

MR MUBAIWA



Mr Mubaiwa narrates his story to a Makadii research team

My name is Douglas Mubaiwa, I am 62 years old. My wife Taneta and I have eight children (one of them is late). I grew up in the Mushunguasha village of Zvimba district. I once worked at a dairy farm, a cultivation farm and a brewery in that order in the 70s. I left my last place of employment vowing never to work at a company again as I had developed a mysterious disease on my left leg.

I started farming but I had several challenges. To start with I had no cattle; this means that I had to hire beasts for ploughing from privileged community members. You probably know how it is like, sometimes they would promise me cattle but they would not come, other times they would turn up very late, making me start working in my fields

very late into the farming season. Another one of my major challenges was of knowledge. I had a lot of eagerness for growing citrus fruit trees and bananas but my efforts were frustrated due to lack of proper knowledge and security. The natural Environment had its own challenges too; particularly erosion that resulted in very deep gulleys, water was also not enough. In 1992 I successfully went through a master farmer training course with the then AREX (now AGRITEX). Although this did not turn me into an expert it greatly enhanced my knowledge.

Using the knowledge that I had acquired during my Master Farmer training I started working in my fields in a better way. I managed to close all the gulleys and dig water ways to trap water and direct it to my banana plants. To be honest I did trial and error based on the little knowledge that I had. I remember at one time because of lack of security my goats got into my citrus fruit trees and destroyed them all. This irritated me to the extent that I just slaughtered all of them one after the other on the same day and gave them to the family to eat, they were five of them.



Mr Mubaiwa shows off his intercropping project

In 2001 I had a Mr Mawire from the forestry Commission visiting my home looking for a goat to slaughter for Christmas. He noticed my environmental and agricultural efforts and was happy with the little that he saw then he promised to assist me. True to his word he brought me two rolls of barbed wire. I was very happy but my joy was short lived when he bid me farewell saying that he was leaving Forestry commission. I just said to myself: that is the story of my life, whenever things are looking up for me, something has to come up and shatter my dreams. I found myself once again resorting to my little ideas and efforts.



Mr Mubaiwa shows off 2 cattle that the purchased from Environment Africa supported projects.

In 2002, I was happy to see Mr Mawire coming back to my homestead announcing that he was now working with Environment Africa and wanted to continue working with me by teaching me environmentally friendly practices and giving me some inputs. The first thing that Environment Africa taught me was working together in harmony with my family, this was after they noticed there was conflict. They also taught me water harvesting techniques that they practically demonstrated, I was also taught how to use a method called the A frame to

measure slopes in order to farm in a way that prevents soil erosion. Turning to my passion for farming bananas and fruit trees, I got a boost through reading materials that I was given that added my knowledge in that area. I also learnt intercropping that not only maximises our harvests but also maintains the quality of our soil at its best.

As I realised huge benefits from Environment Africa's support my heart started feeling for my whole community. I started inviting them, educating them and giving them seed that included banana, cassava, grain amaranth and other small grains. Information spread across the area and in 2003 the Mupumbu Environmental Action Group to which I am chairperson was formed. The group continues to grow as people now value



Family Man – Mr. Mubaiwa poses for a photograph with part of his family and the Makadii research team. (Mrs Mubaiwa is standing second from right)

the knowledge and support that we get from Environment Africa. The group started in 2003 with 7 members now (January 2008) the membership stands at 130.

My life has been transformed. I have 2 cattle that I directly attribute to Environment Africa because I bought them with income generated from sales of proceeds from my projects that were initiated and are supported by them. These include sales of peanut butter, cassava, soghurm and fruits. This means that I no longer have to hire cattle for cultivation thus, I can farm on time at my own pace and that results in me producing a good crop. I also use the cow dung as manure for organic farming, a method that produces a healthy crop, saves me money and ensures the health of my soil.

I got a donation of fence from environment Africa that has enabled me to increase my hectrage and protect my crop from the grazers that used to destroy it before, ensuring me high harvests all other factors being equal. My family now process ground nuts into peanut butter using a machine that we got courtesy of Environment Africa. We sell the peanut butter at a higher price that we would get if we sell the ground nuts.

My family now discuss and understand our agricultural activities. There is no more conflict within the family. We now work as a team, all committed to the success of our projects. Unity and affection is also evident in the community whereby seed and information sharing, giving and exchange has brought people together. We hope to continue expanding our projects and developing our families and homes from the harvests.

I do my work with my family, I rarely hire external labour. Apart from Environment Africa I also work with Forestry commission and well wishers like a Mr Hewat who once took my soil for testing.

I have had my share of setbacks just like any other human being. I tried to sink a borehole but had to stop midway because the chosen sight was not suitable. The excess rains of 2008 resulted in crop loss due to water that affected the growth of crops, for example I harvested only half a tonne of groundnuts compared to the two and half tonnes of 2007. Not only me but the rest of the farmers in this area have a lot of produce but no transport to ferry it to markets.