

CHASEYAMA AGROECOLOGY NEWSLETTER



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LEARNING AGROECOLOGY THROUGH FIELD DAYS: FIELD DAY IN CHANDIMARA VILLAGE

Lucia Munodayi and Joseph Muhle, a couple which lives in Chandimara Village ward 20, epitomized the essence of agroecology. Their modest farm nestled amidst the rolling hills is a haven of biodiversity and sustainable farming practices.

The couple hosted a field day held in March 2024 and was attended by members of the CPC, PORET field officers, village head and the people in the village. The main reason why her place was chosen as a suitable place for the field day was because of various agroecology practices which are being implemented on the ground.

Mrs Lucia and her husband Joseph Muhle are good examples of farmers who are embracing agroecology through various practices they are implementing which include, organic farming methods, agroforestry, home design and water harvesting methods, agroforestry, home design and water harvesting which they have just started.

The family has managed to setup an agroforestry garden where they are planting a number of trees together with crops. They have pigeon pea, paw paw, banana, lemon, nartjies, mango trees mixed with various crops which include, sorghum, vegetables, pumpkins, among various other garden crops. Mrs Lucia said, her husband loves planting trees as he is the one who established the garden. He discovered that it was important to mix trees and crops so that trees will provide shade to the crops in these harsh climatic conditions.

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Above: Lucia Munodayi in her sorghum field

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

It is my pleasure to share with you the latest updates and insights in our journey toward promoting agroecology. Through our collective efforts and unwavering commitment, we continue to witness the transformative power of agroecological principles in revitalizing landscapes, empowering communities, and ensuring the well-being of both people and planet.

As we forge ahead, let us remain steadfast in our dedication to promoting agroecology as a pathway to sustainable agriculture and vibrant rural livelihoods.

Julious Piti (Director)

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Asked of where she learnt about agroforest, she said that, it was an idea which was introduced by her husband. The couple were told by CPC members that they were doing agroecology. And this gave them power to join CPC. The family is also implementing organic farming methods at their plot. This is supported by the growing of local seed varieties which the couple said were donated by PORET.

It was in 2023 when the family received seeds from PORET which they planted in their field. According to Lucia, she said that she discovered that local seeds were doing well when compared to the hybrid seeds which she used to grow. Despite the fact that they are good farmers, the local seed varieties have helped in improving yield.

The field day which was done at her place was meant for other farmers in the area to learn about various agroecology principles which were implemented at her plot. Also, during the same event, PORET officials and some CPC members managed to share with the family on how best they can improve their agroecology practices.

Field days has continued to support farmers and raise awareness about the importance agroecology through look and learn tours happening during the day of the event. Farmers are urged to embrace field as they provide them with platform to learn from each other.

WATER HARVESTING BOOSTING AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION IN CHIMANIMANI LOW VELD - THE STORY OF ANNIE GADA



Above: Annie Gada's sorghum field in Mubururu Village with evergreen sorghum despite lack of enough rainfall this 2023-2024 farming season.

“Water is the pillar of farming, without water, there is no food,” said Annie Gada a farmer from Mubururu Village in ward 3 Chakowa. “I have been working with my family for the past few years making and maintaining water harvesting structures in our field. When we got knowledge from PORET about the need to put swales in our field, we did exactly what we were told and now we are witnessing the results of water harvesting,” she added.

Annie Gada is the wife to the late Rishon Chingore one of the Agroecology veteran who has been working with PORET through Chaseyama Permaculture Club. After the death of her husband in 2022, Annie joined Chaseyama Permaculture Club and continued with the good work which was being done by her husband. She continued with maintaining the existing water harvesting structures in her field, and the production of small grains variety such as sorghum, millet and groundnuts.

Her field has been selected to host the 2024 field day in Mubururu Village. What made her field to be selected was because of the evergreen plants which are in her field. In time like this when most of the farmers are crying because of the elnino induced drought, Annie is busy cultivating the results of putting water harvesting structures in her field as her crops are still shining.

Due to elnino, most crops in Zimbabwe have failed to reach maturity stage because of the lack of enough rainfall. Most crops wilted before reaching maturity stage. In most of the areas in the low veld of Chimanimani, farmers were left counting losses because of the lack of enough rainfall to water the plants.

For those farmers who have been practicing agroecology, they are counting on to harvest crops from their fields. It's because of the water harvesting structures which were put in their field to store water for long time in the field. This also worked in combination with other agroecology practices such as the use of organic fertilisers and companion planting which all helps in maintaining moisture in the fields.

Since 2018, PORET has been working with farmers in the construction of swales in different wards of the low veld of Chimanimani. To those who have been doing it well, they have been enjoying the fruits of water harvesting year in and year out.

During the 2023-24 farming season, Annie Gada has managed to grow a number of crops in her field which include, sorghum varieties, millet varieties, rapoko varieties, water melons, cowpeas, groundnuts, roundnuts, and pumpkins. She

managed to do intercropping through mixing sorghum and pumpkins, round nuts etc. This has been helpful in maintaining moisture in the soil, she said. She has also managed to use cattle manure as her main type of fertiliser.

Whilst other farmers are counting losses, Annie will be counting the number of bags she is going to harvest in her field.

Her son Anderson Chingore said that, if it was not of the swales that harvests water which we have directed in our fields, we were not going to have a good harvest this year because of the limited water we received. I encourage other farmers to take note that water harvesting is important to farmers in the low veld as it will help farmers in harvesting well year in and year out even if the rains are low.

COMMITMENTS OF A FAMILY TO BOOST HOUSEHOLD FOOD BASKET THROUGH AGROECOLOGY PRACTISES: THE STORY OF PATRICK MUSIYEZVIRIYE.



Above: Mr Patrick and some of his wives standing in their field



Above: a field which is dedicated to organic farming. Different crops were grown in the field which include maize, sunflower, groundnuts.

In 2007, Patrick Musiyezviriye and his family ended their long stay in Nhedziwa Chimanimani District after benefiting from Government resettlement program. He had tried his luck of getting a farm during the 2000 land reform program but it came to no avail. In the year 2007, Patrick and a group of other farmers benefited from a resettlement program which was being implemented by the government.

He managed to get 2 hectares of land in Mandima Village in ward 4 of Chimanimani.

Patrick Musiyezviriye is a male farmer aged 54. He lives in Mandima Village ward 4 in Chimanimani with his family. His family comprises of 13 wives and over 30 children who are all staying at his 2ha farm in Mandima.

Realizing that his family was growing and there was need for more food on the table, Patrick chose to look for a piece of land where could settle with his family and do better farming. In the year 2006 he was given a piece of land by the government of Zimbabwe under the resettlement scheme. He moved to his new place in the year 2007 where he reintroduced his journey into farming.

Hearing about PORET agroecology programs for the first time was good news for his family. One of his wives learnt from a fellow friend who was attending to PORET programs in Chaseyama about agroecology. She was told that if she becomes a CPC member, she will benefit from PORET training programs which helps in the sustainable crop production. In 2023, 7 of his wives joined the Chaseyama Permaculture Club and participated in its programs.

In 2023-2024 farming season, the family received the local seed varieties such as maize varieties of mutsvuuragudo, madzande, 8 lines; groundnuts varieties of checheni, dungatunga, chipofu; groundnuts varieties of venencia, zai redawa, kasawaira, sunflowers; sesame; okra and cowpeas varieties.

“Comparing the growth of our crops, I witnessed that in the field we are using organic fertilizer, the crops were growing well as compared to that which we used chemical fertilizer. Last year we managed to harvest 4 tons of maize. This year we were aiming to harvest 7 tons because the yield was better despite the lack of rainfall.” He said.

In 2024, his field was selected to host a field day. During the field day, the family said that they also learnt that they need to improve in other practices such as water harvesting, planting of trees at their place and to do a proper home design. Starting 2024, they are going to focus on putting water harvesting structures in their fields.

Mr Patrick said that he has been facing challenges of lack of water, destructive worms in the maize, termites which he said with the implementation of agroecology best practices, most of his problems are going to vanish. Now he plans to drill a borehole at his home so that he can start horticulture project and fish farming. Apart from farming, the family is also into ISALS where they are contributing money on a monthly basis. The money will be used to start new income generating projects for the family.

MEET VOLUNTEERS FROM SWITZERLAND AND GERMAN WHO ATAYED AT PORET FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH



Above: from left to right, Judith (Switzerland), Nico and Carla (Germany)

Judith Haefliger comes from Bern Switzerland visited PORET as a volunteer for 8 weeks. She is a geographer, ethnologist, organisational and personal development trainer and coach.

Nico Wendker: “Hello everyone, my name is Nico Wendker. I am a German studying Bachelor of Science in Geography. I came to PORET looking for the opportunity to learn about agroecology and community based non-profit work. I hope I can benefit the project a little bit by bringing in my own ideas and by exchanging perspectives with the people around, during my 1 month stay at PORET.”

Carla Marie Barello: “My Name is Carla and I am currently studying Sociology in Munster Germany. Before I visited PORET, my expectation was to learn something about the way of living in the Southern African Country. In addition, I am interested to learn about agroecology and how it influences the community.”