

- ❖ Chaseyama Permaculture Club held Successful field days this year.
- ❖ Field Day at Mwapenya Homestead in Mutidzawanda Village
- ❖ Celebrating the life of Tizwani Jinga
- ❖ Holistic Land and Livestock Management meeting with stakeholders
- ❖ Turning gullies into productive fields: The story of Joel Makuyana.
- ❖ Challenges faced by farmers in carrying out farmer led trials and possible solutions.

CHASEYAMA AGROECOLOGY NEWSLETTER



Jinga Village, Chaseyama, Chimanimani District, 0773025438

Issue 10 | March 2022

CHASEYAMA PERMACULTURE CLUB'S 2022 FIELD DAYS A SUCCESS

Field Days are no longer a new thing to the farmers in Chaseyama. Field Days had been done by government departments annually as a way of celebrating best farmer of the year. This motivated a lot of people to engage themselves in serious food production. It's an event that PORET has now been running for years.

In Chaseyama areas where PORET operates, Field Days are now held at village levels as opposed to ward Field Days, as a way of sharing knowledge and farming technologies among farmers. The difference between the earlier version of Field Days and the current ones done at village level is that, the latter are farmer led and they are important for farmers to appreciate what others in the same village, with same soil and who receive same rainfall are doing.

This year, Chaseyama Permaculture Club in partnership with PORET held successful field days in almost every village in three wards of its operation. These Field Days were done at village level by farmers themselves.

The process of selecting fields to hold the events at was done by farmers recommending a certain fields as a place to meet and learn about how the farmers have been doing throughout the farming season. PORET then came in and assisted with catering and other important things needed for the event to happen.

This year, objectives varied from one field to another. Some farmers gathered to witness how crops are performing under different fertilisers. Some were doing Field Days to learn about the importance of water harvesting in crop production among other main objectives.

According to Mr Mwapenya, a Ward 2 farmer, Field Days are important as they help farmers to gather and learn from each other about various ways of farming and environmental conservation.



Sarah Magobeya from Ward 2 Chipiro Village standing in her Sorghum field during a selection tour for the field to conduct Field Day.

DIRECTORS MESSAGE

The 2021-2022 farming season was set to be one of the best seasons for the farmers in Chaseyama. A lot of farmers managed to grow different types of crops which got off to a good start. The efforts by these farmers are now on the verge of being swept away due to lack of enough rainfall during the time when it was needed most. To the farmers, I say don't lose hope, let's continue to develop our plots in preparation for the coming season. I urge all farmers to start ploughing early this coming season. Let's all turn Chaseyama into a hub of food production. *Julious Piti.*

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FIELD DAY AT MWAPENYA HOMESTEAD IN MUTIDZAWANDA



Mrs and Mr Mwapenya standing in their field during a field day at their place.



The sorghum crop thriving in the sun in one of the Mwapenya's fields.

This year, Field Days were conducted across villages in Wards 2, 3 and 5 in Chimanimani. Different themes were at the helm of each Field Day. One such Field Days was held at Mr and Mrs Mwapenya in Mutidzawanda Village, Ward 2.

Farmers from Mutidzawanda selected Mwapenya's field as a place where they wanted to gather and share knowledge about how the family is conducting farming.

This year farmers faced difficulties due to poor rains which has caused most crop to wilt and others to dry. To the farmers, it's a year of hunger because almost every farmer has been affected.

Mr and Mrs Mwapenya were not spared by this bad year. Some of their crops were burnt during the development stage. Despite failure in most of their crops, they were selected due to their healthy crops before the rains were gone. Even if some of the crops were burnt, one could see that they were healthy.

They also engaged themselves into self-driven trials to see what kind of manure is good for their crops.

Other aspects of the trials included looking at the effectiveness of different fertilisers. The trials were based on anthill, cattle manure and compost. The crops on the anthill performed well but when the rains were gone, they were all burnt worse than those under cattle manure and compost. According to the farmers, they learnt that anthills are rich in nutrients which if the rains did not stop would give abundant food to the family.

Another farmer explained that the sorghum which was grown using compost is still showing signs of green despite the lack of rains for them to mature.

According to Mrs Mwapenya, trials are helping them to determine which fertiliser method best suits their crops and soil. She said that if it was there hadn't been bad rains, she would have harvested more this season.

Mr Mwapenya agreed and explained that they will be doing early planting next season since this season

they planted late which affected the yields. He added that next season, he is going to start preparation in October and plant early so that they realise good harvest.

Generally this year most of the crops are affected in the Chaseyama area due to poor rains. Lucky farmers and those who planted early are the ones who are going to have average yield whilst others will harvest less than expected.



Sorghum affected by lack of rains. This year farmers will be harvesting below average yields. If the rains had continued, most of the farmers would have harvested more from their fields.[this is quite an obvious sentence. Can you rethink?

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF TIZWANI JINGA

On the 7th of February, villagers and traditional leaders gathered at PORET's Learning Centre to commemorate the life of the late Tizwani Jinga. Tizwani Jinga's first commemoration was done on the 7th of February last year following his death.

The event was graced by Councillor Mr Douglas Tsandukwa, the village head Tinashe Jinga and four village head advisors, Daniel Mwakupuka, Tarubva Mutanda, Admore Muererwa and Obvious Tsandukwa.

Sabhuku Jinga was well known for his immense contribution towards a united Chaseyama community. He was a man who wanted to see all people coming together and develop their area as one. He is also the man behind the development of PORET through his contribution of awarding PORET land to establish a training centre where people could come and learn.

During his days, he frequently visited PORET to see how the Centre was developing and he continually encouraged his people to follow what PORET was doing in terms of environmental management.

The traditional leaders who attended highlighted the work which had been done by the *Sabhuku* Jinga. Mr Clever Chikohomero thanked the late Tizwani Jinga for supporting development in his area, supporting the construction of the Chakohwa Clinic, maintaining local natural resources and being open to all people in his village.

Mr Tinashe Jinga, the current Village Head for Jinga, thanked PORET and the People of Jinga for this gesture of remembering the life of the late Tizwani Jinga.

During his closing remarks, Councillor for Ward 3 Mr Douglas Tsandukwa thanked PORET for the idea of celebrating the life of the late village head Tizwani Jinga. He advised that this special event should be done yearly. Finally, he encouraged the Jinga people to work together and have one vision.

HOLISTIC LAND AND LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT MEETING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

On the 11th of March, a meeting was held at PORET Learning Centre to reflect on the progress of the Holistic Land and Livestock Management Program being implemented by the Chaseyama Permaculture Club through the support of PORET and traditional leaders.

The meeting was attended by village heads from Jinga, Hapare, Mubururu, Mukono, Mhizha, Chimoyo, Zvokuitirwa, Nemutenzi, Nemaramba, Chizemo. Headman Mutidzawanda and Mwaoneni, Agritex (Nenohwe, Supervisor Majee), Veterinary Services (Dumbarimwe and Bangira), TSURO Trust (Gumisai, Shumba), PORET Trust (Astrid, Katjia, Piti, Chamudondo, Dube, Gumba, Karisawu, Mutsadyanga), CPC village and Main Committee members (Bande, Kudana). HLLM village committees, Livestock owners, youth and farmers who paid exchange visits to Dibamombe also participated.

The people who attended the meeting unanimously agreed that what went well was the Introduction of HLLM program, exchange visits and borehole drilling. The program helped farmers to identify sick animals, enlightened farmers on the need to herd cattle and also the development of a grazing plan.

They also discussed what has gone wrong with the program. This included the fact that some farmers have not yet accepted the HLLM program. Other issues included the lack of knowledge on HLLM, lack of good bulls and limited resources to implement the program.

The meeting concluded that certain things should be done to make sure that the program progresses. Success will come through training for owners of livestock, team work, and enforcement by traditional leaders, and development of M&E processes, awareness of HLLM by traditional leaders, maintaining the bottom to top approach and also to start the livestock herding program with those willing as a model in Chaseyama.

TURNING GULLIES INTO PRODUCTIVE FIELDS: THE STORY OF JOEL MAKUYANA



Above: Mr Makuyana standing in his field

Mr Makuyana Joel visited PORET in 2019 and participated in the Permaculture Design Course. One of the topics he found particularly interesting was water harvesting. The water harvesting part helped him to realise that he was supposed to do gully reclamations in his field.

Using his new knowledge, he managed to create small mini dams to harvest water from. During the 2020-2021 rainy season, one of his gullies was filled with rich soils which had been washed away from the nearby slopes by rains. During the 2021-2022 farming season, he decided to turn the closed gully into a field. He was inspired by the rich soils and also the availability of water.

He planted maize which performed well. Whilst other farmers were crying because of low rainfall, his maize was still in good condition because of the availability of moisture. He says that the crops are looking good and healthy though dry spells are being experienced.

A farmer from Mutare West Bocha area visited his home and admired the way Mr Makuyana had reclaimed the gully. He has now been asked to visit the farmer's area to help him in reclaiming gullies at his home.

Today Mr Makuyana is happy because he has seen the results of water harvesting and gully reclamation.

CHALLENGES FACED BY FARMERS IN CARRYING OUT FARMER LED TRIALS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Farmer-led trials are helping farmers in Chasesyama to carry out productive farming. The trials have now been running for two years.

Through a series of workshops held at PORET, farmers learnt that farmer led trials are important to them as they empower farmers to work out which crops are truly beneficial to them. These workshops saw farmers getting involved in the trials in order to try different farming methods, different seed varieties, and different pest and disease control methods.

A meeting was held at PORET training centre to reflect on the trials. Farmers have found that the trials have helped them to improve their food production despite facing some challenges.

The challenges they have faced include; the late supply of seeds by their partners, lack of buy-in by male farmers which is slowing down the progress, low participation by youths which will affect succession of the work.

Some farmers also indicated that their trials need to be supported with essential tools such as hoes, measuring tools and more trainings on fertiliser production, as well as pest and disease management.

It was also indicated that if farmers are supported with these essential tools and also if the challenges faced are addressed, their trials will bring in good results.

Some of the possible solutions include collection of wild vegetables seeds by farmers to supply their seed banks, early planting, more exchange visits to areas which are doing seed breeding, continuation with Field Days, development of a research book which captures the work so far and also to involve youth in trials to support documentation.