



LAUNCH EDITION: Thursday 16 March 2023

tariri

Integrated Biodiversity Climate & Livelihoods Programme



Leave No One Behind



Editors Corner

Page 1

What we launched here today was incubated over a period of four years and piloted for over 12 months for a reason. The prospect of Utariri and “**Achieving Community-Based Stewardship**” is not for the faint hearted. It is the proverbial path lined with landmines.

Decades of scholarly reflection on commons and traditional governance models indicate that the economies of scale are in favour of complete biodiversity carnage. This means that the economic advantages related to utilisation of natural resources, far outweigh any environmental concerns related to the present or the future.

The logic as it relates to profit is essentially, “*Why worry now about what you can worry about tomorrow?*” As long as there are profits to be made, we will leave the worrying about the consequences to future generations and those who depend on those natural resources. Effectively, it’s not that hard to see why.

Even the development sector with all its good intentions is guilty of isolating human development and conservation as different sectors within the sector. Separating these two agendas allowed cognitive distance which meant a guilt free pursuit of commercial interests at the expense of conservation for decades.

In everything from waste disposal to air and water pollution, we have all played a part in where we find ourselves today. But the consequences of our actions are with us much sooner than we thought. We are at the tipping point.



Patience Ukama

And for once judgment must be passed on to corporates and individuals alike. Rich and poor, we are inevitably guilty of turning a blind eye to the earth’s health in favour of the almighty dollar.

The world is reeling from what appears to be choreographed disasters, ranging from synchronized cyclones, earthquakes, cold spells impacting the global north and south, the rich and poor all at once. We find ourselves overwhelmed.

But panicking and focusing on our collective mistakes is not a productive past time. How do we start the job of making things right?

Utariri pivots on placing community at the centre as stewards, creating a critical mass to safeguard our natural resources. The resultant economic shift, where ecological and community interests are aligned, is an initial bold step towards ensuring that sanity prevails.

Setting the stage for a degradation neutrality approach where the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystems remain stable, or even increase.

It’s not a matter of people vs planet or conservation vs livelihoods, it’s the pursuit of a complementarity of it all- the best of both worlds in a matter of speaking.

The Conference of Parties (COP) meetings are good, but actions speak louder than treaties. Collective action is what we have launched here today.

Many in their wisdom, will choose to see Utariri as a lofty, ambitious plan. Which it is INDEED.

For one thing, the Utariri package addresses biodiversity, climate change and livelihoods simultaneously. Any one of these in themselves is plenty for one organisation to focus on fully. That is why Utariri has been undertaken by a consortium and not by one organisation. It will take many of us to collectively chew through this elephant using our individual strengths.

On the other hand, a few will not be distracted by the ‘smoke and mirrors’ but see Utariri as an honest attempt to come together, and join the collective fight to restore ecological balance, understanding that a ONE health, ONE life approach means that everyone wins.

At the end of the day, communities harnessing skills ranging from agroecology, climate adaptation, and landscape management, taking their rightful place in society, participating fully in, and benefiting from the economic dividends of sound biodiversity and natural resource management of common property, is Exciting!

WELCOME TO UTARIRI!

USD5.5MIL SWEDISH FUNDED UTARIRI STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMME LAUNCHED

Harare – Today, the Swedish Ambassador, Åsa Pehrson launched the Utariri biodiversity, climate change, and livelihoods programme at an event graced by the First Lady, Auxillia Mnangagwa, Wildlife and Environment Patron of Zimbabwe.

Speaking at the event attended by local government representatives, community members from the middle Zambezi Valley, private sector and other stakeholders, Dr. Berthollet Bwira Kaboru, Deputy Head of the Swedish Mission and Head of Development Cooperation said, “A key focus of our mission strategy is to respond to biodiversity loss and the climate crisis, without leaving the people most affected by these issues behind.”

The programme funded to the tune of USD5.5 million, will be rolled-out in the middle and lower Zambezi Valley over three years, extending across Mashonaland Central and West Provinces. It is anticipated to reach 12,000 households affected by conservation and biodiversity degradation and 10 conservancies. The programme consists of five consortium partners, who are African Wildlife Foundation, Bushlife Africa Trust, DanChurchAid, Farmers Association of Community Self Help Trust (FACHIG), and The Future of Hope Foundation.

DanChurchAid Zimbabwe will draw on a century of global experience implementing development aid programmes, and leading consortia, including the recently concluded five-year, UNDP funded, Sizimele, Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund (ZRBF) Programme in Matabeleland North and South benefiting over 50,000 people in marginalised communities.

Climate change has severely increased the intensity and frequency of droughts in Zimbabwe, thereby affecting the resilience capacity of ecosystems, species diversity, and exacerbating human-wildlife conflict. Sustainable and responsible biodiversity management will be key to supporting national efforts across Zimbabwe’s five distinct ecological regions, to ensure that the



Swedish Ambassador Åsa Pehrson



First Lady: Dr. Auxillia Mnangagwa



Swedish Head of Development Cooperation:
Dr. Berthollet Bwira Kaboru

country continues to provide habitats for abundant and diverse flora and fauna. This way, safeguarding tourism, promoting anti-poaching sentiments, and ecologically sound industrial initiatives to avoid upsetting the natural balance in the valley.

The goal of the Utariri programme is to protect the Zambezi Valley for future generations by harmonizing the interests of people, animals, and the environment.

The Swedish funded Utariri biodiversity, climate change, and livelihoods

programme is a historically significant programme, in that it brings together players from across sectors and development spectrum to provide a holistic response to the ecological crisis in the Zambezi Valley.

“This integrated model of development is one we strongly support, it is the one thing that has been missing, as we believe that the benefits can only accrue to everyone, if all parties are represented in the response,” says Dr. Kaboru.

The initial three-year intervention aims to foster community stewardship of biodiversity management within rural communities living within and alongside protected wildlife areas; whilst reaping dividends from their conservation and preservation efforts resulting in a reduction in poverty and human-wildlife conflict.

Among the programme beneficiaries will be conservation entities, protected areas, local communities, smallholder farmers, commodity associations, and private-public sector players, key government agencies including, Forestry Commission, Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, Rural District Councils, Universities, the Environment Management Agency, and the Communal Areas Management Programme For Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) Association.

PROMOTING ECOLOGICAL BALANCE WHILE MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS

The Needs Assessment conducted in 2021, for the Utariri pilot project established that the biggest challenge for people in Hurungwe district was human-wildlife conflict. The report indicated that people relied on forests to sustain themselves and were being injured or killed by wild animals in the pursuit of livelihoods..

Utariri carried out awareness programmes in schools on conservation, working with 18 schools, nine (9) primary schools and, nine (9) secondary schools in the three (3) wards in Hurungwe.

The project targeted school children and adults to pioneer the concept of auxiliary rangers and initiate the formation of school clubs to raise conservation awareness.

Plagued by marauding elephants which feed on their crops, destroy their homes, and harm people, communities, were introduced to chilli bricks. These chilli bricks were erected on boundaries to enable communities to protect themselves and prevent the shooting of wild animals. Elephants do not like chillies.

In addition, the community was taught about the behaviour of elephants. They now understand their migration patterns.

Utariri partner, Bushlife Africa Trust trained the community on early warning systems notifying people of the presence of elephants in their areas. Where necessary, Utariri stepped in to capture, and assist in the relocation of wild animals, working closely with ZimParks.



Community members clearing and preparing land for Dzisi Community Garden established and supported by Utariri



A field with chilli plants used to make chilli bricks that repel elephants in Mbire

Through the collaborative efforts, Bushlife Africa managed to relocate five lions, three hyenas and two leopards.

“We have driven a herd of elephants away from communities. There has been an improvement in the wildlife management when compared to the past before the intervention” said Bushlife Africa Trust.

Because of the success registered by the Utariri pilot project, it will expand the project to other areas. Consequently, the Swedish funded Utariri Programme, launched today, will be implemented in other areas in the middle and lower Zambezi Valley. The additional areas include Mbire, Muzarabani, Nyaminyami while the work in Hurungwe will expand.



An Utariri solarized borehole in Ward 8, in Hurungwe



DCA & Future of Hope staff demonstrating correct planting techniques of vegetable seedlings to community members in Ward 8, Hurungwe

UTARIRI REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS ALONG THE ZAMBEZI VALLEY

Climate change has severely increased the intensity and frequency of droughts in Zimbabwe, thereby affecting the resilience of ecosystems, species diversity, and exacerbating human-wildlife conflict. Notwithstanding these constraints, the Utariri programme is investing in climate mitigation and adaptation by planting 250,000 trees over the next three years, to increase carbon sequestration and continue promoting and investing in climate adaptive programmes.

The interventions funded by UNDP's Global Environmental Fund (GEF) and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) will be implemented in the middle and lower Zambezi Valley as part of a multi sectoral programme benefiting local small-holder farmers and communities.

This pioneer climate response initiative was launched by Utariri lead partner, DanChurchAid, at the climate summit COP27, in Egypt, last year.

"We are not only facing a climate crisis, but we are also facing an unfair crisis. Those with historic responsibility for global warming, should turn their past into action," said DCA General Secretary, Birgitte Qvist-Sørensen.

"We are firsthand witnesses to how climate change displaces communities and causes food insecurity for millions of people worldwide. For us, the obvious thing is to set an example and to pioneer new standards of climate responsibility. It benefits people who are already facing severe droughts, floods, and extreme weather due to climate change," continued Qvist-Sørensen.

Since 2020, DanChurchAid in partnership with the Government of Zimbabwe and other actors, have



Women fetching firewood for domestic energy needs

provided 6,584 individuals with climate change related disaster relief. DCA ensured food security for over 18,000 people, mainly women and children, accruing to 115,000 urban poor in Harare and Bulawayo.

"Our premise is that an effective response is one where affected communities participate fully in the process and are empowered through capacity strengthening, skills and knowledge transfer to engage with the wider social, economic and political cluster on climate mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity initiatives," said Qvist-Sørensen.

Such engagement will reduce biodiversity losses, human wildlife conflict and ensure that communities have a seat at the table, and part of agreements in tourism and other sectors where they are entitled to an economic dividend.

The programme will result in truly sustainable food systems that serve multiple purposes such as nutrition, livelihoods, and

environmental protection. This requires a holistic, inclusive, and integrated approach incorporating all key players in the landscape

To promote this, Utariri will incorporate indigenous knowledge systems as a key source of wisdom for back-stopping climate change and the related shocks, enhancing people's knowledge beyond conventional science.

The hybrid of indigenous and modern knowledge is expected to benefit farmers through agroecology and other transformative capacities such as climate adaptive agriculture. This hybrid knowledge will promote effective landscape and biodiversity management which have always been at the core of indigenous system.

Climate adaptive agriculture in its simplest form seeks to manage landscapes- cropland, livestock, forests, and fisheries- in an integrated approach to address the interlinked challenges of food security and climate change.

Sustainable and responsible biodiversity management will be key to supporting national efforts across Zimbabwe's five distinct ecological regions, to ensure that the country continues to provide habitats for an abundant and diverse flora and fauna.

MUSHROOM FARMING IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS IN HURUNGWE

Page 5

In 2021, DanChurchAid (DCA), Bushlife Africa Trust, and The Future of Hope Foundation (TFoHF) commenced work on a 12-month Utariri biodiversity pilot project in Hurungwe District.

The initiative was targeted at distressed wards 7, 8 and 9 where increased human settlement is interfering with traditional biodiversity conservancies and wildlife corridors through agrarian land use, mining, deforestation, poaching and illicit trading.

The pilot project which was supported by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) benefited 80 farmers who can now produce mushrooms and earn an income. Consequently, the nutrition and livelihoods of smallholder farmers in ward 7 Hurungwe District have improved following the intervention by the Utariri biodiversity project.

The Utariri project, initiated livelihood diversification, reorienting communities away from short-term, unsustainable harvesting, illegal extraction of biodiversity resources, and moving them towards more sustainable and environmentally friendly livelihood models.

By virtue of their social roles, women depend more on, and interact closely with natural resources. However, competition for water for example, is exposing mostly women and girls to the risk of sexual abuse and human wildlife conflicts as they interact with nature in pursuit of natural resources so that they can provide for their families.

Mushroom farming has become one of the fastest-growing home-based agro-business ventures in Zimbabwe, as it can be done irrespective of age and gender, provided one has the necessary skills. It provides quick returns and is a potential income generator all-year round.

With the government's foot on the pedal to attain food sufficiency, mushroom farming remains a low hanging fruit. National food security is key as enunciated



Chitindiva Mushroom Hub located at Chitindiva Primary School during construction. It is one of three mushroom hubs constructed by the Utariri Pilot Project in Hurungwe



Mushrooms sprouting at November Village Mushroom Hub in Hurungwe Ward 7, built by the Utariri Pilot Project in 2022

in the National Development Strategy 1, which identifies food security and nutrition as drivers of economic revival.

The Utariri pilot project trained 30 mushroom farmers on mushroom production at three tailor-made mushroom hubs built by the programme. Seventy (70) percent were women and 30 percent men. The farmers received starter packs of 25 kits each.

The Utariri pilot empowered farmers and had a positive impact on their income, creating earning opportunities for the community through the multiplication and diversification of livelihood opportunities. The pilot project boosted food and nutrition security, while educating the community on how to prevent human wildlife conflict. Having realised the importance of mushroom production as a well-spring of income for youths and women, farmers have started replicating the production models at household level.

Paulina Jali from ward 7, is one of the 80 farmers who benefited from the Utariri Biodiversity Programme. Paulina purchased additional inputs after receiving the initial starter pack during cascading trainings. By end of October 2022 the kits were already bearing fruit in the round hut she set up as a makeshift mushroom hub. By 31 December 2022, Paulina had harvested 31kg of fresh oyster mushroom from 50 kits. Today, she has a viable market where she supplies 40 punnets (8kg) of mushrooms to the International Anti- Poaching Foundation weekly. She is working closely with other mushroom farmers to meet that weekly demand.

Building on from the pilot project the ambition of the Utariri programme, with the generous support of SIDA is for successful farmers like Paulina to pass on the knowledge to other farmers using the train-the-trainer model.

Those initially supported with starter packs are now willing to buy their own inputs including spawn. Spawn is the genetic material used to grow mushrooms much like seeds are used by gardeners and farmers. Some of the beneficiaries have increased production and sell up to 20 punnets of mushroom every week and are raking in around US\$20.

Zimbabwe has conducive climatic conditions for mushroom production, especially of oyster mushrooms.

Mushroom farming also allows the recycling of materials such as sawdust, banana leaves, husks, and dung, which could otherwise pollute the environment, to be turned into nourishing delights. The demand for edible fungi is growing daily because some customers cannot afford to buy foods like fish or meat because they are expensive.



Mushroom crop at different stages, which are then harvested, weighed, packaged and sold in punnets by small-scale farmers improving their livelihoods and nutrition, reorienting community away from extractive and illegal activities like poaching

However, local production is not satisfying local markets as few farmers have the knowledge and skills to produce it. The Utariri project sought to motivate small-scale farmers to venture into mushroom farming without the inherent risks.



SIDA & Utariri partners engaging with community



Paulina Jali showing off her mushroom crop in her makeshift mushroom hub at her home in Sierra Village, Ward 7, Hurungwe District

SIDA PUTS ZIMBABWE AHEAD IN BIODIVERSITY FUNDING

Page 7



Sweden
Sverige

The DanChurchAid led, Utariri biodiversity stewardship programme was officially launched today, Thursday 16 March 2023, following receipt of a USD5.5 million grant from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

The commitment comes after the United Nations Conference on Biodiversity, COP15 saw developing countries demanding a new funding mechanism of USD100 billion annually until 2030 to fund initiatives to curb biodiversity losses.

“These global discussion fora are useful but unless the people that are directly impacted by biodiversity loss, climate change or human-wildlife conflict are included in the response to their daily struggles, then none of the efforts will get results,” said Mads Lindegard, DCA Zimbabwe country director.

The Utariri consortium believe that any meaningful fight to reduce biodiversity losses must keep community participation and inclusion at the centre. The Programme is in line with the new Swedish Development Cooperation Strategy for Zimbabwe 2022–2026, for strengthened conditions for sustainable management and use of natural resources, including protection, conservation, and restoration of biodiversity. The Zambezi Valley is home to one of Africa’s biodiversity protected areas, extensive enough to support large populations of large mammals and includes a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the UNESCO Middle Zambezi Biosphere Reserve.



Honourable Minister Nqobizitha Ndlovu

This substantially increases the importance of proactive biodiversity management of the landscape, including across (Zambia and Mozambique) borders. The Utariri proposed project area lies between Victoria Falls and the Luangwa River on the Zimbabwe and Zambia border. The middle-lower Zambezi Valley is part of the 1.3 million square kilometre of the Zambezi River basin. The Zambezi biome covers 95% of the area.

“We are working hard to secure additional funding that will extend our Utariri biodiversity programme across borders, to ensure reach and a holistic response to biodiversity, climate change and livelihoods across the Zambezi Valley,” said Lindegard, while indicating that current funding support from SIDA, the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), and the UNDP’s Global Environment Facility (GEF) is not enough to cover even half of the expanse of the Zambezi Valley.

“We obviously have a lot of work to do to build donor confidence, but we believe that our community stewardship model is the correct approach towards sustainable in-



*“The rapid decline of biodiversity has serious implications for humanity ranging from the collapse of food production, economic decline and compromises the health system, among other effects.”
Said Honourable Minister Ndlovu.*

interventions for people, planet and profit.”

One of the many Utariri biodiversity, climate mitigation and adaptation interventions will be the planting of 250,000 trees over the next three years in the Valley, to increase carbon sequestration, improve the resilience capacity of ecosystems and increase species diversity

“There are traditional ways in which these ecosystems have been managed for centuries and we need in part, to go back to that and adopt what was good and compliment it with conventional wisdom. History has taught us that a strictly conservation approach or a purely developmental approach is not enough, we must develop a hybrid where we find the positive from the different models,” concluded Lindegard.

The Zimbabwean delegation to the UN Conference on Biodiversity was led by Honourable Minister of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality, Nqobizitha Mangaliso Ndlovu. It was attended by 190 countries, including 70 African countries.

UTARIRI BIODIVERSITY UPSKILLING

LOCAL BEEKEEPING

Beekeeping is an inclusive and diverse activity. It provides an alternative livelihood to agricultural activities and presents an alternative economy for traditionally agro-based communities. The products of beekeeping are sources of income and have the potential to enhance livelihood opportunities for small-scale beekeepers.

The interconnectivity among forests, agricultural systems and the integral role of people are recognised as key to climate change adaptation. Studies confirm that communities are aware of the high rate of deforestation and have increased realisation of practical measures such as beekeeping. These alternatives aim to protect and sustain forests and land resources from which they derive economic and social benefits.

The biggest challenge for small-scale farmers related to beekeeping is a lack of skills, extensive use of agro-chemicals, fires, soil erosion, and deforestation. More importantly, communities do not have access to markets.

Utariri is stepping in to close this gap, promoting value-addition in the processing of raw products like honey. Utariri is anchoring its intervention on the practical awareness of communities of the negative effects of deforestation, the benefits of organic fertilisers, and the need for ecological balance for them to continue to derive economic and social benefits.

Beekeeping not only provides products for economic gain. Bees also fertilize crops and plants in the vicinity, including fruit trees, and serves as a natural deterrent to some wildlife such as elephants.

This intervention is in-line with both the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (1994) and the Convention on Biological Diversity ratified by 150 government leaders in 1992, including Zimbabwe. The conventions recognize that biological diversity is about more than plants, animals and micro organisms and their ecosystems. It is about people and our need for food security, medicines, fresh air, water and shelter.



A traditional wooden beehive in Ward 7, in Hurungwe where Utariri is up-skilling community on beekeeping



Mother and son participating in the Utariri pilot project, harvesting honey from a beehive in Hurungwe



A traditional wooden beehive in Ward 7, in Hurungwe promoting sustainable forests and biodiversity

THE LEGACY OF INFORMAL NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Page 9

For many, it will come as a surprise that the scramble for our natural resources is less a conflict of culture than it is a battle for survival.

Natural resources management scholars have unpacked how the economic collapse at the turn of the century ravaged the livelihoods of not just urban dwellers, but of rural beneficiaries of these urban fortunes, which led to the modern scramble to survive.

It became demonstrated truth that desperate people do desperate things. Cyclical droughts devastated rural communities, and created unemployment, traditional informal laws and norms that governed the use of natural resources as common property, were forced to give way to economic survival.

Some scholars go so far as to say that the economic decline diluted traditional values within local communities. Fruits, trees, insects, and other commons became mere commodities in the fight for economic survival.

For many, the question of natural resource management is so strongly coloured by colonial bias it makes it impossible to appreciate the gradual decline of traditional governance systems in favour of fostering economic livelihood systems.

Our communal lands which fed the family from one season to the next were no longer enough. This meant encroaching onto historically sacred land, forests, and common property, formally the preserve of only our ancestors, the dead, and wild animals.



Many silted rivers can be found across the country

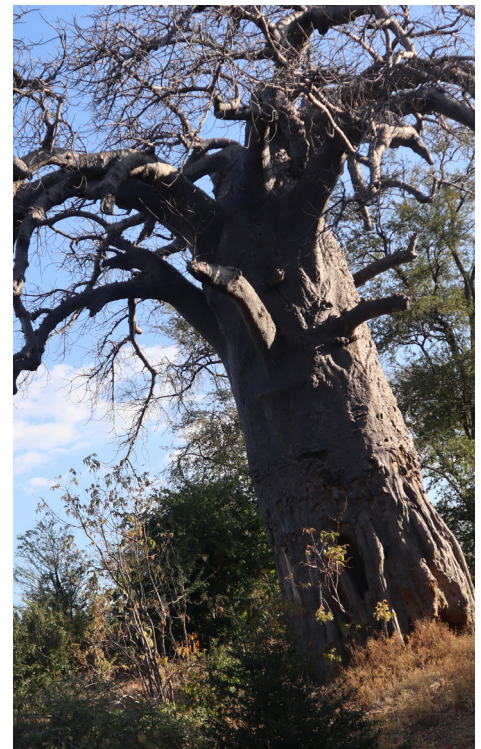
Land set aside for grazing was cultivated. Land supporting ruminants was farmed, wetlands were encroached upon. More land was needed to produce more crops to feed more hungry people -urban and rural dwellers alike. To earn more money, to cover school fees, transport, health and more. Informal traditional regulations did not stand a chance against modernity.

Similarly, natural resources -soil, stones, water, minerals, trees, animals did not stand a chance against commercialisation. Everything had a price against which to trade.

The sculpture industry thrived while hardwood trees were decimated. Stone was mined at will, carvings chiselled, and sold to markets far and wide. But that was not enough.

Wild animals too were harvested and sold for parts. Now there is almost nothing left. Once dense forests are bare. Once flowing rivers of water are now sand pits or polluted. And soon there will be no more animals to kill for parts. Then what?

It is time for our formal and informal governance systems to be harmonised. It is time for community and commercial interests to be harmonised. It is time for the balance of natural resources to be prioritised by urban and rural dwellers alike. After all we have only one ecological system in which everything and everyone must live and work in harmony.



Zimbabwe is losing many Baobab trees which are stripped for fruit and other products

THE LEGACY OF FORMAL NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Achieving sustainable development at local and national levels requires an integrated approach, where there is full commitment and participation from all stakeholders. Utariri is engaging with stakeholders to strengthen the response to natural resource management in the middle and lower Zambezi Valley and keep community at the centre.

Historically, a series of laws were promulgated including the Parks and Wildlife Act (1949, 1975), Natural Resource Act (1942), Forest Act (1948, 1996). Scholars are emphatic that the values and priorities of communal people did not inform policies and environmental remedial measures adopted by the colonial government. Natural resource management initiatives were therefore imposed in a top-down fashion and as such were not people centred.

That legacy still shows itself in the definition and prosecution of poachers. The three categories of poachers are not distinguished on formal resource management platforms. Consequently, hunters for subsistence purposes, are defined as poachers.

Individuals acting out in retaliation against wild animals such as elephants, crocodiles, hippopotamus, buffalo, or lions endangering the community are also defined by law as poachers.

And those pursuing endangered animals like rhinos and pangolin are defined by law as poachers. This legacy means that in instances punishment meted out for inconsequential offenses carry the same weight as consequential and extractive activities done for commercial gain.

Utariri believes that sustainability can only be achieved when the people at the grassroots are involved, and all the initiatives are people centred and holistic where multiple actors are allowed to input in the policy making process.

Another legacy dimension identified by scholars is that those clearing forests, for fruit, timber, honey, animal parts etc. do not have to pay for their negative actions and therefore the absence of consequences means there is no deterrent for such actions.



Rhinos are a protected animal due to poaching



The use of firewood for fuel without replanting trees has left vast areas of forest barren



Uprooted trees after localised floods in Hurungwe district

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Achieving Community Stewardship Across the Zambezi Valley

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