one of its major objectives this year to actively involve youth, PORET and the CPC organised a permaculture design course expressly dedicated for youth. The course was held from the 13th to the 25th of May at the PORET Learning centre.

The course was attended by 43 people, 23 males and 20 females. The course was held under the objective: to have knowledge of implementing sustainable programs and be able to produce learning examples and to work together with CPC forming agroecology examples.

During the course, the participants learnt a lot about permaculture and why it is important. According to Tanaka Makamanzi, the course equipped him with good aspects of home design and he said he also learnt about the income generating projects he can do back home.

Another participant Patricia Kambanje said that she was particularly interested to learn about various types of indigenous herbs and how to use them.

The PDC proves to be essential for young people. If these are continued, they will positively impact on the young people's lives.

Below: Vimbikai Chamhazhika (in blue jacket) demonstrates how to make a tsootso stove during the PDC



VISITING JINGA, CHIBUWE & CHITIMBI – HOLISTIC LAND AND LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT EXCHANGE



Farmers touring HLLM project in Chibuwe Village

In our previous newsletters, we have talked about Holistic Land and Livestock Management (HLLM). The reason why we keep on talking about it is because it is one of the major projects which has a potential help people produce enough household food.

Since the introduction of the program, farmers have shared mixed feelings concerning its impact and importance. Those who have understand its importance, are now doing HLLM whole heartedly and they are now seeing changes in their fields and grazing zones.

To help bring in new ideas and share ideas between farmers who are into HLLM, CPC in collaboration with PORET organised exchange visits between participating farmers to explore how it is being done from one area to another. The exchange visits were organised in the three villages of Chibuwe, Chitimbi and Jinga.

These exchange visits gave farmers the chance to share their experiences on how they are doing the project and what they should do to improve it.

During a visit to Jinga Village, livestock owners in Jinga A explained that they were herding their livestock every day from 0900hrs to 1600hrs. Every livestock owner collects his/her livestock to their kraals.

According to Mr Themba Chikohomero. The herding of cattle is helping farmers in many ways. Firstly, people now have time to focus on other projects rather than herding their own cattle and secondly, controlled grazing is helping to reduce overgrazing.

The visit to Chitimbi Village helped farmers to understand the importance of starting small when implementing projects. The visit proved that numbers don't matter when it comes to do things that matter most. This has been indicated with the statistics of those who were taking up the project. They started small and now more farmers are bringing their cattle.

Mr Mandikutse who is the committee chairperson for HLLM shared how on the 23 September 2021 Astrid from PORET facilitated a grazing plan in the presence of TSURO staff, village head Chieza and Veterinary Services officer Mr Bangira. This marked a good beginning and they started herding their cattle in November 2021.

He explained that it was not easy for farmers to come together. They started with 20 livestock owners with 85 cattle. By 3 March 2022, this had increased to 39 livestock owners with nearly 200 cattle. The exchange visit helped farmers to understand that starting small is important for a project. The exchange visit also helped farmers to share their concerns with other farmers and also with PORET staff. During the visit to Chibuwe village, farmers requested supplementary feeds for their livestock.

All of the challenges shared helped farmers to learn. One of the farmers said that apart from benefiting through collective herding of cattle and environment management, the program is helping them to bring in a sense of oneness since farmers are now doing things together.

Farmers from Chibuwe noted a positive impact of the project. They say that because of the HLLM programme there had been zero deaths of cattle.

Lessons learnt by these farmers are many and though this program, farmers are starting to join the program. It is hoped that the number of households to join will increase by the end of the year.

A VISIT TO THARAKA KENYA

Site visits have an everlasting impact on projects as farmers to go and see what others are doing, observation is incredibly powerful. Such was a recent visit to Tharaka in eastern Kenya by Chaseyama farmers. Sponsored by the African Biodiversity Network (ABN), participants learnt about the way of life of indigenous people through discussions with community elders.



Above: Julious Piti, PORET's Director (left) posing for a photo during the visit to Tharaka Kenya

From the 18th to the 23rd of April 2022, 12 participants (2 females and 10 men) from Zimbabwe representing various organisations visited Society for Alternative Learning and Transformation (SALT) which is based in Tharaka in Kenya. PORET was represented by Mr Julious Piti and Mr Kumbirai Dube who are the Director and Outreach Officer respectively. The objective was to learn from elders with deep ecological knowledge that is at the centre of their governance systems. They are leading the process of mapping and protecting their sacred ecosystem in this arid and semi-arid part of Kenya. SALT works with the Tharaka community to revive the customary laws which had previously protected their forests, rivers, mountains and springs.

SALT's processes with the community include dialogues where many plans are developed with everyone involved. The core foundation of the work are based on this spirit of solidarity and participation.

During the visit, PORET's outreach officer Mr Dube said that he learnt the following: the importance of restoring the culture of local community; maintaining traditional principles as agreed by all farmers; importance of maintaining natural and genetic resources of the forests; and how vital it is to work with all ages, elders and youth to achieve community development.

CPC MEMBERS TRAINED ON MUSHROOM PRODUCTION

Mushroom production can be lucrative when done properly. It is easy to do and it needs low capital to start especially when working with oyster mushrooms.

In the rural areas, people rely on mushrooms which grow naturally in the forest. The varieties include *tsvuke-tsvuke* and *nhedzi*. However, farmers can also get income through producing oyster mushrooms on a commercial level.

As part of its drive to provide people in Chaseyama with stable income, CPC and PORET organised a series of mushroom training sessions. The first training was done at PORET with 10 people. Community-based trainings were then done in order to train more farmers on the production of mushroom.

One of the trained farmers by the name Edward Piti said that a mushroom project can be simple and a low hanging fruit which farmers should ride on.

To start a mushroom project, you only need a dark room made of grass, seed, substrate using dead matter and observe good hygiene.

It is important for farmers to continue taking on board such initiatives so that they improve their household incomes.



Above: Farmers on a training workshop on how to grow mushrooms. Here they are boiling organic matter to make it sterile for use as substrate.