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MUBAYA ECO-VILLAGE TRAINING AND DEMONSTRATION CENTER YEAR END REPORT-2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The beginning of 2022 was indeed quite a challenge. The year began with just one worker at the centre; also, it was disheartening to realize that the project no longer had funding. This brought its own challenges, stemming from lack of manpower to crushed spirits. However, credit should be accorded to Michael Mubaya, as he struggled to keep the project afloat with the minimal finances he had from the grinding mill business, even though that business on its own was a struggle. In this report, we intend to give a full demonstration of the happenings at the Mubaya Eco Village Demonstration Centre in the year ending 2022. The report will address the challenges, triumphs and the general goings on at the Centre. It will touch on the visits made by Mr. Tresor. It will describe the Female Livelihood Project, including the current happenings. It will bring to the foreground the financial challenges, as well as the labor, economic, social and political atmosphere currently prevailing in the country. It will also further touch on animal husbandry, our gardens, the dam, and the student and volunteer program, in no particular order. We have decided to make the grinding mill report a stand-alone report.

Current Situation in Zimbabwe

The political climate is very tense as we approach 2023, the General Election year. The economy has continued on its downward trajectory, with no end in sight to the daily struggles of the population. The ruling party has continued to wreak havoc in the country, from continued politically-related abductions and disappearances to the unjustified incarceration of the opposition party leader for months on end without trial and no bail, and with no valid reasons being tabled for these denials. Zimbabwe's economy is very bad because we are affected by hyperinflation and prices are increasing every day: food is the first priority. In Harare, 85% of the population are vendors, but their businesses are affected greatly by this situation. We are living in miserable moments, experiencing police brutality and victimisation of the masses, as well as people being forced onto buses to be driven miles away from home to attend the forced political rallies by the ruling party. The situation will only escalate due to the upcoming 2023 election and will be heightened by the factional wars being experienced within the ruling party's channels.

The situation is so bad in the country that even the power utility and government have threatened to remove households from the power grid, so that the little power being generated in the country can be channelled to industry, hospitals, army barracks and places like that. The health sector has diminished to the extent that people are resorting to self-medicating, unmonitored. Underage girls are being raped and impregnated. There are active cases currently of two 9-year-old girls that have given birth and thousands more underage girls that are being raped and impregnated by their fathers, male relatives, guardians, etc. The situation has gotten so out of hand also because of the heightened abuse of drugs. Crystal meth is now being sold in Zimbabwe and the drug situation is very, very bad.

MUBAYA ECOVILLAGE DEMONSTRATION CENTRE

As the year began, the centre's mood was depressing. This was brought about by the exodus of most of the auxiliary staff members, citing low wages mostly. The only member who remained was Tapiwa Collins Muyambo, who, only recently, also threw in the towel and left the Centre's employment. The general workers and the seasonal workers, after finishing their term, also moved away. So currently there are only two general workers, who are struggling with the work load. Some of the young people that used to assist the center have since moved to either look for greener pastures either in the small-scale mining industry, buying and selling odds and ends, getting involved with churches, or getting married and working for themselves, while others have turned to drugs and alcohol in trying to cope with the current economic setting.

The issue of salaries is crippling the center. Our finances are not enough to sustain labor. When we started out in previous years, we would get volunteers from within the village, in exchange for knowledge.

STUDENT & VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

This year we were very unfortunate. We were supposed to receive student interns, but this program was disturbed. Fambidzanai, the Permaculture Center in Harare we partner with on intern programs, had to move their calendar around since students had spent a lot of time in lock-down because of the Covid-19 Pandemic, missing quite a number of modules in the process. This year they had designed a "Catching Up" program calendar. We are hopeful that, in 2023, they can send us some intern students. This will go a long way in assisting the center with labor provision and distribution of knowledge.

However, over time, we have learnt that this program on its own needs a budget in terms of accommodation and food. The students we had previously shared accommodation and some were not so keen on this idea. Also, in terms of food, while the students understand that they eat what they grow, in most of the cases, what they grew was only edible or ready to eat when they had already left the center. The center would then end up buying food for the students to sustain them throughout their stay; this seems impossible in the absence of a budget. We would seek assistance in this regard, should we receive students on the internship program in the year 2023.

We received a volunteer towards the end of the year, in September 2022, at the center for a one-week period. Mr. Tresor Nyembe Bukasa is a Congolese living and working in England, working under a refugee support organization. He is, however, running a successful chicken project in Cameroon in absentia. His chicken project is being run by his workers, while he is working in England. He makes frequent visits to his business in Cameroon.

During his stay; there was an exchange on how the Mubaya Ecovillage Project (MEV) came to be, as well as how his chicken project came about. Topics discussed were:

- The chicken project in Cameroon: This project started with a very minimum budget and very few chickens. Over the years, the number of birds has increased to a couple of thousand and are rearing quite a substantial number of eggs for sale. The project, however, is a commercial project

and practices non-permaculture principles. Lessons learnt include, involving the community in the marketing, distribution and sale of the poultry products, eggs, meat, etc. Mainly, according to Mr. Tresor, the women are the most active in the sale of eggs for a profit so that they are able to sustain their families.

- Mr. Tresor also shared about his tomato project. However, his tomatoes are non-organic. He shared pictures of the end product with packaging and labelling ready for the market. Quite impressive.
- A discussion around production of massage oils brought about the issue of an oil presser. We have Moringa trees at the center and would like to explore this project as well. We learnt that we can get good quality massage oils from the Moringa trees at the center, as well as from our lavender plants and rosella. He reported that he had purchased his oil pressing machine from Germany at a cost of USD 1500 and was exporting his oils to some European customers.
- We discussed fishing projects. We learnt that fish can be farmed in drums instead of ponds. We, however, felt that since we are a permaculture center, this method was not ideal as it requires sheltering the fish in confined, indoor spaces. It would require building a room with all the controls in place, including the right temperature, constant monitoring, and a lot of labor and electricity.
- On the issue of labor, having experienced our challenges in this regard, he suggested we discuss with our Swiss Support Association (SSA), to maybe assist us around the issue of wages for the required number of employees for a period of perhaps two to three years. This, he suggested, would aid the center around labor for the gardens, fields, animals, orchards, greenhouse, grinding mill, cattle dipping, pig house hygiene, as well as our boundary barbed wire that keeps requiring repairs because of the termites.
- It's rather unfortunate though that all these projects we discussed were not suitable to MEV's principles of permaculture, as Mr. Tresor's projects are more on the commercial agriculture side. We are implementing the tomato project, but using our permaculture ways. We currently have plants we are experimenting on. We are hopeful that they will produce as well as how they are producing using chemicals in Mr. Tresor's project.
- Already we have two women working in the tomato field, part time. The patch has been prepared and we are waiting to transplant the plants from the nursery to the field.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

- We were fortunate this year. Our **cattle** stock increased by four calves. However, our challenge is the absence of a cattle herder. Many a time the cattle escape the paddocks to find themselves grazing in the gardens and fields and, in the process, destroy the crops. Unlike in the previous year, when we were swamped by the January disease that killed most of the cattle in the village, we have been lucky that we still have our cattle. Some villagers during that time lost as many as 20 cattle a week.
- Our **goats** have also increased in number, and are currently being housed at a neighbor's pen because we are still working on building our own. We now have six goats from the two goats that we purchased. We hope to keep increasing our numbers so that in the future we can start selling them for meat products and their milk. Goat milk is especially recommended for malnourished children (kwashiorkor) to repurpose their health.
- Our **pigs** are not faring well because of inadequate accommodation. Our pig sties are in a bad state and serious attention is needed. At one point, we had 28 pigs squashed in a small space. We used to let our pigs out to roam about in the paddocks, interacting with cattle. However, there has been several incidences of break-ins, with thieves attempting on a number of occasions to steal the pigs. We have managed to evade this on all occasions, but hence the decision to keep the pigs housed indoors for longer periods. The lack of labor at the center has also caused this decision. There is need for a person responsible for livestock (all livestock).
- Indigenous **chicken** are doing okay, the few that we have. Rodents attacked about 20 chicks, killing them, out of the 40 that we had procured. *Kindly note that these are chickens for the center and not for the Female project.* In a bid to find another way to generate income and food for the center, Mr. Mubaya made the decision to purchase 40-day-old chicks from a local farmer, to start the chicken project. However, unfortunately, half of the chicks (20) were attacked and killed by rodents. We have since found a solution to the rodent infestation, and it is currently under control.

FIELD WORK

As we write, it is the rainy season and the rains are upon us. The village is busy preparing and planting the seasonal crop, maize. Unfortunately, this year we will not be planting the seasonal maize; the seed is expensive, as well as everything else. We have only planted a very small portion so that the Center can have green maize this season. We are also planting small grains, sorghum, ground and round nuts, pumpkin, and sunflowers.

All things being equal, we are hoping to plant sweet potatoes and more paw-paw trees. We have planted cassava, sugar beans, and Rosella tea\Hibiscus tea. We are hoping to get sweet potato cuttings next week from a fellow farmer. We are busy preparing the portion where the sweet potatoes will be planted. Should we get a good enough harvest, we would like to preserve the sweet potatoes by processing them into flour for use later when they are out of season. From the Food Processing workshop conducted by Nosizi Mashingaidze, we are able to implement this, as we have been doing with tomatoes (drying), herbs, some vegetables and fruit, and including some teas.

GARDENS & ORCHARD

We are coming out of the dry season. Our gardens were resting. Now that the rains are here, we have tomatoes that were planted in the nursery last week. In our greenhouse we have nursed sweet cabbage, yellow tomatoes, green peppers, lettuce, cauliflower, and parsley. Also, within the greenhouse, we have ginger, garlic and pocketed trees that are ready for planting and selling.

CONSTRUCTIONS

There was not much construction during this year except for the improvements being done at the chicken house where the Female Livelihood chicken project (FLP) will be stationed (see below).

GRINDING MILL

Business at the mill has been going on as best as possible. It has broken down a couple of times, but pricing has remained at a dollar (\$1). We have had at least three employees this year, working as millers. The first one moved on to greener pastures, citing low wages, and the second miller was fired because he was stealing cash from cash sales and reselling maize for his personal gain while the grinding mill business suffered. Right now, we have one man who seems to be handling it well so far. We still monitor him to check on his work ethic, trustworthiness, and honesty.

The fluctuation of oil prices, propelled by the Ukrainian War, has really put the project in disarray. Diesel prices keep going up, and with the lack of electricity, the service providers for repairs on the mill are charging exorbitant prices. For example, to mend a hole on the mill using gas to weld, they charge US\$30. If electricity was available, the same hole would cost at most US\$5. The margins are too far apart.

WATER -WEIR DAM

The Weir-Dam is full to capacity and has gone a long way in assisting the community members with a constant supply of water for their animals, gardens, and for domestic use. The community is grateful for this development.

The few cracks that let water out through the wall have since been repaired and the rains have been filling it up again.

We are, however, sad to report on the passing away of our brother, the Chairman of the Mubaya Weir Dam Project, Mr. Joseph Mubaya. He passed away on the 13th of July 2022. His leadership and unification to the cause will be greatly missed. May his dear soul continue to rest in peace.

WATER CHALLENGES at MUBAYA ECOCENTER

We continue to face water challenges at the center, mainly due to a lack of finance. We have been operating on a seriously tight budget, only prioritizing seemingly urgent matters like salaries and repairs, especially for the grinding mill. Our 5000-liter water tank remains in distress. In the past year we had sought financial assistance from SSA to construct a water reservoir using brick and mortar since the current tank is made of plastic, and the wear and tear of being exposed to all sorts of weather has damaged it. The response we received from SSA, in this regard, was not favorable. We are, however, hopeful that, with some assistance from SSA, we will be able to proceed with the water reservoir project.

The solar pump stopped working around October and we are grateful for the assistance we received from the Support Association. We managed to procure a new pump that was installed recently. We now have water again at the center, running through the pipes.

FEMALE LIVELIHOOD PROJECT

The Female Livelihood Project (FLP) has come to life, finally. We are glad there is some movement regarding the FLP after almost two years of preparatory work. We are glad to report that, so far, trainings have progressed, with Ronah Mugadza being the first to train women in Financial Literacy, Self-Reliance, Empowerment, Managing Internal Savings and Lending Schemes. Following Ronah Mugadza's training, Nosizi Mashingaidze conducted her trainings in "Free-Range Chicken Production and Management."

a) Training on Financial Literacy (3 days; Refer to the comprehensive report submitted by Ronah Mugadza)

The expectations were:

- To learn how to look after chickens
- To learn about savings and lending skills
- Learn how to keep records
- Business management
- How to feed our families a good diet
- Oneness

Although we have come to understand that the training that Ronah conducted turned out to be a repetition of what the women had been trained in previously by a Christian organization, it was a good occasion for the women to review their knowhow.



Ronah Standing, Ronah's uncle sitting, Group Secretary behind

**b) Trainings in “Free-Range Chicken Production and Management”
(5 days; Refer to the comprehensive report submitted by Nosizi Mashingaidze)**

The objectives of the trainings were:

- To give an opportunity to the FLP to learn about raising chickens for a profitable, small-scale free-range chicken project.
- To provide technical information and expose the women to all aspects of free-range chicken practices on a semi-commercial scale.
- To enable the women to set up an improved free-range chicken management system as a small business to raise income for household needs, school fees and a better lifestyle for them and the community at large.
- To enable the women to improve their own health and diet through consumption of eggs and chicken meat.
- To assist women to increase and develop a wide base for alternative sources of protein.
- To help the women prepare a business plan suitable for their chicken project.

The trainings went very well, though the women felt the time was too minimal. In the first training session, Nosizi was unable to cover some topics she had planned for, including training in business management for the women as well as training in sustainability of the project. She, however, promised the women that, as they will be working together for two years on the project, she will conduct a few more sessions with them. She was availed more rainy days, which assisted her in completing her course training, much to the appreciation of the women.

The women were keen and eager to learn, and they were very interactive with Nosizi during her training sessions. See pictures during Nosizi’s training. Sometimes the group was divided into smaller groups for discussion purposes and when presentations were made.



Nosizi Mashingaidze with Catherine Mubaya listening in to the presentations



Women in training session with Nosizi



Group discussions



Presentations after group discussions



FLP members listening attentively



FLP group members in action with Nosizi Mashingaidze



FLP group member posing at the chicken house



End of training FLP group picture



Some FLP group members

Construction for renovating the chicken house at the Centre is underway.

So far, a security wire around the project area has been erected, including the construction of the room that will house the solar system, the incubator, and stock feed. The agreement between Michael Mubaya and SSA (signed 1st of November 2022) stipulates that the project will run for fourteen months (until end of 2023) with the support of SSA. The chicken house and paddock built on the land of MEV (in the confines of MEV Demonstration Center, respectfully on Michael Mubaya's land) will be at the disposal of the FLP for at least two years after the end of the agreement with SSA (meaning until at most the end of 2025). The idea is, whilst the business is still housed within the MEV Demonstration Center, that the women shall, within this period, start construction on their own piece of land that they were given by Michael Mubaya, before moving to it. This piece of land is virgin land, with nothing on it, save for the security wire that runs past it; the piece of land is accessible through the southern gate into the paddocks. There is absolutely nothing on it, in terms of any kind of development.



Entrance to the chicken housing



Fencing around the FLP project area and chicken housing

Solar Incubator

The solar incubator has already been purchased. We are waiting for the completion of the construction work to finish so the solar incubator can be installed.

The chickens for the FLP group shall be purchased once the housing is ready and the security issue (against theft) clarified.



Housing for the solar incubator and stock feed storage still under construction



Solar incubator

Contracts, Agreements & Memorandums of Understanding

MEV and SSA have a contract in place that puts the agreements to formality. Basically, it stipulates the terms and conditions around the responsibilities and accountability regarding implementation of the FLP. FLP is part of MEV's program. A pilot group of 18 women is conducting the chicken project and constituting as a savings and lending group (microcredit group). It aims to be self-sustainable and respect permaculture principles in raising chickens. The agreement also stipulates the use of the MEV chicken house by the pilot group, including a stipulated length of time between MEV and SSA for the FLP project.

There shall be other legal documents established. An agreement between the FLP (the pilot group) and MEV will outline the time factor on the use of the MEV chicken house, the paddock and the equipment and property for resources and equipment. Memorandums of understanding (MOU) shall stipulate the women's commitment to the FLP for a certain number of years, as well as terms and conditions. All women that are joining the FLP will have to sign individual MOU documents, citing their commitment to the project. This exercise is still in process.

Communication

This has been a challenge for the longest time. A lot of information was not finding its way to the supposed recipients because of lack of communication. We believe this has caused a lot of confusion between ourselves, the FLP, and SSA. We are glad this matter has been resolved by providing the FLP leadership with much needed talk time and data. This will go a long way in improving communication channels.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CRS)

We have taken the initiative to assist the elderly, child-headed homes and those that are bed ridden with HIV/AIDS. We have already targeted four people desperately needing help in the village, although we have more.

We are considering a feeding scheme, once a week, for these vulnerable families. With the stigma that surrounds them, of being elderly, HIV positive, orphaned, etc, it comes with segregation, isolation and loneliness. Most of them I realized, after my study, had not met for more than 20 years, even though they live within a two km radius. We are looking to have them gather at the MEV center once a week for interaction. We want them to feel that they are thought of and loved within the community and also amongst themselves. We are, however, looking for funding for this particular program. We have since sent out requests for food donations and money to other organizations that can assist us in this regard; most of the food supplies will come from MEV.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2023

Barbed wire – We would highly recommend the use of iron poles for the barbed wire. The Centre can only afford poles made of wood right now and the termites continue to destroy the poles. Now that we are in the rainy season, a portion of the barbwire has fallen completely due to the weakened poles destroyed by termites. We have tried a number of ways to contain the termite infestation, including capping the bottom parts of the poles with recycling pet bottles; this has proved ineffective because we at the center are housed on top of the termite field.

Labor – The MEV project is labor intensive. Our labor currently, with the amount of work available, does not balance out. We could hire more human resource, but we clearly will not be able to pay them their wages. Also, with the FLP progressing, there is need to hire a security personnel for the FLP project; the center is under staffed and night security will be a challenge. Also, we foresee a situation whereby our members of staff here at the center will be working for the FLP as well, though partly. There is high risk of theft, more so now, because the economy is on its knees and people are suffering and hungry. We therefore seek assistance, once again, for salaries. Comfortably, we require three employees; responsible for: Livestock, gardens and fields, Grinding mill.

To cut on costs, one employee will double as an assistant laborer to the FLP, as well as serve as the security guard during the night for the chicken project.

NB: The only income generating project currently at the center is the grinding mill. Whatever proceeds that are being realized from the grinding mill sales are being used to pay wages. The wages are being spread over months because the generated revenue is not enough to cover expenses, wages and maintenance. Should we get assistance, it will help in establishing at least some cash flow for other areas that need maintenance.

Pig housing – It would be much appreciated if this project would be given priority because our animals are in distress: we are likely to lose what little remains of the pigs if the situation is not rescued urgently. We therefore are requesting financial support towards construction of the pig house and the start-up of a pork business.

CONCLUSION

We still continue to appreciate SSA's efforts in assisting MEV and the FLP. We would like to extend our gratitude for all the assistance we have and continue to receive from our Swiss Support Association at the MEV center. All the best for the year 2023 and best wishes for the new season. Asante Sana. Merci beaucoup.

Project Director

Michael Mubaya