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PELUM Zimbabwe - Networking for a greener Africa



Editor's Note

This month's edition focuses on our thematic area ***Rangeland management, Water and Dry land cropping***. We look into the work started by Zimbabwe's own – Allan Savory who pioneered the work on Holistic Management and the Holistic Land and Livestock Management Programme in particular. Savory's work holds the key to address some of the world's most pressing challenges - drought, floods, hunger, poverty, crisis and many more.

Many organisations in Zimbabwe are beginning to implement the Holistic Land and Livestock Management Programme and results are already showing. This edition takes a closer look into some of the work being done by PELUM members and partners to improve the lives of smallholder farmers including marginalised groups such as women.

I sincerely hope that you will be inspired as I was.

Happy reading!

Gertrude Pswarayi

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Livestock rejuvenates ecosystem

By *Elias Ncube, ACHM*

Smallholder farmers in many parts of Africa face numerous challenges such as desertification, drying rivers and wells, poverty, increasing spread of infectious diseases, crop failures and dwindling livestock. Women who constitute the majority of smallholder farmers suffer the most. Although the challenges they face seem insurmountable, pioneering work in Holistic Land and Livestock Management (HLLM) is offering hope.

HLLM is a programme that uses livestock to restore degraded land by harnessing the power of their hooves to break up hard ground for air and water to penetrate. Old grass is trampled down and the soil is covered, making it less prone to the drying effects of sun and wind. Their dung and urine help fertilize the hoof-prepared soil, and their grazing (which is timed to prevent overgrazing and allow adequate time for plants to recover) keeps perennial grasses healthy, greatly minimising the need to burn and expose soil.

The benefits of restoring land using livestock are many. The livestock do all the work and this reduces external inputs. The soil benefits from the dung, urine and hoof action of animals and this results in increased crop yield. Breaking the soil crust reduces runoff and encourages water percolation that in turn recharges underground water and rivers. Large herds trample plants that decay and recycle nutrients for robust plant growth. This reduces dependency on synthetic fertilizers that damage soils in the long run.

This remarkable work that is offering hope to millions of people is being demonstrated at the Africa Centre for Holistic Management's (ACHM)



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Dimbangombe range. The range had bare and capped soil. Natural water bodies were silted and dry but proper management of livestock reversed all that.

ACHM started with 70 herd of cattle in 1999 on its 3, 200 acre range. The herd has since increased to 560. The drought experienced during the 2014/5 and 2015/6 farming seasons saw Dimbangombe growing more grass compared to surrounding communities in the Hwange communal lands.

For many years, people have been taught that having too many animals in an area damages the environment. ACHM has proved that with good management, livestock help increase forage, improve soils and recharge underground water bodies. Without livestock the soils and plants are over-rested and a crust develops on the surface while the old grey grass chokes the new shoots. However, restoring land using livestock is practical, mostly uses locally available resources and brings many benefits.

This technology is already developed and it just needs tapping. Some smallholder farming communities in Zimbabwe are now using this simple technology and they are managing to put money in their pockets, improve their environment while remaining true to their culture.



Pioneer of Holistic Management, Allan Savory



Land restored using properly managed livestock



depleted land

Farmers benefit from planned grazing

By Samuel Chimbarara

The adverse effects of climate change has destroyed the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa. In Chikukwa communal lands, Zimbabwe, two community based organisations are working with smallholder farmers to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Chikukwa Ecological Land Use Community Trust (CELUCT) and Towards Sustainable Use of Resources Organisation (TSURO) Trust have introduced the Holistic Planned Grazing Programme to strengthen smallholder farmers' capacity to manage their land and livestock productively.

Ester Matirekwe (73), is a widow who is looking after her 12 year old nephew. She could not take care of her cattle because of advanced age. Her nephew could not do the same because he was attending school. Her cattle were known in the community because they caused a lot of destruction in crop fields. This resulted in conflicts and she would be ordered by the traditional leaders to pay fine or compensate crop owners.



Ester Matirekwe's field in 2014



Ester Matirekwe celebrating her success.

Ester owns 1.5 hectares of land which she uses for dry land cropping. Despite the size of her land she could not produce enough food to feed herself and her nephew due to poor soil fertility. Although Ester owned cattle which produce manure, she could not carry the manure from the pan and apply it in the field. One day, one of her cows ate an empty fertilizer sack

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Community constructing a movable kraal



Cattle are penned in crop fields using movable kraals to enrich soils with their dung and urine

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and died. This was a great loss to her. In 2012, Ester adopted the Holistic Planned Grazing Scheme when it was being piloted. Some households in Chikukwa combined their livestock to form one community herd. This herd had 134 cattle and it was herded collectively using a grazing plan designed by the community.

Ester's three cattle joined the community herd. In 2013, a part of her crop field measuring 50m x 75m was *animal impacted*. Animal impacting is done using livestock and a mobile kraal. Livestock are penned in a mobile kraal during the night on a portion of the field for about seven days before being moved to a new site. This is done until the

entire field is impacted.

Before animal impacting, Ester used to harvest six or seven 50 kg of maize. After animal impacting she harvested 16 X 50 kg of maize in 2014 and 17 X 50kg of maize in 2015. In 2016, a devastating drought ravaged the country, but Ester still managed to harvest 12 X 50kg of maize.

“My cattle are being properly looked after. They are healthy and increasing. There are no more conflicts with other members of the community. My fields are fertilized and I am harvesting enough food for consumption and selling and this has given me peace of mind”, says Ester.

Women defy cultural norms

By TSURO Trust



Participatory planned grazing

Ownership and management of livestock in Zimbabwe has traditionally been dominated by men while women were relegated to rearing chickens and doing household chores. Today, women of all ages in Zimbabwe are breaking cultural barriers and they are freeing themselves from cocoons that entrenched them to disempowering gender roles defined by patriarchy.

Women in Chisuko community have taken a lead in livestock management. They now hold leadership positions in Planned Grazing committees and are actively involved in decision making processes. Their active participation has ensured that their voices and issues are considered in the community. Junior Nezandoni is one of the four herders looking after the Chisuko community herd. She joined the project when it started in 2012. Before joining the project, Junior had lost five cattle from stock theft when they were on free range in the Sunguroni Mountains.

“My animals are now safe. They are in good condition because we always move them to fresh

grazing areas and leave enough time for the other areas to recover. They are calving very well. I look after them and many other animals. I am paid for herding my cattle which are part of the Chisuko community herd”, says Junior.

Junior says that she has no qualms about joining the male dominated responsibility of looking after cattle. “We get on very well with other herders. We are good friends and some of them are my relatives. We share ideas about many things when we are up there herding cattle”, says Junior.

The Chisuko Grazing project was initiated by Towards Sustainable Use of Resources Organisation (TSURO) Trust in cooperation with the Chikukwa Ecological Land Use Community Trust. Approximately 58 households brought their livestock together to form a community herd with 223 cattle.

Livestock owners pay a monthly contribution of US\$1 per animal and an additional US\$4 per household. At times members make contributions erratically but on the whole the group has managed to mobilise resources to pay four herders.



Community herd