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Agroforestry helping in addressing effects of climate

by Diana Mapulanga, Zambia

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of **Stories
Change**

Connecting traditional knowledge and
innovations for fair and sustainable
food systems

United Nations
Decade of

**FAMILY
FARMING**

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Agroforestry Helping in Addressing Effects of Climate by **Diana Mapulanga**, Zambia

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Stories of change:

*Connecting traditional knowledge
and innovations for fair and
sustainable food systems*

In December 2017, the [United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Family Farming \(UNDAF, 2019-2028\)](#) thus constituting a framework that recognizes the importance of family farmers, which includes peasants, indigenous people, traditional communities, pastoralists, fisherfolks, upland farmers, and many other groups of food producers that possess a unique potential to promote transformative changes in the way food is grown, produced, processed and distributed.

All over the world, there are thousands of stories of distinctive work carried out anonymously by family farmers, including women and youth, on successful transitions to more inclusive, sustainable and fair food systems. Those stories are based on co-creation and sharing of traditional knowledge and innovations that are helping to make food systems sustainable, leaving no one behind.

In this context, the [Family Farming Knowledge Platform](#) in collaboration with the [Barefoot Guide Connection](#) organized a series of “writeshops”, writing classes to support practitioners to write their own experience, generating knowledge which highlight the practices, changes, innovations and impacts of what they do in support of family farming.

These writeshops represented an opportunity to share the creative process through which identify, recognize, write and exchange stories and experiences from young people, women, farmers, small-scale producers who work to promote, improve and strengthen family farming and achieve prosperous and inclusive rural societies.

This initiative was conceived to provide a space to highlight the human, cultural and social dimensions of family farming, including the human rights embedded in family farming and its social and economic organization.

The stories presented in this compilation - selected among those written during the writeshops, highlight the different ways in which family farmers responsibly and creatively manage their natural resources, landscapes and ecosystems as well as the cultural and symbolic values that define their identity.

Cover photo by Diana Mapulanga

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It all started on the day when I escorted our country director to Rufunsa District, which is located in Lusaka Province in Zambia. We were off to meet the village Chieftainess Mphashya, to talk about our intentions to build a community seed bank in her chieftdom. We were met with warm smiles, and after all the mutual exchanges and protocol of greetings, we were offered some refreshments under the tree shade where we sat for the meeting to discuss the community seed bank.



Photo by Diana Mapulanga

At the meeting, I met the Rufunsa District field officer, Mike Ngulube, who told us about a place of wonder called Dream Creations Space. He explained how indigenous tree species were being preserved there and fruit producing

trees were planted in between them. I was very curious and asked him to take us there after the meeting.

When we arrived, I was amazed by what I saw. An abundant forest of fruit trees, indigenous trees, long forgotten trees, a variety of grasses, birds and insects. I asked Mike what inspired him to start conserving indigenous tree species. Mike answered eagerly, "These trees were in danger of depletion by the nearby communities, and an idea struck me on how best I could enhance the adoption of agroforestry in my community."

I was keen to know more and so I asked him how he started.

Mike smiled and pointed at the trees, "Dream Creations Space emerged out of the idea of what Community Technology Development Trust (CTDT) was doing in conserving indigenous local seeds. I thought that it would be great if we could extend this to conserving indigenous trees as well at a place which would also become a center for hosting other farmer activities. The first thing I had to do was to find a place where I could plant these trees. I wanted species which could be preserved while introducing fruit producing trees which were not originally there."

At first, I faced many challenges. There was resistance from the community in adopting these practices as many people depended on tree cutting for charcoal production as well as farming. But after we started with a few willing farmers, others began to see the benefits and slowly started adopting this practice."

I was very impressed but wondered how Mike was able to secure the land.

Mike nodded as I asked the question. "Yes, with the support from our head office, we were able to secure this place and the community later

got interested. They started to suggest other tree species that we could add which would also be producing foods for them as well as green manure covering crops. To promote agroforestry, green manure covering crops like *lukina*, *glicidea* and *tephrosia* were introduced in the already existing indigenous tree species. Other plants that were introduced in the conservation are bananas, pawpaw, lemons, oranges and avocado.”



Photo by Diana Mapulanga

Mike continued to explain that the space not only served as a conservation site but also as a centre for different activities organised by the local farming community, from food and seed fairs to holding farmer meetings under the cool shade produced by the trees.

As Mike continued to describe the different activities, I thought about my home village. I felt sad as most of the trees had been cut down and the use of green manure to cover crops had been totally forgotten. Now only the heavy use of synthetic chemicals was used in farming. Coupled with a lack of information on agroecology, most farmers in my home village have forgotten their old ways of farming. They preferred new methods, not realising that these practices have destroyed their soils, created low yields and caused food insecurity and lack of nutrition.

Dream Creations Space made me realise that not all hope was lost for my home village. I could share these agricultural practices with my community. I knew that when using agroforestry, we could restore the ailing soils which were hardly producing enough food.

During my next visit home, I spent some time with my mother who is also a small-scale farmer. On the first day, as we sat down to drink some tea together, I told her about my experience in Rufunsa, and how I had been amazed by the lush forest of trees. I described the diversity of trees and how the fruit trees were planted in between the different species. I told her how my perspective had changed and how much I had learnt about green manure. However, from the expression on her face, I could see that she was reluctant to hear what I had to share.

The next day, while we were walking through her vegetable garden, and she lamented the poor soil and lack of water, I explained everything again to her. This time I spoke slowly, I wanted to give her hope that we could bring back our forests and restore our soils. I described what I had seen on my walk with Mike, in much detail. As I spoke, she talked about the old days when she was a child and how her grandparents used to practise this type of farming.

“My child,” she said, “thank you for reminding me of what I had forgotten. I can’t wait for the next farming season to put into practise what you have shared with me.”

When I left my mother’s house many thoughts raced through my head. I thought about agroforestry, and how, especially in the face of climate change, it is very crucial in replenishing and enhancing soil fertility, not only for better yields in areas where soils have eroded, but also for healing the earth, our communities and ourselves.

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