

The Ngádu Farm Cluster Story

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Farmers Pride International Investments Zambia (FPI-I)

It all starts with my humble beginnings as I grew up as a child. Gardening was something embedded in both my parents. My mother and father worked for a white man back in Lusaka's Roma Township as cook and nanny. Our living compound was secluded from the White man's yard, but yet we were given a generous portion, where my parents took advantage to do their gardening.

My parents would grow various vegetable crops and marketeers would come to buy from us for their reselling at the markets nearby. As children we were all subjected to helping out in the garden and that got me interested in gardening and now farming.

Sometime in March 2023, I got a call from Bishop Khondowe in Livingstone, an old family friend I knew through his wife Carol Khondowe from our college days. He invited me to attend a potato growing training that would take place in April 2023. So because I am an already converted gardener and farming lover, a yes was not in question. I immediately agreed and I also invited a few people to travel to Livingstone but only two went with me on 20th April 2023 for that particular training.

After the Livingstone training, the 3 of us immediately sat down to plan for our cluster and on the 2nd of June 2023, we started to plant the first 500 bags of potatoes at my farm about 24 Km away from Choma's central business district. I was privileged to have a group of youths that came to the farm for picnic purposes with our church pastor who planned for the youth to have some rural experiences like fishing with hooks and worms and cooking on firewood etc. amidst having fun.

We diverted the youth's attention to packing the prepared soil into the grow bags. (soil preparation in readiness for planting)



Fig 1: Youths fishing



Fig2: Workers and youths packing prepared soils



Figure 3: Youths transferring packed (grow)bags



Fig 4: Me and Francis a cluster member



Fig 5: Happy youths watering bags



Fig 6: Almost filling up to 500 bags

We have also planted about 10 lines of potatoes on the ground to have a feel of the difference. We had to improvise fencing off the areas where we plant the potatoes by burning big tyres and getting the wire in them to make box wire fence like the game wire.



Fig: 7 Potatoes grown at 1&half months old



Fig: 8 Earthing period

Up till today, we have planted over 1700 bags of potatoes in total and as of one (1) week ago we had our first harvest for the first planting. We did not harvest as per expected See fig 9 and 10 below.



Figure 9: harvesting time for the first batch

Fig 10: Some of the 46 bags harvested

We have learnt our lessons in as far as mistake made and this will not discourage us. Going forward we would like to grow more bags and more on the land as especially rain fed. We shall start with irrigation as we are already doing so and as the rains come, they will continue with rain fed.

In the next coming planting, we have increased the number of cluster members for Ngáandu farm cluster from 3 to 7.

After the second training on 6 & 7th September 2023, a week later we scheduled for a meeting of all trained members to form clusters. We were blessed as the DC offered us his conference room to hold that meeting. From the meeting, members divided themselves into 4 clusters mainly

1. Ngáandu farms cluster – 7 members
2. Riverside cluster – 6 members
3. Choma Central cluster – 10 members and
4. Choma dam cluster – 8 members

There are two members who stay in the outskirts of town and found it hard to cluster with others. They have been added to our cluster but in the mean time they have started on their own.

Government involvement in FPI-I activities

The government through the DC have shown commitment and support towards this project. During our first training in our district, the Provincial minister who was supposed to be guest of honor, sent the District Commissioner (DC) to officiate and that was to our own advantage as since that time, the DC has developed interest in potato growing activities. The DC has since been inviting us to his meetings in the villages where he meets with village headmen with government officials from various departments to explain to the people what government has to offer the people of Zambia. So in these meetings, FPI-I is also invited to market FPI-I. Through such meeting our District has attracted a good following of interested people wanting to be part of FPI-I.



The DC himself addressing the village headmen



Some village head men and others listening to the DC



Fig Village headmen attending meeting



Village headmen attending meeting

Mobilization

During our first training in our district, the Provincial minister who was supposed to be guest of honor, sent the District Commissioner (DC) to officiate and since that time, the DC has developed interest in potato growing and has followed up activities concerning FPI-I personally. The DC has since been inviting us to his meetings in the villages where he meets up with village headmen to explain various governmental activities through various government heads of departments to them. And through this our district has attracted a good following of interested people wanting to be part of Farmers Pride International Investments as the DC has become our chief campaigner. This led to the second (2nd) training in the district where his wife also attended the training. As write, her cluster has planted over 700 bags of potatoes.

During the mobilization of the second training, as part of a strategy to mobilize, I went to two (2) local radio stations to advertise for the training using personal resources.

We are blessed to have both traditional and government officials in full support of FPI-I activities in Choma district.

FPI- I Land Acquisition (Processing Plant farm plus Tourism)

During the last training, the President Mr. Hunter, made an announcement to bring the processing plant to Choma district. Following that exciting announcement, we have written to the DCs' requesting through his office to facilitate acquisition of land for FPI-I for the purpose of installing a processing plant, farming land including tourism activities. The DC immediately called one traditional leader, His Royal Highness Chief Chooma to lobby on our behalf for the land. As the Lords favour has been on our side, his Royal Highness responded with affirmation, with one question

of how big is that land being sort, and mentioned it was a welcome idea as development issues in the chiefdom were his concerns and he invited the team to go and view the land. The DC mentioned to the chief that we were looking for land not less than 50 hectares.

An arrangement to visit the land in question was made and a trip to the place was made in the company of a representative of the Office of the President (OP) and the chief's retainer plus our District coordinator for FPI-I to meet one village headman. This has shown a lot of Government interest on the project. On the first trip made on the 3rd of October, a piece of land was shown to us as we took a tour around it, though it was less than 50 hectares. The headman assured us to come back on the next Friday the 6th of October to view a bigger piece of land.

On the 6th of October, we did not view the other land, but instead the same piece was extended, though we did not see the whole piece. As I write this story, the DC again called his Royal Highness who has asked us to go back and be shown more land with intentions of beaconing the larger piece which will be in excess of 60 or 70 hectares of land which extends to some dam.

After this, His Royal Highness has advised that we can start the paper work processes of acquiring title deeds for the same. Currently I am trying to organise for transport to go to the same place, as my little car cannot manage the terrain. This land acquisition has excited the team on the ground who cannot wait to see our own republican President coming to officially open the processing plant in Choma district.

Lesson learnt (Challenges)

1. We realized as time went by, that plants were growing too fast such that our workers could not cope up with timely earthing and as such the first batches did not receive adequate earthing.
2. The other issue was that the amount of soil mixture which was put in the grow bags initially were also little such that roots reached the bottom of grow bags early making the potato tubers realize maturity before the actual time.
3. For some people, the animal manure becomes another challenge. As for now at the farm, we have depleted the old mature manure and we are now going to nearby farms to buy the manure we are collecting.
4. Fencing off where we plant the potatoes is some challenge as other people's farm animals stray and break off our fences following the green sceneries created with the growing potatoes

We are sincerely forever grateful to our God, Jehovah for the favour and mercies upon our journey to success with FPI-I.

Thanks to my country leaders, the Country director Ronan and her deputy Bishop Khondowe for their leadership and guidance.

Special thanks to the President **Elfas Mcloud Zadzagomo Shangwa** (Hunter) and his wife for bringing to light this great work and their tireless journeys they make to come and teach and give direction. May our God bless them.

This is my story and journey this far since April 2023.