

## Longwe Ostrich Project - An Alternative to land-use systems to reduce biodiversity loss

<b>Country:</b>	<u>ZIMBABWE</u>
<b>Grantee:</b>	Matebeleland Development Foundation - MDF (Non-government Organization)
<b>Focal Area:</b>	<u>Land Degradation</u>
<b>Op. Program:</b>	<u>OP15 - Operational Program on Sustainable Land Management</u>
<b>Project Type:</b>	Full
<b>Operational Phase:</b>	Phase 1
<b>Dates:</b>	11/1995 - 12/1998
<b>Grant Amount:</b>	50 000,00 USD
<b>Project Status:</b>	Satisfactorily Completed
<b>Project Types:</b>	Demonstration, Capacity Building, Applied Research and Policy

### Project Details & Results

The Longwe Ostrich Project is located in a village on the eastern section of the Kennilworth Resettlement Scheme some 120 km northeast of Bulawayo. Prior to resettlement the area boasted of a wide diversity of wildlife such as kudu, impala , duiker, tsetsebe, monkeys, warthogs, and the burrowing-living cats. There was also an abundance of bird life including the ostrich, stocks and fliers.

The introduction and increase in human population densities resulted in a marked decrease in the populations of wildlife as conventional communal land use systems, and livestock management take precedence. Some species like the ostrich are threatened with extinction. The idea of the Longwe Ostrich Project was conceived in the light of the foregoing analysis.

#### MAIN PROJECT OBJECTIVE.

In choosing to develop the ostrich project, the farmers on the resettlement scheme sought to engage in some form of land use compatible with the existent eco-system and congruent to the land capability classification.

#### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To promote ongoing community initiatives aimed at protecting the environment and promoting ecologically sustainable development through better land use.
- To improve the standards of living of the members and their households though deriving improved and sustainable incomes from the project.
- To promote the conservation of the ostrich species and save it from extinction.
- To provide for a for farmers to learn about ostrich farming
- To breed, and raise and market ostriches and ostrich by products.

The direct beneficiaries of the project are the participants and their dependent families,who will gain in skills, incomes and self-confidence.

#### ANTICIPATED PROJECT RESULTS

The project is geared to

- breed and raise ostriches for meat,hides, and feathers which will be sold.
- generate income for its members ,which will result in improving their standard of living
- empower the participants with technical ,business management and personal skills.
- create employment for members and or other locals.
- enhance environmental conservation awareness, protect the ostrich from extinction.

-improve awareness of, and acceptance of the role of women as equal partners/participants in development.

### **Notable Community Participation**

Realizing their problems of depletion of resources and the problem of drought the farmers came up with the idea of engaging in ostrich farming. The members contributed Z\$100.00 each towards the project. They also contributed in terms of labour by demarcating and fencing the paddocks, construction of the hatchery facility, installation of security fence around hatchery and planting lucerne for feeding the ostriches.

### **Capacity - Building Component**

Group has been trained in all aspects of ostrich production, marketing, financial management and have been equipped with technical skills on water and electricity management. There has been increased knowledge and empowerment.

### **Emphasis on Sustainable Livelihoods**

There has been an improvement in the standard of living as the members have realized incomes after selling some of their birds. Given their area which lies in one of the dry regions of Zimbabwe where crop production is marginalized, ostrich production has become an alternative source of livelihood which also helps in the revegetation and regeneration of the environment.

### **Gender Focus**

In terms of total membership, there is an equal proportion of men and women and it is pleasing to note that women play a pivotal role in decision making and in controlling resources. They have been empowered and have gained self-confidence.

### **Significant Participation of Indigenous Peoples**

The farmers in this resettlement scheme initiated the idea of ostrich farming. The identified the areas they needed training and have been actively involved in the actual project implementation by contributing in terms of labour and cash.

### **Promoting Public Awareness of Global Environment**

The Longwe Project has helped in restoring the biodiversity of the area which was continually being depleted as a result of increase in human population densities and the subsistence farming systems. Instead of concentrating on livestock production which required more land for grazing, the community opted for ostriches and this helped in conserving these birds which were also becoming extinct. The community has become aware of how the project impacts on their immediate environment and how it also contributes to the global environment.

### **Policy Impact**

No significant policy impact

### **Innovative Financial Mechanisms**

The group made contributions for the purchase of the feeds for the ostriches.

### **Project Results**

Longwe members with the support of Matebelend Development Foundation, AREX and Bubi RDC, implemented the Longwe ostrich project. This project sought to assist project members to improve their livelihoods through rearing ostriches. The project would also promote environmental conservation and reduce land degradation.

### **OUTPUTS GENERATED**

The project members set up the infrastructure that included the following:

- Fencing of paddocks for the ostriches
- Storeroom and ostrich minder's room and toilet
- Connecting electricity to the project to pump water from the borehole and also for lighting the incubation room
- Installation of engine to pump water from borehole to reservoir

All this infrastructure is intact even though the project is not rearing ostriches.

One of the major achievements was the knowledge gained by the farmers. All the project members were trained in ostrich management. Four members were attached to a commercial farm owned by Mr. Carbutt. The committee was also trained in project management and project members went on an exchange visit to Chesa in Mount Darwin to learn on how other groups are rearing ostriches.

#### CHALLENGES FACED

The project ended before it had achieved the set objectives of raising income for the farmers. The main reasons were delays in implementation which led the project being caught up in Zimbabwe's hyper inflationary environment that started in 1997 and peaked in 2001. The prices for such items as ostrich feed were severely affected by inflation. The situation was further aggravated by the drought conditions of the late 90s that eroded grain and stockfeeds in the 2001 - 2002 season leading to the death of livestock including these ostriches. The project had a total of twenty ostriches and they sold 8 ostriches whilst 12 died as a result of the drought.

Some of the members moved to the resettlement areas. At the moment there is no ostrich. What is left is the borehole, engine and the fenced area. The people are using the water for drinking and watering livestock. They are in the process of writing a proposal for supplementary funding to replace the ostriches which were lost.

#### SUSTAINABILITY OF OUTPUTS

The infrastructure set up by the project members has not been stolen or vandalized. The piped water scheme to the project is still functioning. The piped water is used by villagers from nearby villages mostly village 12 and 13. A total of 44 families use the water for cooking, drinking, washing and horticultural activities. This is an indirect benefit for project members.

#### LESSONS LEARNT

##### 1) SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Government and non-governmental organizations should be prepared to invest time and resources to build capacity of projects especially those that have some technology transfer and which require technical knowledge like the rearing of ostriches.

2) Communities should be made fully aware of the demands that will be made on them by high technology projects like Longwe

3) Project members should be prepared to forgo short-term benefits in order to achieve long term objectives. This recommendation is made in the light of Longwe Ostrich project whereby the beneficiaries sold the 8 ostriches and shared the money instead of investing.

Adapted from:

[http://sgp.undp.org/web/projects/192/longwe\\_ostrich\\_project\\_an\\_alternative\\_to\\_land\\_use\\_systems\\_to\\_reduce\\_biodiversity\\_loss.html](http://sgp.undp.org/web/projects/192/longwe_ostrich_project_an_alternative_to_land_use_systems_to_reduce_biodiversity_loss.html) [Accessed 1 March 2008]