

TAA AWARD FUND

Ben Frampton - Case Study

In September 2010 I completed an MSc degree in Sustainable Development and Disaster Management at Northumbria University. Soon after this TAAF supported my assignment between May 2011 and March 2012, to work with an NGO in Zimbabwe called Foundations for Farming. My task was to help to improve their monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices.

The conservation farming work of Foundations for Farming has been going since the 1980's under the leadership of Brian Oldreive. Over time the organisation has grown and there is great demand for the training it provides, often stretching its capacity to review performance and impact. I reviewed the current M&E practices and introduced new procedures to help the leadership team review performance and learn from their general trainers programme and UNICEF schools project.

I experienced first hand the vision and drive of many Zimbabweans to build a better nation for themselves. Within local organisations like Foundations for Farming the temptation can be to sacrifice internal monitoring and learning time in the face of great need to do more in the communities and on very limited budgets. The leadership team welcomed my outside perspective and knowledge and I was able to train up two local staff members to form a new M&E department for the organisation.



Training school teachers in Foundations for Farming principles

Through this work I learnt a lot about community development and the critical need for development programmes to empower communities to take responsibility for their challenges and to help them to steward their resources in a productive and sustainable way. My assignment with the Zimbabwe team ended in March 2012 when I and my wife were asked to start a new Foundations for Farming Centre of Excellence in Mkushi, Zambia.

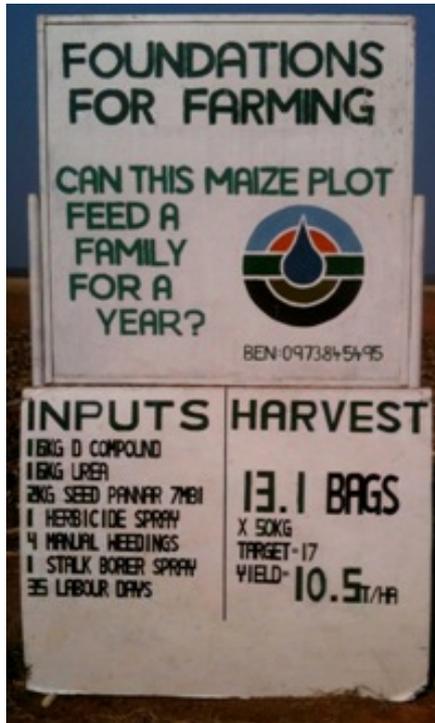
Mkushi is Zambia's leading agricultural area with a thriving and fast expanding commercial farm sector. Foundations for Farming hopes to help small-scale farmers also achieve growth in their productivity through training and building greater harmony with the commercial farms. Since moving to Mkushi we have conducted Foundations for Farming training courses with churches in village communities, schools, Mkushi prison and commercial farm employees.

We believe the key to long-term impact is building strong relationships with Zambian men



and women who share the vision of helping the poor through farming. So we have started small, training and looking for the right people to help us grow the ministry long-term. In September 2013 we recruited our first employee, Mbayoni Chisenga, to help with the schools work (pictured below). Mbayoni is a farmer and works for us part-time and in his spare time he volunteers teaching Foundations for Farming in his children's school, showing that Foundations for Farming is more than just a job to him.

Foundations for Farming first employee, Mbayoni Chisenga (in red shirt), talking with school children who have been taught Foundations for Farming by their teachers



We feel the reception and adoption of conservation farming by those we've trained so far has been good and the 'Pfumvudza' initiative developed by the team in Harare has really helped. Pfumvudza, means 'new season' in Shona and shows that it is possible for a family of six to grow enough maize for a whole year from 1/16th of a hectare. This is four to eight times smaller in area than farmers in Zambia believe is needed. Despite a difficult rain pattern last season, our demonstration plot still helped to challenge the traditional mindset that 'bigger is better' and to harvest more you need to plant a bigger area.

We are finding that many small-scale farmers are not able to manage their fields well because they plant a bigger area than they can manage. As result a lot of fertiliser and seed is used for little or no profit. Farming is all about good management and we are strongly encouraging farmers to start practicing conservation farming well on small areas so they can see what is possible if it is followed wholeheartedly. Then they have a good platform to grow from.

Foundations for Farming
'Pfumvudza' demo plot sign

I am thoroughly enjoying the new challenge in Mkushi. It is something I did not expect to be doing this early in my career. So I am very grateful for the support of TAAF and my supervisor Laurence Sewell, which played a big part in opening up this long-term opportunity for my wife and me to fulfil our desire to help communities realise their potential by stewarding their land and resources well.

For more information see wwwFOUNDATIONSFORFARMING.org or specifically what we are doing in Zambia wwwFOUNDATIONSZAMBIA.org