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This month's progress report from our colleagues at Sustainable Village Resources (SVR) in Rongo updates us on their farmer recruitment, which brings the total in the network up to 78, and on *the Participatory Curriculum Development workshop* which directly involved farmer representatives in defining the curriculum for the coming year.

Making Sustenance Sustainable

Meanwhile, we have a special request for you, which is to consider becoming a *sustaining* donor to the *permEzone* program, by setting up a **recurring monthly donation** through our website. This level of commitment on your part will ensure that we are able to follow through with the full program for our farmers in Rongo, and help us to start planning the next phase of the pilot.



A huge thank you to those supporters who have already set up monthly donations!!

Progress report from the team at Sustainable Village Resources

Heartfelt greetings from the *permEzone* / *SVR-Rongo* team! Our project initiation has been hit both by good and difficult times, but *permEzone* has once again proven to have the capacity to ride above the turmoil and has worked hard towards giving the entire project team something to smile about; achievement of its set objectives. The long hours the team spent in the field with the sole aim of getting new farmers on board has definitely paid off.

As we all know SVR's project team and farmers have been affected by the distress in the country with the recent elections. Kenya's Supreme Court nullified the country's August 8 election in a landmark decision, and has called for a rerun mid-October. The opposition supporters, many of whom reside in Western Kenya where the SVR team are based, are hoping for a just outcome overall and quickly get back to routine without disrupting work and businesses.



Paul during the Participatory Curriculum development workshop which took place at the SVR office in Rongo. Paul is taking farmers through the proposed topics and seeking for their input. Farmers are reading through the preliminary document to get more insights.

Having done some serious ground work, the SVR team are happy to report that they have successfully recruited 43 new farmers to the network, 30 in Rongo and 13 in Asumbi, to bring the total working with SVR to 78 - just 22 shy of the target of 100 farmers by the end of this year. We will continue the recruitment process throughout the project period. It has been particularly impressive to see how the entire project idea was received by the new farmers, and how overwhelmed and perhaps impatient they are to get their hands dirty. They could not quite comprehend the term 'permaculture', but as the project team walked them slowly through the idea in Luo (their local language), their faces lit up instantly! The positive feedback from the farmers is a clear indication that the project is happening at the right time and in the right places for positive impact.

Training Curriculum Developed

In preparation for the training to kick-start early October, the project team has been working in consultation with the lead-farmer representatives, to develop and fine-tune a curriculum document that will meet their specific needs. The curriculum is tailored toward giving farmers a comprehensive permaculture feel and experience. More focus has, however, been channeled towards ensuring that the trained farmers truly get enough interaction with the design component of the concept. To experience and learn good observational skills, for example, the team and the farmers have deliberately planned to have different topics taught at different relevant sites. The curriculum has been engineered to make the training diverse and practical throughout, and to emphasize that there is really no monopoly in permaculture design. The curriculum planning workshop with the farmers has been impressive, their commitment to work together to form an effective plan was evident throughout.

Having the curriculum document and the farmers in place is already a bold step and an explicit manifestation of many more success stories to follow. Together with *PRI-Kenya* and *permEzone*, the SVR team are now working together in formatting the curriculum and final facilitator's handbook which will be ready by the end of the month in preparation for the trainings to begin in October. PRI Kenya have been actively working and monitoring the progress thus far working in cooperation with *permEzone* to enhance better communication and feedback loops throughout the planning phase.



Helida Akinyi (middle) enthusiastic during the curriculum planning workshops.

Farmer Profile - Helida Akinyi Awiti

Helida is one of the newly recruited farmers in Asumbi project area. She is very happy that we are introducing permaculture in her area and that she is part of this new community.

She adds: "For a very long time now, I have been doing small scale conventional agriculture with large inputs of agro-chemicals but I still do not get much yield despite spending a fortune on these inputs. Farming has become less profitable these days. When I was growing up as a young girl, I used to see my grandmother have Orundu (kitchen garden) which did not require any chemical supplements. The garden had everything in it and the production was quite high per unit area. The taste of the food was also good. I just kept wondering what their secret was. I am really grateful that I have been chosen as one of the lead farmers in this great project and initiation. I am quite optimistic that the concept will answer my questions on what my grandparents used when they were farming. I expect that after setting up the permaculture concept and start my own model farm, I will have more time to focus on other things since the farm will not require much of my attention later. My dietary needs will also be diversified. My kids will have time to concentrate on their studies, too. I honestly can't wait for the training to begin."

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. Recent posts have reflected some of the pros and cons of agriculture (pros of organic vs. cons of industrial):

The [Farming Systems Trial](#) at the Rodale Institute, after 35 years of research comparing organic and conventional farming systems, reports on organic's consistent ability to produce comparable yields (superior in drought years) while increasing soil organic matter that in turn increases water holding and nutrient carrying capacity.

Industrial farming is driving the sixth mass extinction of life on Earth, according to an article in the [Independent](#) newspaper based on an interview with Professor Raj Patel of the University of Texas at Austin.

A third of Earth's soil is acutely degraded due to agriculture according to a report in the [Guardian](#) on a UN study that links industrial agriculture to massive loss of fertile soil, erosion, desertification, competition for land, conflict, biodiversity loss, carbon emissions...

The [Washington Post](#) reports on a paper published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences that highlights the need to adopt sustainable land management strategies that store carbon back in the ground, to reverse the loss due to agriculture of 133 billion metric tons of carbon from the top six-foot-deep layer of soil.

PLEASE CONSIDER BECOMING A SUSTAINING DONOR

We now have the funding we need for the initial nine months of our Phase 1 pilot with Sustainable Village Resources 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.



Spread the Word!

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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