



MUONDE TRUST & *friends*

Supporting Indigenous Innovation in Mazvihwa, Zimbabwe

A

Concept Note Proposal for World Centric – May 2016

The Muonde Trust of Mazvihwa is evolving a proven model of environmental, cultural and economic transformation in a semi-arid area of south-central Zimbabwe.¹ Muonde is rooted in community-based action research and the spreading of indigenous innovation. Muonde has identified, helped refine and then share a portfolio of adaptable techniques and community resource governance systems that restore environmental capital, build food sovereignty and improve family well-being and which villagers can do for themselves through farmer-to-farmer, woman-to-woman training (and while singing).

Recent strategic planning meetings have identified important opportunities as the next stage for this indigenous organization whose impact, growth and resilience is becoming limited by (a) its ability to guarantee an income stream from its global community of “friends” and (b) the entanglement of the community in an economy that fails its natural and social capital.²

Based on the extraordinary success of a micro-loan fund run by Muonde’s women activists for their own income generating projects, the organization now envisages a new approach that capitalizes on the lessons of that program and takes both Muonde Trust and the community forward towards resilient self-reliance in a local economy that is more diverse, equitable and circular.

In other words, the Muonde Trust is to seek to build its institutional sustainability on tapping into the resource flows available to the very process of transforming the local economy. Its operating expenses are currently around \$10,000/month; a growing proportion could be met by making itself a stakeholder in the new enterprises integral to that economy, particularly in sustainable food production through watershed management (because food sovereignty based on soil-water management is the central issue of this community, and this is only intensifying with climate change).

The Muonde Trust would pilot this through the exploration of two complementary ideas:

¹ Muonde works intimately with around 5,000 people and engages with another 50,000 plus in three districts

² In this economy – the product over a century of colonial policies and mentalities – the community deeply undervalues the goods and services it produces (and/or could still produce) for themselves, and instead almost all the limited cash that ever reaches them immediately leaves the area in the purchase of industrially-produced consumer goods and foodstuffs. One aspect of the mentality this reflects and creates is that community members undervalue their natural resource assets, including the cultural dimensions, thus failing to look after soils and forests, rivers and wetlands, and indeed prepared to liquidate them for any available short-term benefit. Meanwhile, losing faith in their home region, much effort is expended seeking famine relief and hand-out development programs while youth focus on success as leaving for urban areas and overseas. This perception of progress is out of sync with the findings of detailed long-term research by this community which demonstrates that despite this neglect and invisibility the local economy and resource base remains the largest, most equitably accessed and most resilient strand to their livelihoods and wellbeing and is where the greatest potential lies for enhancing the quality of their lives.

- (a) developing enterprises that can generate medium-term income streams while modeling this new economy such as in purchasing a “de-huller” grinding mill for small grain processing or in small scale solar-powered drip irrigation agricultural for local markets; and
- (b) establishing one or more loan funds managed by Muonde and/or community groups that would provide capital to small-scale cooperative and individual local sustainable production activities in Mazvihwa to grow local enterprise (with technical support from Muonde) while providing Muonde with an interest-based income stream.³

Potential Muonde Trust Enterprises

To minimize the risks/demands of enterprise management by an organization with an action-research (rather than business) “DNA”, Muonde Trust would take on a few such enterprises, and only those for which it would have a comparative advantage in terms of scale.

It will start with two for which there is great local demand:

- (a) **De-hulling grinding mill.** Since the 1950s women have been relieved of much of the labor of processing grain into flour by hammer mills owned by local businessmen. However, these cannot process seed test removal for bulrush millet and sorghum, and so have discouraged women from growing those indigenous grains in favor of introduced dent maize varieties. This matters because these traditional grains are much more drought resistant, are capable of long term storage between good and bad years, and typically have much higher micro-nutrient density. In the early 1990s the ancestor of Muonde Trust facilitated (through an NGO ENDA-Zimbabwe) for the introduction of first generation de-hullers adapted from Asian models. These were purchased by local business people and operated successfully for some years, even though the 1990s were a time when modernization pressures made maize the dominant crop. The return of small grains during the crises of the 2000s has been spectacular, but at the cost of women’s labor, and has been biased to a few varieties which are easier to process. Meanwhile a great deal of maize is still planted, typically fails, and becomes the justification for famine relief, which this community receives (in very modest quantities) on an annual basis for the last decade. The local business community lack the networks, capital and acumen to source these de-hullers. Muonde Trust is still in contact with Severino Hungwe, the technician who brought the first generation machines, and he is prepared to source and train Muonde to establish a contemporary de-huller. We believe Muonde could find a price point that both encouraged the community to shift to more drought tolerant grains and which contributes to Muonde’s operations, including indigenous varieties seed availability and extension programs.
- (a) **Solar-Powered Drip Irrigation.** Mazvihwa is famous for its searing droughts, its heavy red soil and water demanding fertile clays and its big rivers, especially the Runde. For decades the community and the group behind Muonde Trust pressed the government to authorize and support small scale irrigation schemes to utilize these assets, but the area was considered too unimportant to command the capital and water rights. The collapse of central decision-making and the advent of cheap new technologies in both pumping (solar) and irrigation (drip, so much smaller and punctual quantities are needed) can change everything. Muonde’s extension

³ Muonde Trust is an NGO and therefore cannot provide banking services. The precise relationship between the Trust and these community loan and savings groups (which are legal) is therefore still to be determined.

programs are leading to significant watershed-scale regeneration and the creation of hundreds of local water sources. In general, Muonde believes these are best developed managed by individuals, families, and small cooperatives (see below), but we also believe there is a place for medium scale enterprises – five to ten hectare units – and this is where Muonde itself could prove the right manager. Proof of concept for this emerged last year in the solar-powered farm of a young man, Tamuka Moyo, who trained as a solar engineer in India. He and others are now offering technical assistance and training on a commercial basis to private and non-profit entities interested in replicating the approach. Muonde would like to explore this, most probably on land adjoining its proposed new office and cultural center. This would facilitate both management and use of the facility for education and training.

To launch the de-huller project and a medium-scale solar drip-irrigation system would cost around \$5,000 and \$25,000 each. This proposal requests \$16,500 as seed capital for these two projects. We will seek to match these gifts from existing Friends of Muonde and funders in Zimbabwe, such as the Zvishavane Community Trust, which is interested in micro-irrigation infrastructure. There is some risk here that it will prove difficult to raise these funds but we appreciate the stretch involved.

Potential for Muonde Trust Community Loan Fund Activities

Community extension programs around indigenous innovations are throwing up many opportunities for small scale enterprises that can capitalize upon and further contribute to the restoration of farmlands and watersheds through water harvesting, emergent permaculture, livestock management and woodland management. Furthermore, and as noted above, the success of the women's fund entrepreneurs has stimulated a great deal of local interest among both women and men. This is a society whose banking system entirely collapsed in the 2000s, and whose recovery has been uneven. Access to financing remains problematic for well-established enterprises, and there are essentially no regular loans available for community entrepreneurs. (One of the reasons for the extraordinary returns of the women's fund – pushing 30% a month – is presumably the lack of access of potential competitors to capital.)

A Muonde Trust Loan Fund mechanism would identify and make short and medium term loans to small community groups and individuals to develop enterprises that are consonant with our efforts to shift this economy and society towards asset building in a circular and sustainable economy. It would, furthermore, both focus on helping people take forward work already underway by Muonde Trust (especially around water/agro-ecology) and provide technical support to these efforts, whether in practical training or around financial management. Interest on these loans can both grow the Muonde Loan Fund/s towards a scale that can drive transformative change, and also provide either cash flow or income stream needs to the Trust itself or its members if these Funds need to be separate from the mother NGO.

Many ideas have already been discussed in this regard, ranging from beekeeping (once important in this community the traditional hives on which it depended were banned by the colonial government so people are only now re-learning the techniques), to various small stock options and, once again, especially to diversifying local food production and making it more resilient to drought. In 2015 a Friends of Muonde volunteer, Dr Naama Raz-Yaseef, an eco-hydrologist associated with the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab, went to Zimbabwe to enable the community to establish a series of digital weather stations and to evolve methodologies for learning about the local climate and

maximizing the use of harvested water with that knowledge. During that self-funded trip she learned about the extensive labor requirements of women's garden watering (they clamber up from river beds and deep wells with buckets on their heads) and generated with them a plan, now underwritten through a University of California Berkeley crowd-funded effort

<https://crowdfund.berkeley.edu/project/1699> to explore replicable technologies at that scale in a practical training approach. We therefore suspect that a consequence of her visit later this year will be strong candidates for such loan funding among farming families and women's garden groups who will want to develop solar pumping and/or gravity fed drip irrigation systems.

The current goal for micro-loan funds is \$15,000. The Women's Fund is already capitalized at \$5,000 (from an initial gift of \$2,000), and growing at 10%/month, and is committed to launch other funds when it reaches \$15,000 capitalization. We are requesting \$5,000 for this area, and will seek to raise the balance from other sources, as well as from the returns on the \$5,000.

Core Operational Costs

Muonde Trust currently spends around \$10,000/month on its core operational costs of personnel, vehicles and other needs. This new approach is intended to reduce dependence on donations for these on-going needs but in the medium term there is an acute need to maintain/restore core funding (which has been intermittent in the last several months). We are therefore requesting the equivalent of one month's core operational costs (\$10,000) under this proposal. It is by covering the basic material needs of our diverse staff that we are able to implement these other investments in our future.

Earth Island Institute Overhead

The Earth Island Institute charges the Friends of Muonde a 9% fee for legal and administrative services. This amounts to \$3,600 on the proposed \$40,000 grant. Friends of Muonde makes no charge for its management of grants.

Estimated Budget

| Project | Activities | Total Cost | World Centric Contribution |
|--|--|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | | | |
| Solar-Powered Drip Irrigation Systems | Purchase of panels, batteries, pumps & piping; construction of water tanks and distribution systems; training and project management for medium scale project (or multiple small-scale projects) | 25,000 | 12,500 |
| De-Huller Grinding Mill (to process indigenous grains) | Purchase, installation and training on operation and maintenance of first unit | 5,000 | 4,000 |
| Micro-Loan Funds | Fund short and medium term production projects by small groups and individual families for agricultural and other enterprise | 15,000 | 5,000 |

Institutional Development Trajectory

The 2015-2016 Friends of Muonde Budget is \$180,000 towards which we had raised \$100,000 by March 2016. I expect that we shall complete the financial year having raised around \$160,000. The Muonde Trust also receives funding directly; this FY they have received \$15,000 to date and expect to receive double this by the end of the financial year.

An investment by World Centric of \$40,000 would enable Muonde Trust to make a determined effort to institutionalize itself through the office/cultural center and above all through developing its own productive assets. Muonde would welcome a visit from you and/or members of your team so that we can share our strategies and struggles and so that in building a direct relationship with you we can learn together how to make these deep cultural, ecological and economic transformations in our societies.