

# FEPA-JOURNAL

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### SIMBABWE: DIE REGIERUNG IST WIE DAS WETTER

Bis 2015 war Barbara Müller Geschäftsführerin von fepa. Seither wirkt sie im Vorstand mit. Im Rückblick mit dem derzeitigen Geschäftsführer Marcel Dreier berichtet sie von Veränderungen in Simbabwe.

\_\_\_ fepa: Vor zehn Jahren fanden in Simbabwe Wahlen statt, welche Präsident Mugabes Partei ZANU-PF erneut zur alleinigen Macht verhalfen.

\_\_\_ Barbara Müller: Es war ein Schock! Nach den von Gewalt geprägten Wahlen von 2008 sah sich Simbabwe durch Druck von aussen gezwungen, die Opposition in die Regierung einzubinden. So entstand das Government of National Unity, welches trotz Schwächen einen Turnaround in der Wirtschaft brachte und viel Hoffnung weckte. Das Resultat der Wahlen von 2013

vernichtete aber diese ganze Entwicklung! Mit diesem Resultat hatte niemand gerechnet. Zum Teil hatte es Einschüchterungen gegeben. Zum anderen hatte sich die Oppositionspartei zu sehr auf Regieren konzentriert. Die ZANU-PF war schlau, sie liess die anderen regieren und machte selbst Wahlkampf.

\_\_\_ Nach vier Jahren war dennoch Schluss mit dem alten Präsidenten. Die Absetzung Mugabes kam nicht aus dem Nichts. Allerdings war sie auch nicht das Resultat der Arbeit der Oppositionspartei, denn

diese war seit der Niederlage durcheinander. Viel Widerstand kam aus der Bevölkerung. Da war der Pastor und Demokratieaktivist Ewan Mawarire, der sich mit einer Landesflage um die Schultern in einer Video-Botschaft eine bessere Zukunft wünschte. Seine Rede traf einen Nerv. Es gab zudem Machtkämpfe in der ZANU-PF. Dann mischte sich die Armee ein. Und schliesslich zwang ein Militärputsch Mugabe zum Rücktritt.

\_\_\_ Als dies geschah, ging so gut wie ganz Simbabwe auf die Strasse, um zu feiern.

\_\_\_ Das zeigte, wie sehr die Menschen diesen Wechsel wollten – und dass sie ihn als Resultat ihres Kampfes verstanden. Leider kam der Nachfolger Emmerson Mnangagwa aus demselben Stall wie Mugabe.

\_\_\_ War es falsch zu hoffen, dass sich etwas ändern würde?

\_\_\_ Nein. Aber in Simbabwe setzen sich jene Kräfte durch, denen es um Machterhalt ging.

\_\_\_ Was geschah nach dem Rücktritt Mugabes?

\_\_\_ 2018 gab es erneut Wahlen. Hinterher kam es zu Protesten – und

die Regierung reagierte äusserst brutal. Zum ersten Mal wurde die Armee gegen Demonstrierende eingesetzt. Nun haben die Leute grosse Angst sich zu exponieren. Niemand möchte erzählen, wie schwierig sich das Leben in Simbabwe gestaltet: die riesige Inflation, die Verhältnisse in den Spitälern... Es gibt auch zwei neue Gesetze, die es strafbar machen, die "Würde des Landes" zu untergraben. Ganz besonders im Kontakt mit dem Ausland.

\_\_\_ Und aus wirtschaftlicher Sicht?

\_\_\_ Mnangagwa begann mit einem Programm, das "open for business"



fepa feiert 60 Jahre Engagement für Entwicklung und Gerechtigkeit

#### EDITORIAL

Unseren Go. Geburtstag nehmen wir als Anlass, auf Veränderungen der letzten Jahre zu schauen. Es kommen Menschen zu Wort, die diese Veränderungen getragen oder begleitet haben. Die Partnerinnen im Süden berichten über den Weg, den sie in den letzten Jahren zurückgelegt: Schritte für ein besseres Leben und mehr Gerechtigkeit. Dies ist auch Auftrag und Motivation für die nächsten Jahre von fepa.

\_\_\_ Lucy Mazingi schreibt über die Aufgabe, gleichberechtigte Partnerschaften zu etablieren. Geteilte Macht bringt bessere Resultate. \_\_\_ Und geteiltes Glück ist doppeltes Glück. Darum freue ich mich auf das fepa-Jubiläumfest am Freitag, 29. September in Basel. Ich hoffe, Sie sind dabei? Herzliche Grüsse Marcel Dreier



## SHARED HAPPINESS IS DOUBLE HAPPINESS



We take our 60th birthday as an opportunity to look back at the changes that have taken place in recent years.

People who have supported or accompanied these changes will have their say. The partners in the South report on the path they have taken in recent years: steps towards a better life and more justice. This is also fepa's mission and motivation for the coming years.

Lucy Mazingi writes about the task of establishing equal partnerships. Shared power brings better results.

And shared happiness is double happiness. That is why I am looking forward to the fepa anniversary celebration on Friday 29 September in Basel.

Best regards

Marcel Dreier

## MUGABE'S INFLUENCE AND THE ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

Marcel Dreier: Ten years ago, elections were held in Zimbabwe which helped President Mugabe's ZANU-PF party to regain sole power...

Barbara Müller: It was a shock! After the violent elections of 2008, Zimbabwe was forced by external pressure to integrate the opposition into the government. Thus, the Government of National Unity came into being, which, despite weaknesses, brought about a turnaround in the economy and raised a lot of hope. However, the result of the 2013 elections destroyed all this development! Nobody had expected this result. In part, there had been intimidation. On the other hand, the opposition party had concentrated too much on governing. ZANU-PF was clever, it let the others govern and campaigned for itself.

Nevertheless, after four years, the old president was finished.

Mugabe's ouster did not come out of nowhere. However, it was also not the result of the work of the opposition party, which had been in disarray since the defeat. A lot of resistance came from the people. There was the pastor and democracy activist Ewan Mawarire, who, with a national flag around his shoulders, wished for a better future

in a video message. His speech struck a nerve. There was also infighting within ZANU-PF. Then the army interfered. And finally, a military coup forced Mugabe to resign.



When this happened, pretty much all of Zimbabwe took to the streets to celebrate ...

This showed how much the people had wanted this change - and that they saw it as the result of their struggle. Unfortunately, the successor Emerson Mnangagwa came from the same stable as Mugabe.

Was it wrong to hope that something would change?

No. But in Zimbabwe, those forces that were concerned with retaining power prevailed.

What happened after Mugabe stepped down?

Elections were held again in 2018. Afterwards, there were protests - and the government reacted extremely brutally. For the first time, the army was used against demonstrators. Now people are very afraid to expose themselves. Nobody wants to tell how difficult life is in Zimbabwe: the huge inflation, the conditions in the hospitals... There are also two new laws that make it a punishable offence to undermine the dignity of the country. Especially when in contact with foreign countries.

And from an economic point of view?

Mnangagwa started with a program called "open for business". In fact, this means that Zimbabwe, today, is a place where raw materials are mined consistently and completely ruthlessly. Corporations from all over the world are involved, nobody is putting the brakes on.

In the face of these manifold difficulties, how does one keep one's courage to live in Zimbabwe?

My impression is that people accept the government like the weather and do what is possible for their livelihood. They are not blocked - and that is remarkable!

### Has fepa's work actually changed in the context of Zimbabwe?

I have always believed that the motivation must come from the South. We have also not understood partnership as an old-fashioned or dubious concept but have always involved new people to give the partnership new content. And we have remained faithful to the work with youth, even if the focus shifted more towards young women.

When we talk about the role of civil society, somehow it also needs a bit of breadth, backgrounds of experience where they experience themselves not as opposition but as citizens. As citizens who have the possibility to experience their own ability to shape things. The possibility to experience themselves as people with rights.

That is what I find remarkable about Zimbabwe. Especially since 2017, I have the impression that people are using their room for manoeuvre and are also involving the government. I don't hear anyone complaining anymore, it's adapting, acting, and surviving. They are not blocked and that alone is remarkable. You hear the considerations that people are making for instance: If we voted for the opposition now and they won, would that be good? It's not the quality of the opposition, but the reaction that would also mean responsibility for one's own country. Because the worst thing would be a civil war.

It is easy to underestimate how firmly people are marked by the experience of violence, especially colonial violence. Many of these systems and their mechanisms of oppression that we are now criticized have their roots in colonial experiences and institutions. A review of the last ten years is not enough here to understand Zimbabwe's history of violence.



### Loss of democracy in South Africa?

But let us turn to South Africa. The country is so different from Zimbabwe, as I see it. It was still a bit of a model democratic country in 2013 too. Since then, we have had the Marikana massacre and the Zuma government. Is South Africa on its way to becoming a 'normal' African state? A country where the state is very weak and actually erodes democracy?

I wouldn't call it a normal African state now. But at the moment South Africa is really at a turning point. Whether it will manage to somehow save these democratic values or whether it will really sink is left to be seen. Apart from the official structures there are drug cartels and others that are hidden that determine a lot that goes on. In South Africa there is more at stake in every respect, also for the world powers. Economic interests. So South Africa really worries me.

The struggle for Marikana was also still about workers' rights, about social rights, but they were brutally put down. At that time, people were still defending social rights, now they even have to defend the democratic project.

But the bad thing is at the level of society where this polarisation is taking place. The outbreaks of violence and crime are quite bad and such brutal murders are happening. This also has to do with the democratic state, when judges were still saying, now we'll send Zuma to prison, but then trucks are set on fire. The ANC has such powers in the inner circle and cannot deal with it. In South Africa there is a loud and active civil society, there is freedom of the press, but there is also an attempt to hijack the judiciary. There is also a lot going wrong with the police. We still see resistance... but it looks very bad.

for fepa, there was a transition in Zimbabwe, that fepa first supported the liberation organisations and only gradually became a partner of a civil society that almost takes on an oppositional character to the state party of the independence era. Do we see this movement now also for South Africa, as a shift in which civil society is repositioning itself? That we are finding that the ANC is not a partner and the institutions that emerged from the freedom movements are not defending this project of citizen liberation, of democratic development, to the extent that one would expect.

I don't think it was that close in South Africa. From the beginning, fepa was not that close to the ANC.

So fepa has been primarily closer to the grassroots in South Africa from the beginning, or at least for a longer period of time.

### **Another kind of support**

You are still involved in KEESA. With fepa, the partners are more of a livelihood perspective, e.g., the farm workers. The long history of apartheid plays into what we do when it comes to development opportunities. KEESA is actually about other issues like raw materials and the like, isn't it?

Yes, KEESA is about more human rights defenders. That is, to reject this criminalisation of people who fight back and to support them instead.

So, solidarity with the people who are now under so much pressure in South Africa.

Yes, who are being murdered. Of course, that also gives a different perspective. If you can't turn to the state when injustice happens, when life and limb are endangered. So, there is a need for alliances, which we support from KEESA.



In Zimbabwe, you can't really do that either. It shows how people have learnt to deal with the difficult conditions and learnt what their options are for action.

In South Africa, there has been an expectation that the state would protect social rights and struggles.

And therein lies the disappointment. That one actually notices that radical politics in South Africa

is being bludgeoned. We will have to see what happens next.

### Shift in focus within fepa

More focused on the work at fepa. In 2013, there was a lot of focus on young people. Did this perhaps lose a little of its focus because the partners have become older?

There has been more focus on young women. That is still youth, so it is not fundamentally different. Encouraging young women to get involved has been important from the beginning. Now we are addressing more significantly women-specific problems such as early marriage and gender-based violence. This is not something fepa was necessarily looking for but was brought to us. Because these are the issues that women are concerned about.

We believe that young people have a special role to play. Why this focus?

On the one hand, it is the vast majority of the population, and on the other hand, it is precisely that part of the population that is not represented in politics and needs to be strengthened. And they are waiting for this opportunity. They are active.

It is not an idealisation of youth, but actually it is the exclusion that is the problem.

There is an 80-year-old president who cannot understand young people. At the same time, they are told they still have milk froth around their mouths. That is actually unbelievable.

You also hear from young people that they don't get the credit. There are so many changes at the same time, the world has become digitalised, communication has reformed and changed a lot.

Young people are so hurt. They also feel how outdated these leaderships are. Often, they are better educated, but they have to subordinate themselves to their fathers just because of their age.

And at the same time, it is a different generation. I see a bit of a problematic movement nowadays, that young people have less access to education and less opportunities. Is that a role that falls more to us?

Another thing that might play a role is that there are a lot of graduates who are on the street and don't have a job. That is of course a great potential for dissatisfaction.

In the countryside, however, we also observe that young people are finding a way again. We see that in PORET, in agroecology, that young people see a future there. But access to land is still unresolved. That would be an incredible resource if young people could access the land.

## Partnership over the last ten years

The last 10 years have been a success and the fepa model of partnership is actually working well. On the one hand, we have received feedback on how life is changing on the ground. On the other hand, we have our lives here where structures are not moving. Am I being too pessimistic when I say that we cannot influence the big context of development?

The discussion that fepa has, shows us that partnership is not an old-fashioned term. It was a dubious term from the 60s, but I think we have managed to fill it with new meaning. For us it is a guideline, so it was very important to redefine it again and again.

But what you said about the structures: it was always the case that people who advocated for emancipation etc. were never a majority. Today, the terms that the development movement coined back then have become the "best practices" in international cooperation. I don't know whether things are getting better or worse today. The desire and hope for fundamental change from the 70s has given way to a more realistic assessment. We just don't know exactly what will come of it. Each new generation makes its own contacts and experiences and is not interested in what those before it did.

Maybe the approach that change has to come from here is not the model that has to lead to success.

I always thought that the motivation has to come from the South. They don't just act out of an idea of justice, but out of necessity. The whole corporate responsibility initiative was something great, but it also showed the limits. Even if it had gone through, there would probably have been watering down in the bourgeois parliament. The fact that we live at the expense of the South is an unpleasant truth.

It makes sense to strengthen people in the South who work for justice. They are also the right people to determine what justice means and we cannot be the monopoly. Maybe the solution is African, pan-African.

In my perception, it is always difficult to know if you understand things better yourself or if something has changed. But in my opinion, people from Africa have a different appearance, a different awareness of their importance. They no longer see themselves as the "poor" at all. They move differently in this world.

## “A SPACE FOR YOUNG WOMEN”

A conversation with GWEN Director Kumbirai Kahiya. Recorded by Pascale Wassink and Stephanie Naujoks

In early 2022, Pascale Wassink, then a fepa intern, visited fepa's partner organisation Girls and Women Empowerment Network (GWEN) in Chitungwiza in Zimbabwe. Pascale is still in contact with the Team Leader of GWEN, Kumbirai Kahiya. In August 2023, Pascale calls the GWEN office once again. It is quite quiet because GWEN cannot implement many activities due to the harmonized elections towards the end of the month. Kumbie is happy about the call and tells us that she has now successfully completed her degree in Leadership & Corporate Governance. She has also learned to delegate; she says with a laugh. This allows her to focus on fundraising while her team carries out the activities.





The content of GWEN's work itself has not changed much. Economic strengthening remains critical to women's empowerment. GWEN is still training women in soap making and sanitary napkins are being distributed. They had expanded their work to 13 communities, but there were difficulties in doing so; the places are far away and Kumbie is the only one with a driving license. People could move freely again after the COVID-19 times, but the political situation was still restricting due to safeguarding and security issues. The pandemic forced many small business owners to close or sell their shops. These changes are particularly noticeable in Chitungwiza: GWEN has observed an increase in sexual exploitation of teenage girls, unwanted pregnancies, and school dropouts. According to Kumbie, GWEN is planning a community centre in Seke to create spaces for girls and young women to express themselves freely.

As Kumbie looks back on the last two years, she is very humbled: Progress, she says, is the sum of small steps. An office and regular work have stabilised the institution, and this has ensured that GWEN's work, and opinions are recognised throughout the country. But they are not satisfied with just that, GWEN still has a lot to do. Working with fepa has helped them to upgrade their organisation and Kumbie is also grateful for the help with the first full audit. She describes being

part of the fepa network as very valuable. On the occasion of the anniversary, she wishes us a long and successful activity in supporting institutions that promote the development of women and girls and bring about positive change.

## LUCY MAZINGI: IT IS TIME TO SHARE POWER

By Lucy Mazingi



This year, 2023 marks a milestone achievement of 60 years of development work for the Fund for Development and Partnership (FEPA). FEPA was founded when black and white pioneers established community farms in Rhodesia- now

Zimbabwe, working together and, in a way, challenging the Rhodesian government and white supremacy ideology. FEPA has throughout its history worked with grassroots movements and solidarity networks in Zimbabwe, Tanzania, South Africa and Mozambique around human rights, democracy, empowerment, and standing against racism and racial discrimination.

### **This is why we remain in solidarity:**

Global solidarity has made great strides in recent decades. However, as humanity we continue to face great challenges: The consequences of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine with the rise in food prices, a multipolar world in which autocratic regimes are on the rise and the climate crisis threaten the livelihoods of many people and lead to new inequalities.

The need and opportunities to support people working for improvement are no less than they were 10 or 50 years ago.

It is essential during this milestone celebration to reflect on how development aid in Southern Africa where FEPA has active partnerships has shifted. This is an opportunity to immerse ourselves in the current conversation around decoloniality and localisation as FEPA positions itself for the next 40 years. Our reflections will also be informed by experiences from the COVID-19

pandemic and our responses to the war in Ukraine which have further challenged us to rethink development aid.

There is growing acknowledgement by development actors on the need to shift power dynamics as far as aid is concerned by re-examining trust and redefining partnership. This has been an ongoing process but more effort towards dismantling structural barriers that impede its advance is needed. It is also important to interrogate narratives that preclude local actors from playing the leading role in the development of their own communities.

If we look at the historical governance structures for international funding agencies, the power dynamics were, and some are still well pronounced in terms of the geographical location of the agencies- headquarters offices in Northern capital cities including lack of diversity in staff and board members. This in most cases meant flying in and out of communities/ countries to monitor and participate in activities and projects, very often with exorbitant overheads. Some countries in the South are also tightening immigration laws making it cumbersome to get work permits for international staff. There has also been a conscious shift over the years to establish regional offices in southern regional centres with some donor

agencies taking a step further to establish countries offices that employ, and some led by local staff.

Currently, International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) prioritise the needs of the majority affluent country donor(s). They provide the funding, choose which projects go ahead, write proposals, and determine what expertise, development and success look like. Furthermore, the country based INGOs, donors, or offices usually have the budgetary power and the last say in many if not all areas. This final say must be endorsed by the Northern Head Office. Because of the historical power imbalances, many local organizations have difficulty pushing back against donors, especially on program priorities or crucial financial terms like indirect cost rates. Communities even know that local community-based organisations have to wait for approval or final say from the INGOs – that is how embedded these power relations are. If INGO staff go on summer holidays everything stops and the impact is felt at local community levels where delays are experienced.

There is still a lot of hesitance by development actors to fully localise based on experiences from the past where some cases of corruption and fraud have occurred. There are narratives that purport that local organizations are more prone

to fraud, cannot comply with donor requirements, or lack the capacity to implement complicated programming that meets donor expectations.

If we are to move towards decolonisation, a radical examination of narratives and changing approaches of aid by involving and elevating people, systems and methods that originate from communities side-lined by historical imbalances that include colonialism. It is crucial that organisations are honest and transparent about the structure and history of the international aid sector and the inherent cycles of privilege and power. According to Humentum, there must be an understanding of the cycle of dependency that has been created in aid-recipient countries and populations. This understanding should result in a relinquishing, transferring, and sharing of power at all levels of its structure.

To decolonise aid, INGOs should start by addressing the lack of diversity in leadership and governance. Leadership and governance should respect differences, and be genuine, equitable and inclusive. Power holders must truly understand their power and privilege. More women and men of colour and other social identities should be in senior leadership positions and embrace inclusive and feminist leadership styles that are rooted in care, solidarity, and empathy. This

should be extended to governing boards of INGOs that remain predominantly male and white, or from the white/European diaspora.

The aid-receiving people (in their diversities) and country must be acknowledged, included, and centred in proposals and solutions. Co-creation and co-implementation by the people should be adopted. Success must be defined by the community receiving the aid. There is a need to ensure that development work will contribute towards communities' autonomy and self-sustainability instead of reinforcing inequality, white supremacy, and unequal power relations.

To counter narratives around risk, donors would need to increase their risk tolerance when working with local partners by moving away from viewing local actors as an inherent risk; and instead treating them as vital assets bringing both value for money and a greater possibility of sustainability.

The evidence from the localisation shows that local knowledge and engagement are essential for sustainable, equitable development and redressing the inequalities that exist between the global and local actors. More ownership and effective utilisation of resources is achieved through localisation. This may not happen overnight, but acceleration steps must already be put in place.

## **AGAINST ALL ODDS: TRAINING OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

Douglas Muzondo has been a tailoring teacher at the Kuwadzana Skills Training Centre (KSTC) since its founding days. Over the past 10 years, more than 400 young people have completed vocational training at this centre. Muzondo alone has guided almost 170 young people to a degree. He talks about the strengths and problems of an organisation that has had great consistency even though funds have always been scarce.



According to Douglas Muzondo, the strength of the KSTC is not only that it is a professionally set up organisation with well-rehearsed procedures. The fact that the KSTC has a long-standing co-financing partner in fepa is also important to him. "In recent years, we have been able to develop ourselves as teachers," he emphasizes. The KSTC was able to purchase additional equipment for

teaching and has in the recent days put a new solar system into operation. "The scholarships for the students are also an improvement, although the funds are too limited," says Muzondo.

He is referring to the fact that not everything the team strives for can be achieved with the available funds. For many years, KSTC has wanted to move from the cramped community centre to its own school grounds. The goal of offering new training programmes proved to be more attainable. In recent years, the vocational fields of hair styling and pre-school teaching have been added. "But we don't have the money to introduce more courses for which there would be a demand among the boys," says Muzondo. The difficulty of financing is due to the fact that the young people who benefit from the centre can hardly pay anything for an education. This makes the KSTC all the more important for the students, for whom it is the only training opportunity. But the annual operating subsidy that the school has to mobilise is all the greater. To survive in this precarious environment is only possible because the team itself bears an entrepreneurial risk and its salaries have always been small.

## **"TOGETHER WE ARE IN THIS, IN THIS WE ARE TOGETHER"**

Mavis Nkuwasenga, Dangwe Arts



Over the past 10 years, the collaboration between fepa and Dangwe Arts has grown steadily. fepa has helped us to realise our dreams: to contribute to the development of communities. Through fepa's support, some of us have been able to train as early childhood teachers. For the past 5 years, we have been able to give underprivileged children access to free education. And we can also support these children with healthy food.

## “WE ARE NOW A SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION ORGANISATION IN OUR REGION”

In an interview with Stephanie Roffler, Barnes Jonas, chairperson of the Central Karoo Farm Communities Association, talks about the organisation's journey over the past 10 years.



10 years ago, we were 8 farm committees in the vast region of the Central Karoo that came together to stand up for farm workers. We have since grown into a multi-faceted organisation. Our presence in the communities has grown greatly. We have trained over 50 young people as community activators. And we have built a network with the authorities, other organisations, and local partners. Thanks to our activists and this network, we can take up concerns in the communities and bring them into a development

processes. We are now an organisation working for social transformation at various levels.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, we had some successes, especially in the area of illegal evictions of families from farms. But then the COVID-19 period was very hard for everyone here. We focused during that time on training Community Activators who, in the face of restrictions, helped people to access important services and rights. We distributed emergency packages to about 750 people.

After steering through the bad times of COVID, we were able to rededicate ourselves to our core theme. In 2022, we again carried out 15 activities

### South Africa and Covid

South Africa went through a very hard lockdown and excess mortality. Health workers on the countryside received barely any protection and so the structurally already weak health care system had to close its gates. The state assumed that African culture was a superspreader and intervened against central rites with police force. The people were not only left alone with health consequences, but they were also refused dignified burials and identity-creating connections between home village and city life. These experiences will shape the relation between citizens and the state for many years to come.

in favour of the rights and living conditions of the workers and their families on the farms, directly benefiting 550 people.

The women's role in development here in the countryside is important to us. In recent years, we have always been active against sexualised violence. Women now make up 50% of the active members of our board. In many activities, three quarters of the participants are women.

A challenge for us remains the overwhelming number of difficulties that people encounter here in their everyday lives. How can we set the right priorities and plan appropriate activities that make a difference? And it has also never been easy for the volunteers in our organisation to find enough time and opportunities to get involved. We all work very hard for the daily survival of our families and on top of that we have responsibilities within the CKFCA.

As we look to the future, we see not only the challenges we want to tackle, but also the partners at our side, such as the Workers World Media organisation, which helps us to make our suggestions for improvement visible. And we hope in future to be able to hold a youth camp every year. There, the young people of our region can be innovative and experience their own power instead of waiting for help from outside.

## "THE AGROECOLOGICAL MOVEMENT HAS GROWN STRONGLY"

Roger Morgenthaler in conversation with Julious Piti



Julious, I was an intern at PORET a good eight years ago. What has changed since then?

A lot. The centre now has 20 huts for visitors, seven small buildings for working groups and a community hall for meetings and celebrations. We have an office with solar panels and internet. There is also a bigger kitchen, and we now have 4 solar pumps in the area to supply water.

We fenced off a 20-hectare area shortly after your visit to prevent overgrazing. This allowed us to plant hundreds of new trees. It is now beautifully green and wild animals like the guinea fowl have returned. We have transformed the area extensively with 34 dams that help store up to 9

million litres of water. The groundwater resources further down the valley also benefit.

At that time, PORET, together with the Chaseyama Permaculture Club (CPC), was a small grassroots organisation with a board team, gardeners, and volunteers. The CPC included about 15 households who regularly participated in activities.

We have grown a lot and have become more professional as a result. The CPC itself now comprises 634 households from 43 villages in 7 administrative districts. When we hold an event like a seed festival, about 400-500 registered participants take part. In addition, there are many spontaneous visitors. The visibility and impact of PORET and the CPC has therefore increased greatly. Some time ago, the president's wife visited us, and the government consults us when it comes to agroecology issues. From projects like the CPC, many smaller, independent projects emerge in a momentum of their own.

### What are and were the biggest challenges for PORET?

Projects like HLLM (sustainable pasture management) are among the bigger challenges for us. The results are not visible on the first day, like they are after a tree planting campaign or digging a new dam. The changes we want to make take several years. We also encounter resistance from

the traditional and cultural side. Working with the community is absolutely central.

The biggest challenge for us is and remains climate change. For a long time now, we have received practically no rain. When it does rain, it is often in the form of heavy rain and storms. The precipitation runs off the surface instead of seeping into the ground, and erosion is rampant. More and more often, we even have problems with the cultivation of peanuts, which can actually cope very well with the dry climate here.

### What has the cooperation with fepa brought you?

Fepa came at a very important time for us and has supported us enormously in our professionalisation and organisational development, not only financially. Thanks to the cooperation, PORET became visible and was able to gain more donors and partners. Fepa was and is our backbone and we value the exchange with Marcel, Katja and the fepa team very much. We meet at eye level and there is a fundamental trust. For this, we would like to thank fepa and its members from the bottom of our hearts and wish them all the best for their 60th birthday!



## "WE ARE COMMITTED TO PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE"

Claris Madhuku, Director of the Platform for Youth and Community Development, Chipinge.



Originally, we were a group of young people who were exposed to politically motivated violence around the 2008 elections. Since then, we have been working for peaceful coexistence. For us, this means campaigning for free participation in fair elections. In our opinion, this is the best thing that PYCD has done in the last ten years.

Land issues are also very problematic here. Our organisation is at the forefront of defending communities in Chipinge against forced relocation and eviction from their communal lands. We have strong roots in the communities, and we are very important in the eyes of the people here. When necessary, we also take their concerns to the judiciary, and we have won an important victory in the courtroom.

Conflicts over wildlife are also related to land use issues. Buffalo and elephants from the surrounding parks cause many problems in the communities. We have been working alongside victims to claim compensation for land damage and sometimes accident or even death costs that they are entitled to.

In the last ten years, we have also done a lot for more gender justice. We have also worked very closely in local communities to reduce violence against women and men. It is important to change the mindset of men and women, because patriarchal cultural ideas dominate in Chipinge. We have identified harmful cultural practices, brought them up for discussion in the communities. And we have also involved men so that they contribute to enabling girls and women to have free spaces. That's why we called our project "Spaces to Breathe".

In general, we also became an important documentation centre. We documented the dangerous extent of the abuse of cheap drugs by young people, showed the problems that Covid caused in remote places, or the consequences of land evictions for women. This hard evidence-based way of working has made us a strong advocate for the concerns of our communities.

*Translated by Deepl, Joyce Schäfer and Stephanie Naujoks*