



# Annual Report 2017

## *The Year in Review*

2017 was a year of two halves. Although many of our hopes and expectations were challenged during the first half of the year, finally in the second half our pilot program in Kenya came to life – the first fruit of a long, slow process of planning and development over the preceding five years. It took the whole team working together to make it happen, but our persistence has paid off.

We are happy to extend our thanks and acknowledge our great good fortune for the generosity of our many supporters, the guidance of our advisors, the commitment of the *permEzone* Project Board, and the dedicated hard work of the teams at *Permaculture Research Institute Kenya* (PRI-Kenya), and their Phase 1 partners *Sustainable Village Resources* (SVR). Special thanks to the farmers in Rongo and Asumbi for believing in the potential of this program, and for their whole-hearted commitment in taking part.

## *Phase 1 pilot program*

The Phase 1 Pilot program in Migori County, SW Kenya officially kicked off on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017. This initiated the detailed process of planning the program of training, support, and MEL (monitoring, evaluation, and learning), recruiting farmers to join the network, and selecting the 20 farmers in Rongo and Asumbi who would participate in the training as representatives of their respective communities. Their introduction to the program included workshops to engage in co-designing the training curriculum and selecting appropriate indicators to include in the MEL framework.

The three-month training program started in mid-October and was in full-swing by the end of the year. The training team have confirmed that all 20 participants attended all of these weekly training sessions, and the farmers were showing enthusiasm for the coursework, and were eager to get back to their farms and put into practice what they had learned.



*Paul Omollo, Project Manager at SVR, taking farmers through the proposed topics and seeking their input during the Participatory Curriculum development workshop at the SVR office in Rongo.*

## ***Funding***

In 2017 we raised sufficient funds to cover the outstanding budget for the Phase 1 pilot program in Rongo, and to cover the budget for operating the mobile phone platform for the first two years of operation. We achieved this thanks to the generosity of our individual donors, to the small but growing cadre of supporters who have made the commitment to regular monthly donations, to the invaluable support of the Permaculture Association (Britain) who made it possible to accept tax-efficient donations from UK donors, and to our Phase 1 co-funder Greg Zahn.

Thanks to these combined contributions, initial program payments were made to PRI-Kenya in 2017, and funds are in place to cover program costs through to the end of the Phase 1 pilot.

Fundraising efforts are now focused on covering the costs of the next three phases of the pilot, all of which we hope to get started this year. We anticipate that this will mean raising up to \$100,000. We will be pursuing some new strategies to bring in this level of new funding, including crowdfunding and grants.

## ***Program Development***

Our goal for 2018 is to initiate the next three phases of the pilot program. By running multiple pilots of the *permEzone* model of training, support, and farmer-to-farmer extension in parallel, we hope to achieve multiple benefits:

- Maintain the momentum of the program, and the interest and involvement of participants.
- Help each phase to learn useful lessons from each of the earlier phases.
- Get the experience of starting over again multiple times as a part of the pilot learning process.
- Benefit from the input of different communities operating in different climatic and cultural environments.
- Build an evidence-base that supports the viability of this model of rural development, and the potential for scaling it up across diverse communities around the world.

## ***Governance***

Members of the *permEzone* [Project Board](#) volunteer their time to the program and make an invaluable contribution to its development. The Board underwent a few changes during the course of the year, with **Vicki Halpern** and **Sri Subramanian** both stepping back to join the *permEzone* [Advisory Council](#).

**Elin Lindhagen Duby**, former Director of PRI-Kenya is now based in Cape Town, South Africa, and joined the Project Board to take the lead on Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning. **Joel Simpson** is a freelance IT consultant based in southern Ontario, Canada who joined the board with a focus on the mobile phone platform that is an integral part of the *permEzone* program.

## ***MEL – Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning***

The work of the [MEL Team](#) will be fundamental to the success of the pilot program. During 2017, the team made great progress in defining the framework that we will use to measure the impact of the pilot, and which will be key to demonstrate the program's potential. Our approach of fully engaging the farmers in the process of defining the indicators of success for each phase of the pilot has been enthusiastically embraced by the farmers and the training team, and shows great promise for maintaining the farmers' engagement and sense of being fully empowered throughout all stages of the program.

## ***Spreading the Word***

At the start of the year we featured in an article by Hugh Kelly, *permEzone* Founder and Project Director. Published online by [Permaculture Magazine North America](#), the article suggests that *The Slow Development Movement* should be the next incarnation of the "Slow" movement, with permaculture offering a superb toolkit for empowering people to bring about the enduring change they seek to improve food security and livelihoods. We have also been donated ad space in that publication that has run in every quarterly issue.

Hugh Kelly and Sheena Shah, Director of PRI-Kenya, were both contributing authors for a paper that was presented at a symposium on Climate Change and Drought Resilience in Africa at Strathmore University, Nairobi in November 2017. The paper was titled *Building Eco-Social Resilience in the Face of Climate Change and Drought: How permaculture pedagogy and praxis can benefit rural communities and their environment*. The other contributors were David Yisrael Epstein HaLevi, Gregory William Misiaszek, Charles Mugarura, and Liam Walsh. The paper is due to be published by the symposium organizers in 2018.

## ***Supporter Communications***

We've been publishing regular [newsletters](#) to keep our supporters informed about our progress implementing the pilot program. Since June 2017, these have now been published on a regular monthly cycle.

*January:* discussed the idea of the *Slow Development Movement*, with a link to Hugh's recent [article](#) on the subject published by Permaculture Magazine N.A.

*June:* announced that our 1<sup>st</sup> phase pilot program started in RONGO, in Migori County, SW Kenya, with the team at [Sustainable Village Resources](#) recruiting farmers to the network, and starting to plan the training.

*July:* included the first update from the team at SVR, and focused on the need for funds to trial and operate the mobile phone platform, as a result of which we raised \$4900 towards our target of \$6000.

*August:* an update on farmer recruitment, and the identification of the 20 lead farmers who will participate in the full training program. It includes a profile of farmer Jane Migao, and the flourishing canopy of fruit trees that shade her coffee plants.

*September:* a report from the curriculum development workshop, involving the farmers in designing the training curriculum; and a profile of farmer Helida Akinyi Awiti, who commented: “I honestly can’t wait for the training to begin.”

*October:* an account of the team’s two-day workshop with the farmers to define their Indicators of Success for monitoring and evaluation of the pilot. Our new co-funder Greg Zahn was profiled, along with farmer Clemence Akoko Opata.

*November:* a full report on the 2<sup>nd</sup> training workshop in Rongo and Asumbi, and a report on the presentation at Strathmore University, Nairobi of the paper that the *permEzone* team contributed to.

*December:* we shared the positive feedback from the farmers enrolled in the training with SVR, and their eagerness to start trying out the new ideas and approaches being shared with them.



*Caleb Omollo, Founder of SVR, walking on Mary Aila's farm, where she is already trying to implement the swale and intercropping concept. She says her next project on the farm is mulching.*

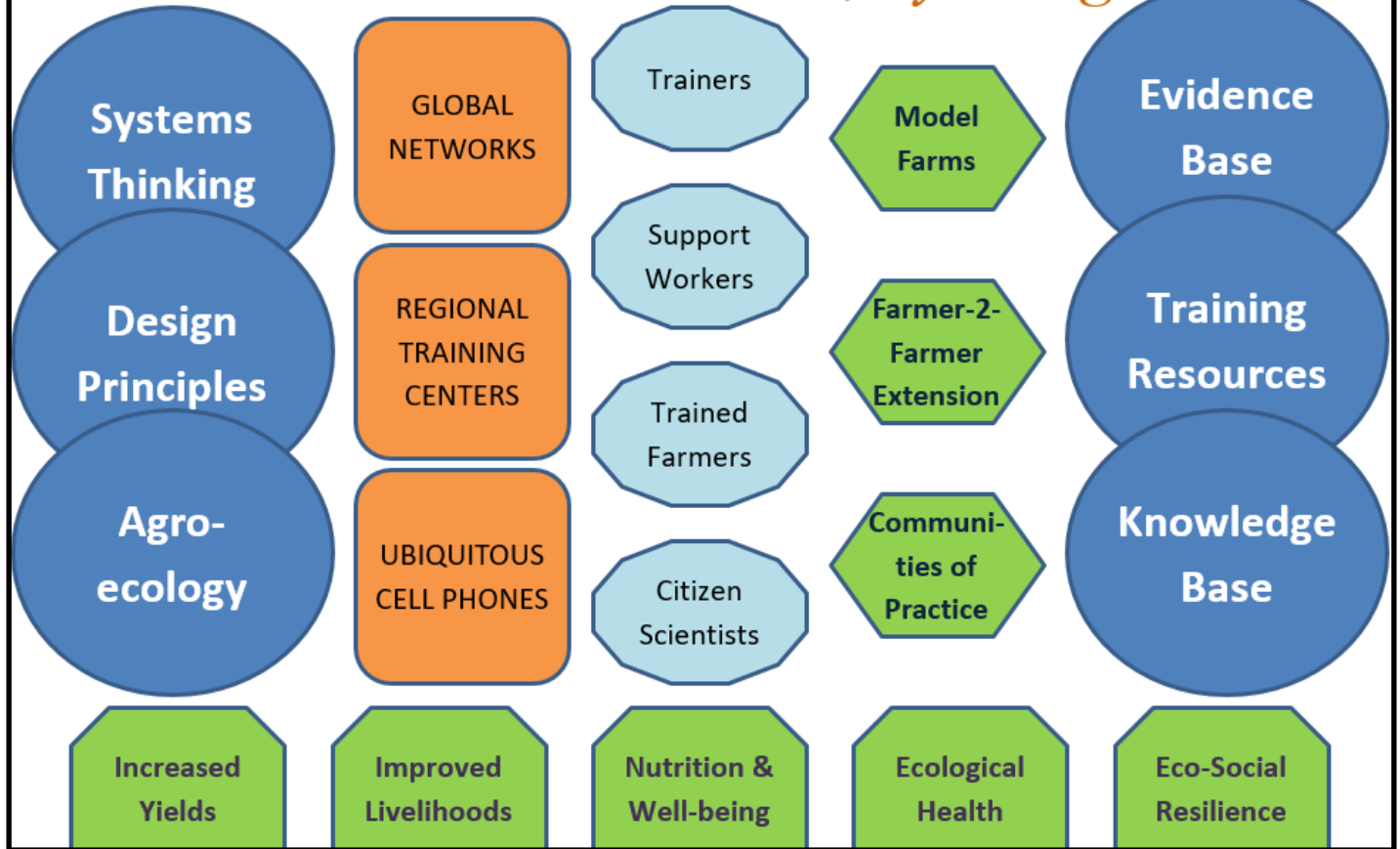
*“I can’t wait for the training to end, I can’t look at my farm in the bad state it is, when I have gained the knowledge to improve it and eventually my own well-being through simple and practical techniques. This is why I have started the implementation process.” Mary Aila*

## ***The Year Ahead...***

We enter 2018 in a very different place from where we were at the start of 2017. The challenges we face now are very much about building on the success of the preceding year, continuing to learn many valuable lessons from those experiences, and building on that great start to move ahead with the next phases of the pilot program in East Africa.

We re-iterate our profound thanks to all our supporters for sharing our vision and for making it possible for us to embark on this experiment to demonstrate the potential for farmers to become eco-social agents of productive and lasting change.

# *Eco-social resilience, by design*



PO Box 23031, Santa Barbara, CA 93121-3031, USA  
+1(805)259-4252  
[www.permezone.org](http://www.permezone.org)