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Permaculture in Zimbabwe

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[Presentation Report]

Fambidzanai Permaculture Centre – Brigid O'Connor

Fambidzanai (Fambidzanai means to reciprocate, to participate together) was working as a training centre through 1980's but by 1986 was looking for a new direction in training since the traditional approach to agriculture was failing. In 1987 Bill Mollison ran a workshop in Botswana which was attended by members of Fambidzanai. It seemed like the right approach and in 1988 they ran their first permaculture course, having taken a year to develop an approach appropriate to the Zimbabwean conditions. Fambidzanai has a 40-acre plot 20 kilometres from Harare. It runs 30 courses a year and is incorporating other techniques. When asked to provide input, training, run extension courses for people interested elsewhere in the country, Fambidzanai decided it would be more appropriate for training to take place through groups already working in similar areas – eg organic farmers, natural pest control, reforestation groups etc. And so the Natural Farming Network was formed.

Natural Farming Network – Simba Muzuwa

This organization took over the responsibility for extension training after an exchange experience with Kenya in which twelve delegates were funded to visit the different organic farming organizations in Kenya, and a group of Kenyans visited similar groups in Zimbabwe. Five groups in Zimbabwe were involved in hosting and planning for the Kenyans' visit and it was out of these that the Natural Farming Network (NFN) was formed. Simba was asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the exchange in Kenya and some time later a similar evaluation of the Zimbabweans' visit to Kenya took place. From this exchange and evaluation process an umbrella organisation consisting of thirteen countries was formed. These are independent organisations which came together because they believed that it was crucial to the survival and promotion of permaculture and organic farming in general in Zimbabwe to network. The structure is important. NFN has a secretariat of twelve, plus a chair. Members own the organisation and make the policy. The two main activities of the organisation are the provision of information and training. NFN publishes pamphlets and books, such as the book *Production Without Destruction*.

PELUM: Participatory Ecological Land Use Management – Rob Sacco

In April 1991 the Botswana Permaculture (Society?) and ZIP (Zimbabwean Institute of Permaculture) met at Fambidzanai and decided there was a need to formalise and formulate permaculture training. The groups included Holistic Resource Management amongst others. John Wilson wanted to unify all these groups. A series of workshops were held subsequently with other East African countries. A syllabus was developed so that more trainers could be trained to become trainers themselves.

In 1995 PELUM was formed from nine member countries including Zimbabwe, Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania, Lesotho, South Africa, and Uganda. Country working groups were set up to organise training. PELUM is currently in the process of establishing country desks with coordinators working together with PELUM. PELUM has a mission statement and a constitution, and has established a pilot program: the PELUM College of Zimbabwe. It is hoped that this college will be replicated in East and Southern Africa. It is taking students at three levels.

1. Postgraduates who do a 2 year program.
2. O Level graduates who will eventually become trainers.
3. Farmer extensionists.

Accreditation is being negotiated with the University of Zimbabwe for postgraduate students, the Ministry of Education for the O Level students and internal accreditation for the farm extension workers.

There is no central organisation. Students are given some experience of how the different organisations work and get a perspective from the inside.