



Supporting ecological land use
management in Swaziland

Newsletter

Dear PELUM Partners and Friends,

Greetings in the New Year! It is with great pleasure that we bring you the latest edition of our newsletter where we share positive stories despite the Covid-19 pandemic and unrest that is gripping the Kingdom of Eswatini.



Tsakasile Dlamini
Country Coordinator

In this edition we are cover the activities done on the year 2021 by PELUM Eswatini and our member organizations. We were particularly pleased to host the Triennial General Meeting(TGM) & Agroecology Symposium where we hosted the Regional Board, Country Chapters as well as local Member Organizations.

Under our capacity building pillar, we conducted exchange visits for extension officers from member organizations for them to learn from each other and equip them to practice what other member organizations are doing in their respective communities. Advancing food security and environmental sustainability in farming systems requires an integrated soil fertility management approach that maximizes crop production while minimizing the mining of soil nutrient reserves and the degradation of the physical and chemical properties of soil that can lead to land degradation, including soil erosion. That is why, in the last quarter, member organization extension officers were also trained on how to improve soil fertility in partnership with Eswatini Organica', an NGO that promotes organic farming in the country.

A Volunteer Day was hosted by PELUM Eswatini in partnership with Ezulwini Municipality Council and the Forestry Department under the Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs, at the new Urban Garden site in Ezulwini for the removal of Invasive Alien Plant Species (IAPS). We also continued to participate in the monthly Farmer's Market that is hosted by one of our member organizations Swaziland Homeopathy Project (SHP).

Lastly, in this edition of the newsletter we have included some helpful tips on the basic tools needed when constructing a backyard garden and how to take care of them as well as water your backyard garden using water saving techniques and greywater. Remember to keep growing your vegetables for household consumption, income-generating purposes, and taking care of the earth, our only home.

Please share the newsletter widely and follow PELUM Swaziland on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

Kind Regards

Tsakasile Dlamini

(Country Coordinator)

Eswatini hosts TGM and Agroecology Symposium ... Event graced by the Hon. Minister of Agriculture

In the central part of Eswatini, at Esibayeni Lodge a two-day event was hosted by PELUM



The Hon. Minister of Agriculture (Mr Jabulane Mabuza)

Association Regional Secretariat (R.S) in partnership with PELUM Eswatini. The Regional Secretariat arrived in the Kingdom of Eswatini for the Triennial General Meeting (TGM) and Agroecology Symposium from Kenya, Uganda, and Zambia. On the 16th of September selected small-scale farmers from the different communities came to exhibit their fresh organic vegetables, preserves, and handmade products. The

Agroecology Symposium was graced by the Hon. Minister of Agriculture Jabulani Mabuza was delivered his speech about that local legislators find the concept interesting and they would work towards having more policies that would support this initiative.

Eight of our member organizations, namely COSPE, Green Living Movement (GLM), Tenvelo, ACAT, ERWA, Swaziland Homeopathy Project (SHP), and Du Green all came to exhibit their organic produce and hand-made products. Other Country chapters joined the proceedings via zoom

due to the pandemic they couldn't travel to Eswatini for the proceedings but thanks to technology they were able to participate via zoom. The exhibited products such as (Tilulu)



Stalls visitation by The Hon. Minister of Agriculture (Mr Jabulane Mabuza)

indigenous Chickens, Indigenous Seeds, and trees. The honourable guest the Minister of Agriculture among the activities visited the different stalls and had one on one sessions with the farmer's.

PELUM Eswatini displayed the different manuals that we have generated in partnership with different organisations including COSPE, and SNPAS to name a few, which are Indigenous tree planting manuals, introduction to Biosafety and GMO's, Farmer



Hand made products, Indigenous Seeds and Chickens in display.

Managed Seed Systems (FMSS), and The Basic Principles of Agroecology, Posters, and fresh

organic vegetables from the printing materials, manure from Du green, and fresh organic vegetables from the PELUM Eswatini backyard garden.



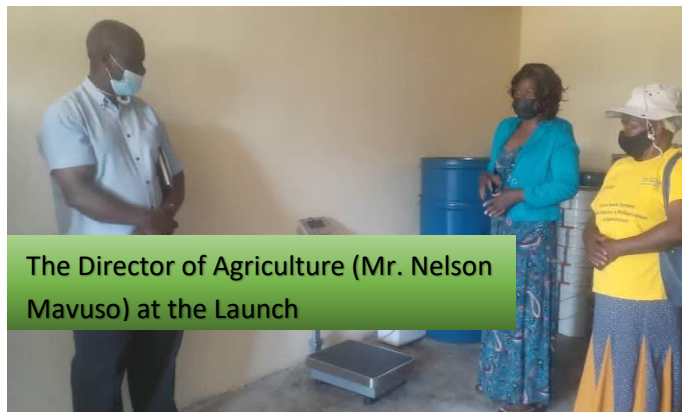
Seedbank at KaLanga RDA

COSPE Seed Bank Launch at KaLanga

PELUM Eswatini had an opportunity for Member and Partner Organizations, to visit COSPE Seedbank Launch at Kalanga. The seed bank is a strategic way or place where farmers keep their indigenous seed varieties for storage and multiplication that they get in small quantities for household use.

Kalanga is an area located in the Lubombo region in the Lowveld, where one of our member organizations, COSPE, is operating. In this dry area, which is drought-stricken, COSPE works with farmers at the household level and conducts trials and experiments aimed at determining which crop and seed varieties can do better under the little rainfall the community receives. The trials are conducted on crops such as; maize, sorghum, beans, and cowpeas. In each of the above-mentioned crops, there is more than one variety where the tests were

done. The gene bank, under the Department of Agricultural Research Specialist Services, played a major role in providing the different seeds to the farmers to test and multiply.



The Director of Agriculture (Mr. Nelson Mavuso) at the Launch

This area being in the Lowveld, where rainfall is scarce, most farmers had reached a point whereby they were giving up on planting any crops due to the high failure rate. However, through the inter but after this intervention with COSPE, they have since changed their minds. This event

was honored by the presence of the Director at the Ministry of Agriculture, Mr. Nelson Mavuso. COSPE works with several communities; Tikhuba, Mambane, Lukhetseni, and other communities in the outskirts of the Lubombo region. After trying out the different seeds, the farmers have been able to determine which varieties are suitable for their local community's climatic conditions. PELUM also facilitated the transportation of some farmers from Member Organizations to witness the launch of the first Seed Bank at Kalanga RDA. The aim of the launch is for other communities is to practice farmer-managed seed systems. Indeed, members were inspired and acknowledged such an opportunity to learn and improve food security at



The Director of Agriculture visiting stalls of local seed varieties

Newsletter



Local Indigenous Maize Seed varieties displayed by ERWA

to establish their own seed banks upon returning to their respective communities. It showed positive feedback because the main aim of such activities is to see more farmers storing and multiplying seed varieties at the household level. This is a great way to improve food security in the Kingdom of Eswatini. This goal can be only achieved through access to the right seed varieties that are adapted to local climatic conditions.

the household level for Small Scale farmers. The Director of Agriculture in the Ministry of Agriculture, Mr. Nelson Mavuso, assured farmers that as a Ministry they are willing to support them in whatever way they can.

This initiative will assist that every household has enough food to feed their families and stop relying on food aid from other countries. This event was a marvel to watch as numerous small-holder farmers from nearby communities came to attend the event. Small Holder Farmers from Member Organizations also indicated a strong desire



Member Organizations' Extension Officers at Vusumnotfo

organizations extension officers will then share the knowledge with small-scale farmers in their communities. The member organizations that had to showcase their diverse permaculture activities are the following: ACAT Lilima Eswatini, Vusumnotfo and Guba.

Knowledge Sharing Amongst Member Organizations

As part of the capacity-building pillar, PELUM Eswatini conducted Exchange Visits among member organizations to learn amongst each other and implement in their respective organizations. That way, the

ACAT Lilima Eswatini

Nsingizini community located in the outskirts of Shiselweni Region showcased their different water harvesting and protection techniques and interventions. This included wetland rehabilitation, its benefits to the community for watering their backyard gardens and household consumption. Various households were visited by the member organisation participants in a bid to learn more about the activities done by their ACAT to assist the community. One of



Cement Tank built by ACAT Lilima in one homestead at Shiselweni

Newsletter

the homesteads had a cement tank whereby an ACAT Extension Officer by the name of Blessing Dlamini, took us through on the construction of the tank and its benefits.



**Borehole constructed by Vusumnotfo
in partnership with Water Aid**

Vusumnotfo

Vusumnotfo, meaning "to restart the economy" in SiSwati, works with 17 communities in the northern parts of Swaziland. Their vision is to see communities sustainably developing their environmental, social, and economic conditions. Additionally, they desire to increase the capacity of individuals and families to be able to identify and pursue their developmental objectives. This organization is located on the outskirts of the

Hhohho Region. PELUM Member Organizations representatives that visited Vusumnotfo learned about the different activities which include permaculture, boreholes in partnership with Water Aid, Indigenous trees which are in the local RDA in partnership with the Forestry Department, and composting toilets. Vusumnotfo also works to equip young people in the different communities on how to live sustainably using locally available resources.

Guba

This permaculture haven is located at Malkerns, and during this exchange visit, Member organizations learned about the different services offered by Guba, including various permaculture techniques and skills shared with the neighbouring community. They also got a chance to indulge in fresh organic cuisine found prepared on site using produce from the permaculture garden. The Guba Farm has a fish pond, indigenous chickens, and pigs and to name a few attractions observed by the participants. Guba also

demonstrated their different composting techniques which include composting toilets in the compound and, indigenous chickens manure which they break down in different stages for it to be ready to use in the garden. Even their resident's houses are ecologically friendly made out of Earth brick. Among their activities permaculture classes are conducted whereby interested candidates train and graduate to improve their skills. One of the graduates, Mrs. Dlamini has a permaculture-designed garden and indigenous chickens used for household consumption and as an income-generating method.



A composting toilet at Guba



A tour around the farm conducted by Mr. John Weatherson (Eswatini Organica)

Compost Training at Mnyokane hosted by Eswatini Organica

In the serene parts of Maguga, PELUM member organizations participated in a compost training at Mnyokane aimed at improving their knowledge on compost making and the different legume species that improve soil fertility that were labelled across the farm.

Member organizations' representatives came in their numbers and as far as Big Bend to attend the compost making tutorial with resources that are readily available in their households. The training kicked off with a tour around the farm followed by a practical hands-on step by step training by Mr John Weatherson from Eswatini Organica. The training also included lessons on how to plat seeds and make your own seedlings instead of relying on commercial seedlings.

The practicals included compost making, worm farming, utilising worm tea and how to plant seedlings using available resources. The participants noted that the training was quite informative and that the practical approach made it easier to grasp the concepts.

Jack Bean (Legume Species)



Composting making materials for the practical's

At the end of the training, each participant received a goodie bag which included seeds and a plant which they were urged to plant in their respective communities.

Part of the PELUM Eswatini
Network



Networking with
Participatory Ecological
Land Use Management
(PELUM) in Eswatini

Tenvelo is an NGO that provides training, coaching and mentorship support to communities on activities and programs based on addressing the plight of marginalized groups of people. Programmes that have an emphasis on eco-friendly go-green initiatives. Tenvelo became a member of the PELUM network in 2018 since then there had been a mutual understanding with the network. From joining the network Tenvelo has benefitted a great deal from PELUM Association, through activities are as follows:

- Collaboration in implementing a tree planting project where 1000 indigenous trees were planted in KaZulu and Luzelweni.
- Tenvelo has received material support in the form of seeds and seedlings in 2020 and 2021 the aimed at building resilient seed systems across Eswatini through the promotion of locally adapted farmer saved seeds, their storage, and multiplication. Agroecology practices were implemented in Sphocosini, Motjane, and Lugongolweni, where 44kg maize and 44 kg bean seeds, and 4400 seedlings of assorted vegetables were received in 2020 while 3 000 seedlings were received in 2021.
- Learning opportunities for Tenvelo staff have been plentiful especially during exchange visits which enable interaction among the member organizations within the country.
- Workshops, seminars, and meetings are organized by the PELUM Eswatini to uplift its member organizations on Ecological Land Use Management (ELUM).



The PELUM Stall at the Ekuphileni
Farmers Market

Farming in Eswatini through farmers Markets

PELUM Eswatini continues to participate in the Ekuphileni Farmers Market aimed at promoting the sale of organic produce from local farmers and NGOs. This Market is primarily a useful awareness-raising tool for spreading the message of sustainable

Newsletter

living and has served as a platform for raising the visibility of PELUM and the work we do as a network.

Ekuphileni Farmer's Market is a monthly market that helps communities of small farmers and producers. The main focus is to provide everyone with direct access to locally grown organic produce, homemade/baked goods, and eco-friendly products. PELUM Eswatini has been involved in its member organizations as a way of getting a market for member organizations and promoting their organic products and preserves that include homemade chilies, Peanut Butter, and many more. This has also



Fresh Organic Vegetables at the
PELUM Stall

been a good avenue for fundraising and we have encouraged our Member Organisations to take part in the market.

It is also a great platform to network with like-minded people and improves our reach as an organization. Guba also hosts a Maker's Market in Malkens, where different organic farmers in all four regions of the country come through to display their products. The PELUM Team also puts up a stall with fresh vegetables and preserves from local organic farmers.

Basic tools needed for establishing a backyard garden

The adverse impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been felt in most households through the financial burden brought about by job losses.

However, there is something that can be done to ease the burden of food shortages and as well as eating healthy for less. All households are encouraged to start backyard gardens, but most people assume that starting a garden is costly which is not necessarily the case.

Before establishing a backyard garden one needs to check the soil quality because gardening success depends on the soil quality. After testing the soil make sure the area where you need to plant is well fenced to protect your crops from domestic animals like chickens, dogs, etc.

One can use the tools they have at home because starting a garden does not necessarily require buying new tools. Yes, there are a couple of several tools that are needed for gardening like an angled shovel (triangular-shaped head) that helps in digging holes, moving soil, and relocating plants and usually, in almost every household this tool is available.

Tools for constructing a garden



Newsletter

Another essential tool is a trowel (a hand-held trowel) it helps for a multitude of the everyday gardening task, including breaking up clumps of soil, digging small holes, transplanting seedlings, and even digging up weeds, however, it is important to select one with a metal blade and sturdy wooden handle.

The hosepipe is good when putting plants directly in the ground, however, it should have a sprayer attachment for controlling water flow and pressure. If a hosepipe is not available a watering can be used and it's also very good especially the one that is lightweight for carrying it to be easy even when it is full.

Garden tools displayed neatly in a tool shed



A garden rake is also an essential tool that is used to clean up grass clippings and other loose materials allowing easily smooth level soil while removing unwanted weeds. On another note consider buying a wheelbarrow for removing large quantities of soil, mulch, compost, and plants, but a plastic wheelbarrow is highly recommended as it is less heavy and much

cheaper.

There are other garden tools that one can buy, however, they are not as important thus they can only be bought when the budget allows like the gardening gloves which helps to prevent blisters and scratches, not to mention keeping hands clean especially those with cinch able wrist straps to keep soil from getting inside.

Gardeners are advised on the importance of keeping garden tools clean after every use, washing them, and putting them under shelter to protect them from rainwater which can cause rust thus forcing you to go back to the shops again.

For best results water your garden in the morning when temperatures are cooler.