

# Translation Mitteilungsblatt May 2022

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## **FIGHT FOR ECOLOGICAL BALANCE**

Permaculture clubs in Chaseyama are fighting the desert formation process in their area. They are working to preserve the natural resources on our planet and to repair a problem caused by the high emissions of greenhouse gases in the industrialized countries.

The agroecological movement in Chaseyama has a challenging race against time. Will it be able to grow fast and strong enough to stop the effects of climate change before it's too late? Fepa's partner organization PORET mixes short- and long-term approaches. Thanks to which act without the need for huge technical programs or substantial amounts of money. The participation and involvement of local women in farming is essential.

In the short term, smart horticultural technology is needed to increase food security. Fepa's partner organization PORET and the permaculture clubs that have sprung up around it, are therefore promoting fast-growing tree plantations, a diverse selection of local seeds and are also adopting all kinds of measures to harvest water, as well as the digging of new wells here and there. Harvesting water today is essential for survival and central to motivation. Finally, it needs people who are committed to the land and invest in the care for it through their work, so that the desertification can be stopped. That is why we at Fepa continue to support the work on the land owned by individual farmers and the community projects.

If we had more money, we would promote active and sustainable agriculture on a larger scale, by using subsidized methods that are evident to see in Switzerland. Because the farmers in Chaseyama are more independent, PORET and Fepa are more selective: at the moment, only the most motivated benefit from direct support for their flagship projects. In 2021, nine more were added. These "learning sites" complement PORET's permaculture training centre. In total, nearly 50 farm households have consistently converted and are letting others share in their learning process: They are using new methods for planting and water stewardship and investing in soil fertility. Around 400 other households are following their example. They are learning and trying to also be successful in harvesting. Thanks to PORET, we can support the members of the permaculture clubs in the 28 villages and carry the wave further out.

The maxim that the permaculture clubs themselves determine the measures they want to implement continues to apply. This is the right thing to do in terms of a development policy. It is born out of necessity, as PORET could not grow fast enough or assess all the risks accurately enough to determine and implement all this. PORET's commitment to strengthening club capacity and conviction overcomes the scarcity of funds and enables growth that can keep pace with the challenges of the worsening climate crisis.

## Long-term perspectives

But better methods in the fields are not enough. In the long term, an ecological turnaround is needed in the field. Unfortunately, it is not enough for individuals to stand up against the depletion of natural resources. It takes the whole community to. It needs a next generation of people who are committed to sustainable agriculture. Environmental engineer Katja Majirija just returned from a long visit to PORET. She experienced the effects of PORET's work for pasture management and with young people.

"I was pleasantly surprised by people's commitment," Katja said after her countless meetings on the ground. "The communities have worked together to find solutions to overarching problems. They know they are empowering each other and they want to manage the process themselves." The highlight was March 11th. Over 100 people from 6 villages had come together via PORET to discuss their experiences with grazing plans. Thanks to these, in the medium to long term, the soil fertility is strengthened over large areas and the income and the nutrition of the people with animal proteins is improved. They also help to stabilize the water balance in the region.

Last year PORET focused on training young people. The team extended permaculture courses and changed the curriculum to mostly hands-on work, some in villages of their origin. The innovations have paid off. The discussions and data collection around Katja Majirija's visit included many young

people who are committed to these overarching causes in their communities.

Ultimately, the meeting in March also demonstrated the importance of tangible, fast-acting action. Thanks to the enclosure of small herds with mobile tarpaulins, "boma sheets" as the local people call it, the cattle can spend the night in different places of the fields. "The effect is amazing and visible to all," Majirija says, "the ground feels like fertile soil just by walking on it, not like a hard-baked wedge. And the growth of the plants in these places is conspicuously more vigorous and high-yielding. I can see why PORET would want to use more of these tarps."

## 2022 will be tough

The challenge for permaculture clubs and PORET in the current year is great. Rainfall during the wet season has been meagre. Parched by the sun and carried away by the wind, the grass in the pastures that is so important for the animals is already disappearing without a trace. Doing the concrete things to keep the momentum going, and not lose sight of the big goal - that is the vision of PORET director Julious Piti. The courage of the members in the clubs who defy the forces of nature impresses us time and time again. And vice versa, Piti says in conversation, "Your solidarity strengthens this courage and the independence of people who do not complain, but take action and protect and rebuild the foundations of life".

## Editorial

### Dear readers

Our team could hardly curb this Fepa newsletter. How can we put a face to the experience of our partners in Zimbabwe and South Africa that matches the magnitude of their day-to-day commitment?

They are so active and skilled. Their work is inspiring and instructive and there is much more to say about them. That's why we report on some of them in more detail at [www.fepafrika.ch](http://www.fepafrika.ch). You can use the QR codes for easy access.

Fepa partners feel supported and motivated because they know that there are people here in Switzerland who are interested in their work and who also read the Fepa newsletter. We are now always translating the newsletter into English in order to facilitate exchange and mutual support in Southern Africa as well.



**Marcel Dreier, fepa Managing Director**

## CYNTHIA GWENZI: A STORY SHARED IS A PROBLEM HALF SOLVED

"Everything is documented, every single case." With these words Cynthia Gwenzi, gender officer at the Platform for Youth and Community Development (PYCD) in Chipinge, opens the book lying on the office table in front of her. She flips through page after page of handwritten notes until she reaches the first blank page: Thursday, March 10, 2022. Cynthia's small office is occupied, in order to be able to have conversations in a protected environment. Although the year has just begun, the many pages of paper in Cynthia's hands indicate the countless hours she has already invested in listening and identifying possible avenues of support. Child marriage, rape, incest, dropping out of school, and cultural conflicts - these are the issues most women come to the Drop-ins for. "Fortunately, the cases of child marriage are decreasing and school dropouts of young girls are decreasing again somewhat," says Cynthia. During the months of Covid restrictions, the numbers had risen rapidly. According to the activist, violence against women is linked to the lack of opportunities to generate income for the family. The lack of prospects ensures that parents leave their families in search of work, mainly in South Africa. The children, under the leadership of the older ones, try to cope with everyday life on their own. Often this leads to the circumstance that they no longer attend school due to a lack of school fees. And unfortunately, this is also a driver for sex work by minors.

Many gender activists on the PYCD team are familiar with this reality from their own experience. This ensures their rock-solid conviction of wanting to work for the community. They follow the principle "Ubuntu - I am because we all are". They understand from experience. They know how they have to move within their cultural environment in order to be successful.

The team at PYCD is all too aware of how fine the line of acceptance within their community for their quest for progressive change in their Ndau culture is. Not with radical claims, but step by step, they seek to achieve their goals. They offer PYCD's spaces as safe spaces for women, to allow them to express themselves, to stand up for themselves and to share what they are partly ashamed of, is of great importance. "A story shared is a story half solved," says Cynthia with conviction. The fact that the people who come to the drop-in go the distance to voice what they have experienced helps them to not feel that they have to carry the whole burden alone on their own shoulders," she says. It also helps them understand in the first place the difficult situation. Often, the women come with feelings of guilt without the knowledge that they are victims of a crime. The fact that marriage to sixteen-year-olds is forbidden and sexual intercourse with minors is a punishable offense is seen as a self-inflicted mistake.



For Cynthia and her team of volunteers, the conversations are stressful. They discuss the cases in the group and exchange information about support options. It is important that the activists should not claim to be personally responsible for solving problems. "Our focus is not on the 'why', but on the 'how' - how the women who come to us can change their situation." Often it is important for them to gain economic autonomy. "Our task is to think about who can contribute what in support and solutions. Which institutions and organisations have a suitable offer, is there help from the police, the courts, or from important people in the community? Unfortunately, there are too few places to go to. In the end, Cynthia's team often have no choices: If they cannot help directly, then the people who have turned to them are left alone. For Cynthia and her team, the drop-in on this 10th of March was once again a full-time job. There are already fewer blank pages and these too will be filled up in the course of the next few weeks. And each page also outlines a path to improvement.

## WHAT WE ARE LEARNING ABOUT “HAIRDRESSING”

In October, the students undergoing hairdressing training at the Kuwadzana Skills Training Centre impressed Fepa board member Silvia Schönenberger and the Fepa CEO with their enthusiasm and self-confidence. By the end of the year, the graduation and employment rates after the 5-month course went up by almost one hundred percent.

### **Why it is good for the Fepa partners to have the freedom to formulate and test their solutions?**

Today, CEO Marcel Dreier assesses the potential of this training offer differently than he did two years ago. At that time, he advised restraint. He was of the opinion that a dual education system in this area could work cheaply and flexibly and therefore preferred to work with existing salons. The KSTC presented a number of arguments why a complete school operation at the KSTC would work more reliably and safely for the students and lead to good results for the young people in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods around the KSTC. And indeed, because it is less about haircuts and more about hair extensions and braiding techniques, training on fellow students with repeated undoing works very well and offers learners intensive practice at a small cost.



### **Unrealistic entry barriers**

In the past, a diploma was required to work with hair straightening chemicals and the like. In cities, there was even a competent licensing authority. But for a long time now - and especially since the braiding of hair, extensions have become popular - there has been a multitude of suppliers inside the market. Incorrectly treated or too tightly braided hair can cause very unpleasant sensations.

The hurdles for admission to a state-recognised training course are unrealistically high. For the one or two-year training courses, depending on the school, which lead to a state diploma ("Certificate in Hairdressing"), one had to apply several months in advance. And this with a "detailed curriculum vitae" and a copy of the secondary school leaving certificate. Each polytechnic has slightly different rules here, but you always need a sufficient grade point average in English, usually also in science,

mathematics or even in "Fashion and Fabrics". In addition, a "clearance letter" is required from a responsible government agency. For example, the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development is responsible for this, on the first floor in Block F of the so-called New Government Complex in the city centre of Harare. But in a country where even today less than 20% of women have completed secondary education, these training courses to become a professional hairdresser are an almost elitist affair. For those who want to enter professional life without the necessary certificates, the only way is through private or even informal education. Today, there is a confusing range of training opportunities with specialised providers and various community colleges. The KSTC can probably be counted among the latter, even though the requirements at the KSTC are deliberately kept low. At all these specialised providers, the basic training usually lasts only a few months, similar to the KSTC.

**Phoebe Mangwende Dheka**, trainer at KSTC, obtained a State Certificate in Hairdressing from Mutare Polytechnic and then trained as an adult educator at Harare Polytechnic. She is also currently training as a stylist.

### **BARNES JONAS (CKFCA)**

**Our view of things: fepa partner organization CKFCA on "State Capture" and its consequences**

The African National Congress (ANC) is considered the oldest liberation movement in Africa and has ruled the democratic Republic of

South Africa since 1994. The party's popularity has been declining since its near two-thirds majority in the 1994 national elections, and the ANC won only 48% of the vote in the last local elections in November 2021.



South Africans' loss of confidence in the ANC is linked to the resignation of many high-ranking ANC politicians. They were involved in criminal activities ranging from theft and money laundering to corruption on a larger scale. The allegations against ex-president Jacob Zuma led to the final split of the party. The consequences of this split include violent protests and xenophobic attacks - the civilian population of South Africa suffers the most.

The government's economic policies are adversely affecting the majority of South Africans. Unemployment is at an all-time high and income inequality within South Africa is increasing at an alarming rate. The increase in xenophobic attacks against African migrants is also causing Zimbabweans in particular to pack their bags - for fear of further outbreaks of violence.

### **Municipalities without social services**

Corruption, incompetence of officials and politicians, and poor planning are widespread in local governments. Basic services are inadequately provided throughout the country. Experts say that corruption at the municipal level

is out of control. This has a concrete impact on the population. Conflicts paralyze the authorities, and health care, social welfare and business suffer from a lack of money and inadequate supervision.

### **Rising crime rate**

Poverty, inequality and unemployment are increasing youth's risk of crime and violence. In the small communities of the central Karoo, crime is out of control - and the legal system is unable to cope with the rise in crime. White-collar crime, gender-based and sexual violence, and violent drug cartels are destroying the social fabric of South African society before our eyes.

### **We are all affected**

Because of corruption in South Africa, there is a lack of much-needed funds for infrastructure development, job creation, education and health care. The impact of this on communities is particularly visible in times of crisis: the current situation is adversely affecting vulnerable populations - especially agricultural worker communities in the Central Karoo. The unacceptably high cost of living makes it impossible for us to meet basic needs and live a life of dignity.

## **16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GBV**

### **Kumbirai Kahiya: Reviews and contributions of fepa partner organizations**

**Kumbirai Kahiya** is director of the Girls and Women Empowerment Network GWEN. GWEN is committed to girls' and young women's rights in Chitungwiza and Seke Rural.

The 16 Days of Action in 2021 demonstrate that a gender equitable society will not achieve SDG 5 unless other goals such as access to clean energy,

ending poverty, safer sustainable cities, and stronger institutions are realized.

The activities carried out by our alliance of young Zimbabwean organizations demonstrated the multi-layered causes of sexual and gender-based violence and how comprehensively it affects all communities in Zimbabwe. The overall picture also reveals an innovative breadth of response strategies that organizations are pursuing.



They focused on involving interest groups, raising awareness among critical segments of the population, mobilizing large numbers of people with protest marches, seeking solutions against abuses through dialogue, encouraging young people via social media, and using lobbying and action groups to advance the application of laws through the courts.

The young organizations educated about rights and about violence, empowered communities to raise their voices against sexual and gender-based violence, including child marriages and also politically motivated violence against women and girls. They also launched livelihood initiatives and created learning and engagement platforms around the campaign theme. The Better Life Foundation addressed a specific case of physical violence against a young girl by a schoolmate that was ruled as a bullying case in court. The organization turned it into a district-



wide awareness campaign that educated the public, including those of a higher rank, about SGBV and its impact on the community and national development.

We at the Girls and Women Empowerment Network brought the Community Cinema to the rural communities of Beatrice and Seke, using documentaries and feature films with relevant stories to encourage young people to speak out and take action against sexualized and gender-based violence. Filmic tools were also used by RIGE in the Midlands region to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation and the law among mine workers and surrounding communities in the Midlands.

Partners shared successes and challenges in a virtual feedback session on the 16-day activities co-sponsored by Fepa. What the various initiatives have in common is that they work within communities and involve stakeholders in the planning and implementation of activities. All struggled with constraints related to COVID 19 and insufficient financial resources. All also noted that there are large differences of opinion between generations about how to handle the rights they claim. Differences were also noted in the involvement of men. In particular, those who work in deeply patriarchal communities are still looking for men to be allies in the service of change. The biggest challenge in the 2021 phase of 16 Days is the lack of funding for 16 Days activities.

## **WOMEN PROTECTION COMMITTEE**

The Better Life Foundation initiated a Women Protection Committee (WPC) at the end of 2021 in the rural Mutoko district, about 100 kilometers northeast of Harare. This committee aims to offer protection to victims of gender-based violence and support them in reporting the

crimes. The WPC currently consists of a total of 20 people - 11 women and 9 men.



The volunteer committee includes women and men between the ages of 19-40, two traditional leaders, a teacher, a nursing professional, and a police officer. The project has developed a conflict resolution mechanism involving traditional leaders, neighborhood police officers, the city council, and community leaders. The committee has already recorded initial successes: THE WPC has provided counseling to three women who have experienced gender-based or sexual violence. The perpetrators were reported and convicted in all three cases. In addition, the WPC prevented an imminent child marriage.

**More information:** <https://fepafrika.ch/blf>

## **WOMEN DEMAND LANDRIGHTS**

In October 2021, 30 women from various local groups and institutions in Chipinge adopted a "Declaration of Rural Women on Land Rights". The women demand an immediate stop to evictions from land covered by the Customary Land Act, i.e., not transferred in writing to private owners or tenants. The women demand that land rights be secured for all women, including those who are unmarried or without children. The

declaration demands that women and men have the same land rights and that women are allowed to agree or disagree with decisions on land use. To this end, a 50 percent quota of women should be allowed to sit on committees that decide on land use. The declaration also demands that compensation for land grabbing be fair and that the rise in land prices in the context of speculation and mining be stopped.

**Full declaration on land and rights:**

<https://www.plaas.org.za/rural-women-of-chippinge-policy-declaration-on-land-rights>

**RACHEAL 'VOKO' NCUBE – BETRAYAL**

Multi-award winning and talented poet and spoken word artist Racheal 'Voko' Ncube fights gender-based violence and the oppression of women through her poetry. In her poem 'Betrayal', she addresses femicides of international women environmental activists and raises her voice for those who have been violently silenced.

«Those who were murdered are the foundation for us - we need to carry their message out into the world as multipliers! Most people cannot express themselves freely for fear of oppression. We speak of the freedom to express oneself but not of the freedom after one has expressed oneself freely.

Poetry is for me a tool to resist oppression, injustice and lack of freedom. In Ndebele we say: *Olendlebe makazwe* - which means: Those with ears should hear. If they don't hear us out, we will continue fighting! Poetry is my weapon in this struggle, my voice, my language.

I defend human rights - but why? I ask myself this question again and again. The answer is: defend to protect, defend to encourage, and defend to emerge victorious from a system of oppression».



**Excerpt from her poem 'Betrayal'**

See  
I commit to  
Peace  
Non-discrimination  
Gender equality  
Don't tell me you are gonna do me like  
Rabiyya Mamadova?  
(...)  
Betrayal congesting the air  
Betrayal congesting the space  
It's just betrayal all over  
Betrayal to death coz I don't want  
Your dreams to die  
I don't want your ambitions to die.  
(...)  
Marielle Franco  
Elisa Badayos  
Fikile Ntshangase  
(...)  
I will be so ready to join you  
As you continue to Rest in Power  
Help in fight this struggle (...)  
For they say  
'The dead can hear and the dead can see'.

## **WELCOME, DANIELA STUCKERT!**



Daniela Stuckert joined our team in March as a secretary. She has known Fepa for a long time. The workload is minimal at around 10%. With this friendly specialist in charge of the administration, the area of membership and donations is in in good hands.