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RESILIENT WATERS PROGRAM



Dambari
Wildlife Trust



INKANYEZI
DEVELOPMENT TRUST



Zimbabwe Humanitarian &
Livelihoods Dev Trust
Sustainable Livelihoods For All



Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 1 | Issue 1 | TOWARDS RESILIENCE IN THE MATOBO HILLS ● OUR WETLANDS; OUR LIFE; OUR FUTURE

Why are the Matobo Hills so important?

We all know that the Matobo Hills are very beautiful, with rocky mountains, pretty villages and a great variety of plant and animal life. For thousands of years, people have lived in the Hills. The rich cultural and spiritual history of the area is the basis of its UNESCO World Heritage Site status.

But did you know that the Matobo Hills carry out a very important role in the Limpopo River Basin? The high runoff from the granite hills provides a lot of water to the Limpopo River and communities all the way downstream to Mozambique! So, building resilience in the Matobo Hills has positive consequences for millions of people in the Limpopo Basin.

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- Communities in Matobo and Umzingwane Districts are working towards a resilient future, with help from the project.
- What is “Resilience”?

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- Catchment and wetland protection are key to water and food security. What can be done?
- Community quotes.
- All about the Matobo Hills Consortium.

Resilience and planning for the future

Being prepared for unexpected hardships is an important part of resilience building. We may not have control over when a drought happens or fall army worm strikes, but by planning and having strategies in place, we can recover quickly. Looking after our environment is a good place to start, as a healthy environment can recover faster than one that is degraded.

In Matobo and Umzingwane Districts, our programme is helping communities to develop natural resource management plans – focusing on resources that communities feel are important to them. Water, land and grazing resources are often high on the list. By following community-led resource management plans that set use and harvesting limits, people in the Matobo Hills will be better able to recover from unexpected events in the future.

“Resilience is the ability of people, communities or ecosystems to recover quickly from hardships such as drought, floods or disease”

A RESILIENT FUTURE FOR THE MATOBO HILLS

The USAID Resilient Waters Programme is working with partners in the Limpopo and Kavango River Basins to help resident communities to build resilience. In the Matobo Hills, Dambari Wildlife Trust, Inkanyezi Development Trust and Zimbabwe Humanitarian and Livelihoods Development Trust are working together with local communities and local authorities to raise awareness, improve catchment management and manage wetland and other natural resources effectively. Through knowledge and improved management, the ability of communities to withstand hardships and to adapt to climate change will be increased. This is resilience-building!

This is a community-based project, with communities making decisions about how they want to improve their lives.

Sharing knowledge

People in communities may have heard of some terms such as “climate change”, “resilience” and “natural resources”, but many do not know how these things impact their lives and livelihoods.

One way to build knowledge and awareness is through outreach. Eight community members have been selected as “Ward Monitors” to help to share knowledge and answer community questions. These monitors attend workshops where information on a variety of topics is shared. They then share what they have learnt when they return home – at village meetings and at household level.


Topics we have covered so far include:


- ❖ Wetlands: why they are important and how to manage them properly. National laws and local by-laws covering wetland use were also included.
- ❖ Grazing resources: managing livestock to promote a healthy environment.
- ❖ Climate change: what it is, and how it affects our lives.




What people in the Matobo Hills are saying about the project:

Getting feedback from the community and understanding what it is that people living in the Matobo Hills want to achieve is vital. It allows us to make sure that our support and activities directly benefit people’s lives. We can learn from this feedback, and improve on things we are not doing well or build on things we are doing well. So, we’ve been talking to people during and after workshops and meetings. Here are some of the things they’ve said:

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“The project is of great importance to the community because it has enabled us to know that, if protected, wetlands can give us water throughout the year” (Ward 16, Environmental Monitor)
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“The HLLM training we had brought new knowledge – no one in this area knew we could use livestock to improve the condition of the land!” (Ward 16 workshop participant)
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“The community has realized that it is important for everyone to join in the conservation of grazing lands and wetlands” (Ward 15 Environmental Monitor)

Caring for catchments, saving water for the future

A main focus area of our resilience building project is catchment and natural resource management. By looking after the land where water falls, we can improve water security within our communities. Enough rain falls to sustain our communities, our livestock, our crops and the wild plants and animals in the Matobo Hills. However, by not looking after our catchments properly, a lot of water and soil is lost as runoff and silt instead of sinking into the ground.

In the project, we are protecting some wetlands (*amaxhapozi*) to show how reducing pressure on the source of water can benefit people living nearby. We are also helping villages to set up livestock grazing management plans to fertilise croplands in winter and to grow enough grass in the wet season to last the whole year! We are excited to be working with communities in Umzingwane and Matobo Districts to achieve this!

Who are we?

There are three organisations active on this project:

Dambari Wildlife Trust specializes in environmental and wildlife conservation and natural resource management. Dambari assists with technical support to communities, enabling people to manage their environment well.

Inkanyezi Development Trust (IDT) is a women’s advocacy organization that operates mostly in Umzingwane District. In this project, IDT helps with building awareness and resilience around natural resource management, climate change and resilience.

Zimbabwe Humanitarian and Livelihoods Development Trust (ZHLDT) is involved with advocacy, resource management and livelihood development. ZHLDT is doing similar work to IDT on the project, but is focused on Matobo District.