



Jan-Feb 2014

The Chididi Bulletin

Issue 3

This edition's topics

- Strengthening operations
- Joseph Nchiza
- Logo's out
- New local volunteers
- Information challenges
- Savings follow-up
- The Tisungane case
- Arrival of tithonia and beans
- Food related issues
- Tackling food insecurity



Joseph Nchiza

Nchiza is not exactly new at SURCOD. He was actually with us from the very beginning. He too comes from Chididi and has thus a very deep understanding of the local conditions up there in the mountains. Now he is back and is mainly responsible for coordinating the follow up of the savings project - for which he will until the end of 2015 make sure the associations are sustainable - and the new gender project. The gender project has three stakeholders through which the activities will be implemented. His duty is to ensure that the stakeholders stick to the stipulated objectives and that there is value for money. Nchiza is always humble and committed and it is with pleasure that we welcome him back to SURCOD.

Strengthening operations

2014 is SURCOD's fourth year implementing livelihood projects in Chididi. The beginning of the year has so far been one of major shifts in the operationalisation of the organisation. Overall those changes have occurred to improve the way the organisation works. Some changes have also been effected for international relationships. Continue reading for more details.

Logo's out

Several months after announcing some changes, in particular asking for help to design our new logo, we did it! We tried several logos, fonts and colours without being satisfied until Paulina Hoffman, a young designer in the making, came up with a great design.

See for yourselves.

Thanks Paulina for the great job.



New local volunteers

One of the improvements that occurred within SURCOD this year is the change of local volunteers based in Chididi. An English aptitude test was done and five people passed: a one young woman and four young men. The organisation's local efforts in Chididi are now supported by six volunteers. Indeed, on top of the five new volunteers, Naomi – who was already working with us before – is the local volunteer supervisor.



January having an induction meeting with the new volunteers

Information challenges

The organisation has had trouble obtaining written reports from the field. The coming in of the five new volunteers will undoubtedly contribute to improving the documentation of reports, the presentation of case studies and the sharing of successful stories. Being continually in touch with our projects' participants, the volunteers will be SURCOD's eyes and ears in the field and will strongly influence on the development of the organisation thanks to their experience.

Another instance in which we face information challenges is when other institutions in the district refuse to provide us with information that would enable us to be swifter and more efficient. Hopefully this environment will be more conducive in the future.



Savings follow-up

The eventful month of December marks the opportune time for savings associations to gather up and share the benefits. For those associations that did not manage to organise their share out meeting last year, they did it in January. This is the crucial point as it determines the essentiality of the saving culture at group level. SURCOD follows up the share out process with keen interest ensuring that members take home exactly what they deserve. Any inaccuracy suffered during share out sends shock waves across the associations and members of the community.

To the left: share out meeting for three associations

The Tisungane case

Tisungane savings association failed to collect some of its debts. Members wanted the share out done! Share out was done but it was unsatisfactory. The proceeds gotten were far below the expectation of the average saver. A one-year journey cannot just end like that. SURCOD organised a meeting with Tisungane to salvage it from dissolution. Several irregularities were identified including flouting of their own association bye-laws as some non-members were able to secure loans. It was also observed that there was a leadership wreck. The meeting wanted to ensure that defaulters would correct the imbalances they created. The resolutions were made in collaboration with the village head who also pledged untiring support to ensuring that all people would pay back the monies. The group has since reconvened without losing anyone of its members.



Meeting between SURCOD and Tisungane savings association

Arrival of tithonia and beans

Bean seeds of the Kholophethe variety were bought in Blantyre. Kholophethe, as locally meant for bumper yields, is the only certified variety produced by the seed company in Malawi and does quite well in most parts of the country. Tithonia stemmings were brought from Blantyre on the same trip. Both crops were distributed to 30 farmers. Fortunately, two days after the distribution rains fell and planting started.



Food-related issues

Malawi, just like many other parts of the sub-Saharan continent, remains food insecure and media reports show that every year, children die of food poisoning for eating wild tubers. Another common sight in Malawi is the lack of maize grain in Agricultural Marketing Cooperation (ADMARC) depots during lean periods. Reasons for food insecurity range from insufficient political will to grant adequate budgets to appropriate ministries to the effects of climate change.



Tackling food insecurity

Various modern agricultural methods are tried to challenge the effects of climate change. SURCOD has chosen to use natural resources to restore soil fertility. Through our Green Manure project, we have introduced in Chididi tithonia, a multi-purpose tree (MPT) that will give farmers green manure and protect their fields from erosion. Tithonia is planted as a cutting and with good rains it should be able to germinate. It is a common tropical shrub found along river lines which is also known to produce strong odours that expel infesting insects. 15 farmers were identified and tithonia cuttings were planted in their fields. So far the plant is doing relatively well in Mkhutche area unlike in Mpangira and Mchacha. The project also promotes the production and application of compost manure to release rural farmers from the burden of buying industrial fertiliser which also damage the ecosystem.



*Top left: Nozi handing beans to a farmer;
Top right: demonstration plot where tithonia will be planted;
Bottom: SURCOD explaining to farmers how to use beans and tithonia*

*Want to share with us
your suggestions,
comments, advice or
criticisms?*

*Do it through one of
these channels.*

Contact us

Address

P.O Box 126, Nsanje, Malawi

Email

Surcod_development@yahoo.co.uk

Telephone

+265 888745752 (Cell)
+265 997203983 (Office)

Facebook

Sustainable Rural Community
Development Organisation (Surcod)

Website

<http://surcodmalawi.weebly.com>