



**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT:  
COPING WITH COVID 19 EFFECTS THROUGH  
PERMACULTURE**



**REPORT**

**October 2020**

## Introduction

The year 2020 started on a very low note with covid 19 ravaging the world and disrupting the world order. Uganda was not spared and indeed the effects were not something to write home about. The lock down meant to slow down the rate of infection was not without serious consequences as it left many people jobless, escalated domestic violence and disruption in health services which led to many deaths, as people were not able to access health services.

People were required to stay home to stay safe! However, they needed food and in fact, the threat of hunger was more real than covid 19. Government tried to distribute food to the population but it was like a drop in the ocean and scenes of people fighting or demonstrating for food were common. It was therefore not just a question of staying home and staying safe but also putting food on the table.

It should be noted that most people in Uganda earn daily wages and inability to work due to lockdown left them helpless and hopeless. The lessons learnt from these experiences have brought into focus the urgent need to empower vulnerable communities with additional skills to enable them survive during the pandemic.

It was against this background that Community Health And Information Network (CHAIN) conceived the idea of introducing permaculture to its project beneficiaries to improve health, food and nutrition security and livelihood. Permaculture initiatives empowers the communities to cope with the social, emotional and economic challenges. It promotes organic agriculture, is suitable for households with little space, enables access to nutritious food and therefore helps to improve people's health and wellbeing. It also promotes animal integration to increase soil fertility by using their manure.

CHAIN contracted Agency for Integrated Rural Development (AFIRD) to conduct a 5-day Permaculture design course from 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020 to 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020 at CHAIN offices in Kiwenda. It was sponsored by CHAIN and it's friends from United Kingdom; Christine

The training focused on Permaculture design principles and practices including zoning and integrating natural elements on land and establishing spiral spice/vegetable gardens, stacking food forests and medicinal gardens. Other practices included soil fertility build up (nutrient recycling), animal integration, indigenous seed multiplication, water harvesting, making bio-fertilizers and bio-pesticides.

Twenty (20) participants attended the training including; Village Health Team (VHTs), members of Community Based Organisations, teachers from partner primary schools and Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) guardians.



***Participants who attended the training***

The participants were purposively selected for knowledge transfer. The trainees are required to share the knowledge and skills acquired with their family members and the community. Each trainee is supposed to reach at least 10 households and in case of schools the trainee is supposed to share the knowledge with the school administration, teachers, support staff, children, parents and guardians.

### **WHAT IS PERMACULTURE?**

Permaculture is a set of design principles centred on whole systems thinking, simulating, or directly utilizing the patterns and resilient features observed in natural ecosystems.

It is an innovative framework for creating sustainable ways of living and a practical method of developing ecologically harmonious, efficient and productive systems that can be used by anyone, anywhere.

“Permaculture science enables communities to create sustainable human environments” (Bill Mollison, 1991) where they work harmoniously with the various elements of the eco system. The permaculture concept is rooted in ecology, sustainable agriculture, appropriate technology, cooperative economics and indigenous knowledge.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE**

- Equip participants with the knowledge, skills and techniques of designing productive landscapes, from which they can earn a living; including zoning and integrating natural elements on land and establishing spiral spice/vegetable gardens, stacking food forests and medicinal gardens. Making organic fertilisers.

- Developing a CHAIN permaculture centre to be used as a demonstration center for the community.
- To develop a holistic design of permaculture sites.
- To develop an Integrated Land Use Design (ILUD) for CHAIN permaculture centre.
- To identify, promote and harness healthy ecological processes.
- To facilitate the holistic design of permaculture sites.
- To define permaculture and to describe and explain the ethics and principles of permaculture.
- To describe and explain an Integrated Land Use Design (ILUD) process and use it as a tool for designing sustainable landscapes.

## **FIVE DAY TRAINING ACTIVITIES**

### **Day One 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

The first day involved facilitators and participants getting to know each other. The objectives of the course were highlighted and participants also shared their expectations. The day's topics included;

- Introduction to the Permaculture approach where participants were taught about the Permaculture designing principles and ethics.
- Connection to natural processes (water cycle, energy flow, nutrients cycle, succession).
- Pictorial presentations on various permacultural garden designs.
- The process of Integrated Land Use Design (ILUD);
- Generating basic knowledge about CHAIN environment and history.
- Situational analysis to develop CHAIN site resource inventory and environmental challenges.
- Participants came up with CHAIN current map/design.

The sessions were delivered through presentations and group discussions and an evaluation of the day's activities was done at the end of the day.





*Faizo, from AFIRD facilitating the permaculture session*

### **Day Two, 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

The session started off with the reflection of the previous day's activities and areas of clarity. This was general reflection shared by all the participants through presentations, brainstorming, discussions and personal reflections.

#### *Activities:*

- The second day was mainly practical which involved designing access ways and multipurpose gardens. Strings, stones and manure were used during the activity.



*Practical work – marking the gardens off from the compound*



### Day Three: 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2020

The reflection of the previous day's activities and areas of clarity. This was general reflection shared by all the participants.

#### Activities:

- Practical work continued with Stacking food forests on CHAIN permacultural site. This was carried out using a variety of planting materials like multipurpose trees, shrubs, herbs, creepers and arrow roots.



***Planting multi-purpose vegetables and trees***

- Soil fertility management which included making fertilisers such as Bokashi and Supermargo. The following items were used; coffee husks, wood ash soil, poultry manure, baking yeast, molasses, charcoal dust, plastic drum, cow dung, milk and water were used.



***Participants making Bokashi fertilizer***

- Waste management session was conducted where participants were introduced to how to make use of waste and also earn from it. By reusing plastic bottles to raise seedlings, making crafts, bags etc. Plastic bottles, black soil, lake sand, manure, seeds and cuttings were used.



***Josephine Nakabba showing off a phone jacket that she had from a milk packet.***

**Day Four 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020**

The session started off with the reflection of the previous day's activities and areas of clarity.



*Activities:*

- Waste recycling which was teaching the participants how to make Vermi-compost. This was done through presentations and group discussions.
- Integration of small livestock (rabbit rearing) on CHAIN permacultural site where a four cage rabbit hutch was established and hay and silage was made.



*Faizo facilitating a Vermi-compost making session.*

**Day Five: 2nd, October, 2020**

This was the last day of the Permaculture Design Course. The morning session started off with the reflection of the previous day's activities.

*Activities:*

- Natural pest and disease control then took place which included making of general pest repellent and Mineral brews (ash brew and lime sulphur) which was practically done. Items used included wood ash, sulphur, lime, saucepans, bar soap, garlic, chilli



ethanol, vinegar and molasses.



***Faizo facilitating the pesticide making session – Ash brew***

The afternoon session was all about the evaluation and reflection of the week's activities and lessons learned which was then concluded by Awarding of certificates to the participants.



***Awarding of certificates to the participants.***

The Permaculture design course (PDC) was a success and the following were achieved;



1. Participants acquired knowledge in Permaculture design principles and practices including zoning and integrating natural elements on land and establishing spiral spice/vegetable gardens, stacking food forests and medicinal gardens. Making organic fertilisers.
2. Participants were eager and ready to put in use the knowledge acquired. Field visits to monitor and evaluate the participants work were planned within 3 months.



***CHAIN offices before implementing the permaculture initiatives***

***CHAIN Offices after implementing the permaculture initiatives***











**Pictorial**

















