

permEzone Newsletter – August 2016

Finding the Pieces of the Puzzle

This is a busy and exciting time for **permEzone** as we gather resources to start the first pilot training program in the New Year... in fact, now that we know that we will be able to get started soon, those resources seem to have been gravitating towards us!! We are grateful to announce that **permEzone** has added some important new members to our team and in this month's newsletter, we'd like to introduce you to the four founding members of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Team, and explain the fundamental importance of their work to the outcomes of the pilot program.

The permEzone pilot will operate in three overlapping spheres simultaneously:

- First and foremost, it will provide lasting benefit to the participating farmers and their communities;
- Secondly, it will develop and refine a curriculum and service model that can be replicated far and wide;
- Thirdly, it will gather together a body of evidence that has been independently evaluated to demonstrate the value and potential of permaculture as an essential ingredient in rural development programs.

It is this third sphere that the MEL Team will be responsible for designing, planning and realizing in practice. I know that the rest of the team will join me in hoping that you will get in touch with us if you have any relevant experience or resources that you can contribute to this effort.

NUTRITION BY DESIGN

A key goal of many development initiatives, especially those aimed at benefitting communities in impoverished rural areas, is to improve nutrition. Improved nutrition will be a core goal of the permEzone program, and will be a key indicator for our MEL team to track.

We're calling this *Nutrition by Design* because we envisage nutrition as a function to be designed into the food systems that our students will be creating as a result of their permaculture training. We're extremely fortunate that Gerri French has agreed to join the MEL Team because, as an experienced professional nutritionist, she will help us to weave ideas about designing for a well-balanced diet into our training curriculum, and help us evaluate progress towards the ideal of meeting nutritional needs in our MEL framework.

There's some interesting work being done in this field, focusing on nutrition within the context of whole systems thinking and eco-social well-being. Check out the [Never Ending Food](#) initiative in Malawi, and this [Nourishing the Planet](#) blog-post from the Worldwatch Institute - also about Malawi. This article from [Navdanya](#) in India (pdf), co-authored by Dr. Vandana Shiva and Dr. Vaibhav Singh, about organic solutions to hunger and malnutrition puts it so clearly: "the agrarian crisis and the food and nutrition crisis are really connected."

This is just one strand of the MEL team's work, and we'd be very interested to hear your ideas if you'd like to contact the team.

You can see the team bio's on the [MEL Team](#) page on our website, but for now here's a quick intro:



Georgina McAllister is co-founder and Programmes Director at UK non-profit [Garden Africa](#) (who granted the matching funds of £10,000 to support our pilot program), and is currently undertaking PhD research in Zimbabwe. Her experience of the humanitarian and development sectors in Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Pacific and sub-Saharan Africa will help the program prepare for scaling up in different parts of the world. Her knowledge of participatory monitoring and evaluation, including the [Most Significant Change](#) (MSC) technique, will help the team develop indicators of both quantitative and qualitative change resulting from the pilot.



Nicholas Syano is a co-founder of Permaculture Research Institute-Kenya, and set up the local NGO [Drylands Natural Resources Centre](#), where the pilot program will be launched. He has practised and taught permaculture across Kenya and Tanzania, and is a PhD candidate at the University of Nairobi researching Dryland Resource Management. His experience of teaching, practice and research, combined with his direct involvement with both PRI-Kenya and the DNRC, position Nicholas to contribute to the evolving design of the MEL framework and ensure that data collection and information sharing are embedded in the training and operational processes of the pilot.



Gerri French is a California-based clinical dietitian, nutrition educator and cooking instructor, working in healthcare and education. She specializes in translating the latest scientific findings into practical information for clients and students, and regularly organizes events that bring like-minded people together to tour farms and taste freshly picked foods. Gerri will advise the MEL team on appropriate indicators to measure improvements in nutritional outcomes, and help ensure that the training curriculum prepares the farmers to include nutritional considerations in their farm designs.



Vicki Halpern is the Project Board member who will coordinate the MEL Team. She is a retired social work supervisor and adjunct professor with over thirty years' experience working with at-risk and oppressed populations. She is an active member of the permaculture community in Santa Barbara, and volunteers as a certified Master Gardener through the UC Cooperative Extension Service. Her many years' experience in coordinating teamwork, combined with her academic background and current research and learning about monitoring and evaluation, will help the team get the most out of the opportunities presented by the pilot.

We are very happy to see people step up and claim a piece of this project. We are in an exploratory stage now. The shape of this program will ultimately form around the resources, people and expertise that we are able to gather. We still have many questions and we need to find many answers.

As early supporters of **permEzone**, you realize the potential and the value of what we are trying to accomplish. If you have anything that you would like to share - ideas, contacts, resources - please do! We welcome all input with open arms.

Thank you for your continued support!
Thank you for sharing this program with your network!
Thank you for reaching out and sharing your valuable information with us!

NEXT Month - meet the PROJECT BOARD...

*The **permEzone** Team*

We are now fundraising to meet the costs of trialing the mobile phone platform that will form a critical component of the permEzone service. Please consider making a [contribution](#) if you can.

Your donations will be used to run a pilot of the permEzone program, training and supporting farmers in East Africa, developing the mobile phone platform and collecting and evaluating data to demonstrate the impact of the program. This is a chance to make a real difference by empowering people in impoverished rural communities to work together to build resilience and improve the lives of current and future generations.

Any further help you can give to [spread the word](#) will be hugely appreciated.

permEzone is a project of [Empowerment Works](#), a 501(c)3 non-profit, and an international project of the [Permaculture Association](#) (Britain).

2016 © permEzone
PO Box 23031, Santa Barbara, CA 93121-3031, United States