



# CTDT Monthly Newsletter

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***Supporting farmer-led seed systems through the promotion of local crops and varieties to achieve household food and nutrition security in the face of climate change***



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## **Editorial Team**

**Chief Editor**  
Charles Nkhoma

**Editor**  
Juliet Nangamba

**Author**  
Diana Mapulanga

## Small Scale farmers key to Agrobiodiversity-CTDT Director

Zambia is endowed with abundant natural resources and a fairly rich biological diversity manifested in its wetlands and rivers, flora and fauna and agrobiodiversity. However, the value of ecosystems and their biodiversity are not fully appreciated even though the country is heavily dependent on these natural resources.

Community Technology Development Trust (CTDT) Director, Charles Nkhoma who has taken up the initiative of promoting agrobiodiversity explains that during his formal employment years, he always thought there was a gap in terms of what he called plant genetic resources programmes.

“During my days at the National gene bank and SADC gene bank, we used to talk about the fact that we were conserving the diversity that is in the country and the region without involving farmers very much because of the nature of the program.” he said.



CTDT Director ,Charles Nkhoma speaking to farmers

Mr. Nkhoma adds that it was always his interest to play a future role in establishing an entity that would work with farmers towards maintaining biodiversity which was aimed at promoting local crops which had slowly started disappearing and going into extinction in the country.

In 2009, CTDT, an agro-biodiversity NGO was registered. The same year Mr. Nkhoma left his last formal employment at World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

“The initial funding came from Hivos for about four years and basically just working with promoting those crops which were possibly going in extinction, these included Bambara nuts ,cowpeas and even traditional varieties of groundnuts, maize, sorghum and millet.” He said.

With the project which started towards the end of 2011 for four years, CTDT began a process of multiplying seed in communities and allowing farmers to share; this program enabled the increase in some of the seed varieties especially Bambara nut and cow peas which were almost going into extinction in some areas.

The director explained that the biggest challenge was first to convince enough potential funding partners because for a long time even Hivos' interest was simply to improve the farmers wellbeing and not necessarily focusing on biodiversity; the approach to promote biodiversity was CTDT's initiative.

*"People don't appreciate the fact that what farmers do is also valid technology in their own right. Those farmer initiatives are technologies ,its just that society has tended to view technology as one that involves machinery and other sophisticated things" Charles Nkhoma*

Normally, the belief that farmers' seed systems are a credible means for achieving food security is not very well understood, most people only understand modern crop production which involves hybrid seed , chemicals and machinery.” He said.

And asked why the name 'CTDT', Mr. Nkhoma explained that the name was adopted from Zimbabwe where CTDT was first established in the early 1990s. The name basically means that it was the communities (rural communities) at the center of development.

The term technology was used in a broad sense which meant the farmers abilities to take production using practices that are developed overtime.

“People don't appreciate that what farmers do is also technology in its own right. Those are technologies, its just that society has tended to view technology as one that involves machinery and other sophisticated things.” he added.

### Quote :

*Whether we consciously realise it or not, the biodiversity with which we are most familiar, and the biodiversity with which we have most intimate historical, cultural and biological connections, is that associated with food plants...*

**Cary Fowler**



Field visit - Chikankata

## What CTDT Is

Community Technology Development Trust (CTDT) is a not-for-profit Zambian NGO registered in 2009 with the objective of contributing to the livelihoods of rural communities, through interventions aimed at promoting biodiversity, conservation and natural resources management in food production practices.

CTDT promotes the management of agrobiodiversity to enhance sustainable livelihoods through intervention strategies aimed at facilitating restoration and enhancement of traditional plant varieties and animal breeds. CTDT strives to enable farmers to own, manage, control and benefit from agrobiodiversity through supporting conservation, restoration and enhancement of local crops and livestock.

CTDT is actively involved in the areas of agrobiodiversity, household and nutrition security needs, climate change, policy advocacy, and gender mainstreaming. It promotes cultivation of wide diversity of crops and varieties in order to contribute to household food and nutrition security needs. This involves the cultivation of different nutrition groups of starch, proteins, minerals and vitamins.

CTDT also recognises that changing agricultural and food production in ways that ensure improved sustainability and healthier and more nutritious food supply involves the increased use of agricultural biodiversity.

Increased use of agricultural biodiversity is also necessary to adapt agriculture to climate change. It has been predicted that climate change is expected to cause substantial reductions in potential crop production in southern Africa including Zambia. It is therefore imperative to embark on strategies aimed at mitigating the impact of these changes in agricultural productivity.

Additionally, CTDT believes that for many programs to succeed they need to be supported by the right policies. CTDT is thus actively involved in influencing policy on biodiversity through policy engagement, formulation, implementation and capacity building of relevant stakeholders. CTDT engages in policy advocacy and lobbying designed to bring the voice and experience of local communities to the attention of policy makers.

Not only is policy change essential, but also gender mainstreaming which calls for the inclusion of both men and women in all program activities. Gender is thus mainstreamed in all CTDT programmes on the appreciation that achieving gender equality requires understanding that every policy, programme, project and development process affects both men and women differently and that specific measures must be designed to eliminate inequalities because they tend to fuel poverty and food insecurity.

## Outline of CTDT Projects

Community Technology Development Trust (CTDT) Zambia, has outlined its current projects being undertaken in the four target districts of Rufunsa, Chirundu, Shibuyunji and Chikankata.

CTDT currently has three running projects supported by the Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI), Bread for the World and Oxfam Novib.

SKI's overall goal is to improve food security for participating farming communities through supporting farmer-led seed systems (FLSS) and Agroecology (AE).

The initiative aims to restore the narrowing diversity observed which presents a danger due to the acute effects of climate change in the targeted areas. It also aims at promoting agroecological practices as a means to ensure food and nutrition security.

Bread for the world aims to build communities that are resilient to climate and social and economic changes. This project focuses on increasing the number of households that are producing and consuming a balanced combination of starchy plants, pulses, fruits and vegetables.

it also focuses on increasing the number of households that are using sustainable practices to increase soil organic matter by utilising locally available inputs.

Oxfam Novib supports the project 'Sowing Diversity equals Harvesting Security' SD=HS whose overall objective is to have indigenous peoples and small holder farmers, men, women and youth -enjoy their farmers rights and have the capacity to access, develop and use plant genetic resources to improve their food and nutrition security under conditions of climate change.

SD=HS contributes to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG2) number 2 which is to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and provide sustainable agriculture.

The program is built on the assumption that sustained crop diversity and increased access to good quality well adapted seeds are preconditions safe, nutritious and sufficient.

Farmers increase their productivity and income, have strengthened capacity to adapt to climate change and maintaining the genetic diversity of seeds and plants.

CTDT is thus in the process of rebuilding the diversity that once existed in the areas where it operates, which will also be the source of seed for re-introductions in areas where maize had completely taken over all other cereals like sorghum and millet but where now the changing climate is affecting maize production.



Seed being displayed at the seed fair in Chikankata



*Chirundu farmers during the tour of the national gene bank*

## Chirundu Farmers tour the National Genebank

In a bid to promote the conservation of locally owned seeds, CTDI in partnership with the National GeneBank has continued to work with rural communities of Zambia in supporting the creation of community seed banks for seed security in the country.

CTDI and the National Genebank recently held a familiarisation tour of the Genebank for farmers from Chirundu district.

During the tour , CTDI project Manager, Juliet Nangamba said the purpose of the familiarisation tour was to strengthen linkages between the National Genebank and the community seed banks that are owned by the community.

“The reason we are seeing our local crops not performing well is because we do not properly take care of our seeds which forces us to buy hybrid seeds,”She explained.

And Agriculture Research Officer at the National Genebank, Womba Kamusaki explained the importance of Seed banks to communities, the nation, region and the world at large.

**“Farmers have a tendency to think that seeds can only be supplied by big companies( agro dealers ) that supply seeds not knowing that they can preserve seeds on their own” Julius Mufana**

During the tour of the cassava field gene bank, Mrs. Kamusake pointed out that the National Gene bank which was established in 1989 houses a wide variety of local seeds which were collected from different parts of the country from the local farmers themselves.

She further explained to the visiting farmers that the reason they have gene banks is to preserve crops that might otherwise diminish due to factors as climate change and urbanization among other factors.

The research officer went on to explain the different processes that are undertaken for seed preservation at the National Gene bank.

At the same event, a lead farmer, Mr. Julius Mufana expressed happiness for the opportunity to visit the National Gene bank which taught the farmers the correct procedure to follow in seed preservation.

Mr. Mufana advised other farmers to take keen interest in seed preservation through the depositing at the seed banks.



*Julius Mufana*

He however expressed concern that farmers have got a tendency to think that seeds only come from big companies that supply seeds not knowing that they can preserve seeds on our own.

“I therefore advise my fellow farmers to preserve seeds on their own using the same method we have learnt at the Gene Bank today,”he said.