

Newsletter No. 15 – Summer 2023

Dear Members,

Dear Donors,

Dear Volunteers and Sympathizers of the Mubaya Eco-Village in Zimbabwe,

Hope in Mubaya currently rests on the women with their Female Livelihood Project, FLP. In this newsletter you will learn how the chicken breeding program in Mubaya, led by a women's group, began, and how it is developing. Chicken breeding and egg production generate income that is managed by the women themselves. Through a microfinance system, they will be able to grant loans to each other, which will be used to cover the costs of everyday life (such as expenses for the education of children or medical expenses, for example), but which they will also be able to use to launch new projects on their own. They want to be as independent as possible from men, in order to avoid the power imbalance between the sexes. In addition to this project, the focus of the strategic and organizational support from the Bieler Förderverein in 2023 will be on advising the Mubaya Eco Village Center, helping them on the path to self-sufficiency. Partially and temporarily, we will also pay the wages of employees who assist the village on this path to self-sufficiency. You will get to know some of these employees in this newsletter. In this way, you will get a vivid impression of who in Mubaya energetically and day-by-day provides for food security, community income and also creates confidence in the village. It is obvious that these people need support. The donations that were collected at our benefit concert at the beginning of May were most welcome. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you, dear donors, for accompanying the Eco Village mentally and financially on its way to independence.

We wish you an interesting read and a splendid summer.

Muriel Beck Kadima, President



Muriel Beck Kadima at the charity event in May.



Women of the Female Livelihood Project FLP: After the training, the chicken breeding started. The henhouse is ready, new shade areas and watering places have been installed, and the women are taking care of the operation.

From 200 chickens to more autonomy

After initial difficulties, the chicken project gains momentum

On March 13, 2023, two representatives of the women's group, the chairperson and her deputy, set out to buy the chickens intended for the Female Livelihood Project FLP. This is how they had planned it the previous year. The 46 chickens – 6 roosters and 40 laying hens – were purchased from a company 30 km outside the city center of Harare. Unfortunately, it turned out that the women had not been sold laying hens, according to the requirements they had learned in their training. The supplier had also not provided containers large enough to house the chickens during transport. The cages and crates were too small, so two chickens died on the way to the village. Moreover, another 14 chickens died on the first day outdoors: they were battered from transport, couldn't stand the scorching sun, and were too apathetic to move to the shade. Someone should have been there to herd them into the shade or into their henhouse. But there was also an obvious lack of shade and water. The three shade spots in the chicken meadow – two banana trees and the chicken house that provides shade inside and outside – were not enough. Consultant Nosizi Mashingaidze from the Fambidzanai Permaculture Center therefore met with the pilot group immediately after this tragic incident and gave the following advice:

- The chicken run must have several watering places.
- The chickens require the permanent presence of a woman from the group; there should always be a person nearby who picks up the eggs and observes the behavior of the chickens.

- On a very hot day, the chickens should be driven back into the henhouse before it gets too hot.
- Nest boxes are to be placed inside the henhouse as soon as possible.
- The group should construct shade areas with poles and empty bags.
- A register is to be kept at the weekly group meetings to record the presence of women. Strict measures are to be taken against those who are absent without valid reasons.



High-tech in Mubaya: The solar-powered incubator is set up. It offers space for 486 eggs at the same time. The project group can rent out incubation sites that it does not use itself to others. The chicks hatch after 21 days.

The group can now place eggs that are less than 10 days old and suitable for hatching in the incubator. The other eggs are sold. After hatching, most of the chicks are sold. At the same time, chicks are kept back to be used to increase the flock, so that the number of chickens in the henhouse reaches the target number of 200 birds.

In March, a night watchman was hired to provide security. He was paid by the association for the first three months, after which the women will be able to cover the expenses themselves with their income from the chicken breeding.

The women's goal is to run the farm independently after two years. By 2025, the group should be able to transfer the chicken program to their own households if they do not want to continue operating it as a collective. The two-year test will show which option is more viable.



Start In the start-up phase, the project can use an existing building on Michael Mubaya's land..

New project: Generating income



Farm according to permaculture principles, become self-sufficient and thus create food security. To build a social community that will secure its existence independent of the political and economic turmoil that regularly plagues Zimbabwe. Then to pass on the knowledge and experience gained with permaculture principles and subsistence farming to those interested in the Mubaya showcase farm. Following these guiding ideas, **Michael Mubaya** has been building up the Eco Village Mubaya with great personal commitment since 2013 and demonstrates how the considerate use of natural resources can be successful. Since 2015, he has been supported by the Swiss Support Association SSA.

With the construction of the flour mill (see Newsletter No. 12 / 2021), as well as the Female Livelihood Project FLP (chicken breeding), another aspect has been added: The projects should not only produce and process food for their own consumption, but also generate a financial return. The income should enable the employees to spend on education (school books, etc.) and health (medicines, doctor's visits). Older residents who are no longer able to participate in the production process themselves are to be supported. The income should also bear the cost of veterinary and medicaments for animals and for repairs of machines. It should be possible not to live from hand to mouth, but to initiate new projects with self-generated funds. Laborers who work in the agricultural sector of Mubaya should be able to be paid on time and in full, especially since they have to be satisfied with minimum wages. The economic aspect of projects thus becomes the focus of attention, as well as organizational issues to ensure the safe and permanent operation of the projects.

Ronny Beck has extensive experience in both areas. As a trained political scientist (Lic.rer.publ. HSG), lawyer (BA) and financial analyst/financial consultant (CEFA), he has worked for banks, companies and private clients for more than three decades. He is interested in topics concerning an agriculture that does not deplete and exploit the soil, but protects it for future generations. Ronny Beck, brother of Muriel Beck, the founder and president of the Biel-

based Support Association Mubaya Eco Village, will advise Michael Mubaya on the development of new projects for the village in Zimbabwe and will sit on the board of the association.

Currently, Ronny Beck and Michael Mubaya are evaluating projects that will generate income quickly and sustainably. *The intention is – based on principles of impact investing – to financially support the main goal of the Mubaya Eco Village: a perma-culture based, permanently operated teaching center with sustainable, economically viable activities.* The aim is to create a solid financial basis for the residents of Mubaya to sustainably provide for themselves in a self-sufficient, nature-based system. In the dialogue between Michael Mubaya and Ronny Beck, different perspectives come together, rubbing against each other in a productive way, and – it is hoped – producing results that will help the Eco Village to become self-sustaining in the long term. Below we give an insight into the topics of the conversation between the scientist and theorist of the north and the perma-culture farmer and project manager of the south.

The first thing Ronny Beck and Michael Mubaya did was to sound out the resources: How much land is farmed in Mubaya? What is being cultivated?

At Mubaya, there are currently three acres (=1,3 hectares) of fertile land available for agriculture plus terrain for the animals' enclosures. A wide range of vegetables, fruits, teas and spices are grown: cabbage, tomatoes, onions, garlic, carrots, cucumber, pumpkin, covo, lettuce, cassava, spinach, pigeon peas, banana, lemon, mango, sugar cane, guava, ginger, mint, peppermint, lemongrass, and rosella. Trees are also planted, especially monocots: baobab, moringa (horseradish tree), pine, bamboo, mulberry, and juranda (grape berry/verbena).

The expansion of agriculture is limited by two factors:

1. the lack of water

As Michael Mubaya points out, improving water supply is essential for agricultural expansion. Water is used extremely sparingly in Mubaya – crops are supplied by drip irrigation. Currently, two wells are in operation in the Mubaya Eco Village. One dries up in the summer, while the other runs all year round, but supplies only a small amount of water. 5,000 liters can be retained in a tank (if enough rain falls). Another borehole is absolutely necessary for a reliable water supply. This is the only way to secure the additional water demand for chicken farming and to intensify agricultural cultivation. For the expansion of the cultivation of vegetables, fruit, grain and fruits, which are then to be sold, year-round water security is fundamental.

2. the lack of manpower

Financial resources for the regular employment of workers is currently lacking. According to Michael Mubaya, relying on volunteer labor is not possible because people in Zimbabwe are struggling to survive on a daily basis and cannot afford to work without compensation, simply to gain experience. The employment situation is extremely precarious. Students or graduates of universities – as was the case last year – put in a certain amount of time with great enthusiasm in order to gain their first experience in the field. But if they are not offered a perspective, they move on. Also, when employees are not paid correctly, theft occurs, according to Michael Mubaya. Transparency is needed: employees should always know how much compensation they will receive for how many days of work. Due to the lack of money, Ronny Beck proposes

a hybrid model: One or two people should be found who are partially paid in cash and also receive compensation in the form of food and accommodation.

How can new revenues be generated?

The hope of generating regular income with the corn mill has been dashed because a mill in the neighborhood is attracting customers with dumping prices. In addition, the maintenance of the mill has proven to be time-consuming and cost-intensive. According to Michael Mubaya, having the repairs carried out by local people is not expedient, as they are not trained for this and the machines still have to be repaired by specialists afterwards.

Michael Mubaya brings up the idea of a store selling the agricultural goods grown, as well as animal feed and medicines – these are the three product groups that are particularly in demand at the Mubaya site. And he is getting straight to work, currently renovating a bar along the highway, to which he plans to add an arbor. Next to it, a mini-market is to be built, where fruits and vegetables will be sold.



Traffic along the main highway will provide revenue: A bar is renovated and a mini-market will be installed.

The idea of a store and a slaughterhouse had already come up during the construction of the mill. Chickens, pigs, goats, turkeys and ducks are kept in the Eco Village. For the preservation of their meat, as well as eggs and fresh vegetables, a cold storage room is needed in or next to the sales store, which Michael has already completed. In the sales store he has created a small warehouse with sugar, oil and other daily necessities. Michael also sees the possibility of renting out space in the cold room to third parties – apparently there is a need for this. Michael would like to be guided by Swiss expertise in the development of the cold store/shop/slaughterhouse.

Largely self-sufficient in energy

The Eco Village is well positioned in terms of energy supply. Mubaya is about 60 % self-sufficient in solar energy. The electricity is mainly used to irrigate the gardens and trees, to feed the animals, and for domestic needs (lighting, computers). Since the country is always confronted with electricity shortages and outages, complete self-sufficiency (with solar energy or a generator) would be desirable, especially when it comes to running a cold storage room.

Security and solidarity

Again and again, in the dialogue between Ronny Beck and Michael Mubaya, questions of security and the integration of the inhabitants into the projects come up. It is obvious that due to the devastating economic situation in Zimbabwe, valuable means of production and goods like the mill, solar panels, chickens, computers, incubator etc. have to be guarded so that they are not stolen. Ronny Beck proposes to use inhabitants for the guarding and control, those who are no longer burdened with strenuous agricultural work, but can still perform simpler tasks. It is clear that they must be compensated for this or be provided with goods. Another goal of such involvement is that, above all, the inhabitants of Mubaya feel connected with the project and the goals of the Eco Village.

The village as an employer

Three persons from outside the village are newly employed by the Eco Center: Master Sipunu, his wife Florence Kopilo, and – this is his name – Professor Kugotsi. We briefly introduce the three of them and their tasks. We also introduce Patricia, who has worked for the Eco Center for several years, but now needs the solidarity support of the community.

Master Sipunu is 40 years old and married to Florence Kopilo. The couple has eight children and two grandchildren. As a supervisor, Master Sipunu is overseeing of the Eco Center staff. In this capacity, he previously worked on a farm in Kutama. This job ended when the owner of the farm died and the farm changed hands. The duties of Master Sipunu in Mubaya are – but not limited to:

- Supervising and overseeing the work of colleagues
- Tending the fields and gardens
- Tending and ensuring the welfare of the livestock
- Taking over everyday work and duties as assigned
- Handling the mill, grinding for customers, and keeping records of daily sales



Master Sipunu has a cell phone. His salary is paid by the Swiss Support Association SSA.

Florence Kopilo is married to Master Sipunu. In addition to raising eight children she currently works in the mini groceries shop attending the customers. She also works at the family's home, in the fields and in the gardens. In addition, she attends to other duties assigned to her. Florence Kopilo does not have her own cell phone.

Florence Kopilo's salary is paid by the Mubaya Eco Center.

Professor Kugotsi is 32 years old. He is the father of a three-year-old daughter who lives with her mother. His duties include – but are not limited to:

- Tending the fields and gardens according to instructions from Master Sipunu and Michael Mubaya
- Taking care of the livestock and feeding the security dog
- Participating as night watchman, securing the chicken farm of the FLP
- Making sure the cattle are dipped at the local veterinary services every Thursday
- Attending to any other duties as assigned



Professor Kugotsi does not have a cell phone. His salary is paid by the Swiss Support Association SSA.

Patricia, also known as Patan Ganah, is the longest serving member of the Eco Center, having worked for seven years now. When she started her job, she was doing well - but today she is challenged due to health reasons. She comes and goes as she pleases and when she feels well. Sometimes she is mentally absent and can only come to the center for meals. The Eco Center assists her when it is possible and pays her an extremely small wage so that she can buy basic goods such as soap, fuel, etc. Food she mostly gets from the gardens producing vegetables and the Eco Center occasionally grinds meal flour for her. Patricia is 38 years old and has a daughter and a grandchild. Currently the Eco Center is looking for support to repair her hut. The roof has curved in and in the upcoming winter – i.e. July/August – the harsh weather could affect Patricia.

Patricia does not have a cell phone.



Patricia / Patan Ganah is in need of support.

Miscellaneous

Personnel

Patthamaphorn Wan Kunz announced her resignation as treasurer of the Swiss Support Association at the end of the last fiscal year. On March 11, 2017, she was elected to the Board of Directors, for which she does not stand for re-election now. She performed her duties as treasurer with great composure and humor. Thanks to her experience in Thai projects, she did not let herself be disturbed by the sometimes chaotic bookkeeping in the Mubaya Eco Village and cleared up the presentation of the expenses in US dollars and the accounting in Swiss francs with the eye of a practiced practitioner. Her many years of service were thanked at the general meeting on May 6, 2023.

At the same general meeting Ronny Beck was newly elected to the board. He takes over the function as treasurer from Wan Kunz. As an investment manager with more than 30 years of experience in the financial markets, he intends to assist Michael Mubaya and his staff in the management of the overall project. In addition, he wants to support them in standing on their own feet in the foreseeable future. In this sense – from help to self-help – Ronny Beck will lead the project "Financial Independence of the Mubaya Eco Village Center".

8th General Assembly on May 6, 2023

At the ordinary general meeting, the annual report and the annual accounts were accepted and the board was discharged. The president, Muriel Beck Kadima, the board members Patricia Zimmermann-Kadima and Patrick Leu, and the auditor Janick Grüber were re-elected. Ronny Beck was newly elected to the board as treasurer. The membership fee remained unchanged at Fr. 50.—.

Of the projects planned for 2023, the women's project in particular gave rise to discussion.

Events in Switzerland

Charity concert on May 6, 2023



The singer Julie Fahrer was accompanied ...



... by Sebastian Hirsig.

The evening began with the rich female voice of Julie Fahrer, accompanied by Sebastian Hirsig on the piano. The duo, who has been together for many years, improvise, develop sketches into finished songs and arrange songs. Acoustic elements mix with electronic sounds. Julie Fahrer was born in 1986 in Odder/Danmark into a family of musicians. In 2008, she began her studies at the Jazzschule Basel. In 2011, she received the Young Musicians Award of the Friedl Wald Foundation. In August 2014, she successfully completed her Master of Arts in music, pedagogy and jazz singing. Sebastian Hirsig earned his master's degree in jazz piano, composition and production at Jazzcampus Basel in 2015. The audience of about 50 were delighted by the diverse repertoire, which ranged from jazz standards to folk songs of the North and songs from South America.



The versatile instrumentalist Dedou Sanogo with his band Yiza Beny.

During the second part of the evening, those present let themselves be carried away in dance by the percussion and singing of Dedou Sanogo, griot and musician from Burkina Faso, and his band Yiza Beny. Dedou Sanogo has been living in Switzerland since 2015. He plays and teaches the instruments Balafon, Djembe, Flute, N'Goni and Tama - and he sings. He has performed at various festivals in Switzerland, such as the Delémont Conservatory, in schools with children, and at dance classes.

During this wonderful evening, donations in the amount of Fr. 1000.– were collected. Many thanks to all donors!

In the run-up to the event, interviews with Muriel Beck Kadima were published in the Bieler Tagblatt and in the Journal du Jura, plus an interview was broadcast on the radio. These media reports made the goals and current plans of the Zimbabwe Eco Village and the Swiss Support Association known to a wider audience.

Article in Bieler Tagblatt

<https://mubayaecovillagezimbabwe.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Artikel-Bieler-Tagblatt-Mai-2023.pdf>

Article in Journal du Jura (link pdf here

<https://mubayaecovillagezimbabwe.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Artikel-Journal-du-Jura-Mai-2023.pdf>)

Interview on Radio Canal 3

<https://web.canal3.ch/fr/emissions/230517/interview-muriel-beck-kadima-170523>

Flea markets

The duo Christine Zimmermann and Ria Schüpbach will again be present in Biel with a market stand at flea markets in the old town or on the Esplanade. Thank you very much for your commitment, Christine and Ria!

Our volunteers

Without the work of numerous volunteers, our vision in Zimbabwe could not be realized. For the editing of this newsletter we could count on Peter Schneider. The texts were written by Muriel Beck and Peter Schneider. The translation into French was done by Maeva Koenig, the translation into English by Peter Schneider. The design of the newsletter was done by Christine Zimmermann and the mailing by Simona Materni.

We are also on Instagram and Facebook!

We are also available on various social media! Follow and like us on Facebook and Instagram and receive news from Zimbabwe or from the friends.

Instagram: www.instagram.com/mubayaecovillage/

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Mubaya-Eco-Village-213264952396648/

Next issue

The next newsletter will be published in the winter of 2023.

We wish you a wonderful summer!

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