



SKI AE Landscape Initiative

Piloting landscape level agroecology in Southern Africa

Walter Mugove Nyika (Rescope), Roseline Mukonoweshuro (TSURO),
Stéphanie Aubin (SKI) and John Wilson



SKI is a regional partnership of diverse Southern African organisations working with smallholder farmers to enhance food security and nutrition, strengthen social cohesion, and build climate change resilience through farmer-led seed systems and agroecology



- The Seed and Knowledge Initiative started in 2014, with 3 partners in South Africa (Biowatch South Africa, Mupo/EarthLore Foundation, UCT)
- In 2020, SKI is now a collective of **16 partners** in **4 countries** in **Southern Africa**: Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa (with other strategic collaborative partners, incl. in eSwatini and Lesotho)
- Our core purpose is to promote and strengthen **farmer-led seed system** in the context of **agroecology (AE)**. A main objective is to contribute to **forming a movement on AE and farmer rights** in Southern Africa.
- While we have strong relationships with a number of organisations and individuals in the region and all over the world, our **primary stakeholders** are the **partners** and **farmers** we work with the region.

ZAMBIA:

- Community Technology Development Trust (CTDT)
- Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre (KATC)
- Regional Schools and Colleges of Permaculture (ReSCOPE)
- Zambia Alliance for Agroecology and Biodiversity (ZAAB)

MALAWI:

- Soils, Food and Healthy Communities (SFHC)

ZIMBABWE:

- Chikukwa Ecological Land Use Community Trust (CELUCT)
- Participatory Organic Research Extension and Training (PORET)
- Towards Sustainable Use of Resources Organisation (TSURO)
- Zimbabwe Small Holder Organic Farmers' Forum (ZIMSOFF)

SOUTH AFRICA:

- Biowatch South Africa
- EarthLore Foundation
- University of Cape Town's Bio-economy SARChI Chair
- Ukuvuna

SMALLHOLDER FARMERS:

- Our **way of working**:
 - We help **strengthen and focus** what farmers and partner organisations are **already doing** – on seed, agroecology, community building, networking, advocacy, etc.
 - We **bring together processes, people, organisations, and learning** in an inclusive way. This has included establishing a **Community of Practice** - there is greater collaboration and the movement is strengthened.
 - We **introduce and facilitate the sharing of innovative ideas**, practices that can enhance community seed systems and amplify agroecology.
 - We do **research and documentation** – to generate knowledge and evidence on the effectiveness of these alternative practices and systems with farmers, academics and community-based partner organisations (emphasis on participatory research and documentation processes).
 - In **advocacy**, we support partners in taking up opportunities for advocacy to lobby and influence decision-makers in their countries, incl. building their advocacy skills.
 - We establish a **long-term institutional commitment** with partners - partner organisations get strengthened, the work is maintained over a long period so as to ensure impact.

Community of Practice (CoP):

"Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly."

<https://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>

SKI CoP

Phase 1

Since 2015

> > >

A group of 10 +/- seed
practitioners
in the SKI partnership

> > >

Phase 2

Consolidation in Phase 2, incl. through SKI
partners/CoP members taking the lead on CoP activities

A group of 30+ AE practitioners, incl. SKI
friends

- Learning exchange meetings, training on cutting-edge new technologies/practices, the SKI CoP Google group, the WhatsApp group
- Appreciation and growing active involvement of members
< > Relevance and Effectiveness

A **building block** to our **Movement Building** objective in the region

Zambia SKI CoP meeting

(August 2019)

>> Identification of **Key Priorities** for stepping up agroecology in Southern Africa

>> Participating **CoP members** were given the opportunity to **lead and join teams** to take this forward during Phase 2

No.	Area	Team (team leaders are in bold)
1	Strive to practice what we advocate for, and advocate what we practice.	SKI Team
2	Towards AE landscapes	Walter , John x2, Shephard , Kasisi (Bridget; person to be confirmed), Frances, Theo, Stephanie
3	Ongoing seed work	Charles , Elfrieda, Julius, Esther, Lawrence, Stephanie
4	Towards alternative markets for AE production and AE in urban areas	Frances, Caili, Vanessa, Julius, Bridget, Gertrude, Chifundo, John N, Godwin
5	Embedding AE at all levels of education – curriculum work etc.	Shephard , Elfrieda, Vanessa, Chifundo, Solomon, Witness.
6	More focus on AE in dryland cropping areas	Elfrieda , Roseline, Method, Samson, Julius, Juliet, Nelson, Solomon, Laifolo, Kasisi, Roland, John N
7	More focus on holistic livestock management	Gertrude , Osmond, Method, Kasisi, Annie, Samson
8	More documented examples of profitable AE enterprises	Vanessa , Juliet, Roseline, Witness, Frances, Method
9	Towards a stronger farmer's voice	Elfrieda , Nelson, Gertrude, Method, Austin, Omali
10	Stronger health and AE linkages – nutrition etc.	John W , Juliet, Caili, Walter, Steph, Frances, Omali, Annie, Kasisi (Shadrack), Esther
11	More work on AE outside the 'agricultural' areas – fisher folk, wild harvesting etc. (links with AE landscapes)	SKI Team

Community Action for Resilient Landscapes: piloting an AE landscape approach with communities in Southern Africa

WHY ?

- **Southern Africa environmental context:**
 - 7-month dry season; rain in short, very hard bursts of great volume; with climate change and variability, the rainy season tending to become shorter, or start later, and is affected by an increasing number of dry spells.
 - > **Optimising water cycles and management** is critical

To have a vibrant, healthy environment that feeds people and provides them with abundant water throughout the year depends mostly on **getting every drop of rain into the ground.**

- Large scale ecosystem and land degradation
 - > If **communities** are to be meaningfully **resilient to the changing climate**, this means **managing landscapes** at the **watershed level**

WHY ?

- In recent years, a number of **alternative ecological, and more community-rooted and community-driven approaches** developed in response to the mainstream promotion of a top-down green revolution/industrial approach to farming/land-use and food systems
<> working with the complexity of social, cultural, ecological and sustainable economic systems ; recognition that everything is inter-connected - it's all about working with relationships and not separate 'parts'.
- These approaches cover all various aspects of management, from small food gardens to the watershed level > Need to bring these approaches into **a more cohesive overall approach**
- Because of the complexity of such an overall approach, it should be **guided by clear principles**, and not by objectives and targets.

WHY ?

- Around the world there are a growing number of initiatives that are now focusing on the landscape level, incl. FAO's Global Landscapes, Evergreening Global Alliance, ARK2030, Restore Africa and more.
- These are positive signs, but most of these initiatives are still based on mainstream thinking and are about relatively small changes and adaptations.
 - > Need for more **transformative alternatives**
 - > An **agroecological approach** to **landscapes** will work in a deeper-rooted and transformative way
- **Aim:** to illustrate that by working on a landscape level with a systemic approach and moving beyond the current small-scale food garden emphasis of AE in the region, livelihoods and food systems can be transformed.

Key specific feature of the SKI AE Landscape initiative

- A community-driven process to restore their landscape will depend on **communities re-kindling their deep connection to Nature, their land and to their culture**, a culture that often has long historical roots in those landscapes.

Communities across Africa always had this deep and reverend connection. The modern industrial world has undermined this.

Functionality alone will not bring landscapes back to vibrancy where good health and well functioning ecosystem processes abound. It will only happen when that deep connection and reverence is restored.

Key other features

- A 3-year programme to pilot the AE landscape management concept with at least 5 communities in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi > **a learning process**
- A **principles-driven programme** (not a goal-driven one)
- An emphasis on **participatory planning and documentation** to ensure community ownership of the process and grow their confidence to engage in policy spaces.
- A generic process designed to give an idea, but **every situation will be unique** and the landscape regeneration programme for each situation will be different.
- Through a multi-country collaboration and multi-partner joint action, build **solidarity and leadership** with an emphasis on women and youth; impact on local, national and regional levels, and so contribute to the AE movement.
- Any donor willing to support this work will do so from a **position of trust** and being a full partner in this co-learning programme.

Long term vision

A growing number of highly committed communities, who are re-establishing deeper connections to their land and culture, in Southern Africa are moving towards management of their landscapes in an integrated and holistic way and they are actively sharing their learning with others.

Core purpose for next three years

To initiate and learn from landscape-level AE work with at least five pilot rural communities in Southern Africa over the next three years.

Note: While the first steps will be made during these three years, this is seen as a long term programme lasting decades.

Guiding principles (1-4)

1. Work towards **high levels of biodiversity** across the landscape and contribute to effective ecosystem processes; this includes ensuring awareness amongst all involved about the interconnectedness across and between landscapes (wholes within wholes).
2. Recognizing that **every context is unique**, use creative and flexible processes, based on the co-creation of knowledge and learning, and working at the community's pace.
3. **Build on local knowledge and customary governance**, enabling the revival of bio-cultural knowledge and practice.
4. Pay special attention to **involving fully those who are often excluded** from community activities.

Guiding principles (5-7)

5. Emphasize **action-oriented collaboration** amongst all relevant players towards community ownership, and dynamic and inspiring leadership.
6. Enable **documentation and learning** at **every step of the way** by everyone involved towards amplification of the piloting work.
7. Seek out to **support ways** that will **enable self-spread of landscape regeneration** between communities with a ripple effect and not dependent on outside intervention.

Generic process and tools

- Starting point for any pilot: uniqueness of each situation (principle #2).
> Suggestion of a generic process = a kind of checklist to act as a basis to draw on for designing a more specific process.
- **Dialogues and mapping** as starting points for ongoing processes
 - Help communities to develop a vision of what they want to work towards and the principles that will guide them
 - Recognize that there is a lot happening already that must be acknowledged and built upon.
- **Participatory Action Research (PAR)**, as an ongoing overall approach to **documentation and learning** – will be used from the beginning, strong focus <
> pilot initiative with a core learning purpose

Generic process and tools

- **Identify/define priorities** out of each unique context, **requiring different approaches** and **specific capacity-strengthening** needs.
 - Many of the approaches that will be drawn upon are outlined in the study commissioned by SKI entitled: *“Exploring the determinants of an effective agroecological landscape approach”*.
 - These approaches include
 - those for the broader landscape areas, such as Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), Holistic grazing management for rangelands, and permaculture design;
 - practices for cropping areas such as green manuring/cover cropping, agroforestry, multi species cropping, use of biofertilizers, stimulants and inoculants;
 - those applied at more intensive garden levels such as bio-intensive agriculture, with use of composts or equivalent.

An example of what a process might look like:



1. Entry/community mobilisation

— an inclusive process, to assess social and leadership readiness, interest and willingness in an AE transition

2. Resource mobilisation

— as early as possible in the process, but sensitively so that communities don't see this process in 'money terms'.
Emphasis on communities identifying their own resources.

Proposed pilot in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe (Chimanimani district)

*“Saurombe community water and land resources
sustainable use/management to support improved
livelihoods”*

Proposing SKI partner: TSURO Trust

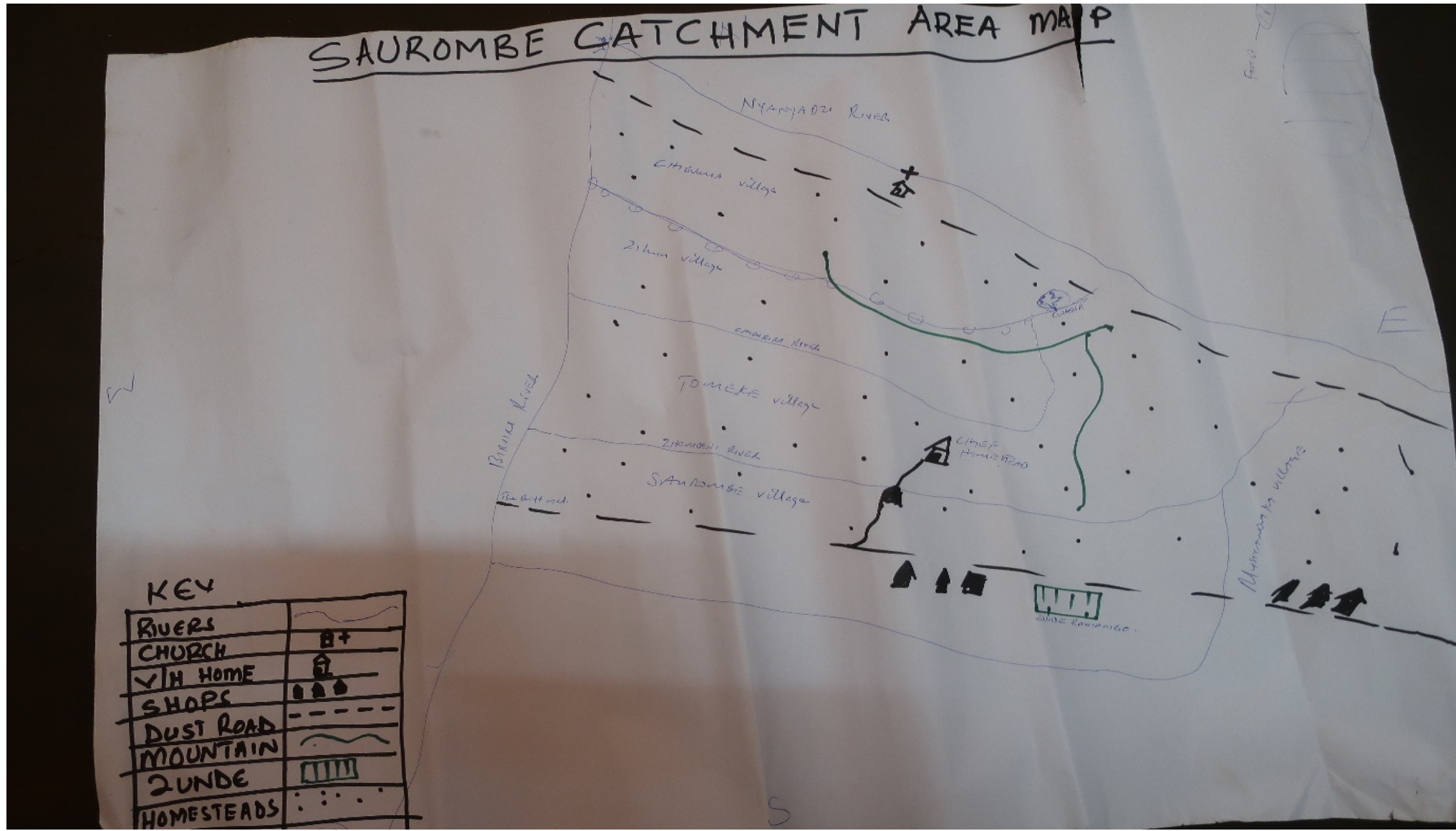
Background

- The **TSURO Trust** (Towards Sustainable Use of Resources Organisation) started programmes in 1999
- It is a community-based organisation based in Chimanimani District, Manicaland, Eastern Zimbabwe
- **TSURO Vision:** Empowered, peaceful and united communities of Chimanimani and neighbouring districts with well sustained natural resources, healthy and food secure people as well as productive food processing initiatives and marketing businesses
- 3 main **departments:** Community Health, Agro-processing and marketing, and sustainable agriculture and natural resources management (SARNRM)
- **SARNRM focus:** holistic land & livestock management, climate change & watershed management, farmer led research and learning, agroecology and organic production; seed sovereignty and farmers' rights, sustainable land-use design, food & nutrition security and biodiversity
- Has worked with SKI since 2015 on promotion of farmer led seed systems and Agroecology.

Site Description

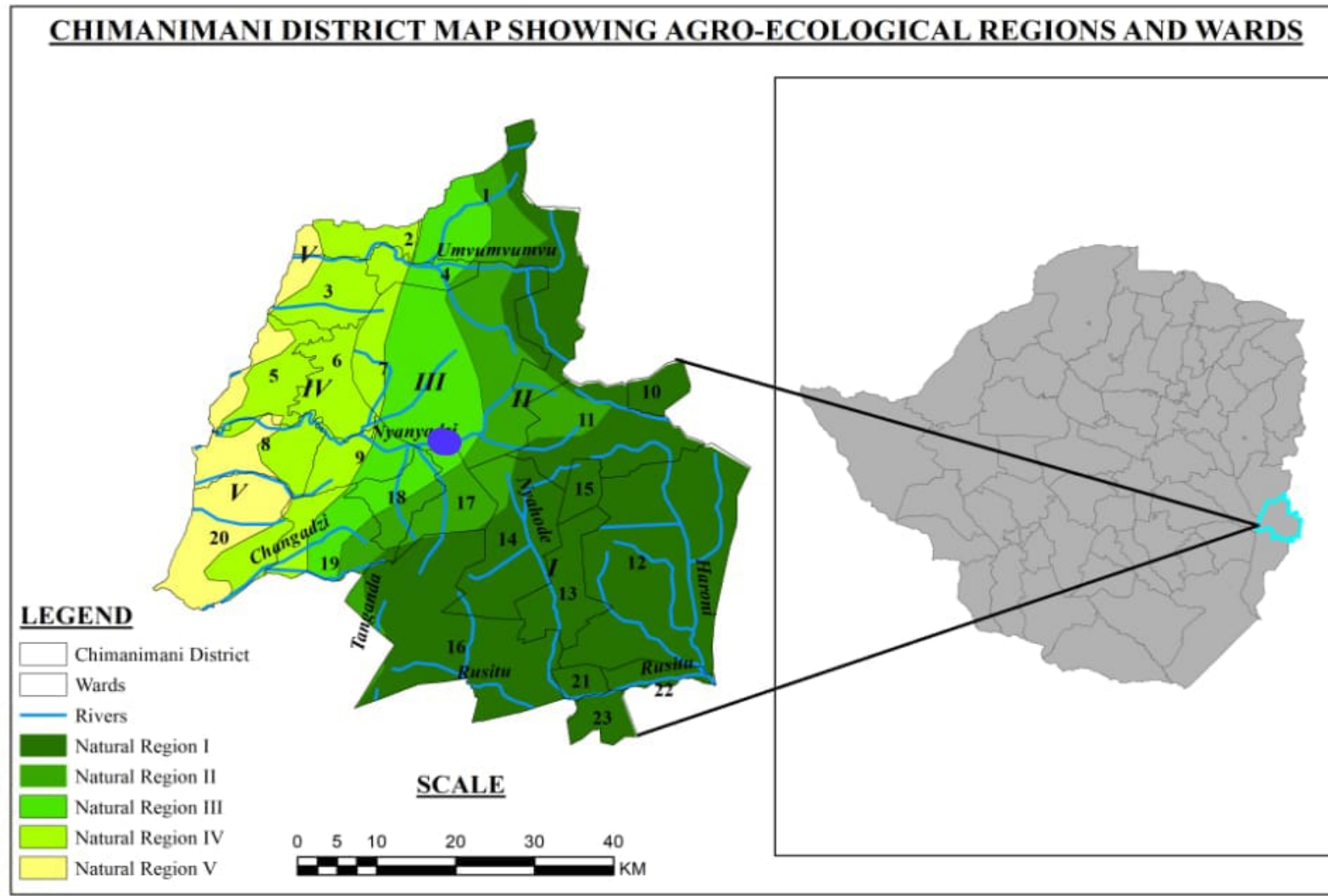
- Saurombe is in ward 17 of Chimanimani, Agroecological region 3
- Varombe under chief Saurombe
- Settled around 1950s, driven from fertile areas into Saurombe west which has infertile, stony sand soils
- Rainfall range is
- Hilly terrain with sparse vegetation
- One small irrigation project in the area-Zunde ramambo
- 4 villages namely tomeke, zihuu, chibuma and saurombe. +/-450 households (2700 people)
- Zhombweni and Chidirira streams and bordering with Nyanyadzi and Biriiri Rivers. Nyanyadzi river supports irrigation schemes in the arid western from Shinja to Nyanyadzi
- Cyclone distorted river channels, swept riverine trees and destroyed farmers gardens

Saurombe AE Landscape proposed pilot



Saurombe AE Landscape proposed pilot

Location



Vision

To see rivers and land used sustainably by villagers and improve their life standards, becoming food and fruits secure through proper management of the river, forests and field

Essence

- Revive sustainable farming and management of the forests and rivers in this area through addressing challenges below:
 - Streambank cultivation
 - Ungoverned use of water and brick moulding
 - Poor soil fertility
 - Low rainfall and common droughts
 - Deforestation
 - Climate change effects and Cyclone Idai effects on soil and water sources
 - Limited livelihood options
 - Low information and knowledge on climate resilience

Targeted activities

- Agroecology promotion in the fields
- Setting of soil water conservation
- Setting up structures reduce erosion
- Setting up by laws of river usage to reduce streambank cultivation, river water diversions, control livestock watering and brick moulding
- Reafforestation and conservation of indigenous fields
- Bee keeping
- Holistic land and livestock management
- Land designing
- Education and awareness and strengthening local governance systems

- **Achievements** so far (since August 2019) :
 - Background reference produced, Concept developed
 - A mini Barefoot Guide on AE landscaping under development (final product by October 2020)
 - 6 pilot communities identified with 5 SKI partners in 3 Southern African countries (<> community entry/mobilisation step)
- **Next steps:**
 - Start the participatory situational analysis in the 5 pilot communities in October 2020
 - Fund raise
 - Develop and implement the PAR/documentation process
 - Aim: finalised design process and activity implementation start in the 3rd quarter of 2021.



Cultivating food and seed sovereignty in Southern Africa by reviving and strengthening farmer-led seed and knowledge systems and amplifying agroecology.



ZIKOMO, THANK YOU, SIYABONGA, TATENDA,
MERCİ BEAUCOUP!