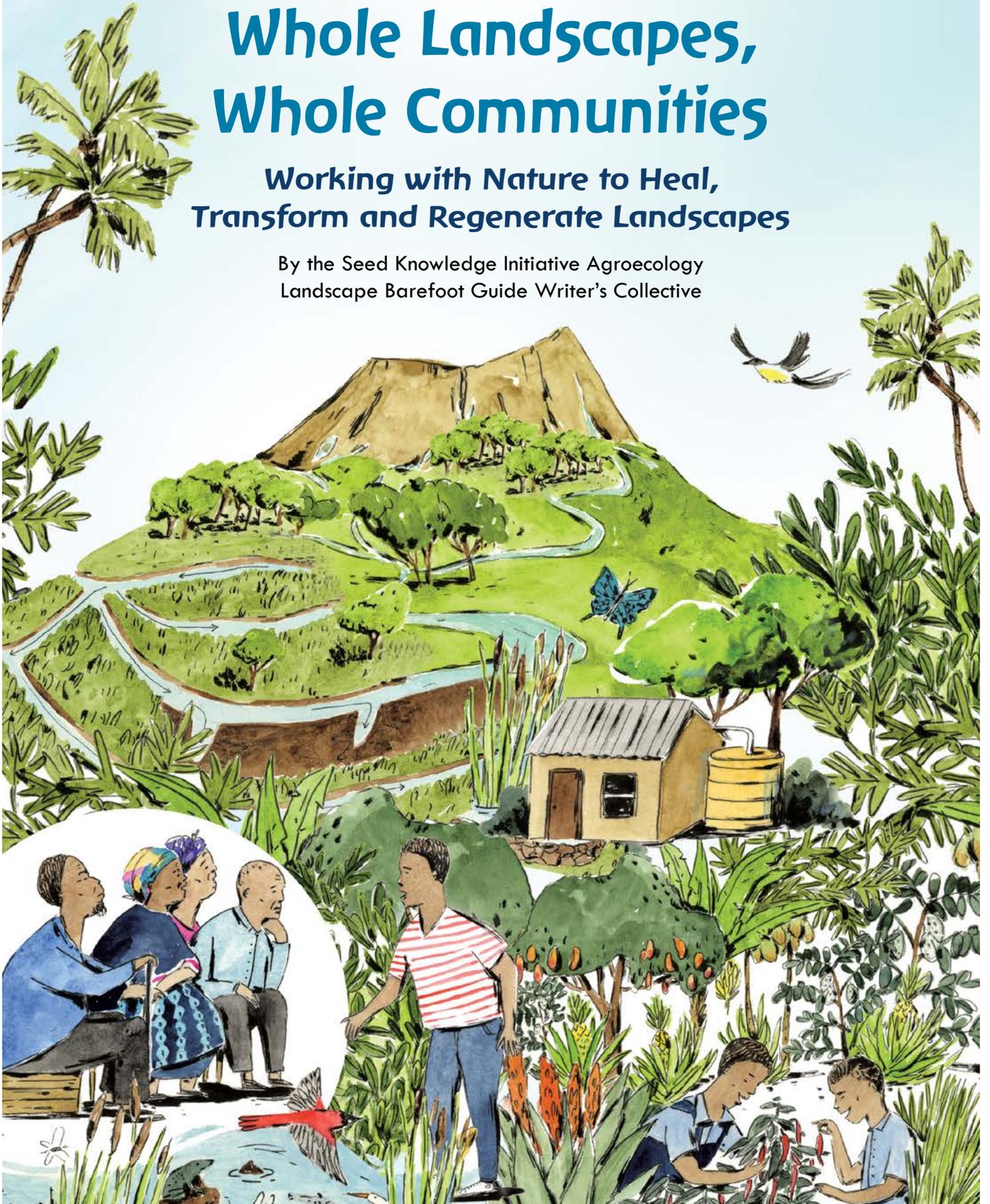


A Mini Barefoot Guide
Agroecology Series

Whole Landscapes, Whole Communities

Working with Nature to Heal,
Transform and Regenerate Landscapes

By the Seed Knowledge Initiative Agroecology
Landscape Barefoot Guide Writer's Collective



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2020



SKI 
Seed and Knowledge Initiative

www.seedandknowledge.org



The SKI Agroecology Landscape Barefoot Guide Writer's Collective

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Mugove Walter Nyika is a community development facilitator focused on building resilience and food sovereignty in African communities. He has worked with the Schools and Colleges Permaculture (SCOPE) program since its inception in the mid-1990s and helped found the regional SCOPE (ReSCOPE, one of SKI's 16 partners) in 2006. His aim is to use his life-skills, land-use design skills and passion for the environment to listen, encourage and share with everyone, especially children, so that they can be empowered to look after themselves and the environment for the common good. He has played a central role in the development of the Integrated Land-Use Design (ILUD) process as a tool for whole school land design and building community resilience.

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www.seedandknowledge.org

A publication of the Seed Knowledge Initiative

The Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI) is a dynamic partnership of diverse Southern African organisations committed to securing food sovereignty in the region. We work with smallholder farmers to become more seed, food and nutritionally secure through farmer-led seed systems, improved crop diversity, and the revival of local knowledge systems. While we have relationships with a number of organisations and individuals all over the world, our primary stakeholders are the farmers we work with in Malawi, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The initiative started in 2013 and has since grown to include sixteen partner organisations across those four Southern African countries.

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Why we wrote this Guide

The Seed and Knowledge (SKI) partners are spread through four countries in Southern Africa. We have come together to write this Barefoot Guide because we believe that in our region we have to start working at the landscape level if we are going to be climate resilient. Even if this is an ambitious task. We already have the practices for communities to be able to work at the landscape level. What we need now is to work together and link these practices and share our different experiences, and to keep learning.

Everything we do in an environment that is dry for seven months or more, and that often receives rain as hard bursts of great volume, must be geared towards water management. It is about getting every drop of water into the ground, to maximise growth of a diversity of plants. But it is more than this. It is about people reconnecting to their land, to their history, to their culture and to each other. It is about bringing back the values that stem from our connection to Nature, while also using the latest knowledge and understanding, and implementing a holistic approach to managing landscapes. As humanity we also have the opportunity to share stories and learn from each other's successes. This mini-Guide shares the experiences from our Southern African Partners and also brings in valuable lessons from as far afield as Kenya and Burkina Faso.

This mini Barefoot Guide is also an introduction to the SKI partners' journey of landscape-level work with communities in the region. We hope it will help those communities and those working with them to think about why this landscape-level work is important, and how to go about it. We also hope that people elsewhere will read this and start talking about the opportunities we have to change how we think about the future, and how they might go about landscape-level work where they live.



A Message from SKI

Healing the land and healing the people are inseparable aspirations. This book started with a seed of urgency to revive healthy African sustainable systems for farming and eating and to do this so that it will not only benefit communities, but also the wider ecosystems they depend on.

The great unravelling of knowledge and wisdom about the land that is taking place, as we are allowing our agriculture and landscapes to be transformed into lifeless factories, must stop. This guide is a deep dive into the wisdom and knowledge of Africa while also calling for us to look into the future and explore what is needed to regenerate our landscapes and communities.

Agroecology is a science, a practice and a movement. It inspires and resonates with local knowledge systems, with many other holistic and sustainable farming approaches and with the latest scientific knowledge around soil, water, climate and nutrition. Agroecology provides a viable framework for implementing the practices that will restore the reciprocal relationship between farms and the ecosystem they are situated within. It is vital that we shift our focus beyond individual farms and think like a landscape, think like a river, think like a community.

Regenerating landscapes starts with building community relationships, invoking ownership, and crafting a shared vision for the future. This guide is pointing us in the direction of that hopeful future.

Welcome Dear Readers ...



Greetings, I am Madalitso, an Earth Law facilitator from Malawi. Since I began this work and learnt more about my responsibility to the earth and how everything is connected, I have become inspired to share my knowledge. So, today I am here with my colleague Tawana to take you on a journey through the world of natural landscape management.

Hello, I am Tawana. I was a research student at the National Herbarium and Botanic Garden in Harare. Now I'm involved in Earth Law to help people better understand the impact that we have on the landscape and how we can restore its life and vitality.



Our work has brought us to understand and appreciate farming that is inspired by Nature. We have learned how to combine local knowledge with scientific knowledge, and to apply ecological and social approaches to agricultural systems. We are much more aware of the interactions between plants, animals, humans, and the environment and how we can be part of the healing of our damaged landscapes.

Earth Law or Earth Jurisprudence

is an approach that recognises that humans are only one part of a wider community of living beings. The welfare of each member of that community is dependent on the welfare of the Earth as a whole. Earth Law states that human societies will only work and flourish if they see themselves as part of this wider Earth community.

In this book you will meet people who will inspire you with real stories of how to transform the damaged lands of our communities into bountiful landscapes in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Kenya and Burkina Faso.

Our story begins in the Chimanimani District in South-Eastern Zimbabwe. From the craggy hills the land rises to form the great, ragged Chimanimani mountains, forming part of the border between Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Over 150 000 people live there, mostly part of farmer families.

In the second week of March 2019, Cyclone Idai gathered her forces over the Indian ocean. She swept across the Mozambique flats to the Chimanimani mountains. By all accounts more than 500mm of rain fell during the night of Friday 15th March and into the next day. Houses and schools were damaged, trees were uprooted, and collapsed building rubble,

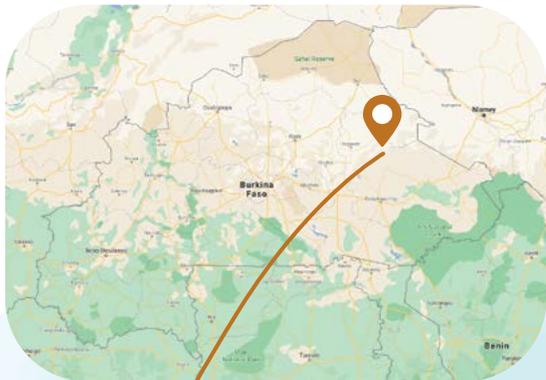
huge stones and boulders created rivers of stones that flooded the defenceless communities, leaving them devastated. 157 people died and 300 were declared missing.

As part of our Environment Leadership programme, we called an Earth Law workshop in Chimanimani, with twenty-five young people from many parts of Southern Africa. We wanted them to witness first-hand the impact of the cyclone on the lives and livelihoods of the people of Chimanimani and on the land itself.

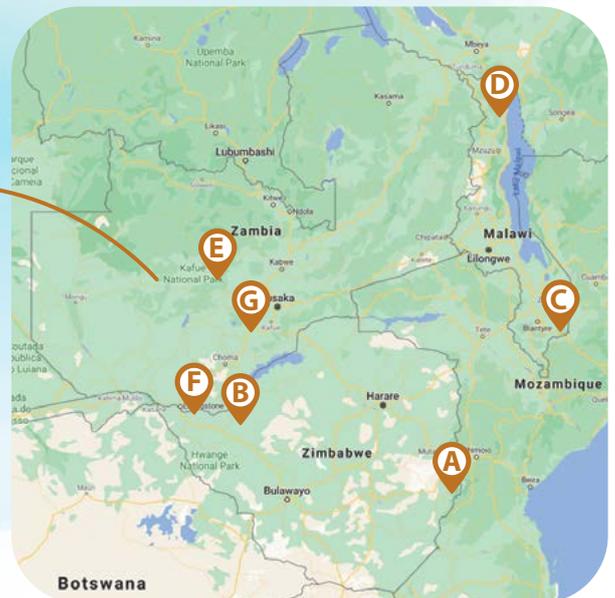
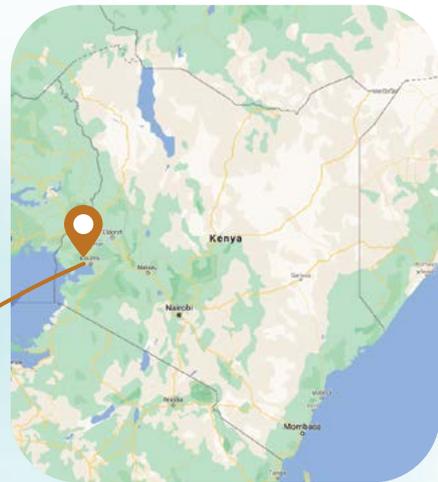
The group arrived in the late afternoon and after supper we gathered in the church hall and the workshop began. We decided to begin with the big story, inviting Amai Mercy, one of the schoolteachers in the town, to describe her experience during Cyclone Idai.

Maps of Places in the Stories in this Guide

Kokouogou Village in East Burkina Faso



Julius Astiva's Food Forest, Western Kenya



- A** Kopa, Chimanmani, Zimbabwe
- B** Magoli community, Hwange, Zimbabwe
- C** Mulanje Mountain, Malawi
- D** Lwatizi School in Livingstonia, Malawi

- E** Mwabula Village, Mumbwa district, Zambia
- F** Jambezi, Western Zimbabwe
- G** Monze District, Southern Zambia