

## Local Leadership Support for Farmer Managed Seed Systems



*Chikankata member of parliament, Jaqueline Sabo giving her speech at the open day*

**By; Diana Mapulanga**

Government's support towards the formal farming sector and undermining the informal seed systems has continued even when small scale farmers have continually preferred their own farm saved seeds for household consumption.

Non-governmental organisations including many farmer groups have been calling for the recognition of farmer managed seed systems if the country is to attain food and nutrition security with the ultimate goal being food sovereignty.

With policy makers continually calling for evidence on the viability of farmer managed seed systems, CTDТ conducted open days for farmers to showcase their work. The open days were an eye opener for the local leadership who were in attendance; it deepened the exploration of farmer managed seed systems by discussing how having diverse seed is critical for nutritious and sustainable food system, the importance of planting diverse food crops in the same field, and how talking about seed is inseparable from talking about the food we put in our bodies.

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## CTDT Newsletter



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Chikankata area Member of Parliament was present at the Chikankata open day, the event showcased a wide variety of farmer saved seeds and local food plants that were displayed by farmers. The member of parliament emphasized the need to support farmer managed seed systems which have proven to provide nutritious healthy diets in many rural communities.

"At the moment we are eating these hybrid foods that are giving us a lot of diseases that we are failing to understand, I was shocked to hear children as young as four diagnosed with BP. It has become a national anthem people saying I have diabetes. Why? It's because of the food we are eating.

Our hospitals are constantly experiencing medicine shortages because of a rise in non-communicable diseases at the moment, hence it is high time as a people we go back to our local products which are healthy and nutritious. And it means when you have a health nation, you have a wealth nation. Am appealing to the head of state to come and sit with us MPs to find a way on how we are going to promote local products in our communities," Jaqueline Sabao.

Chief Chipeco of Chirundu district added that in the times of climate change, it becomes even more inherent to adopt eco-friendly farming practices especially when it comes to choices of seeds. "This climate change has become a global challenge and the only thing we have to do is go back to what our ancestors used to eat and relook at what type of crops they used to plant. We should not only stick to maize; its high time we start planting drought resistant crops like pearl millet, sorghum and cassava.



*Chief Chipeco taking a tour of stands during the Bread for the World open day in Chirundu*

I encourage my fellow chiefs to preserve local seed varieties. The Chiefs should sit down with the elderly and ask what type of food they were eating. I have a small farm and I found that each time I plant maize, I spend a lot of money as compared to when I plant traditional legumes," Chief Chipeco said.

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## FSE First Experience with the Seed Control and Certification Institute(SCCI) Inspectors

**By; Joseph Mwitumwa**

In order to strengthen farmers capacities in production and facilitate access to quality seed and provide them with options to improve their livelihoods under the Sowing Diversity=Harvesting Security SD=HS project, CTDT Zambia supported a total of 88 smallholder farmers drawn from six FFS with trainings in seed production and marketing. Out of the 88 farmers that received this training, 11 farmers grew local seed for maize and beans while 77 farmers grew registered varieties of groundnuts and beans.

The six FFS in Shibuyunji and Chikankata districts chose to carry out seed multiplication from their individual fields as farmers and have one field for each FFS where they have been learning from on a weekly basis.

Two inspections for the registered varieties were carried out to assess if the varieties conformed to state regulations for seed production. These inspections were conducted by the Seed Control and Certification Institute (SCCI) of Zambia. SCCI is mandated to regulate and control the production, sale, and importation of seed as well as the exportation and testing of seed to ensure that it adheres to minimum standards.



**A happy farmer Dolas Machona after her field passed inspection**

During the first inspections a total of 56 farmers' fields growing seed were inspected; Farmers in Shibuyunji and Chikankata were excited to have passed inspections given that this was their first time engaging in seed production.

"I am very happy that my field has passed the inspections, you have no idea how happy this has made me," said Rosemary Shimonde. "I made sure to follow all the things that we were taught during the training and weekly FFS meetings and I am happy that it has paid off.

Once we harvest we will keep some seed for next season and sell some, this will help me pay for my children's school fees and be able to have food security at home." Rosemary further shared that the weekly lessons they learn from the FFS has really helped them manage the crop well. "The lessons from the FFS Guide on FSE have paid off, we were very prepared for the inspections".

"I had very little to do and no source of income, now that I am a seed grower and my seed has passed the inspections I will be able to sale it at a better price and find some income to help sustain our home, next season I plan to double the hectarage I am growing," said Dolas Machona one of the farmers under Shimonde FFS in Shibuyunji.

Hilary Moono, one of the P2 facilitators in Chikankata district, narrated that he was very happy with the project and how it has empowered him. He said the seed for groundnuts was very difficult to find in Chikankata district. They would use poor quality seed that produced very little, with no surplus to sell.

But now, using the training they received, the community will be able to multiply more of the seed and make it available in the communities. Seed Inspector Ms Zombe Sikazwe was one of the officers from the Seed Systems and Inspectorate Section (SSIS) of SCCI who conducted the inspections, she stated that the overall analysis for the seed crops grown was good. She believes that the seed production training course yielded positive results.

***"I had very little to do and no source of income, now that I am a seed grower and my seed has passed the inspections I will be able to sale it at a better price and find some income to help sustain our home,"***

***Dolas Machona***





## Lived experience of discrimination of farmer varieties by existing seed laws on Bingo FFS

By: Juliet Nangamba

Mercy Shibleki and her FFS (Bingo) transitioned from a participatory plant breeding farmer field school to a seed production and marketing farmer field school. In order to fully participate in the seed production and marketing process, Bingo FFS implemented the guide on seed production and marketing.

FFS members were also trained by Seed Control and Certification Institute (SCCI) to ensure that the requirements for seed production were understood and implemented during the production process. Bingo FFS agreed to produce and multiply seed of Go by Red, a popular local variety among the community members.

Despite the training received from SCCI and following all the production guidelines for seed production in their fields, Bingo FFS members could not register the seed they were

producing with SCCI because it was not registered on the national variety register.

During the production period, SCCI inspected and visited all farmer field

schools that were producing seed of registered varieties while Bingo FFS was not considered for inspection. This implied that the produce from the farmer



*Mercy Shibleki showing off the local maize variety*

field school can only be considered as grain as it is not inspected and certified by SCCI.

Mercy Shibleki and Bingo FFS hope that in the future the government may consider the farmer varieties for commercialization as seed. She states that they arrived at producing the local variety as seed because they noted that it had a high demand within the community but was not available in desired quantities.

“It was also difficult for us to find this variety. We had it in very small quantities and we kept multiplying it. This ‘maize’ variety tastes very sweet and is not easily attacked by weevils in storage. We thought of multiplying this maize so as to increase quantities to enable access to this variety by other community members.

If we have our own seed, we will not be waiting for seed from the Farmer Input Support Programme which sometimes is delivered late. We will not even be waiting for agro-dealers to bring us seed. Even when they bring the seed, it is so expensive for some farmers to afford it.

This is why we thought and settled on seed production of the local maize so that maybe in the future it may be considered as seed. This will enable us to often have seed and prepare for the season. If we have seed it will be easy for us to look for synthetic fertilizer. Our local seed does not even

require so much synthetic fertilizer. We can even use manure to grow it. This is why our local seed is important.” Mercy said.

## Institutionalisation of PPB as a potential solution for realisation of farmers Rights

By: Diana Mapulanga

Through the SD=HS project, CTDI is keenly working to foster collaborations between the breeders and small-holder farmers in the development of new crop varieties through Participatory Plant breeding using the farmer field school (FFS) approach. This is seen as a mechanism that can be used to involve farmers in the decision-making process and implement farmers rights.

To encourage development of adaptive seed varieties in the farming

communities, Participatory Plant Breeding (PPB) is seen as a way to overcome limitations of conventional breeding by offering farmers a means to determine which varieties are most suited for their needs. Through the PPB approach, farmers are able to actively participate in the development, enhancement and production of seed; they not only produce it, but are part of the development process and are able to market it...to page 4



**Visitor Chimuka participating in the bagging of sorghum**

In the past three years, CTDI has been engaging a Sorghum breeder from the Zambia Agriculture Research Institute (ZARI) to work with farmers in Chirundu in order to develop new sorghum varieties with preferred traits that were selected by the farmers themselves. Expanding this work to involve other breeders, working on other crops with ZARI can be a means for achieving institutionalisation of the PPB approach in the national breeding program. This would ensure the continuation of this approach by ZARI beyond the project period.

Dr. Lloyd Mbulwe, the sorghum breeder from ZARI partnering with CTDI, shared his experiences with other breeders working with various crops across the country: "Farmers tend to stick to their varieties because of the many uses a particular local variety gives them. We have noted that local crops have their own space and they are not conflicting with the improved varieties. An example of a sorghum variety 'Longo' is still dominant in the local seed system in Chirundu because of its multiple use and adaptation to the harsh environment" he explained. During the seminar organised to share experience, he added

The reason we are doing PPB is to make sure that farmers are engaged in the process of developing new varieties to make sure that appropriate seeds are readily available in the community. What we are trying to do is to breed materials that are more tolerant and resilient to climatic changes" Dr. Mbulwe.

Learning from the experiences of the sorghum breeder, there is a need to co-create knowledge and bridge the gap

between scientific and farmer knowledge for easy adoption of new varieties.

"Breeders are moving towards working with farmers more; some of the best varieties we currently have are those that we have developed together with the farmers," Says Kennedy Muimui, a beans breeder with ZARI.

"The research that has been done by Dr. Mbulwe should now be given to extension staff to expand on the projects so that many areas can also be able to benefit from work taking place in Chirundu district. The government will ensure that the work being done here is replicated in other districts if they are to have significant impact," Alick Daka, Deputy Director of Agriculture in the Ministry of Agriculture while officiating at the PPB seminar.

"PPB also brings in the relevance of a farmer variety registration system which hinges a lot on the realisation of farmers rights. The farmer variety registration system will enhance the production and consumption of local crop varieties. Farmer varieties should not be demonised because there is a space to develop and market these varieties," Godfrey Mwila, former national focal person for the International Treaty for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

Farmers are optimistic and eager to carry on working with experts in breeding new varieties while calling for more collaborations. "We are happy to have been part of the process of developing a new sorghum variety with traits we had been looking for. We appreciate the knowledge and sharing between us as farmers and the breeder; we could not have reached this stage where we are now seeing the results of the objectives we had set. The collaboration with the breeder has greatly impacted us, we all knew what we wanted but were not clear on the path to take to reach those," Visitor Chimuka, PPB farmer in Chirundu.

During the seminar and follow up workshop on PPB using FFS approach workshop, the breeders from various national breeding programs including beans, groundnuts, maize, sorghum and cowpea agreed to work with CTDI and the SD=HS program with small-scale farmers to develop new crop varieties thereby setting in motion the process of institutionalization of PPB approaches in national breeding programs.

## Farmers set foot on eco-friendly practices

**By; Mike Ngulube**

Too little or too much rain is some of the issues small-scale farmers are grappling with around the World. This situation is being said to be elicited by several factors which also include issues such as climate change; whose effects are felt by many now with the small-scale farmers being the hardest hit.

The effects of changing weather conditions are seen as a recipe for shifting season which has become an eye sore to small-scale farmers by way of widening food scarcity but also pose a threat on living things microorganisms inclusive which are very critical in keeping the soils healthy.

Microorganisms if well harnessed and properly nurtured have positive multiplier effects a 64-year-old Ms. Esther

Phiri said a tip which small-scale farmers everywhere and anywhere must ride on as part of mitigating the effects and adapting themselves to the ever-changing weather conditions.

Ms. Phiri together with nine other members who constitutes a Community Seed Bank Committee in Rufunsa have set foot on eco-friendly farming system with some hope of cashing in more for less since the farming system uses only locally available resources without external inputs such as fertilizer, weed killers among other things which have potential to damage the soils as well as some living organisms in the long run.



**Esther Phiri, farmer in Rufunsa**