GROUND UP

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A PELUM publication promoting sustainable community development

Championing Small-scale Producers' livelihoods amidst Global crisis

Inside this Issue:

Cover picture: A flood disturbs the day to day activities of people. Courtesy of PELUM Uganda

Editorial

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Welcome to the July 2009 Issue of the GroundUp magazine. The world is going through a global financial crisis. Not long before this, people were protesting against high prices of food. Frequent floods and droughts are experienced on a yearly basis.

While it is acknowledged that everyone, in one way or another, is affected by the global crises, it is also a known fact that others are more affected.

For PELUM, the possible effect all these crises are having on smallholder farmers is paramount. Persistently grappling with other structural dilemmas, these smallholder farmers have limited access to agricultural inputs including technical support, markets and information. A collapse in the global financial markets, frequent floods and numerous droughts just add to the already souring situation.

This issue of the GroundUp magazine tries to remain positive amidst all these crises. The articles propose alternatives to the way things are being done. There are some developmental strategies that may or may not have been used before but provide a different view to the way in which the world does things.

Centainly, there is need for a reflection on how best smallholder farmers can be facilitated and supported to ensure they cope even in the midst of all these crises. Moreover, there is need to ensure that farmers increasingly rely on their local resources that are easy and cheaper to acquire.

In all this, governments should ensure that policies and legal frameworks in place, encourage the advancement of local production and sustenance of people's livelihoods. On the whole, everyone should play a part in ensuring that strategies employed advance the participation of people whose livelihoods need improvement.

Marjorie Chola Chonya
Editor

The Credit Crunch: how does it affect Smallholder Farmers?

As the world goes through the credit crunch and a recession, for smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa, there is even more to worry about. *Frank M Kayula, from Panos Institute of Southern Africa in Lusaka,* writes that these economic woes make the situation of smallholder farmers even more vulnerable.

The world has known a number of words and phrases that have become household terms. One such term that has become popularised by the low cash availability in the United States (US) economy since September 2008, is the term credit crunch. The phrase credit crunch has sent fevers and uncertainty among citizens in the developing world to the extent that they refer to anything unavailable or affecting their well being negatively, as related to the credit crunch.

Credit crunch and recession defined

What is a credit crunch and does this phenomenon affect in anyway how smallholder farmers in the rural and urban communities make ends meet for their livelihoods? Is there anything developing countries can do about the credit crunch?

The Council of Economic Advisors to the US presidency (1991) defines a *credit crunch* as "a situation in which the supply of credit is restricted below the range usually identified with prevailing market interest rates and the profitability of investment projects". A credit crunch is therefore when there is little money to lend out to prospective borrowers. The current credit crunch is a result of the risky lending behaviour particularly among bank executives, board members and bank confidants. Huge amounts of loans were given at high risk to these special clients who were trusted to handle the monies expeditiously but failed to do so. This situation created a lack of or inadequate money to lend out to productive industries. As such, banks had to start rationing available money because it was limited in supply. By the forgoing, I then agree with those that have opinions like,"Africa has been in a credit crunch as far as we can remember". There has not been a period when credit has been readily available to most smallholder farmers. In fact, lack of adequate credit has contributed to the near no growth among smallholder farmers. Why then is there anything bad about the current credit crunch experienced in the developed countries?

The major problem has been that the credit crunch this time around was immediately followed by a recession. A *recession* is a period of economic slowdown when the national or global economy registers declining Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for two or more quarters consecutively. One can imagine a period of restricted credit when GDP is dropping. That is the economic situation among most developed countries except Norway which is one of the few countries still recording growth in its economy.

The combination of the credit crunch and the recession is as bad as the combination of high blood pressure and diabetes. The combination of the credit crunch and the recession may lead to the collapse of the economy and great suffering among citizens. This is the reason why affected developed countries have to really take care of their economies and their people before considering outsiders, except of course when the nation is keeping up appearances and maintaining relations and grip over those relations. If developed nations have to give priority to their citizens before considering the poor African, then there is cause to worry because most developing nations depend on donor funding to produce food for their people.

Politicians and economists have blamed the bank management staff in both the US and the United Kingdom (UK) for the current credit crunch. Some 'senior bank executives' have taken such steps as restitution for their wrongs. Some economists have gone on to give a general blame to the developed countries as having been spending recklessly while the developing and emerging economies were trying to save for their development. Other economists have blamed the whole scenario on the loose money management in the corporate as well as the financial sectors in all the regions.

Whatever the cause of the current money blues, we have all begun feeling the effect of the economic crisis. An increase in job losses, which

has been coupled with the slow business flow for most productive industries like the mines and manufacturing, is an inevitable encounter for Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA). The cut down on activities and purchases of goods and services by organisations that depend on financing from the developed countries means low income for the suppliers and poor markets for the producers.

Does the financial crisis have anything to do with smallholder farmers?
This is a big question particularly for SSA, which is highly vulnerable to the current environmental conditions and whose population largely depends on agriculture.

The agriculture in SSA indeed depends on rains and is vulnerable to climate variability. This, coupled with the low asset base among most SSA smallholder farmers, means that any failure in dealing with climate change (an activity that depends so much on funding from rich countries in accordance with the Kyoto protocol) will definitely affect the production of food and industrial raw materials. It is a fact that a number of programmes aimed at improving agriculture are highly donor dependant. For some nations who have failed to reach the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) agreement of 10% budgetary allocation to agriculture, the problem may be compounded as they have definitely been depending on bilateral and multilateral donor support to produce food for their own people.

Disgraceful as it may sound, most SSA countries operate on deficit budgets with great dependence on donor funded programmes for food security. This is a situation developing economies should try to avoid at all cost. There could be some dependence on donor support but not for things as cardinal as feeding own citizens. Many SSA countries still depend on donor support for fertilisers and management of agriculture information systems. The early warning systems which enable farmers to respond quickly and decisively to production directions are for a major part supported by donors.

It is no hidden fact that the developed nations have been hit harder by the credit crunch and the recession than most renowned economists thought. Some European Union (EU) countries, Japan and the US have had to readjust their estimation of the impact of the economic meltdown. Although most bilateral donors are faithful enough to proclaim that 'a promise is a promise' and that they will endeavour to meet their promised obligation to provide finance for agreed sectors of the developing nations, the disbursements are bound to be delayed or even derailed if the financial situation remains uncertain globally. In short, agriculture in developing nations will be affected negatively by the inadequate and lack of flow of funds to the sector due to the credit crunch and the economic recession.

Is there a way out for the smallholder farmers?
This question is one of the major issues that should have been addressed by the governments of developing nations at independence. What should be done to empower smallholder farmers so that they are resilient enough to withstand shocks and be able to improve their production to levels where the current agricultural sector dependence on donor funds could be reduced?

The suggestions put forward here are just a list of what could be done to reduce the impact of the credit crunch among smallholder farmers and streamline a new direction for the coming years. The solution is a three pronged endeavour to involve all stakeholders in the agriculture sector: Individual farm household solutions, internal institutional solutions and regional/global Institutions.

Individual farm household:

1. Should start their enterprises with local and easily available resources. The enterprises should be developed to yield products that can be made competitive on local and international markets.
2. Plan production cycles early to include alternative sources of inputs and resource mobilisation strategies. Focus should be on food security and extra production for sale. The plans should also include coping strategies in case of failure of preferred enterprises due to unforeseen circumstances.
3. Diversify into other farm enterprises, non traditional farm enterprises and nonfarm enterprises to supplement farm income.
4. Support each other in developing local enterprises by making networks of groups with similar interests for easy outreach programmes by support and market organisations.

Local institutions: that include government and non government institutions as well as community based institutions should:

1. Focus on policies and strategies that clearly outline stages for smallholder farmer development.
2. Build capacity in farming as a business for smallholder farmers to make them compete equitably and fairly on the open market.
3. Improve infrastructure and market support to open up rural areas for markets.
4. Deliberately allocate quotas of farm enterprises to suitable regions and support production with appropriate infrastructure and technology.
5. Institutionalise savings and credit schemes and facilities for rural farmers.

External institutions: including regional and global networks and donor communities should:

1. Help to provide for and support

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regional integration for agriculture production.

2. Support promotion of suitable and specialised agriculture products for export within and outside the region.
3. Support value addition to selected country specific agricultural products.
4. Provide for the establishment and enhance capacity for free trade of agriculture inputs and produce within the region.

Due to vulnerability of the agriculture sector in developing nations and the heavy dependence on donor funding, the sector is likely to suffer a heavy decline if developing countries will not address some issues locally. The solution lies with the smallholder farmers by taking up farming as a business and utilising local resources. Governments should also enact policies that are responsive to rural agricultural needs. The regional and global institutions should support the integration of agriculture systems to incorporate value addition for all export products.

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Mount Kenya Declaration on the Global Crisis and Africa's Responsibility

Aware of the various global crises, *25* civil society organisations from 10 countries in the region bemoan the same thinking and *"False Solutions"* that have continued to propel solutions for Africa. The organisations were brought together by the African Biodiversity Network to an advocacy workshop held near Mt Kenya in May 2009.

From 23 - 31 May 2009, the African Biodiversity Network (ABN) gathered together near Mount Kenya, 25 organisations from 10 countries that work with farmers and local communities on the issues of biodiversity, food sovereignty, livelihoods, climate change, traditional knowledge, culture and community rights in Africa.

The organisations were aware that the planet is facing multiple interconnected crises which will have an even bigger impact on Africa, even though Africa is not responsible for these crises. On the one hand, there is the stark and devastating impact of the food and financial crises, which will be compounded by the impact of climate change.

The organisations are very concerned about the devastating impact that the food and financial crises and climate change is having on the people of Africa and their environment. People are losing their livelihoods, houses, jobs at an alarming rate and at the same time, farmers, pastoralists and local communities have to cope with unpredictable changes in their environment. They concured with the Indigenous Peoples (Anchorage Declaration of April 2009), that the Earth is no longer in a period of climate change but in a climate crisis.

Smallholder farmers want to produce enough for sale and household consumption

They are outraged at the financial crisis which was caused by global financial institutions accumulating unimaginable wealth while speculating with ordinary people's hard-earned savings. This economic meltdown is now pushing many countries over the brink and is adding another estimated 104 million people to the 1 billion permanently hungry people in the world.

They are also aware that the food crisis and recurring famines in Africa are not something new but is caused by basic structural injustices entrenched over decades, now reaching new levels of deprivation because of the speculative trading of food on international markets.

“We find the current scale of ”crisis capitalism” intolerable and strongly reject the cynical attempts of corporates that target Africa for further exploitation of the food and climate crises by turning it into economic opportunities rather than trying to solve it.

We see the underlying cause of the crises as the globalisation of the industrial system which inevitably results in the concentration of capital and power in the hands of a few, generating ever growing poverty and ecological destruction resulting in global climate change. Now the same thinking that created these numerous toxic debts is promoting many *“False Solutions”* that are exacerbating the crises. There is an intensified scramble for Africa's land and ecological wealth facilitated by governments who continue to be dominated by corporate interests,” they lamented.

They rejected these False Solutions which include:

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs); which are said to solve hunger and climate change, but have instead caused widespread contamination of farmers' crops and our food while increasing the use of pesticides which destroy biodiversity and health. The ultimate aim of GMO companies is control over our seed and thus food system through the patenting of all forms of life. These crops require highly industrialised farming conditions, which release huge amounts of carbon into the atmosphere, thus a major contributing factor to climate change. In spite of this, GMO proponents are now claiming that they can find GMO fixes for both the climate change and the food crisis.

AGRA; a New Green Revolution is imposed on Africa by a collaborative effort between amongst others, the Bill and Melinda Gates and Rockefeller Foundations, the World Bank, and agro-industries to replace Africa's seeds, crops and knowledge with hybrids, GMOs, fertilisers and pesticides. Because this industrial system needs large tracts of land, AGRA is also funding the push to change land tenure systems, privatise land and so facilitating the rapid change of land from community custodianship to just another commodity in the pockets of investors. The sheer amount of money and political influence the Green Revolution push has behind it, is now dominating the debate on agriculture, pushing for stricter intellectual property rights on seeds, weak biosafety legislation, in the process narrowing Africa's options for food sovereignty both on country and local level.

Agrofuels (or biofuels); are promoted in Northern countries as the solution to climate change, as providing an alternative to fossil fuels. But they are driving an unprecedented land grab across Africa, and leading to forced evictions, deforestation, and rising food prices. We challenge the myth spread by corporations and corrupt governments that there is plenty of free land, going spare in Africa. We in Africa know of the challenges and conflicts we already face from the competition for land and water. A number of other solutions to climate change are also turning out to be little more than business opportunities, including biochar, carbon trading and geo-engineering. It is clear that these proposed solutions by corporate interests are based on acquiring large tracts of land and cheap labour for industrial scale production, serving to maintain the lifestyle of societies of over-consumption thereby exacerbating the crises both in the North and the South. All of these developments claim that they bring progress to Africa. But not only will they fail to address hunger and climate change, they will make them worse. These false solutions are cynical attempts by the corporations to reach new markets, and to make a business out of a crisis.

ABN's Position

ABN believes that the solutions to climate change and hunger are the same: healthy resilient communities depend on healthy resilient ecosystems and biodiversity. We are certain that the role of healthy, biodiverse ecosystems in maintaining a stable climate is critical, and that it is completely underestimated in most predictions and discussions about climate change. When dealing with climate change, we must both reduce carbon emissions and enhance biodiversity as equally important. Healthy soils built up by ecological agriculture and livelihood systems sink carbon as well as having more capacity to

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hold water in times of drought or flood.

Food sovereignty at local and national levels require locally adapted crop and livestock diversity and land tenure systems that will enable communities to produce and market food in a way that really feeds people, promotes equity and at the same time deals with climate instability. We also believe that local and indigenous ecological knowledge and governance systems must be urgently revived and enhanced to maximise Africa's capacity to read, anticipate and adapt to climate change. The time has come for national governments to prioritise the regeneration of ecosystems, self-reliant communities and diversified local economies over export oriented policies, free trade agreements and the current wave of expansion of the food system. Africa needs to have the courage to free itself from its colonial legacy and build on its rich heritage through reviving the wisdom of its people as a responsibility to past and future generations. Based on this wealth, it has the capacity to take a lead in finding true solutions by disengaging from the very thinking that has created the crises in the first place.

Here, as the birthplace of the human species, African communities have adapted and evolved over thousands of years, without destroying their life support system. Africa needs to reclaim its responsibility and legacy as a basis from which to build a viable future for all.

This declaration was made following an advocacy workshop that was organised by the African Biodiversity Network (ABN). The workshop was attended by 25 civil society organisations from 10 countries. For more information please visit the ABN website on:www.africanbiodiversity.org

GMO Free Regions Conference urges EU to rethink policy on GMOs

Participants of the 5th European Conference of GMO Free Regions have called upon the member States of the European Union (EU) to rethink their legislation and policy on the use of genetically engineered organisms (GMOs) in agriculture. According to the resolutions made by the participants at the conference held from 23rd to the 24th of April 2009, the participants noted that majority of citizens oppose the use of GMOs in agriculture and food.

They also noted that in the larger part of Europe, regional and local governments, as well as farmers have declared their territories GMO free. They said that the GMOs, presently approved for cultivation, Monsanto's Mon810 maize, is formally banned in six member countries (Austria, Hungary, France, Greece and more recently, Luxembourg and Germany) and factually prohibited from planting in two more countries. This maize variety is cultivated on less than 0,1% of the area dedicated to maize cultivation in but 7 member states and no other European countries. Of these 100,000 hectares, 75% are planted in a single country, Spain.

They lamented that despite the small percentage of land under GMO cultivation, millions of taxpayer's money are spent on the introduction and promotion of GMOs. Thousands of farmers are threatened by unwanted contamination with genetically engineered traits. They lamented that the controls for labeling and identity preservation absorb resources in utter disproportion to the claimed benefits of these GMOs. They are disappointed that hundreds of millions from public funds are spent on genetic engineering research and development as well as propaganda for a technology. Taxpayers have clearly indicated opposition to its use and have not expressed desire for the products.

The participants are aware that while the European Food Safety Authority is unable to present the required scientific re-evaluation of the long expired approval of Mon810, the European Commission had tried over and over again to overrule the national bans of this GMO, claiming there was no evidence that this product might be unsafe, only to be overruled by bold two-thirds majority votes in the Council of Ministers.

In December 2008, the Council of Ministers unanimously agreed that the present legislation on GMOs requires a thorough revision with respect to risk assessment and should also take into account socio-economic aspects. There was also agreement that the present procedures of imposing the cultivation of GMOs upon regions and nations is untenable.

The conference participants are disappointed that the Commission has so far not taken any steps to react to the Council's unanimous demands.

Participants called upon the governments of the European Union to put a halt to this farce and to impose a moratorium on any further approvals of GMOs until regulations are established that reconcile these contradictions and pay due respect to the will of the people of Europe. In addition to a credible, unbiased and precautionary assessment of the potential risks of GMOs to the environment and human health, the participants resolved that an assessment of the socio-economic impacts of cultivating GMOs and their impact on the agricultural practices and policies, should be taken into due account.

Participants also resolved that, EU approvals should no longer constitute an obligation to accept GMO cultivation.

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Permaculture: Another hopeful development strategy

Amidst global crises including food and financial, solutions have to be sought to ensure that people's livelihoods are protected. One of the prominent areas of interest is Permaculture. Permaculture is a holistic design science that is being used as a tool for promoting sustainable living by a growing number of people worldwide (IPC9 Concept paper: March 2009). In addition, it is an ecological design science that outlines an approach to living, which takes its inspiration from nature. Its goal is to feed, house and create economic opportunities in an inspiring and environmentally responsible way.

Permaculture activists have recognized it as a philosophy and development strategy that weaves together climate, plants, animals, building design, soil, water and energy management into cohesive sustainable social systems.

According to the IPC9 Concept paper, Permaculture applies techniques and principles from ecology, cooperative economics, appropriate technology, sustainable agriculture, and the wisdom of indigenous people to create sustainable human environments, at home, at work, at play, and in our communities. As such, the promise of Permaculture extends far beyond food production systems to explore new potentials and horizons for a sustainable life on Earth.

Why Permaculture?

The interest in Permaculture is growing worldwide as more and more people become aware of decline in the 'natural' capital upon which human wellbeing and economic activity depend. As noted by UNEP in its *Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4) October 2007,* the destruction of Earth's natural and nature based resources have reached a point where the economic viability of economies is being challenged, and the bill we hand on to our children may prove impossible to pay. As such, Permaculture design and planning offers an accelerated effort to reform the way we collectively do business on planet Earth.

There is also recognition that most development paradigms still face the challenge of replenishing the declining planet resources amidst increased demand. Permaculture provides the hope for a practical and common sense approach to identifying and maximizing our available natural and social capital.

Permaculture Conference in 2009

The 9th International Permaculture Conference (IPC9) will be held from the 2nd to the 6th of November 2009 in the Malawian capital, Lilongwe. The theme for this year's conference is *Plan Africa ~ Food & Empowerment*. The theme is hoped to inspire, inform and enable a development strategy for Africa. Underlying this theme is the by-line '*Designing solutions for a sustainable future*'.

Expected outcomes of conference

1. Strategies for strengthening Permaculture education and training in Africa.
2. Increased awareness of the strategic importance of the alternative development paradigm among the young generation and the policy makers.
3. Increased confidence and motivation among the Permaculture teachers and farmers in Africa.
4. Improved networking and organizational development for the Permaculture

Permaculture preserves soils and ensures food security

movement in Africa.
5. Raised profile of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and the Natural Resource Management (NRM) model for endogenous development.
6. Increased awareness among African farmers of the alternatives to the 'green revolution' approach.
7. Increased understanding in the international (Permaculturalists and others) community of the issues around development in Africa.
8. Higher recognition among the government officials, funding community and other key stakeholders of the huge potential of Permaculture in transforming lives, landscapes, the development outlook of Africa.
9. Practical solutions for global challenges described.

Who Will Attend?
The Convergence will bring together the global Permaculture movement. The Conference is aimed at policy makers, extension agencies, corporate leadership, strategic planners, non governmental and civil society organizations, businesses, development workers, health professionals, green architects and designers, farmers, academics, the media, Permaculture trainers and practitioners. It is envisaged that the conference will be attended by over 500 people including school children from nearby schools, with an additional opening event and a sustainable livelihoods EXPO open to the public.

The IPC 9 Conference is an opportunity to build relationships between civil society, government and business; it has the potential to unlock new ways of dealing with age-old problems at a time when we are battling to find a way forward.

Conclusion
Permaculture offers an appropriate bottom up and holistic approach development solution to Africa's impasse. Its strength relies and builds on the foundation of indigenous knowledge and locally available resources.

IPC 9 is an opportunity for Africa to awaken the full potential that we see in ourselves, in our outlook, perception and design, to manifest a civilization that we create, where people are the transmitters of an integrated self teaching ecological learning organism. The possibility exists for Africa and humanity to design ourselves into oneness and harmony with the natural world and together we can make it happen.

Further information visit: www.ipc9.org

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Regions must have the right to determine the best agricultural practice and decide for themselves whether to allow the introduction of GMOs in their agriculture and food systems or not.

The participants called upon agro-chemical multinationals Syngenta, Monsanto, Bayer, BASF, DuPont and others to no longer abuse the scandal of increasing hunger in a world to defend the introduction of GMOs. The participants consider such misleading propaganda, which is belied by all practical experience, to be unethical and intolerable. They called upon the companies to refrain from patent claims on traits of plants and animals, especially those which might be of special importance to address the impacts of climate change.

The participants believe that the control of a few multinationals over the heritage of seed and agricultural diversity poses a threat to its further preservation and improvement and call for political action to stop and revert this trend.

On the GMO moratorium the participants called for an EU-wide moratorium on the authorization and the commercial planting of GMOs. In the wake of six EU member countries banning the planting of MON810 and in light of the rapid increase in GMO-free regions in Europe, there has never been a better moment for a moratorium than now. The participants advised that the moratorium be used to:

- Re-think EU legislation and strengthen regional self-determination;
- Re-define risk assessment according to the precautionary principle while considering socio-economic impacts; and
- Support GMO-free, diverse agriculture and ensure food sovereignty.

The participants were grateful to the citizens of Switzerland, who have made their democratic decision to instate a moratorium on the cultivation of GMOs.

According to the resolutions, the resistance to the cultivation of GMOs in Europe, which is represented by thousands of GMO-free regions, provinces, municipalities and farmers associations, has been steadily growing now for ten years. It unites people from all realms of society and from all political and social movements and parties. It gives pride to regions, as it expresses their will to defend their food sovereignty well beyond the critical aspects of a single technology.

The participants agreed that in times of environmental, social and economic crisis, regional self-determination and democratic defense of people's ways of life, food and agricultural diversity is a sign of hope. They resolved not to surrender to global monocultures, and do their best to address the enormous global and local challenges ahead.

This final declaration was made and adopted by the 250 participants from 28 countries who attended the conference on GMO Free Regions conference. For more information visit: ***www.gmo-free-regions-org***

Small scale farming in Africa at a crossroad

There is recognition that 80% of Africa's population is dependent on agriculture. *Agnes Kirabo, the Chairperson of PELUM Uganda* argues that despite various initiatives implemented to advance this sector, there is need for a new way of thinking to ensure the improvement of farmers' livelihoods.

Debate is ranging today as to how Africa can develop given the fact that 80% of the population are dependent on agriculture and this agriculture is mainly subsistence.

Several countries, if not all, have taken subsistence agriculture to be the major contributor to high levels of poverty. This is because agriculture is the mainstay of the biggest proportions of their population.

National programmes aimed at reducing poverty have major focus on agriculture. In Uganda for instance, The Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) has been part of the government broader strategy of poverty eradication contained in the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) since 1997.

The major aims of such programmes like the PMA has been eradicating poverty by transforming subsistence agriculture into commercial agriculture. The assumption is that modernising agriculture will raise farm productivity, increase the share of agricultural production that is marketed and creating on farm and off farm employment.

This is supported by a school of thought that maintains that, the only way to develop is to embark on “modern” farming, get new technologies from outside and use improved seeds as well as chemical fertilisers. In other words, embrace the green revolution; the smallholder farmers can no longer be relied upon to produce enough food but rather the new technologies. Some proponents of this school of thought aver that the smallscale farmers have to be sacrificed for growth; that the two cannot co-exist.

The green revolution simply refers to the techniques in agriculture requiring the use of increased pesticides, inputs and selective breeds or genetically modified plant varieties. Selective breeding takes advantage of so many principles of genetics recognised since 1800 when first patterns of inheritance were recorded. On the other hand, genetically modified crops developed in the mid 1900s, are much more complicated and technology intensive. Genetic modification involves the insertion of a gene from another source into the host plant.

The two forms of technologies (Selective and Genetic modification) have seen the developments of common major hybrids in maize, rice and wheat. These are more supported by massive campaigns by politicians, scientists themselves, academia and government programmes.

African diets are based on a much broad base of grains, root crops, vegetables and fruits. The campaigns for the hybrids and transgenic crops have seen the erosion of the rest of the food crops that had fed generations after generations. Worse still, many of the lost varieties have never received the attention of these scientists.

The cereals, which have been planted for many years in African soils, are not being planted. For countries whose soils are already not fertile and where irrigation is not so easily used, these transgenic crops and hybrids have not been the solution.

The use of narrow genetic base crop varieties has increased the risks of large areas of crops being devastated by pests, diseases and crop failure. The high yield varieties promoted under the reforms are more vulnerable to pests and diseases than the traditional crops. This is because there is little genetic variability. In traditional African agriculture, pests and diseases were managed through the use of multiple species of crops in an area.

The rejection of native crops and the reign of the transgenic and hybrids has not only been unhelpful because of lack information that farmers have about these new crops, but even when they have it and are able to understand what needs to be done, they must also apply for loans in order to buy the new technologies. And while this may not at first seem like such a difficult task, credit institutions do not easily invest in agriculture.

Not only does this system of planting and depending on transgenic and hybrids offer little assistance to those involved in agriculture who wish to keep up with changes in technology, it is also a catalyst for pushing many individual African farmers into debt.

It is also hard to ascertain who eventually benefits from all these changes in agriculture, because when new equipments are purchased, it takes away the work of other people, mostly women. The division of labour between family members has not always been equal, especially in the African setting. Many of these reforms in agriculture seek to make changes as regards to heads of the households, rather than involving all those that participate in the agricultural processes to ensure that changes are beneficial to all. In other parts of the world where such reforms brought about land reforms and heavy focus on cash crops, female rights to land without easing their responsibility to feed the family

plus their need for cash, were all eroded. What then is so unique for Africa remains a question yet to be answered.

Most land in Africa is classified as "Marginal land" which is not considered effective land for cultivation. In particular, it does not lend itself to successful irrigation as proposed by the reforms aimed at modernising agriculture. Farm machines, traditionally proposed for these reforms, decrease the limited water that enters the soil (Morrison 2000). Compressing the soil, machines and other vehicles used in modernisation, increase water runoff (Lal, 1987). Without water entering the soil, the nutrients are not circulated, and water is lost in the system, leading to a decrease in production.

There is little modernisation can do if the soil quality does not increase, and the trend in Africa is degradation rather than improvement. The increase in population brought with its rise in cultivation of marginal lands results in low yields and increased vulnerability in degradation.

In cases where production has increased, the next struggle for the African farmers is fighting the natural landscape, because most governments have not provided funds for rural road construction. Thus even when farmers have excess produce to sell, they may not be able to make it to the market on time because of poor transportation. Inability to sell crops means that no payments on loans can be made and people often end up worse off.

So as well as not being able to plant staple crops in their fields or use any of the knowledge gained from farming for decades, African farmers are also forced to deal with governments who are not willing to either monetarily or structurally aid in the sustainable practices required for such a reform. Any reform must have the money to let information by researchers get to the farmers and vice versa, avail funds for credit to buy new technologies, build the roads to support access to markets as well as influencing government policies that support farmer led research and development.

We have come to believe that "Hope is always buried in tragedy. May be strife in return arrives with success". The agricultural reforms have thrown up their own set of problems. There has been a toil on soil fertility because the transgenic crop varieties and hybrids call for heavy dosage of chemicals- fertilizers and pesticides. The prolonged use of these have depleted African soils and poisoned the environment. The once thrifty farmer has become a profligate user of power and water because this form of agriculture is capital intensive for most African farmers to afford. Most of the traditional food crops have been lost and the African farmer is unable to feed herself/himself nor cross over to benefit from the reforms.

The unspoken mission may be to give Africa a fresh breath with which to codify the African farmer's traditional wisdom. The direction the farmers take remains a big challenge even with competence skills in navigation. The more sensible road to take is the one to eco-sensitive farming. Africa needs to re-evaluate proven ancient ways of harmoniously maintaining soil fertility. Dependence on chemicals has to be minimised. Esteem for carefully selected native strains has to be encouraged if the small farmer is to be freed from malevolent seed systems.

Wangari Mathari defines development as an African stool with three legs; social stability (peace, security), economic advancement, and environmental sustainability.

Development must be for the people and by the people. Therefore, if Africa and Uganda in particular, is to transform its economy and ensure sustainable development, agriculture and the small-scale farmers on whose shoulders the economy rests, should be at the centre of this transformation. This is a broad based economic promulgation that pro-poor development economists advocate for.

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Pro poor development will ensure farmers live in tranquility

Small Scale Farmers brace themselves against effects of climate change

Among the many other global crises is climate change. *Ruth Nabaggala and Joshua Aijuka from PELUM Uganda* reflect on climate change and how PELUM Uganda is helping farmers brace themselves against this natural phenomenal.

The world is currently struggling with several challenges ranging from economic, social, political and environmental which could be jointly categorized as global crises. Many theories have come up to explain what might be the cause of these crises as well as propose remedies but with no successful results.

As PELUM strives to achieve its vision and mission, it has come to the realization that socio-economic and environmental related crises tend to directly or indirectly hit hard on their primary target, the small scale farmers in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Supporting smallholder farmers' livelihoods in the east, central and southern Africa region is increasingly becoming a challenge to PELUM in the midst of the current global crises. PELUM Uganda has however embarked on supporting her member organizations and their respective farmer organizations on climate change adaptation. Efforts have been made to sensitize members on climate change. Studies are also under way to enable the members to learn from each other on climate change adaptation.

Climate change continues to silently cause a decline in the agriculture production and more so to small scale farming. For example, many farmers in east and northern Uganda were greatly affected by floods in the last half of 2007 while quite a number of farmers in central and southern Uganda suffered prolonged droughts in the first half of 2007. All these are as a result of climate change yet Ugandan farmers hardly know about climate change as well as its likely impact if not addressed.

Everyone is concerned about climate change; not just the warming temperatures but the threat of warming temperature related extreme conditions such as floods and droughts which are a serious risk to poverty reduction and threaten to undo decades of development efforts.

Floods cause damage to infrastructure and disturb people's livelihood opportunities

Furthermore, Uganda and Africa as a whole should be concerned because irrespective of our contributions to the Green House Gases (GHGs) emissions, the impacts of climate change will affect everybody and Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to climate variability and change due to:

- Economic importance of climate sensitive sectors agriculture and fisheries;
- Limited human, institutional and financial capacity to anticipate and respond to impacts of climate change; and
- Already existing vulnerabilities poverty, food insecurity, civil wars and poor health systems, among others.

During the PELUM Uganda sensitization workshop on Climate Change, the following were discussed:

Impacts: These include droughts (which have been more frequent in the last 20 years), water stress, conflicts over shared resources, loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services, floods, increased incidences of water borne diseases, increased incidences of agricultural pests and melting glaciers.

What needs to be done to address climate change: Addressing climate change requires a combination of mitigation and adaptation measures. Mitigation is defined as actions that aim

at reducing the concentration of GHGs in the atmosphere. It is important to note that even when the current efforts to reduce GHGs are implemented, they will not stabilize the atmospheric concentrations of gases. The global average temperatures would still continue to increase because of the slow response of the earth's atmosphere system to past emissions hence the need to combine mitigation with adaptation strategies.

Adaptation is defined as all those responses/actions that are aimed at reducing vulnerability to changes in climatic conditions. Adaptation is necessary because it minimizes the damage to livelihoods from impacts of climate change. Many of the adaptation actions are required to increase resilience to climatic changes which generally benefit development objectives.

What PELUM can do

Policy Advocacy

1. Influence local governments to promote diversification of enterprises (to include non-agricultural ones) in government supported programmes such as the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) and to support income generating projects.
2. Influence local governments to prioritize and provide adequate funding to the natural resources sector.
3. Advocate at all levels for development of policies that integrate climate change such as early warning systems and disaster management.
4. Advocate for a national policy on climate change that integrates climate change into government programmes at national and local levels.

Specific activities to be done include:

a. Identify member organizations involved in advocacy.
b. Undertake research on climate change issues.
c. Document and disseminate information on climate change.
d. Identify and engage key stakeholders e.g. Parliament, line ministries, CSOs to participate in climate change discussions at international level.

Technology Improvement

1. Identify appropriate and low cost technologies that can be promoted for adoption by communities. These include biogas production equipment, fuel saving stoves and improved charcoal kilns, among others.
2. Promote high quality drought resistant indigenous crop varieties/breeds.
3. Equipping farmers with skills on different coping measures such as energy and water saving techniques.
4. Promote fruit trees for food security and environmental protection. Specific activities to be done include:
   a. Awareness raising on fruit tree production.
   b. Conduct training in fruit tree growing.
   c. Establish community nurseries.
5. Promote water harvesting techniques at household levels.
6. Promote alternative (to agriculture) livelihood options as community savings are used as disaster management strategy. Specific activities to be done include:
   a. Facilitate self selection of saving groups.
   b. Conduct training on saving methods.
   c. Promote community savings.

Capacity Building

1. Strengthen the capacity of staff of PELUM members on Climate Change issues.
2. Designate Climate Change focal persons in each organization.
3. Design and disseminate information, education and communication materials on climate change for different audiences (communities, policymakers and CSOs, among others).
4. Organize high level Workshops/dialogues for local government technical and political leadership to raise their awareness on climate change and the need to address it in their plans and budgets.
5. Organize seminars/workshops for partners to raise their awareness so that they can appreciate climate change related issues.
6. Member organizations to sensitize farming communities on the need to diversify their enterprises as a way of adapting to impacts of climate change.

Research

1. Implement joint research with partners on selected topics related to climate change.
2. Undertake research on different aspects of climate change including indigenous knowledge on best practices for adapting to the impacts of climate change.
3. Undertake market research and product development.

Specific activities to be done include:

a) Supporting communities to establish storage facilities.
b) Conducting training on agro processing techniques.

Information Sharing

1. Network to share experiences on climate change.
2. Set up rural information centres to disseminate weather information as generated by the meteorology department.
3. Promote crop diversification as a disaster preparedness strategy.

Specific activities to be done include:

a. Organizing exchange visits.
b. Carrying out adaptive research on selected enterprises.

For more information, please contact Ruth Nabaggala and Joshua Aijuka of PELUM Uganda on: pelumuganda@utlonline.co.ug or pelumuganda@yahoo.com

Alternatives to the New Green Revolution exist

While debate rages about the New African Green Revolution for Africa, *a* WWF study on examples of alternatives show that there are other ways, that have proved successful in utilising the land. *Martin Bertram from the PELUM Regional Desk* writes that conventional farming may not be the answer to smallholder farming.

In 2008, Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), funded by SIDA, invited PELUM to respond with examples of best practices. The question was: "Which feasible alternatives exist to the New Green Revolution?" This was a sub-question contributing to the overall theme of the study "Examples of Sustainable and Adaptable Agriculture African responses to new challenges".

PELUM Association conducted 15 case-studies with small farms and two commercial farms before and after conversion towards conservation farming (CF) in co-operation with Conservation Farming Unit (CFU) and the Golden Valley Development Trust (GART) in Zambia. PELUM evaluated the economic and ecological sustainability of small farms in Zambia, before and after conversion.

Conservation farming in Zambia proves to be an important first step to enable smallholder farmers who feel totally dependent on maize-production and the use of synthetic fertilizer, to get out of poverty and towards organic farming.

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basins with the chaka hoe, a special CF-tool developed by CFU- Zambia showed that:

- Ploughing was a failure (average 2.4 tons/ha)
- Ripping was better (about 4 tons) and handhoe was the best, with 5 to 8 tons, where the 8 tons were only reached by those farmers who used manure, where synthetic fertilizers showed lower yields.

Sustainability of farms was measured before and after conversion. Profit was the indicator for economic sustainability. A new method was applied to measure ecological sustainability: Carbon Dioxide (CO_2) equivalent, telling us, how much fossil energy was consumed by production and how much biomass was produced in yield and soil.

Another amazing finding was that in the south of the world at least, the message is viable: THE GREENER THE BETTER. In a wide optimum range of higher CO_2-values, ecological farming proved to be significantly more profitable (70% more profit after one to two years after conversion) than conventional farming. This applied to small and large, fully mechanized farms applying zero-tillage and direct drilling into the stubble.

Another study is planned to evaluate the success of climate adaptation measures in and around Zambia. The Zambian pilot study team is looking for funding to upscale the success of its farmers and to emphasize on mechanic ripping, natural fertilizer production and organic weed-control. Furthermore, the success that took place in an area stricken by floods and droughts should lead to an integration of good sustainable practice, accumulated in one area, sourced from best practice from the entire PELUM and leading to an alternative to the GR "Millennium Villages": THE PELUM VILLAGES.

For more information, please get in touch with Martin Bertram at mbertram@pelum.org.zm

Good harvests are possible with sustainable farming practices
(Interplanting onion carrot: picture courtesy of Kelvin from Kasisi in Zambia)

Mainstreaming Gender, HIV and AIDS: A Case of INADES Formation Tanzania

Gender, HIV and AIDS mainstreaming has become a major component of work for development workers worldwide. INADES Formation Tanzania, a member of PELUM Tanzania, has endevoured to mainstream these crosscutting issues. *Grace J. Mketto, the Trainer-Coordinating Gender and HIV/AIDS projects at INADES formation Tanzania* shares the experience of the organisation.

INADES Formation Tanzania (IFTz) is a training institution at the service of rural communities. It provides action-training support for social economic empowerment of small holder farmers and communities. The aim is to enable rural communities understand their challenges and maximize the available opportunities for self development. IFTz offers services through direct field outreach programmes where the organisation works (Dodoma, Singida, Morogoro and Mbeya regions of Tanzania) as well indirectly, by correspondence courses to the general public from all regions of Tanzania.

IFTz vision and mission

IFTz's vision is to see smallholder farmers in Tanzania achieve quality life by overcoming poverty. Its mission seeks to contribute to the above vision in many ways including promoting sustainable agriculture, food security, environmental conservation, rural micro finance, savings and credit services, agri-business, small enterprise development and income generating activities. IFTz also establishes and strengthens farmer organisations, promotes local knowledge and resources, as well as awareness on HIV and AIDS. The organisation also facilitates changes in gender relationships among women and men in societies.

Why mainstream Gender, HIV and AIDS in IFTz activities

The effects of HIV and AIDS have implications on sustainability of rural livelihoods. On the other hand, HIV and AIDS affects more women than men. In turn, rural communities are most affected by the loss of manpower. There is also concern on the rising expenses for taking care of patients and funerals, adding to the families' burden. Women are responsible for

An HIV and AIDS group performing in one of the sensitisation sessions

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AIDS (PLHA) in target locations.

? Improving social status and economic security of poor women and their families through increased awareness, enhanced social organization and income generating (IG) capacity.

Approaches used during interventions

IFTz works with marginalized communities at sub village level through:

- Public meetings, training workshops, practical demonstration
- Local theater groups
- Counseling
- Provide VCT in collaboration with government hospitals
- Distribution of leaflets, magazines, posters, calendars from different sources
- Video shows
- Exchange visits
- Link PLHAs with Indigenous Knowledge (IK) therapy and

ARV services
- Use of PLHAs Testimonies

Achievements in Gender, HIV and AIDS Activities

In HIV and AIDS: A baseline survey on HIV and AIDS in 10 villages under three Area Programs (APs) was conducted in 2006. The survey findings indicated that 514 people were infected across the sampled area. This figure was based on those who went for voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) and there are many more other people who have not yet been tested. Some of those that were found infected expressed readiness to try and use Indigenous knowledge (IK) and ARV therapy. A total of 5,327 people in 3 APs attended training interventions. Six HIV and AIDS campaigning groups were also formed in the three APs. Fifteen PLHAs volunteered to form a group and undergo IK therapy for a validation process. In addition, information and publicity materials on HIV and AIDS were distributed which included 4,200 copies of Femina magazine and 675 Tanzania Commission for AIDS (TACAIDS) leaflets. Counseling was also conducted in villages for 12 PLHA (nine females and three males) with their relatives.

In Gender: There are notable attitudinal changes towards traditional cultures and customs discriminating women at family and community levels with regard to resource utilization, doing family work, polygamy and inheritance. Women are running informal savings and credit schemes. There is also a notable change of men's attitude towards women's involvement in Income Generating Activities (IGAs) and other development activities. Women have been used as resource farmers who are sometimes offering first support (if needed) to other people within the villages on livestock husbandry, poultry and processing, among others. Some women have established various IGAs in fishing, piggery, poultry, mushroom production, food processing and gardening, which has helped to raise household incomes.

Juhudi Group from Mhongwa-Dodoma explaining the fish project to guests

Outcomes in Gender and HIV/AIDS Activities

In HIV/AIDS: there is increased awareness amongst people on HIV issues in the villages. People are willing to openly go for VCT services while yet more volunteered to go for VCT during the regional VCT Campaign day held in Dodoma in 2007. There has also been an increase in the number of PLHAs who attend counseling sessions and are willing to go for more medical advice. As a positive outcome of the repeated exposure to training on HIV and AIDS in villages, there is increased demand for training from more members of the village community. There is also an attitudinal change amongst people as they can now freely talk about HIV and AIDS, during trainings compared to the past. Debates and discussions on HIV and AIDS issues within families and in community gatherings are becoming common.

There has also been a reduction in stigma against PLHA as well as increased care and support of PLHA from family members. PLHA are seeking treatment with no fear of being stigmatized, while parents are requesting counseling for their patients. Counseling services given to some of the PLHA and the continuing medical support has helped them to improve their health status especially after using ARVs and some IK herbs.

In Gender: Women no longer want to be inherited or married in polygamous families for fear of their health. Men are willing to let their wives attend and participate in IGAs and development activities. There has also been an increase in income for the women from sale of their IGAs products. Generally, there have been improved family living conditions. Increase in income is helping in attending to basic needs at individual and family levels and easing tension during hardship hence avoiding conflicts. Women and their families are also assured of nutritious food as some IGAs form part of family diet.

For example, one woman (Ms. Rose Tupatupa) was able to attend medical treatment at a Referral Hospital in Dar es Salaam using income generated from her IGAs. She is also paying school fees for her children. Currently, she is initiating a fish pond project. Another woman (Mayasa),

through a poultry project has managed to purchase a sewing machine, joined Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs) and saved Tanzania Shs240,000= (about US$ 200) with SACCOs. Catherine Chiduo, another woman, has through her piggery project, managed to attend medical treatment at Berega hospital where she was operated upon. She also sold one pig at TShs300,000= (about US$250) and used the money to purchase 20 corrugated iron sheets.

Challenges

Most of the remote sub-villages are not reached with gender, HIV and AIDS education. It has been noted that very few organisations work in remote villages thereby increasing demand for Gender, HIV and AIDS training in these areas. Unfortunately, there are limited funds to reach a wide coverage. On another level, there are still some misconceptions about HIV transmission amongst people in villages which may lead to increase in infections. There are also limited VCT services in most villages against demand and few centers providing ARVs to PLHA leading to some dropping out of taking the drugs. There are still some households where family members and relatives tend to stigmatize PLHA and do not provide enough care and support.

Women are the most infected with HIV. The national campaign on VCT found that 261,413 were infected of whom 160,891 are women. Few men give their testimonies on HIV and in some communities, men do not turn up for gender trainings. It has also been noted that most women have no income while traditions and culture still limit their opportunities for advancement. There is also concern that the current economic crisis may affect the funding for implementation of IFTz Gender, HIV and AIDS activities.

Conclusion

Africa is still the most vulnerable to HIV and AIDS given the slow attitudinal change of individual behavior towards HIV transmission. Therefore, interventions in this sector should continue to reduce new infections and free communities from HIV and AIDS.

Protecting the land of Southern Africa: a study of land management practices in Lesotho

Land is an important asset in agriculture. It needs to be preserved to ensure that benefits are derived from it. *Maleshoane Sekorobele from PELUM Lesotho* highlights the major findings from the sustainable land management study that was conducted in Lesotho.

Lesotho is experiencing serious land degradation, contributing to a critical drop in agriculture. PELUM-Lesotho, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), conducted a study on sustainable land management. The primary goal of the study was to create baseline knowledge to guide the policy direction and practices that will reverse the negative usage of land, to ward off poverty and hunger.

Several agencies - among them, UNDP, TerrAfrica, the Government of Lesotho through its Ministry of Forest and Land Reclamation, and PELUM Lesotho to name but a few - are concerned that over 70% of the rural populations of Sub-Saharan Africa depend directly on land and its natural resources for their livelihoods, which are based on agricultural production, use of forests or woodlands, fisheries, and rangelands for livestock.

They have established a causal link between land degradation and rural poverty, with the poorest rural communities generally located in the most ecologically fragile and degraded areas. They are also aware that a number of barriers have been identified that must be removed if sustainable land management is to take root as a cross-cutting and centrally-placed development priority. These include:

? Knowledge and technology barriers: Although there is a wealth of information on successful Sustainable Land Management technologies andapproaches, there is insufficient sharing of experiences at the local, national and regional levels within Sub-Saharan Africa.

? Policy and institutional governance barriers: Land degradation and sustainable land management issues are not yet fully understood, internalised and prioritised in country poverty reduction strategies, public expenditure frameworks or sectoral development policies.

? Economic and financial barriers: The financial resources available for sustainable land management in general do not match the scale of the problem.

The study gave stakeholders the opportunity to state constructively and critically where they are and where they felt they need to be in future, in the development, performance and utilization of better land use. PELUM-Lesotho undertook the identification of participants, ensuring the careful representation of all regions of the country and selected from among PELUM-Lesotho members.

The central element in the change process is the identification, development, testing and application of tools and approaches to improve behaviours to relevant desired change, in this case, sustainable land management.

Throughout the discussions with PELUM-Lesotho's stakeholders on desired sustainable land management in Lesotho, it was evident that the purpose and desired vision the organisation wants to embark on can be summarized in three strategies. Participants focused on the fact that for nearly three decades, Lesotho has endured untold suffering from poverty and famine, as most of the arable land, which was previously flourishing, has become entirely redundant.

The government has therefore devised the Lesotho National Environmental Policy (LNEP). However, while it is good on paper, there is very little evidence that the LNEP has trickled down to communities and resulted in programmes that achieve the spirit of the policy. Perhaps the bureaucratic nature of government machinery may be the reason why little evidence exists at grassroots levels of the government's intention to better livelihoods of its citizens. Even the introduction of local government, whose purpose is to create participatory governance by the people, for the people and of the people, does not seem, in these initial stages to show that participatory governance has taken on a new meaning.

This vacuum presents vast opportunities for concerned citizens who want to end the suffering to step out, roll up their sleeves and get busy. Clearly, this is a task that no one party can perform, and although one of the determined parties is PELUM, its success will depend on collaborative and collective consultation and implementation in a participatory manner in state-society-community, along with other players.

In its preparatory work for this vision document, the intention was to transform barren land into productive land. The government made a number of commitments, such as improving the networking of affiliate members, as well as reaching out to everyone willing to partake in the endeavor. PELUM Lesotho is taking the challenge of handling this problem, and the creation of an energetic dynamic network, involving public action by the state, society and community, very seriously. The significance of public action, the organization realizes, is a very critical factor in protecting and preserving natural resources and reducing vulnerability to poverty, hunger and diseases.

A number of exceptions to this socio-economic bias have to be taken into consideration such as issues of intra-household entitlements and co-operative conflicts that seem to have developed in communities as one approach to these issues. The other is the dynamism in relations that exists between women and men which often may result in a complex bargaining process when their livelihoods are under stress.

Negotiation can result in positive adaptation, but in extreme circumstances, it can result in women, and their dependent children, being abandoned when they no longer have any means (or entitlements) left with which to negotiate. An important by-product of these negotiations is that children too are affected early in the cycle, further differentiating the capacity for and experience of livelihood adaptation within the household along generational lines. As women must spend more and more time on subsistence activities, children (particularly girls) take over their domestic roles.

PELUM Lesotho stakeholders endeavoured to find a workable solution to proper management of land that will lead to it being available to the present and future generations. Very little work directly addresses the relationship between state and civil society institutions and livelihood adaptation; much of that can be broadly categorised into: responses to livelihood shocks, notably drought and famine, and responses to longer-term livelihood changes, especially environmental change.

In pursuing its goals to bring about flourishing vegetation throughout the country, PELUM Lesotho has promised to learn from the best practices wherever they can be found.

Proper land management will ensure its availability for future generations

Will the Joint Africa European Strategy Really Work?

There is a new initiative, the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES). *Zachary Makanya from PELUM-Kenya* looks at the JAES and analyses why it may succeed or fail.

In the past, Africa has witnessed many initiatives that are meant and designed to champion smallholder farmers and producers' livelihood interests. Such initiatives are designed to make Africa come out of its abject poverty. These initiatives are usually well funded and one would normally expect them to succeed and have high impact. The contrast is the case: Africa's communities are continually sinking into deeper depths of poverty, and this forces economists of the world to go back to the drawing board and come up with more packages like the Joint Africa EU Strategy (JAES).

Now many are asking questions: Will JAES work? Is this another strategy that will fail or will it work? It is also important to analyze why the past initiatives have failed. In this, sins of development may have been committed: the sin of commission: there could be some things that were done and were not supposed to be done; the sin of omission: There could be some things that ought to have been known, and are not known and hence are not done.

A critical review of JAES shows that

it has all the hallmarks for success since it is designed in such a way that it avoids the mistakes and pitfalls of the past. It is built on the experiences of the past similar initiatives; the civil society organisations (CSOs) are central in the discussions and its implementation; it is built on equal partnership between Africa and Europe; it is an integration of many ideas. In the past, the CSOs have been given little room to influence the policy and decision making when governments are involved.

To their credit, the CSOs try as much as possible to make their voices heard in all major events, they hold parallel or pre-events where they come up with resolutions and communiqué which are largely ignored by the government delegates. In fact, the greatest impediments in lobbying and advocacy has been on how to make governments listen to civil society.

One frustrated African farmer once said: *Our governments are like stones, they are there apparently listening but in the end they do not make any "move" to show that they have heard what they have been told" .*

As the JAES get underway, many Africans are wondering: will the Europeans really talk to Africans and regard them as equals among equals?

Will the African governments be consistent, by sending delegates who can make follow-ups on what is agreed at negotiating tables? Are African governments willing to "clean their houses" by instituting strong management, governance, and democratic systems so as to

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raise their integrity and worthiness at negotiating tables? Will the governments in Europe and Africa really listen to the voice of civil society? Many CSOs have good linkages with grass-root farmers and communities and bring relevant inputs to the consultations in the discussions. Ignoring them is like ignoring 75% of the target beneficiaries.

The discussion about EPAs has raised a lot of suspicion between Africa and EU. In fact, many people view JAES more positively than EPAs. It is on record that the CSOs in Europe did not adequately support the African counterparts as they wrestled with the EPAs threats. Can they rise to the occasion in case there is need for serious lobbying?

As the implementation of JAES goes on, all efforts should be made to ensure its success and the pitfalls of past initiatives should be avoided like plague. All the stakeholders should work hard to make JAES work and prove that joint partnership can work. Unless this is done, this will be another golden opportunity trodden on and development in Africa will continue to remain evasive.

Strategies for smallholder farmers to cope with EPAs

A lot has been said about EPAs, but it is becoming clear that eventually, they will be implemented. *Bertha Nherera from PELUM Zimbabwe,* writing on an EPA workshop that was held in Zimbabwe, reflects on the challenges that EPAs may pose and how smallholder farmers may cope.

A meeting to raise awareness and provide Zimbabwean smallholder farmer representatives and civil society organizations working with smallholder farmers with feedback on Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) was held on 25 March 2009 in Zimbabwe. The meeting was attended by 8 farmer representatives from Zimbabwe Small holder Organic Farmers Forum (ZIMSOFF) and representatives from 6 PELUM Zimbabwe member organizations. The meeting was based on a Desk study undertaken in collaboration with Community Technology Development Trust and was supported by Vredeseilanden (VECO).

EPAs are a key element of the Contonou Agreement which provided a framework for trading between the EU and African Carribean and Pacific (ACP) countries and expired in December 2007. The Contonou agreement itself is a response to continuing criticism that the non-reciprocal and discriminating preferential trade agreements offered by the EU to the ACP countries are incompatible with World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules. Thus, EPAs are to provide a framework for trading between the European Union (EU) and African Carribean and Pacific (ACP) countries creating a free trade area between the EU and the ACP countries. Given the Global

? Farmers increasing their productivity to have quality and consistent supply of produce.

? Farmer representatives participating in the “Think Tank” established at national level on EPAs.

? Farmers and Civil society organizations to establish or identify lines of credit for farmers.

It was apparent in the meeting that knowledge on EPAs was still very limited both amongst the civil society organizations working with smallholder farmers and the smallholder farmers themselves. As a way forward, there is need to continue holding similar workshops. It is said that information is Power. If a large mass of smallholder farmers are equipped with this knowledge, they will go a longway in operationalising the strategies and influencing government.

Research Into Use: putting research results into practice

Many researches have been conducted. Many findings have come out of the various researches. *Research Into Use* has embarked on a mission to ensure that outcomes of the some researches are implemented.

For many years now, research has been providing solutions to impediments in terms of quality and quantity of agricultural production. Productivity as a solution for food insecurity has been boosted by various researches done both on-farm and at research stations. However, it has recently been realized that most of the interventions proposed by research findings have not filtered through to the people that should be using them for improved agriculture production and productivity. This challenge has been identified and DFID has come out to support initiatives to ensure that research is put into use.

Research Into Use

The Research Into Use (RIU) programme was created to “tackle one of the biggest (and oldest) problems of development” that of ensuring that “new options to improve poor communities' livelihoods actually get picked up and used by the largest possible number of people” (An overview of the RIU programme, 2007).

RIU, funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), is a five year initiative whose mandate is to put research into practice. It believes

Research findings should eventually translate into improving people's livelihoods

that decades of investment in agricultural and natural resources research in the developing world has produced hundreds of tried and tested technologies, practices and processes that could lift many out of poverty. RIU is working to make sure that these innovations are taken up far more widely and used successfully in Africa and Asia.

RIU aims at maximizing the livelihood-improving potential of research in the natural resources sector and capturing lessons about best practice in achieving this for different social groups and in different environments.

It uses the innovations systems approach in its programme work to improve the flow of information between those who have or 'push' information and those who want or 'pull' information in national and regional innovation systems. This means articulate and satisfy their demand for knowledge, technology and other resources. It also means building the capacity of all partners in the science community, government, private sector and civil society to work together more productively.

The RIU Programme builds on the DFID Renewable Natural Resources Research Strategy 1995 to 2005, which funded research on crops, livestock, fisheries, forestry, post-harvest handling and natural resource management. Much of this research has a great deal of unfulfilled potential to impact on poverty. RIU aims to realize that potential and to learn lessons that can be incorporated into future research for development.

Outputs

RIU is delivering three major outputs to achieve its aims:

1. RIU is enhancing access to research outputs to greatly benefit the poor. Through this, it is hoped that there will be increased use of past research results.
2. RIU is gathering concrete evidence of what works and why, to ensure that research-into-use evidence is generated.
3. RIU is working to embed innovation for the poor in development agendas to ensure that research-into-use lessons on policies and practices are gathered and shared.

Target regions

RIU focuses on sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, and works in:

- East Africa: Rwanda, Tanzania
- Southern Africa: Malawi, Zambia
- West Africa: Nigeria, Sierra Leone
- Asia: covered by the Innovation Challenge Fund, currently operating in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nepal, Vietnam

For more information about RIU and the Innovation Challenge Fund, visit: www.researchintouse.com

Why are some farmers more susceptible to climate related problems than others?

Between June and August, Amina prepares her land for planting

Some farmers cope well with climate change. Others do not and lose most of their crops. *Martin Bertram from PELUM Regional Desk* describes an agricultural season with Amina, a smallholder farmer in Zambia. Amina's story illustrates some key questions: How does climate express itself to the farmer? Is it the duration, distribution, frequency and intensity of rains? Is it the frequency of severe storms and extreme temperatures?

The skilled Zambian farmer Amina, harvests early in April and starts immediately to dig the planting basins for the next season within the rows of the last year, where some black organic soil still exist, some symbiotic fungi and some residues of fertilizer are. The soil still has a bit of moisture softening the field for her work. She digs small longish basins with a slim Chaka hoe deeper than her neighbours but moving less soil because she needs to be economic with her energy.

She does not burn the dry stalks. Her lines are along the contour and she measures the spacing. The Faidherbia trees and the Witerthorn-trees (Musangu), start getting leaves and provide shade for the ground and herself.

She works one hour every morning from 6:30am - 7:30pm with her four children and two hours in the evening from 4-6. Only few weeds are disturbing the hoe because she weeded before the weeds could spread the seeds and had a ground cover. Remaining weeds are eradicated and thrown into the new holes. Her neighbors are still hoping that their crop will mature and blame climate change for the lack of rains needed by their plants. Later in the morning, she sells maize meal to her neighbors who have not yet harvested.

In May, she finishes working on 2.5 hectares three times faster than the other hoe-farmers due to less tillage.

Neighbors point at her field and call it disorderly because maize stalks and some low legumes are still in the fields and she harvests legumes from time to time.

During 'party' season towards end of August she goes to her field before the heat in September and October becomes scorching hot. The soil is covered with vines of the legumes and termites build their clay-tunnels over the maize stalks.

She prepares the field for the rainy season more than 10 weeks before the rains start to fall, during the season of village festivals. The wind fills the planting holes with organic matter and termites convert it into fertile soil adding some drainage channels for future rains.

She opens the soft basins, adds two beer-cans full of boma manure, rich in urine which she had protected from the sun in a pile covered by soil and has treated it with self-prepared Effective Microorganisms (EM), adds lime and ash that she always saves from her kitchen stove on the ground of the basin and fills the dark topsoil back until 3 cm under the surface level.

After the whole field is fertilized, she joins the village parties sometimes during the warm evenings of late September and October and has all the reason to celebrate thanksgiving for the harvest of the previous season.

In October her neighbors begin to toil on their fields. They turn the hard dry soil of their entire field moving 3-6 times more earth than their neighbor, digging big shallow basins with their wide hoes going down the slope.

The oxen plough has to wait for the first strong rains to soften the soil. Most farmers do not have the capacity to cultivate bigger portions of land yet. The soil is still too hard.

The first rains come and the last farmers get reminded to start work.

Amina has no reason to get busy yet because the risk of drying seedlings is still too high. She harvests some long grass from her unburned fallows, sells some and uses the rest to mend her roof.

One evening, after a strong rain in early

With good farming practices, food security is assured

November, she starts to sow the cotton seeds together with her children. The work is fast done and she adds a small practical lesson about correct spacing of maize and groundnuts to prepare everybody for the sowing campaign.

The strong rain on 13th November does not see her sowing and she fears to miss the nitrogen flush. On 15th November she starts praying for strong rain. On 17th November a thunderstorm fills her basins temporarily with water and the whole family rushes out under the departing thunders to sow groundnuts and maize in each basin. The maize-plot is the fallow, where Sunhemp grew last season to increase nitrogen and the Faidherbia has started to shed its tiny fertilizer leaves. Moreover, she sows some rows of cow-peas to provide an early harvest during the so called "weeks of hunger" before the bulk harvest.

The very first rains, she knows, provide the nitrogen flush, the strongest of all fertilizers. She has observed that if her seeds are early enough to benefit from the nitrogen flush regardless of which variety they are, they will grow excellently. The best Nitrogen flush must have been after 13th but the risk for a later dry-spell was too high.

The whole family sows and fills back the basins until it gets dark and continues the next morning when the soil is still wet. The teacher understands why the kids come late to school. The work is done. While the owner of the oxen starts to plough his field and all the other fields are full of farmers turning their soils, in Amina's field, the count down begins.

A high-performance maize like her grandfather's house variety, Gankatha, needs 120 days. That means by mid March, the maize should be ready and some may even be sold green for 3 times the price. If the rainy season is short and the March rains fail, there would be no problem in Amina's yield.

By 7th December, Amina's maize and groundnuts are germinating, while the oxen-farmers wait for the hired oxen to plough the fields. The hoe farmers have started sowing but still have to extend their fields. Many farmers still wait to start, because the fertilizer supply has delayed or the November salary to buy D-compound and hybrid-seeds is not available yet.

Everybody who has not yet sown by December loses 1.5% of the harvest per day, hence 10.5% for the season as a punishment for being late.

Amina starts weeding and eats a lot of tender blackjack and amaranthus-weeds (Ondwe) as a relish because there is no poison in her fields. Safari ants have raided the field and killed all pests and also many spiders and millipods controlling her pests. The safari ants had a good meal and will come back but some of her pest controlling arthropods have survived in old hollow maize-stalks and neighboring fallows.

By 14th December, the smaller maize plants have reached knee-height and she starts to treat the plants with manure by putting some in a little furrow along the plants which she covers with soil to protect it from rains.

Maize requires too much nitrogen.
The last Witerthorn-trees (Musangu) shed their leaves fertilizing the field and bringing nitrogen and lime to the surface. The rare hours of warm sunshine can reach the crop and the tree is not competing with the crop's need for water.

While some farmers are still preparing their fields and most of the oxen-farmers wait for the tractor to come. They are already losing at least 40% of their yield and will loose more through the costs for ploughing and the loss of loose soils during heavy rains and Amina sows Sorghum, Millet, Sunflower Cowpeas, Green-gram Pigeon-peas and prevents weeds from flowering.

The fields of the neighbors show deep gullies. Heavy rains have washed away topsoil and fertilizer. Farmers blame climate change for their misfortune. Amina's contours, the termite holes and potholes between the rows have trapped most of the flood water.

Sometimes during the rainiest periods, she visits her field immediately after a rain or during a drizzle and sprays her wet plants with open stoma with EM to prevent pests.

At Christmas, she has many guests from her family and friends and celebrates the holiday knowing that the harvest is safe.

Early March: The soil is free of weeds. Amina walks through her field, the cobs are mature, breaks the stalks above the cobs, reducing shade, improving drying and feeds her termites before the hunger makes them attack weaker crops.

After the green maize and the early cowpeas have already been sold or consumed, Amina starts to harvest the dry cobs, to sell maize meal and to use the softness of the soil to prepare for the next season where each crop has to shift to another field to avoid possible diseases, while her neighbours have to buy pesticides to fight nematodes in their inorganic soils and fungi on the leaves of their maize weakened by high doses of Urea.

Amina has not bought any chemical input, but harvests five tonnes of maize per hectare, four to five times the amount of her neighbours and the average Zambian. Her profit is more than 6 times higher.

Amina's stock of her seed-grains is full and secured by non-toxic diatomite. Full is also her cash-box and she contributes a good amount to community initiatives.

Amina's story is just an example of how some farmers are coping with effects of climate change. For more information on these strategies , please get in touch with Martin Bertram on mbertram@pelum.org.zm

A letter from John Wilson

PELUM board/Staff during a strategic planning session

Greetings for 2009. The theme for my letter this time around is 'strategic planning'. One way or another, I seem to have been involved in strategic planning processes with a number of organizations the last couple of years.

I am trying to promote a kind of planning that is holistic rather than mechanistic. This relates to our work in sustainable agriculture where we are promoting an approach to the management of land that understands it as an inter-connected whole, rather than having a machine-like approach, which is characteristic of conventional high-input agriculture.

A lot of the planning that takes place these days is strongly mechanistic. The log frame is the epitome of this. Let me quickly say that I do not have a problem with the log frame IF it is used to serve the bigger picture. We need to keep using 'technologies' (and the log frame is a soft technology) to serve the bigger picture, not the other way around. We need to work from the whole to the parts. And having that 'whole picture' is what is critical in creating an alive, dynamic organisation that is constantly on its toes; in other words an organization that is strategic.

All too often, organizations work (and think) from their log frame, or something like a log frame. What happens in my experience is that they become delivery organizations rather than strategic organisations.

What we need to do in our planning is to go through a process where we develop an interconnected whole picture that 'we' (all those involved) understand. This understanding of our way forward should clearly show how we, as an organisation, are learning from the past and moving on in a creative way.

It should also include a clear link to what is happening in the environment in which we work. How are we responding to that environment and why? Who are the key people to work with? Where do we need to strengthen ourselves? Which strengths will we build on?

We need to be able to tell our strategic plan as a story. And we need to be able to write it as a story. Only by telling and writing it in this way will we be able to convey the whole picture. If we disappear into planning boxes and lists as happens often, we lose that wholeness.

Once we have the whole picture in our mind and are able to tell it and write it very clearly, then, and only then, should we start going more into the details and the 'boxes'.

These more detailed planning methods then become useful as checklists because we can not hold all the details in our mind. But we can hold the big picture and we need to keep holding it, and changing it as our circumstances change. To be strategic, we need to keep being strategic, day in, and day out. Which is why I try to put more emphasis on strategic thinking than strategic planning.

John Wilson was the first Coordinator of PELUM Association. He can be contacted at spiritvaults@yahoo.co.uk.

PELUM holds a traditional food symposium

The Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Association held its Triennial General Meeting (TGM) at Morogoro Hotel in Morogoro, Tanzania, between October 27 and October 30, 2008. Alongside the general meeting, PELUM also held a traditional foods symposium that was accompanied with a food fair. The food fair attracted farmers from all the 10 PELUM countries. The farmers exhibited diverse foodstuffs with a competition conducted and overall winners awarded a trophy.

The meeting saw the attendance of participants from all the ten PELUM member countries, donor community and farmers as well as staff from PELUM.

From Tanzania, there were 73 participants including farmers, PELUM staff, representatives of member organizations and board members. Rwanda was represented by 10 farmers, 3 board members and 1 staff. Zimbabwe sent 8 participants; Kenya came with a delegation of 16 people while Uganda was represented by 9 participants. Other countries that were represented were Lesotho (4), South Africa (5), Botswana (3), Malawi (4) and Zambia (15). Partners from INADES Formation Burkina Faso and ACORD also attended the symposium. Collaborators who attended included partners from the US, Europe and Asia.

The symposium discussions were meant to share experiences from different PELUM countries on pertinent development issues such as climate change, food security, biotechnology, market access and the Association's contribution to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

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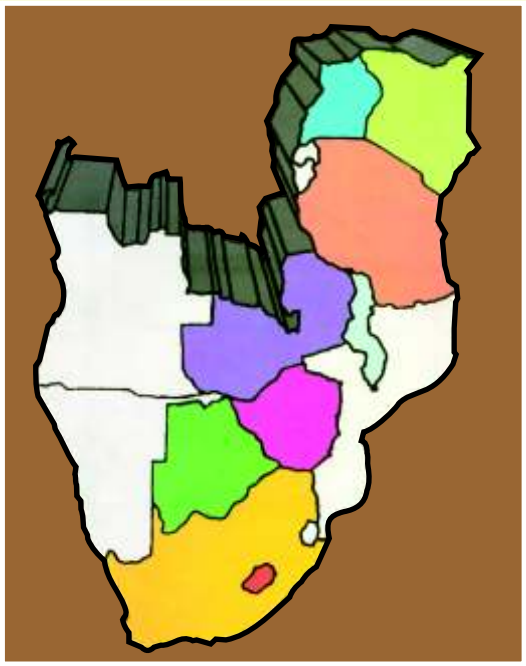

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About PELUM Association

We are a network of civil society organisations operating in east and southern Africa.

We have come together to facilitate learning, networking and advocacy in sustainable agriculture, natural resources management and household food security so as to achieve community development among small holder families in the region.

We learn through linking our experiences, alternative approaches to agriculture and participatory development. We bring our strengths together and generate added value to what each member strives to achieve.

Our key strategies include information sifting and distribution, advocacy, networking and short and long-term training.

This, we hope, will contribute towards food security and increase small holder farmer income. And for our own sake as an institution, we do consultancies that bring some income towards our sustainability.

We run workshops to train community development workers, identify and distribute useful books and articles and other relevant information materials and also work to facilitate networking among ourselves and with like-minded outside organisations.

The development and subsequent adoption of a policy on advocacy has also been completed.

We have a dream: "sustainable communities in east and southern Africa", and it is towards this that our energies, talents and resources have been, and will continue to be, channeled.

The Association was founded by 25 members in 1995. Today over 160 member organisations in ten countries in east and southern Africa make up the Association. These are mainly NGOs working towards rural development.

The magazine, Ground Up, is produced at the Association's regional office in Lusaka, Zambia. It is an avenue of sharing information and experiences among the members and between the members and other stakeholders in community development. Ground Up represents what PELUM stands for: genuine and bottom up approaches to community development.

Panos Institute Southern Africa

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