



LAND CASE STUDY

Holistic land and livestock management in Manicaland

Summary

Poor management of the land over the years resulted in a series of problems. Cattle were not herded and grazing management was poor; livestock were overgrazing parts of the veld leading to bare lands and loss of biodiversity. The lands were badly degraded and exposed to persistent soil erosion, leaving gullies and infertile soils. The project created a platform where community members could meet,

developing opportunities for collective and inclusive dialogue towards sustainable community resource management. The project has resulted in an improvement of the quality of the land and biodiversity. New plant species that had been considered lost in the area are now growing and some streams and water sources that had dried up have started to flow most of the season.

The Problem

Chimanimani District is in the eastern highlands of Manicaland Province in Zimbabwe, close to the border with Mozambique. The district has five natural farming regions ranging from the Highveld to the Lowveld. The Highveld at 1800m elevation records an annual average rainfall of about 2000mm, while the Lowveld at 600m elevation records about 300mm annual rainfall. Most of the rivers that supply water for irrigation, household and animal uses have their catchments areas in the Highveld areas. These rivers and their tributaries pass through many communities as they flow across the district, some crossing into Mozambique. The activities

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of community members upstream affect the quality and quantity of water accessed by societies downstream, as well as the livelihood activities of the people.

Poor management of the land over the years resulted in a series of problems. Cattle were not herded and grazing management was poor; livestock were overgrazing parts of the veld leading to bare lands and loss of biodiversity. The lands were badly degraded and exposed to persistent erosion, resulting in the washing away of fertile top soils, plants and seeds, leaving gullies and infertile soils. These challenges also increased surface runoff during the rains and reduced recharging of the water table. The resultant effect was the drying of most water sources and rivers in the area.

Response

In 2012 TSURO Trust in collaboration with the Africa Centre for Holistic Management and Njeremoto Biodiversity Institute initiated the Holistic Land and Livestock Management intervention, in partnership with community and government leadership, aimed towards restoring the ecology of the area and promoting sustainable livestock grazing practices to improve livelihoods and biodiversity. The intervention covered five wards, each comprising at least 10 villages and 60 members drawn from each ward. The wards covered are Ward 20 (Changazi) in the Lowveld, Ward 7 (Shinja Resettlement) and Ward 6 (Chayamiti) in Central Veld, and Wards 10 and 11 (in Chikukwa) in the Highveld.

The project created a platform where community members could meet, developing opportunities for collective and inclusive dialogue towards sustainable community resource management. The aim was to reduce the adverse effects of climate change, reverse the impacts of land degradation, improve access to quality and sufficient water for people and all biodiversity, improve livelihoods of the community through enhancing a rich natural resource base, reduce runoff and loss of water, improve soil fertility on grazing lands and cropping fields, and improve the quality of the veld.

The project brought the Chimanimani community together to map a way forward towards restoring their degraded lands, conserving biodiversity and ensure sustainable grazing. Through participatory and consultative processes, the community agreed to multiple strategies for addressing the problem.

Community agreed strategies

- Establish environmental action groups that would champion environmental management, create environmental awareness and carry out biodiversity monitoring and assessments.
- Start to herd cattle through a collective and time controlled planned grazing.
- Establish a district dialogue platform on climate change to review and plan on climate change and watershed management activities.
- Develop a participatory district climate change and watershed management policy.
- Establish a district climate change steering committee to drive the process of implementation of the agreed processes on environmental management and Land use in the district.
- Carrying out biodiversity conservation projects in the community.

Results

The project has resulted in an improvement of the quality of the land and biodiversity. New plant species that had been considered lost in the area are now growing and some streams and water sources that had dried up have started to flow most of the season. At least 10 new grass species considered to be favourite for livestock have been observed growing and cows calving rate has also increased by 10%. Overall, community cohesion and participatory interactions have increased and most community members are engaged in agroforestry land use practices. The vegetation cover of the veld has improved tremendously.

The project has chalked up very important milestones that serve as great opportunities for upscaling into other parts of the country. These include:

- A district climate change and environmental management strategy developed, the establishment of a district steering committee and a district dialogue platform to drive this process.
- Zimbabwe's Climate Change Policy provides a framework for climate change work and environmental management for Chimanimani Community.

The project has effectively contributed to the following:

- Community land security;
- Improving access to land for young people;
- Improving women's access to land;
- Poverty reduction;
- Reducing discrimination in access to and use of land;
- Adaptation to climate change;
- Biodiversity conservation and agricultural biodiversity;
- Improving soil fertility, rainwater infiltration, reduced runoff;
- Improving water use;
- Cultural sensitivity, democracy and justice

Despite the achievements of the intervention, challenges remain in the unplanned settlement expansions, inappropriate farming practices, and exploitation of nature (such as mining), mostly influenced by the socio-political situation.

Lessons

The project brought out useful lessons.

- A community that works collectively and democratically with all members of the society, and whose traditional leaders are active and work very closely with state and non-state actors, creates

opportunities for its members to access sustainable livelihood opportunities which are promoted through sound collective environmental management.

“Our river dried up and for the past 10 years it had no water flowing in it, but due to the good environmental management practices we are starting to see the water source supplying us with water again and our livestock and other animals are benefiting from this water.” Mrs Mandega, an elderly woman in Chikukwa Village, ward 10.

- Sustainable land and livestock management practices that look at the environment in a holistic way, and where all members of the community work

collectively with their traditional leaders, women, young people and stakeholders, has high impact in promoting well-being and a sustainable quality of life for the society where access to land, water, biodiversity and other natural resources is improved.

The results of this intervention created an opportunity to share and engage the district, provincial and national policy makers. It provided an opportunity to use the evidence to advocate for a holistic land and livelihoods programme that ensured the scaling up of the project lessons. The participatory approach adopted in the project cycle created a good opportunity for all stakeholders to share and own the successes and promote scaling up of the lessons.



The veld was bush encroached with few palatable plant species required for animal nutrition



This is the same area and the bush encroachment has been removed. The ground is now covered with cow urine and dung and has been trampled destroying the hardy bushes



Three years later the land has been impacted using livestock and showing the robust growth of mixture of palatable plant species and few hardy bushes



The area has been impacted and foot paths tracks can now be seen seed cutting across grass veld with few bushes

**Author: Mr Backson Muchini, Executive Director,
Towards Sustainable Use of Resources Organization (TSURO) Trust.
Email: bmuchini@iwayafrica.co.zw. Tel: +263 772 413 124**

Who is AFSA?

The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa is a broad alliance of civil society actors who are part of the struggle for food sovereignty and agroecology in Africa. It is a network of networks, currently with 34 members active in 50 countries. Its members represent smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fisher folk, indigenous peoples, faith-based institutions, women's and youth groups and environmentalists from across Africa. The core purpose of AFSA is to influence policies and promote African solutions for food sovereignty.

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