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This month we bring you the first full progress report (below) from our colleagues at Sustainable Village Resources (SVR) in Rongo.

The team in Rongo is working in the tense and difficult circumstances that you are no doubt aware of, with the outcome of the presidential election in Kenya being contested and taking a turn from the peaceful democratic process that everyone hoped for. There is a lot of tension in Rongo and Western Kenya in general where our trainers Paul, Reagan and Caleb all reside and are very restricted in their movements until everything settles.

As we write this, the country seems quiet and we send our hopes and wishes for a calm and peaceful resolution to the dispute soon, so that the whole nation can take a new step forward together. We hope that we can make our small contribution as we do our best to help farmers flourish- as we intuitively feel and evidence supports that when our basic needs are met, we humans are a lot more stable and peaceful.

Results of fundraising appeal

We are excited to share with you some great news: thanks to our recent fundraising campaign, we raised **a total of \$4900!** This is enough to cover the estimated costs of running the mobile phone platform for the first two years of the pilot program! Thank you to everyone who contributed and shared this campaign with their network, and an especially big thank you to an anonymous donor who contributed matching funds. Now we can confidently implement the texting platform and share with our farmers essential information that will help them be successful.

Help test the mobile phone platform

The call is still out for volunteers to spend a few minutes a week helping us to test this program before it goes live. The more the merrier! The bigger our test group is the more valuable it will be. So please sign up if you haven't done so already, and spread the word-- it will be fun! Please SIGN UP [HERE](#)

Progress report from the team at SVR in Rongo

A warm greeting from permEzone SVR-Rongo team! We have witnessed a very busy and eventful month both in the office and out in the fields, thanks to the release of the permEzone project activity funds. Our team has been busy recruiting farmers both in Asumbi and Rongo since the beginning of last month all through to the end. It is quite impressive to see how the new farmers are eager and excited to experience and practice permaculture in both areas despite the fact that to some of them, it is a whole new concept. This fact brings a new energy to the project implementation team!

RECRUITMENT IN ASUMBI

The SVR team traversed Asumbi, Wakeru Village in search for farmers to join the permEzone project. Besides the willingness of farmers, other indicators such as the availability of sample kitchen gardens guided our choices and the team was able to recruit a total of 25 farmers from Asumbi.

Wakeru Village is an area that had a very fertile soil and reliable weather patterns, but in the past few years, the inhabitants have experienced degradation in their soils and unpredictable rainfall patterns. These can be attributed to unsustainable farming practices such as excessive use of agro-chemicals and the devastating effects of climate change. Farmers have agreed that creating a design system for sustainable food production and habitats, a system that links ecology, culture, economics and society to sustain agricultural productivity and biodiversity promoting viable farming communities is the most viable solution.



Ochieng Odeny, the husband of Felister Aludo Ochieng who is now one of our new farmers from Asumbi, showing us their degraded land. They have planted Skuma (kale), but they are devastated with the loss since the plants are not doing well.

RECRUITMENT IN RONGO



Reagan (left) and Paul (right) during farmers recruitment activity in Rongo

Rongo and Asumbi have a lot to share in terms of climatic conditions and the problems facing farmers. The SVR team traveled across Rongo visiting East Kamagambo, Central Kamagambo North Kamagambo and South Kamagambo villages. The team was able to recruit 30 additional new farmers from these areas. The team however noticed that the situation here was not different from what was experienced in Asumbi. A land that was once so fertile is now so degraded. Farmers resorted to sugarcane cultivation which led to the use of a lot of agrochemicals that eventually killed their land. All embraced the fact that the only way to bring their land back is to adopt sustainable agricultural practices such as holistic implementation of permaculture principles.

IDENTIFICATION OF LEAD FARMERS

A total of 20 lead farmers were identified both from Asumbi and Rongo (10 farmers from Asumbi and 10 from Rongo). This selection was based on both the seriousness of the farmer- this was determined by how well the farmers took care of their existing gardens and also the availability of space on their land. The space on their land was important for practical demonstration during and after the PDC training. The lead farmers are expected to disseminate the information in the form of extension work to other farmers in their area after they are trained.



Helida Akinyi Awiti (left), one of our lead farmers in Asumbi, showing Reagan (middle) and Paul (right) the progress she has made with her garden. She is experiencing various crop diseases like bacterial wilt on her tomatoes mostly caused by excessive use of chemicals that kill good bacteria in the soil. Reagan is explaining that building her soil is the first step to curing the disease.

Farmer Profile - Jane Migao

Jane Migao's coffee farm has a flourishing canopy of fruit trees that shade her coffee plants. Each plant is carefully nurtured and has a dark layer of compost around it. "The preparation of organic compost was one of the useful thing I learnt from the courses on ecological coffee growing" says Mrs. Migao. Her compost comes from locally available materials such as cow dung, crop residues, kitchen wastes, waste papers and other organic materials.

From her coffee harvest, she was able to purchase an in-calf cow, which has now already given birth, and she also sells milk in the local market. From the income she obtains from coffee and milk sales she is able to pay for her son and daughter's school fees in College and High school respectively. She harvests twice in a year, and gets an average of 400 kg of coffee cherries annually. At 60/- per Kg, her income from coffee is about Kenya Shillings 24,000, while the milk, averaging 6 litres daily at 60/- per litre, earns her 360/- per day. This equates to a total income averaging about US\$4 per day.



Trainer Susan Karendi and Rongo Coffee Farmer Jane Migao

What we're sharing...

We use the permEzone Facebook page to spread the word about our own activities, and to share posts that illuminate the ever-evolving movement to create healthy food systems that support healthy communities. We've recently posted about:

August 9th, the UN celebrates the [International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples](#), marking the 10th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, helping to protect their unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment.

A call for more research on the impact of food system change, and how an ecological understanding of the design and management of food systems can help us take major steps toward sustainability, the journal [Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems](#).

[Learn how to understand your soil](#) and explore global environmental soil issues by becoming a citizen scientist - with the help of the University of Dundee.

PLEASE CONSIDER BECOMING A SUSTAINING DONOR

We now have the funding we need for the initial nine months of our Phase 1 pilot in Rongo, and to run the mobile phone platform for two years across multiple sites. Now we need your help to keep the pilot running through to the end. If you commit to a **regular monthly donation** that will help us to start planning the next phase.



Please let people know that we're looking for [contributions](#) to support the program; any help you can give to [spread the word](#) will be hugely appreciated.



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