

LEARNING FROM COMMUNITIES

a programme in sustainable land use skills

The story

For the past 20 years, the villagers of Chikukwa in Zimbabwe's Chimanimani mountains have been using permaculture techniques as a survival strategy. Where once you would have seen serious degradation on the mountainside, due to poor soil management and inappropriate farming practices, now you will find abundant homesteads. Roads are lined with plants that help to prevent soil erosion, and trees, both fruit and indigenous varieties, have been planted with the aim to increase food security in the area. As a result of these and other sustainable land use skills, water is conserved and households are able to enjoy running water on their lands. This is permaculture in action and it is being practiced on a growing scale.

It is this learning that CELUCT – the Chikukwa Ecological Land Use Community Trust – is wanting to share with the wider African community. We already run an outreach programme in the district, and further into the rest of Zimbabwe, with our partner organizations TSURO and PORET. However, we have had numerous requests to host communities from further a field.

Therefore, in collaboration, our three organizations are developing an accessible *Learning from Communities* programme, specifically aimed at small scale farming communities from



The mountains of Chikukwa



The best permaculture design winner



Community-based planning

How do we see this working?

We are looking to develop a programme that will welcome three communities a year to come to Chikukwa and learn from us. It will be an intensive programme over a two to three week period, dependent on the requirements of the participants. Participants will stay at the CELUCT Centre, itself a wonderful example of a permaculture designed garden with accommodation for 35 people. From here, they will take in the immediate village of Chikukwa as well as travel to other nearby areas. The areas selected provide a good cross section of how permaculture and other sustainable land use skills can be practiced in different geographic zones: tropical, dry land and savannah.

To the most part, teaching will be carried out by our experienced trainers. However, we also see this programme as an opportunity to develop skills amongst the farmers practising permaculture on their small holdings. As part of the preparation for the programme, training will be given in presentation methods and other teaching skills. This will ensure that participants on the *Learning from Communities* programme will be given very practical experience from those practising the skills being taught.

Learning will include permaculture and sustainable land use techniques: land design, holistic resource management, integrated livestock practices, relationship building. There will also be modules in conflict resolution, culture and tradition, as well as mindfulness, all of which have relevance within community life and emphasizes our responsibility for the earth.



Assessing cowpeas - a leguminous crop to build soil fertility



Vetiver grass used along the swales to reduce soil erosion on the hillside.



Mai Chokera shows her herb garden

How you can help

In October this year, we plan to run a preparatory training of the trainers session to ensure that a well designed *Learning from Communities* programme can be launched early next year.

In order to run the preparatory training, we need \$2,200 to run this 6-day **training of the trainers programme**. This will enable us to train 20 participants, including the trainers and those farmers in the district who will host participants. The budget covers: accommodation, food, transport and training materials, as well as a small allowance for those who are not employed by CELUCT.

From our years of experience, we know what works in terms of content. Key aspects will include community livestock management grazing practices. *Learning from Communities* is a tailor-made programme for communities across Africa, therefore we will use the preparatory session to ensure that specific elements are explored and developed. The training of the trainers session will also help us to write a realistic budget for the programme itself – identifying all elements required.

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Any funds raised beyond the \$2200 needed to train the trainers will go towards the *Learning from Communities* programme which will train some 30 members of another African community to create food security through permaculture back in their homelands.

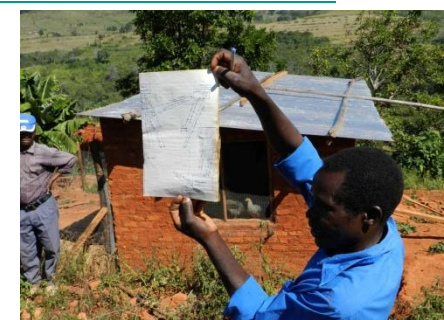
For more information: johnseed1@ozemail.com.au. Visit www.chikukwa.org. To watch a film about the Chikukwa Village and CELUCT's work: <http://vimeo.com/33761246>.



Dryland permaculture in Chaseyama



Instruction being given on how to set up a home nursery,



A plan on integrating chickens into the homestead