



Networking for a Greener Africa

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REGIONAL NEWSLETTER

Editorial Note



Faustin Vuningoma - Secretary General

Welcome to the 2nd edition of our monthly Newsletter. I wish to thank PELUM Association's Country Working Groups and regional staff that have contributed towards its production.

This edition focuses among others on the Agroecology Learning Exchange that was held in Uganda, where much of what was discussed was similar to ecological land use management principles that were established by PELUM Association 21 years ago.

This edition highlights Zimbabwe's small-scale farmers' efforts to attain food sovereignty through promoting their indigenous seeds and foods, Kenya's rural women's mitigating efforts of climate change through promotion of kitchen gardens and the importance of public expenditure tracking survey in the agricultural sector.

We continue to request Country Working Groups to share news about what they are doing in their respective countries to become part of our newsletter.

The Small Seed that Grew the Giant



The 1st SG John Wilson, one of the earliest donors Dr. Michel Pimbert and the current SG Faustin Vuningoma meeting in Uganda

The meeting of the 1st Secretary General of PELUM Association Mr. John Wilson, one of the earliest donors Dr. Michel Pimbert and the current SG Mr. Faustin Vuningoma in Uganda was exciting with historical moments. The three men met at the Agroecology Learning Exchange that was held at St. Jude in Masaka on 10th May 2016.

The story of Dr. Michel Pimbert and PELUM Association dates back to decades ago. In 1993, when the founder members of PELUM were working to get the organisation registered, the 1st Secretary General of PELUM Association, Mr. John Wilson, travelled to Copenhagen in Denmark for a Permaculture conference.

During the event, he made a presentation on the importance of bringing together the different approaches of sustainable agriculture under Participatory Ecological Land Use Management, and highlighted PELUM Association's intentions of "Networking for a greener Africa" in the Eastern and Southern African region. His presentation impressed Dr. Pimbert who was then representing

the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and he promised to donate a small grant of \$5,000 for the purpose. Dr. Pimbert requested Mr. Wilson to use the grant to what he believed would best help grow the network and spread the message. That is the seed which grew the giant – PELUM Association.

The grant was indeed put into good use, and here they both are two decades later; attending a global meeting with colleagues from all over the world to convene at the premises of one of the PELUM Association's Member Organisations.

PELUM Association, linking from small-scale farmers to the national, regional and continental level, and further to the global agroecology movement is fully in agreement with what Mr. Wilson was presenting at Copenhagen in 1993.

We in PELUM family remain thankful to Dr. Pimbert and all the other donors that supported and continue to support ecological land use management or agroecology, the only sustainable systems of feeding nations.

Seed Sovereignty Taking Root in Zimbabwe



The Vice President of Zambia, Madam Inonge Wina happy with the display of seed varieties exhibited by Zimbabwe during the Regional SSFs Symposium

The Zimbabwe Seed Sovereignty Programme has continued to gather momentum in Zimbabwe with PELUM Zimbabwe and its partners forging practical and political synergies that avail

smallholder farmers with platforms to discover knowledge together, invent or modify strategies that sustain community-based seed systems.

This multi-year programme is the first of its kind in Zimbabwe and

involves seven partners – PELUM Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Smallholder Organic Farmers’ Forum (ZIMSOFF), Chikukwa Ecological Land use Community Trust (CELUCT), Towards Sustainable Use of Resources Organisation (TSURO), Farmers Association of Community Self Help Investment Group (FACHIG) Trust and Practical Action. The seven partners have vast experience in seed, advocacy, documentation and working with communities, particularly smallholder farmers.

The seven partners are joining forces to link isolated work on seed and respond to contextual factors on seed. Learning will be documented and shared with the PELUM network at local and regional level.

The Zimbabwe Seed Sovereignty Programme is farmer-led and it seeks to strengthen sustainable practices.

Kenyan Rural Women’s Groups’ Efforts to Mitigate Effects of Climate Change

Women Small-Scale Farmers in Karura Village, Gatanga District, Kenya, have begun to embrace kitchen gardens in the bid to adapt to climate change. PELUM Kenya is encouraging farmers to stick to family farming by promoting the production of indigenous crops which have proved to adapt well to harsh climatic conditions.

The women groups have since planted cassava and other crops. They have also started rearing rabbits and keeping goats which can provide manure as an alternative to chemical fertilisers. “When farming, I don’t use chemical fertiliser, I use compost manure,” explained one of the beneficiary women.

Leah Wangoi, a member of Nyagila Women’s Group in Karura Village, has also confirmed that indeed the weather patterns have changed drastically: “The weather has changed in comparison with the last few years for instance, River Kiama used to flow

very well throughout the year, but it has now dried up”. She however is glad that something is being done to adapt to climatic changes, like establishing tree nurseries.

PELUM Kenya is working with Youth Action for Rural Development (YARD), a community-based organisation that operates in Gatanga and some parts of Kirinyaga District. YARD has since trained the women in alternative farming methods to cope with the effects of climate change. YARD and PELUM Kenya package information on climate change and translate it into local languages to help farmers to create awareness to farmers. They also link farmers with research institutions and repackage research information to be user-friendly to farmers.

YARD has also come up with drip irrigation kits in order to irrigate kitchen gardens and provide extension services to the farmer groups. These include minimum tillage to enhance

the water-holding capacity of the soil, construction of water tanks to harvest rainwater to a capacity of 15,000 liters storage, practice of technologies that help to conserve water and soil, and training farmers to construct simple solar driers for farmers to preserve the vegetables. YARD also encourages farmers to set aside small plots of land for planting trees, especially agroforestry trees that improve soil fertility.

Despite the unfortunate effects of climate change rural women have put in place plenty of measures that can help the small-scale farmer communities to adapt to these harsh conditions.

This story of the Kenyan rural women is to encourage the entire PELUM family and the small-scale farming communities on the African continent to emulate the agroecology practices that Kenyan rural women are using to ensure food security and sovereignty at household level.

PELUM Uganda Commended for Good Work



Secretary General visited the PELUM staff in Uganda

The Secretary General, Faustin Vuningoma visited PELUM Uganda on 9th May 2016 during the Agroecology Learning Exchange organised by Agroecology Fund and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), and hosted by a Member Organisation of PELUM Uganda, St. Jude.

It was an opportunity to discuss about the experiences of PELUM Uganda, appreciating

the hard work of the staff and the important role they play in the entire PELUM network as an active Secretariat.

The SG and the Country Coordinator Stella Lutalo had a chance to discuss the successes of PELUM Uganda and the promotion of the new Zone structure of PELUM which places Uganda to the Northern Zone together with Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania.

St. Jude in Masaka, a member organisation of PELUM Uganda clearly demonstrates what member organisations working with SSFs at the grassroots can do to promote agroecology. Their demonstration farm where many get trained is a very good testimony of how one can work on a small piece of land (0.5-2 ha), produce enough food for his household needs and have extra to take to the market for income to purchase goods or services that are not produced at their farm.

This can be a good testimony for policy-makers who continuously argue that agroecology cannot feed the growing population. This was witnessed by participants from the globe who were hosted at St. Jude for the Agroecology Learning Exchange from 9th to 12th May 2016.

Also the rest of our 258 Member Organisations across the entire PELUM family in Eastern and Southern Africa are doing good work to promote agroecology. As PELUM and others build a strong agroecology movement globally, we request all Member Organisations to take the lead wherever you are and showcase how only this system can feed the world sustainably.

Take the lead and challenge the productivist theory being promoted by industrial agriculture practitioners and the exploitative multinationals.

Global gathering at the Agroecology Learning Exchange discussed viable food systems for sustainable future

St. Jude Demonstrates that Agroecology Can Feed the Growing Population

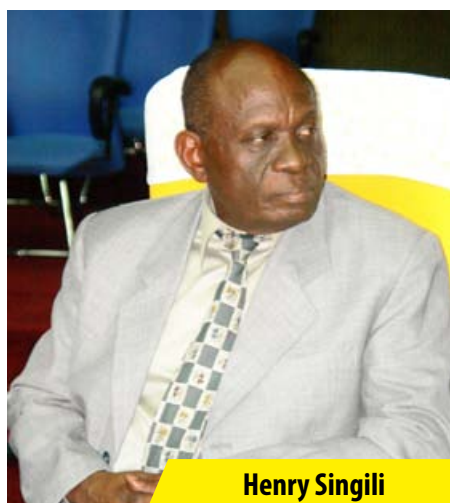


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Henry Singili

PELUM Regional Advocacy, Campaign and Lobby Officer Mr. Henry Singili has urged Civil Society to play a prime role in compelling governments' accountability and transparency in public expenditure and influencing investment policy in the agriculture sector in favour of small-scale farmers and the communities.

This is in line the 2003 African Union (AU) Maputo Declaration that directed all AU member countries to increase investment in the agriculture sector to at least 10% of the national budget by 2008.

To gauge progress towards this target, the AU and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) agreed to take on agriculture expenditure as a good variable to be monitored.

"PELUM Association for instance has for the past twenty years promoted public debate on issues that affect Scale farmers in the region, this includes their participation in the formulation and implementation of the various government policies and programmes as well as supporting greater transparency in public expenditure accountability", said Mr. Singili.

Singili: Civil Society Must Prioritise Budget Tracking

He added that PELUM Association with support from Joint Country Programme (Norwegian Church Aid, Dan Church Aid and Christian Aid) recently undertook a two year budget tracking project in two districts namely Serenje and Sinazongwe.

The project focused on the budget allocation to the Ministry of Agriculture with special reference to the two districts.

The Ministry of Finance and National Development was instrumental in facilitating dialogue with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock through whom PELUM Association was connected to Ministry Officials in the Provinces and the Districts.

The project established and facilitated budget advocacy groups in the two district according to the number of communities identified with members trained in the budget process and advocacy.

The advocacy groups played a key role in analysing budget allocations in their respective districts.

They monitored funds disbursed from the Ministry of Finance and National Development through the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock to the District Treasuries.

They also visited project sites and shared their findings with Government officials and other stakeholders in the districts with whom the project worked and built up their strength to engage with

policy-makers in their respective districts.

This arrangement worked very well with the relevant information and data being provided at all levels.

Through this project small-scale farmers were able to influence the inclusion of their budget priorities and concerns into the mainstream national budget with favourable response.

Today, the work done by these local budget advocacy groups is being emulated by other institutions like Parent-Teachers Associations (PTAs) in schools to track resources allocated in the education sector. Budget monitoring is now a family concern at household level too!

The Zambian example is a show case on how the Civil Society can support communities to play their role in holding governments accountable and transparent in government expenditure. This can help communities to influence public policy in their favour.

We encourage the entire PELUM family in the 12 Country Working Groups to support small-scale farmers to build up strong coalitions that can undertake public expenditure tracking surveys in their respective countries.

This should be done specifically in the agricultural sector so that the farmers are able to know how much is actually spent in supporting the sector and how much really reaches the grassroots.