

Dear members,

Dear donors,

Dear volunteers,

Dear supporters of Mubaya Ecovillage's Support Association in Zimbabwe,

Thanks to your support, the projects started in recent months are progressing very quickly. This is particularly the case for projects related to Biochar (page 1) and to medicinal herbs (page 2).

The visit in Switzerland of our project manager, Michael Mubaya, was an opportunity to learn more about his daily work, his collaboration within the Ecovillage and his vision for the future (page 2).

On page 3 you will find a summary of the Association's news in Switzerland and the event calendar.

We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter!

Biochar

The organic fertilization method using charcoal, called Biochar, not only increases agricultural production by improving soil quality, but also fights global warming.



It is necessary to carry out several field and greenhouse cultivation tests in order to find the most adapted fertilizer blend to the soil of Mubaya.

We tend to forget that no agricultural activity can last without fertile soils. In comparison with other African countries, the soil in Mubaya contains enough humus and other nutrients to allow most plants to grow. There is still concern about food insecurity while climate change greatly increases the risk of drought. The Biochar project enables preventive action by using a charcoal-based fertilizer.

The Mubaya Ecovillage benefits from the financial and personnel support of former Agric Society Switzerland Ghana Association (ASSG), in particular from its former president Felix Jenny, who has used this method since 2009. Michael Mubaya is currently carrying out tests to evaluate the effectiveness of this fertilizer in the ground of the Eco-Center.

The objective of this preliminary study is to compare the growth rate of plants, their nutritional qualities and their resistance to diseases depending on whether they were grown with or without Biochar fertilizer. Our Association is now looking for Zimbabwean and Swiss agronomy students willing to work with this innovative method.

What is organic fertilization?

Each plant needs dozens of different nutrients to grow. The carbon contained in the Biochar fertilizer acts like a sponge: it retains elements like carbon dioxide (CO₂) and hydrogen in the soil, allowing the plant to grow faster. Known as the main greenhouse gas in the atmosphere, CO₂ is converted into oxygen by the plants through photosynthesis, thus helping to reduce global warming.

Interview with Michael Mubaya

What did you have the opportunity to do in the last few months?

The Biochar project kept me busy in the last months because it is still in an experimental stage. First of all I came to Switzerland to meet Felix Jenny with whom I work on the Biochar project. We are looking forward to engaging volunteers and students from Zimbabwe and abroad into this project, if it proves a success, in order to spread it in the village and further. This trip also allowed me to meet many other people and to imagine how to further develop our projects.



I look forward to returning to the Ecovillage to continue with the existing and scheduled projects especially now that we have sent four people from neighboring homesteads within the Ecovillage to a permaculture training course.

How have these collaborations with neighboring homesteads been developed?

Our projects in recent years, like the tree planting and the permaculture gardening, have attracted the curiosity of residents of the Mubaya village. Some people have come to us to attend workshops and discuss opportunities to adapt our methods to the challenges they face.

We selected five homesteads from the Mubaya village where success to implement permaculture is most likely to occur. One of the most important aspects was that people from these homesteads had shown great interest in what was done in our Eco-Centre until now. Another criteria for selection was the existence of exploitable water sources even in periods of drought. We will now be able to tackle our projects on a larger and more sustainable scale with a common masterplan. I hope that this trip will enable me to meet their expectations by coming back with solutions that can help them on a daily basis. We intend to fence a piece of their lands in order for it to be protected from the strolling animals and for them to now start with permaculture gardening and field work.

Which are your next projects?

As global consideration of land characteristics is crucial in permaculture, we began to map the precise location of infrastructures such as wells and roads in the 40 to 50 hectares of our territory in a workshop starting back in 2016. We will now go on with this mapping: not an easy task! The four people who took a permaculture design course ("PDC Course") in July to understand the technical aspects of our work will be welcome assistants. Our common goal is to "fit" more members of the Mubaya village into the masterplan of the Ecovillage by 2020.

The awareness to permaculture which is raising within our neighbors was envisaged from the beginning of the Ecovillage project. The dissemination of this method not only makes it possible to obtain more abundant harvests, but also to cope with agricultural crises in a more efficient and solidary way.

Medicinal herbs

After her training in Cameroon in 2017, Cathrine Mubaya was able successfully start herbal harvests in the Eco-Centre

Medicinal plants have left Cathrine Mubaya little rest since the rainy season, which occurs from November to April. Her plants asked her for constant care and water supply.

But Cathrine sees only benefits from the training she took in July 2017 with Anamed (Action for Natural Medicine) in Cameroon to learn how to grow and use wormwood ("Artemisia"), the Moringa tree and other plants. Cathrine has already been able to use her crops to relieve people in her community suffering from diabetes, asthma and various dietary deficiencies.



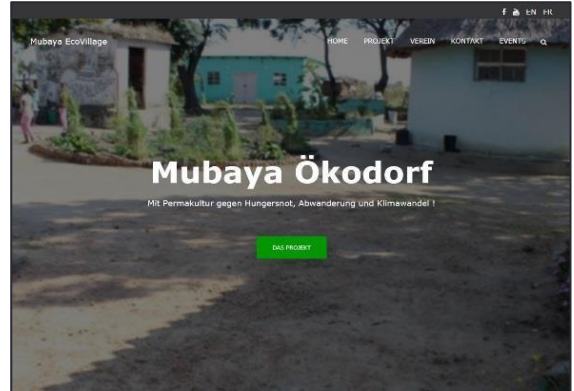
Cathrine Mubaya smiles in front of her decoctions during her workshop in Cameroon.

News in Switzerland

New website

The new version of our Association's website is available in German since the beginning of April. The layout has been adapted to both computer and smartphone readings. We would like to thank Corinne Diallo warmly for her work.

The French and English pages are currently being translated.



Help from new volunteers

Our association can count on the support of new people, whose names appear on the right side. Some of them have contacted us through the association Benevol' Biel. We thank them warmly for their commitment and look forward to our future collaboration.

- Maeva Koenig: translations into French
- Livia Schmocker: flea market's support
- Jorge Martos: webmaster
- Yannick Saucy: newsletters

Events

On Saturdays, 7 AM to 2 PM

Flea market in Biel/Bienne

4. August | 1. & 29. September | 13. October:
in the old town

18. August: at the *Esplanade*
(front of *Kongresshaus / Palais des Congrès*)

We look forward to meeting you there.

Also we would like to thank Christine Zimmermann warmly for the organization of the market booths.

On Saturday 15. September 2018

Portissimo Market

Village square in Port (BE)

Further information

As of 31st July 2018, our association's income amounted to CHF 11'747.30, mainly from donations made during a birthday and following a funeral service.

Almost 100% of the donations and contributions from members are directly allocated to projects on the spot in Zimbabwe.

We would like to thank you for your support and your interest in the Mubaya Ecovillage!

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