

The Soft Foot Alliance



Quarterly report
Jan – Mar 2024

In collaboration with



*Always
look on the
bright side
of life!*

*a word from Laurie and
Brent*



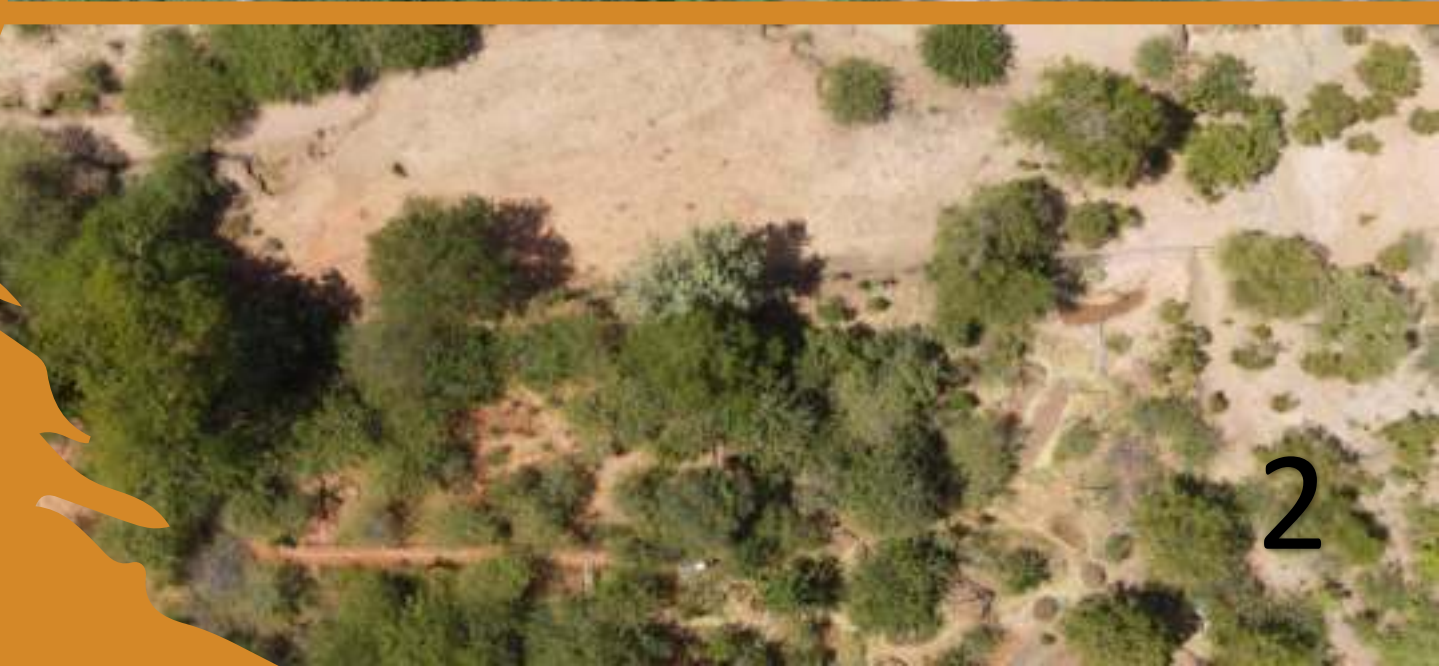
It's hard not to feel despondent when the rains that you've eagerly waited for months for and done everything to prepare the land to collect, just never came!

As I write this, we have had about half of the rain we'd expect in an average year! The crops have failed completely and the grass that did grow during January (when we last had rain) is all but finished or wilted. It's very testing!

But in a way we needed this harsh year to wake us all up and learn how to adapt to a changing world. This world is only going to get harder to live in and the sooner we incorporate regeneration into all that we do, the easier that adaptation will be.....

Feb 2023 v Feb 2024

- Aerial photographs are a good way that we can compare years and monitor what is going-on on the ground.
- Here we see the Sobajimba garden in Feb 2023 (top photo) and the same place in Feb 2024 (bottom photo)
- You notice a lot barer ground, less standing water and plants that are not as green and lush as an average year like last year.



In a year like this it's important to both survive and plan & prepare for the next season. Our resilience to so-called "Climate-shocks" will depend on how well we "keep our cool" and continue to plan for our futures. That includes developing alternatives sources of income and nutrition as well as preparing our landscapes to capture all rainfall.



Mushroom house





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- In collaboration with the Mother Africa Trust, a small business opportunity is being set up for the all-women's goat herding team of Masikili village.
- A 6-roomed mushroom growing house is being built in Rammed-earth to provide a regular supply of oyster mushrooms for their own nutritional needs as well as a source of income selling the mushrooms locally.
- The earthen walls will allow air flow and the thermal mass of the thick walls coupled with the orientation of the building will keep the temperatures nice and cool inside! Perfect for the Shrooms!



- What better way to inspire the building team building the Mushroom-house than to feed them home grown Oyster mushrooms for their lunches!
- In a drought year like this one where there are no green vegetables for relish, the mushrooms provide a delicious nutritious diet!



Natural building

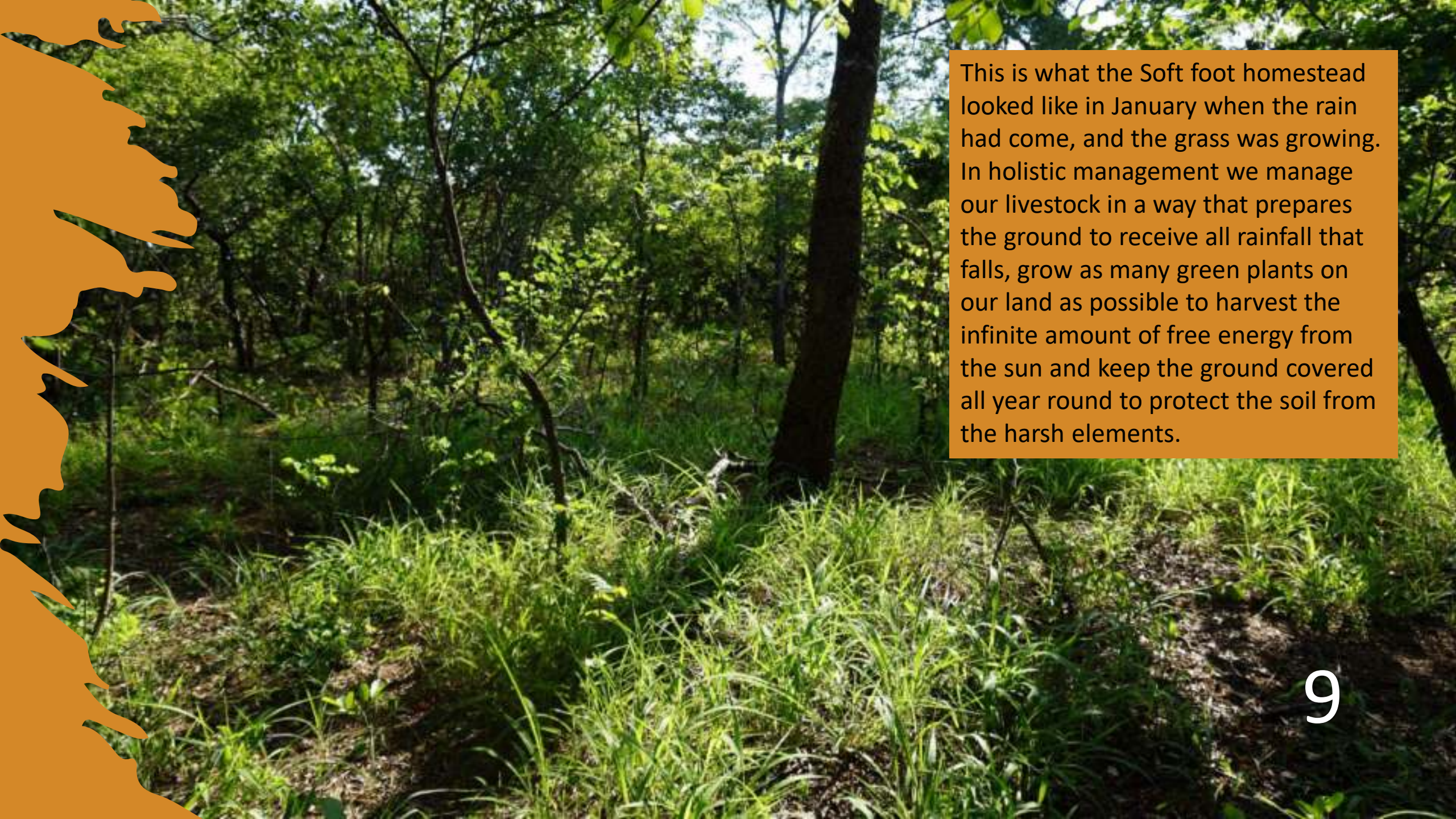
Continuing the journey to get “Rammed earth building” as an accepted and popular alternative to standard construction, Laurie has been working hard to test the various mixes. This quarter saw her performing the compression test and more recently the moisture tests which will add to the strength of the argument for this as a regenerative alternative to cement etc. These data will then go to engineers to add to their learnings!

Of course, nothing is simple, and this involved having the equipment needed to ram the samples in, specifically made locally for these tests!

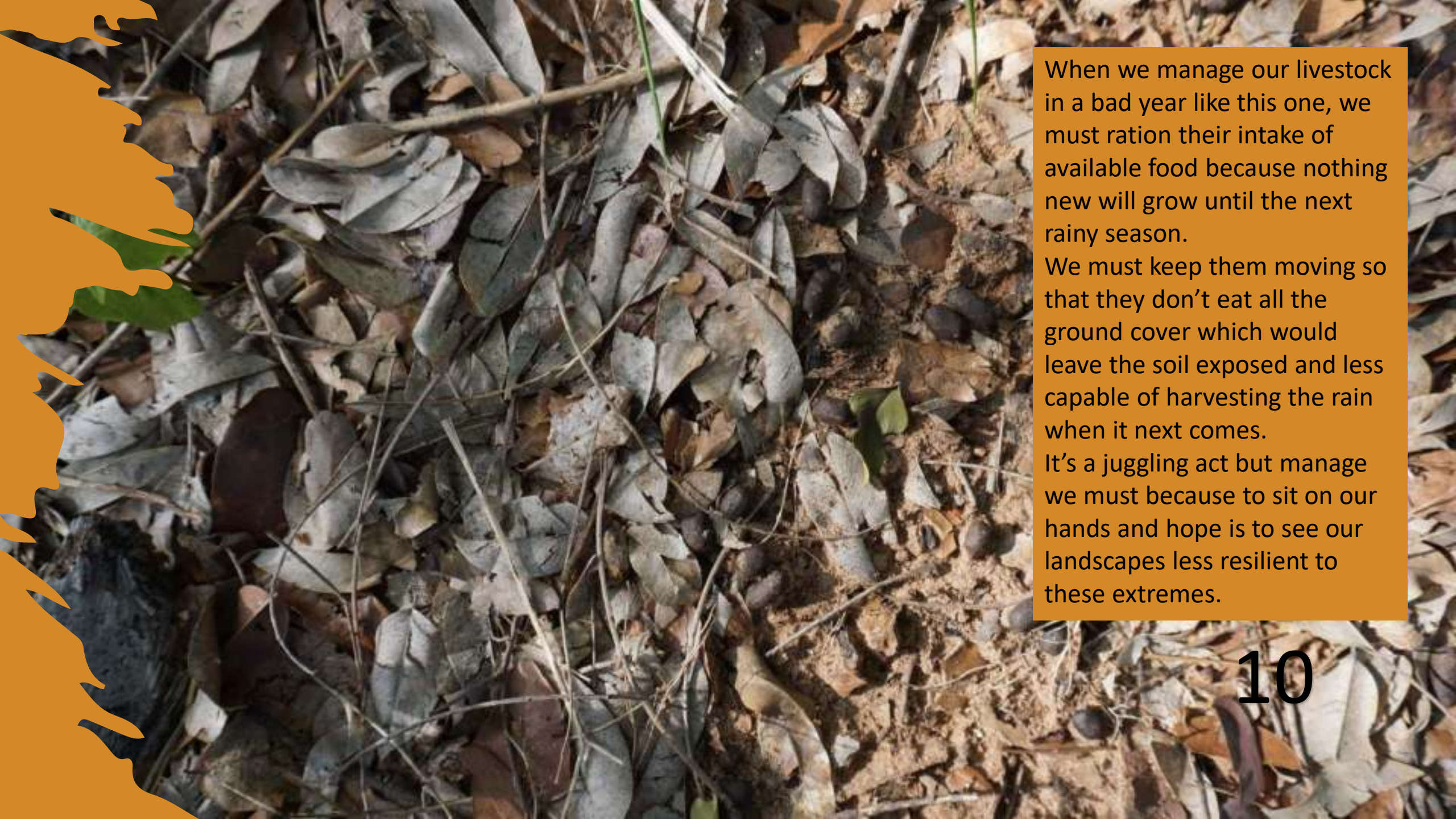


Holistic
management
training





This is what the Soft foot homestead looked like in January when the rain had come, and the grass was growing. In holistic management we manage our livestock in a way that prepares the ground to receive all rainfall that falls, grow as many green plants on our land as possible to harvest the infinite amount of free energy from the sun and keep the ground covered all year round to protect the soil from the harsh elements.



When we manage our livestock in a bad year like this one, we must ration their intake of available food because nothing new will grow until the next rainy season.

We must keep them moving so that they don't eat all the ground cover which would leave the soil exposed and less capable of harvesting the rain when it next comes.

It's a juggling act but manage we must because to sit on our hands and hope is to see our landscapes less resilient to these extremes.



We were very excited to get the opportunity to send our community members and a couple of staff to train in holistic management facilitation at the Africa Centre for Holistic management this quarter.

The group of 6 people came back brimming with a new energy and excitement and went straight into the work of mapping their available grass and planning their non-growing season.

Meat-goats

As a longer-term income source for the women's goat herding group, we are setting up a goat-meat business that will raise Holistically managed, predator friendly goats to lodges and the local market. A new Kalahari-red ram and a boer-goat doe were purchased to improve the genetics and now it's up to the group to manage their landscapes and business.

This, coupled with the mushrooms is the kind of alternatives to subsistence crops that will help people survive in a changing world

Staff computer training



To build our own in-house capacity at the Soft Foot alliance we found an opportunity, at the local high-school, to train our staff in computer literacy.

As our long-term strategy for the Soft foot alliance is to eventually hand it over to the community, we see the need to get our team up to speed with report writing, budgeting and accounting, donor relations etc and this was the start.

We are very grateful for the opportunity provided by the Nechlibi high school and the use of their “Innovation hub”

Boma making training!

In-line with our collaboration with the Painted Dog Conservation organization we offered our boma maker extraordinaire, Mampo, and our facilities for their community anti-poaching volunteers to learn how to make a mobile boma and then take two away with them to use at home. One volunteer said it was a dream come true because they'd seen bomas being used but nobody wanted to share! Now they could not only have their own, but they can say they made it themselves!





Permaculture teacher training

In March 2024, several of the Sobajimba regenerators took us up on an offer to enroll and start on a 2-year Permaculture Teacher Training course which is online. People will meet every week for 3 hours to learn permaculture design and how to teach it. This is an internationally recognized qualification and will add another string to their bow in terms of potential income streams in the future.



Weekly baking

As a community bonding opportunity, Laurie kicked off a weekly Baking morning where people can gather around the community oven and bake cakes and bread-rolls. This is proving very popular and is a way of getting to know each other in a whole new way.



Extension work

Our extension work continues with our own Mr Sithole heading it. He travels to several other villages every week to help people with rainwater harvesting works, soil fertility improvement and permaculture training



This work is in collaboration often with other organizations such as the Painted Dog project and its anti-poaching volunteers and The Mother Africa Trust supporting women growing Ilala palms for their basket weaving etc. The Dirimwe community is another collaboration supported by the French group Cirad in its ISANGO project.

The Sobajimba regenerators were asked to provide a field visit for a conference on One-Health held at the Hwange Safari Lodge. The delegates for which came from all over the world.

The Regenerators organized a great afternoon and as a thank you the organizers of the conference provided some funding to get everyone a beautifully designed t-shirt. As this team of community members get more and more accomplished at regenerations so their reputation and demand for their training increases and these smart t-shirts are worn with great pride when they travel to other villages to train people.



New Shirts



The French group, CIRAD, with its base in the nearby town of Dete has a project called ISANGO.

This quarter the Soft foot alliance staff were able to attend a couple of trainings offered by the project.

The first was a “Futures training” which Mr Sithole attended and learnt how to facilitate community conversations and about the Future people want and how to get there and the second training was a climate modelling workshop that Brent attended. The climate work really highlighted the importance of regeneration as the world's top 20 climate models predict increased temperatures, heat waves and erratic rainfall in the future for this region.

Days when Tmax > 90th daily percentile [TX90p] in Lon : 27.05 Lat : -18.58



Budget and expenses

Salaries = \$11,371.70
Social Security = \$249
Diesel = \$338
Vehicle tax, insurance etc = \$142
Health cover = \$2376
Stationary/website = \$305
Training = \$528
Regenerative points = \$96

Total from Klein family via GDG
for the quarter = \$13,029.70



Special Appreciation

Our sincere thanks go to our working partners in the Hwange RDC, National Parks and Wildlife, Forestry Commission, Chief Nelukoba and his traditional leadership and to our generous friends and donors. To our collaborative partners including Painted Dog Conservation (PDC), the Mother Africa Trust, Mare's donkey sanctuary, we appreciate your help and support. Special mention must go to Brian Courtenay and his team at the Southern African Conservation Trust (SACT) for their invaluable support.

Twalumba, Siabonga, Thank you!

