Experiences And Lessons From A Regional African NGO Network: Tracing PELUM’s Developmental Journey

By Mutizwa Mukute

2004
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<td>AIDS</td>
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<td>APM</td>
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<td>BAG</td>
<td>Berea Agricultural Group</td>
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<td>BGM</td>
<td>Biennial General Meeting</td>
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<td>BTZ</td>
<td>Biotechnology Trust of Zimbabwe</td>
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<td>CCFD</td>
<td>French Catholic Committee Against Hunger and for Development</td>
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<td>CARE</td>
<td>Cooperation Agency for Relief Everywhere</td>
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<td>CAL</td>
<td>Campaign, Advocacy and Lobbying</td>
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<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organisation</td>
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<td>CCFD</td>
<td>French Catholic Committee Against Hunger and for Development</td>
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<td>CD</td>
<td>Country Desk</td>
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<td>CIAT</td>
<td>International Centre for Tropical Agriculture</td>
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<td>CTA</td>
<td>Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation</td>
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<td>CGIAR</td>
<td>Consultative Group of International Agricultural Research</td>
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<td>CLADES</td>
<td>Latin American Consortium on Agro-ecology and Sustainable Development</td>
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<td>CPHP-SA</td>
<td>Crop-Post Harvest Programme, Southern Africa</td>
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<td>CRS</td>
<td>Catholic Relief Services</td>
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<td>CWG</td>
<td>Country Working Group</td>
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<td>EA</td>
<td>Environmental Alert</td>
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<td>EAC</td>
<td>East African Community</td>
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<td>Environment and Development Agency</td>
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<td>Environment and Development Action</td>
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<td>European Research Organisation</td>
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<td>ESAFF</td>
<td>East and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers’ Forum</td>
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<td>ETC</td>
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<td>FPC</td>
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<td>Global Forum for Agricultural Research</td>
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<td>GRAIN</td>
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<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immuno-deficiency Virus</td>
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<td>HIVOS</td>
<td>Stichting Humanistisch Intitut voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking</td>
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<td>IFOAM</td>
<td>International Federation of Organic Association Movement</td>
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<td>IIRR</td>
<td>International Institute of Rural Reconstruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILEIA</td>
<td>Institute for Low External Input Agriculture</td>
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<td>INADES</td>
<td>Institut Africain de Developpement Economique et Social</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPSA</td>
<td>International Partners in Sustainable Agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITDG</td>
<td>Intermediate Technology Development Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>IUCN</td>
<td>International Union for the Conservation of Nature</td>
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<td>HDRA</td>
<td>Henry Doubleday Research Association</td>
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<td>MISEREOR</td>
<td>Katholische Zentralstelle fur Entwicklungs hilfe</td>
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<td>MS</td>
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<td>MWIWATA</td>
<td>Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Tanzania</td>
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<td>MWENGO</td>
<td>Mwelekeo wa NGO</td>
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<td>NECOFA</td>
<td>Network of Organic Farmers in Africa</td>
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<td>NFN</td>
<td>Natural Farming Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>NOVIB</td>
<td>Netherlands Organisation for International Development and Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NULC</td>
<td>Nyahonde Union Learning Centre</td>
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<td>OD</td>
<td>Organisational Development</td>
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<td>PCZ</td>
<td>PELUM College Zimbabwe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<td>PELUM</td>
<td>Participatory Ecological Land Use Management</td>
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<td>PTB</td>
<td>Permaculture Trust of Botswana</td>
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<td>RAFI</td>
<td>Rural Advancement Foundation International</td>
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<td>RD</td>
<td>Regional Desk</td>
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<td>RODI</td>
<td>Resources Oriented Development Initiatives</td>
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<td>ROPPA</td>
<td>Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs Agricoles de l’Afrique l’Ouest</td>
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<tr>
<td>SACDEP</td>
<td>Sustainable Agriculture Development Programme</td>
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<td>SADC</td>
<td>Southern African Development Community</td>
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<td>SFC</td>
<td>Small Farmer Convergence</td>
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<td>SFH</td>
<td>Small Holder Farmers</td>
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<td>SFO</td>
<td>Small Farmer Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>Secretary General</td>
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<td>TDH</td>
<td>Terre des hommes</td>
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<td>UMADEP</td>
<td>Uluguru Mountains Agricultural Development Programme</td>
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<td>VECO</td>
<td>Vredeseilanden Coopibo</td>
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<td>WFS</td>
<td>World Food Summit</td>
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<td>WSSD</td>
<td>World Summit on Sustainable Development</td>
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<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organisation</td>
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<td>ZERO</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Environment and Development Organisation</td>
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Tafadzwa Marange reviewed several drafts, as I had to rewrite the book many times. She was ruthless and generous with her pen and each time I could see the book getting better and better. She was patient and helpful during the long period of critiquing the text and polishing the final version. I also appreciate the assistance of """"who provided the illustrations for the cover page.

I have been privileged to work and share experiences with the PELUM regional desk staff. I drew inspiration from my professional colleagues. Producing this book would not have been possible without the constructive and encouraging support of the PELUM Country Working Groups (CWGs) and Country Desk Coordinators (CDCs). I would like to thank the following: Onwell Ruswa, Musole Musimali, Tshelo Moshe, Haidee Swanby, Paul Mtoni, Yakobo Tibamanya, Zachary Makanya, Emily Drani, Petra Bakewell-Stone, Donati Senzia, and Tim Connel.

As a learning organization, PELUM not only learnt from its own experiences, it grew and developed through learning from other outstanding, innovative or wiser organizations. They are discussed in the book.

I particularly acknowledge the financial support of VECO-Zimbabwe, MISEREOR, HIVOS and Bread for the World who covered the costs of publishing this book.

Notwithstanding all this support, I take the responsibility for any shortcomings and misrepresentations that may still exist in this book.
FOREWORD

As the chairperson of the Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Association for the past three years, I have had tremendous opportunity to experience PELUM’s growth and development. I have also had the privilege to work and share experiences with our Secretary General. Writing this book in the penultimate year of PELUM created a good opportunity to synthesize, consolidate and crystallize the various experiences of PELUM. Mutizwa has demonstrated great integrity and diligence in undertaking to document the first comprehensive and consolidated institutional memory of PELUM. What is particularly recommendable is that he wrote this book during a difficulty period when the PELUM regional desk was not fully operational in Harare and in the process of relocating from Harare to Lusaka. This exemplary sense of high responsibility and substantial initiative laid the footsteps that others should aspire to follow.

The book provides the necessary historical, conceptual and environmental context to PELUM and articulates its role in development. The frank reflection that focuses on: What worked? What didn't and Why? is perhaps the greatest strength of this book. The diverse experiences with the associated trials and errors underpin the basis of this book. PELUM has a responsibility to go beyond retaining an institutional memory but to share with others in the development sector. This book not only analyses the tensions experienced during the growth and development of PELUM but further makes a determined effort to pull together the lessons and suggest what could be done to avoid certain pitfalls.

Mutizwa has shown a high level of objectivity, boldness and honesty in writing this book, which is difficult for someone who is so close to the organization as he is. The book also makes illustrates that we learn as much from our successes as from our failures. I strongly recommend that all member organizations get a copy and read this closely. Finally, I would like to challenge PELUM Board members, member organisations and staff alike to document and share your experiences within and beyond our network. PELUM will continue in its search for new and innovative ideas to make its developmental efforts more efficient and effective.

Mary Jo Kakinda
PELUM
Chairperson (2001-2005)
INTRODUCTION

“Stories connect us… they build relationship. I have an experience of you when I listen to you relate your story, as it enters me so it draws us together – your stories explain you to me… I have heard peasant farmers tell their poetic stories, everyday tales of the mundane, and marveled at the parables, pictures and metaphors they continually weave into daily exchanges …What clever methods have I imported and imposed to disable them?” Doug Reeler, CDRA Nugget, March 2004.

Why tell the story?

People lead storied lives. So do organizations. This book tells the story of an African civil society network of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in east and southern Africa. The network was conceived and nurtured by Africans themselves to link and spread the countless islands of success in rural development, to link promising rural development approaches and to connect people and organizations so as to help empower communities to live better and fuller. It traces the footsteps of Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) over the last decade, revealing some of the experiences, strategies, challenges, tensions and lessons. This account of PELUM covers the regional network itself, the country working groups (CWGs), the country and regional secretariats and the member organizations.

PELUM is one of the few surviving and reputable NGOs network in Africa. This book aims to explore some of the possible reasons for its survival and respectability. PELUM hopes to positively influence the NGO sector in the region and beyond. This book attempts to articulate and share PELUM experiences and lessons.

Many NGOs do not adequately address knowledge management and yet is a key part of the development process. Generally the key focus is on “concrete” development. This has resulted in loss of their useful reflections and lessons that could enrich development thinking and practice. This book is also an attempt to encourage others to document and share their stories too. Their tacit knowledge needs to be illuminated for others to tap. Another related value of documenting experiences is to ensure that the memory of the institution is preserved to nourish future thinking and action.
PELUM is a learning organization which values sharing its experiences in forms that other people could find useful and accessible. This book is one of PELUM’s many efforts at adding value to its experiences. PELUM also aims to retain an institutional memory available to the organisation and to its stakeholders. When the history and the context that shape the organization are available to future members it gives them a rich background upon which to compose new songs of development and to sing them to others.

This book also focuses on how PELUM grew and developed. More and more, we see the value of learning about how NGOs and networks could be effectively run, how they can contribute meaningfully to development, the challenges they confront and the opportunities that arise.

I have been working with PELUM for almost a decade and have been exposed to many learning and challenging moments, which have enriched my experience. As a result, I feel that I owe it to PELUM to sift and share some of these experiences.

One of the greatest motivating factors for writing this book has been the reflections of other NGOs. For example, from Environment and Development Activities (ENDA)-Senegal I learnt the following lessons:

- NGOs should not only demystify and criticize development concepts and approaches that do not work, but create new ones;
- Use action learning to help people and organizations to grow and develop;
- Build another generation of development practitioners who are more capable and effective than the current one and;
- NGOs should capitalize and socialize their useful experiences among themselves and others working in the development field.

Finally, I wrote this book because I experienced PELUM and it experienced me.

**How this book was written**

I started writing this book in January 2004, building on the first edition that I compiled in 2002 when the Board tasked me to do so. The Board had realized that a lot of institutional memory and tacit knowledge in the heads of employees and others is often lost, especially when they leave.
The first edition of the book, which gave a descriptive and historical account, was completed in April 2002 and commented on by the Board. Subsequent reflection compelled me to provide a more reflective framework that would bring to the surface, key experiences, issues and lessons. The framework is consistent with an approach that seeks to manifest the road and the pathways that PELUM has designed and walked over the years.

Most of the story is taken from official PELUM events and documents that include annual plans, strategic plans, Biennial General Meetings (BGM), board meetings and PELUM evaluations. However, I had to carry out some analysis and synthesis. Therefore, the book has both my personal and collective analyses. The collective knowledge creation and meaning making are particularly important because PELUM values participatory thinking and action.

**Audience of the book**

Potentially, there are many groups of people who might find this book interesting and useful. Primarily, I have written this book for people working with and in NGOs and networks. Smallholder farmers, funding partners interested in rural development and those who might want to set up an NGO or a network could also benefit from PELUM experiences. Finally, I have written this book for people in PELUM Association and for those who will join later.
CHAPTER 1: LOCATING PELUM IN THE DEVELOPMENT LANDSCAPE

The emergence of PELUM was influenced by the growing need to connect isolated successes that dotted different parts of east and southern Africa. For example, Lesotho had made breakthroughs in gully reclamation, Zimbabwe in water harvesting and Zambia in promoting seed security among smallholder farmers. Another important stimulant was the emergence of many community based organizations (CBOs) and NGOs in post-independent states in east and southern Africa, who were largely supporting their governments to support rural communities in different ways. It was some of these organizations that then came together to form PELUM. Some of the questions that will help locate PELUM in the development landscape. These are: where have NGOs come from? What do they do? Why?

1.1 The historical and international context of NGO development

First decade (1940s): Relief and Welfare

NGOs emerged after the First World War in Europe, with their numbers swelling during the Second World War in the 1940s. In Europe, some of the first NGOs to be set up were Caritas, Save the Children Fund, Oxfam and the Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Cooperation Agency for Relief Everywhere (CARE) was launched in America in 1945. These NGOs initially operated locally, focusing on relief and welfare before adopting a more developmental focus, within and outside their home countries.

Second decade (1950s): Northern NGOs providing services in the south

Northern NGOs increased in number and began to assume a developmental role after recognising that relief work addressed the symptoms of poverty not the root causes. The thrust was towards helping the poor to increase their capacity to meet their needs through providing the necessary resources. They wanted the poor communities to learn from and be like northern societies by importing northern expertise, ideas and technologies. The “Research-Design-Disseminate-Assimilate” process informed this top-down approach where the poor in the south were consumers of solutions crafted in the north.
Third decade (1960s): Southern NGO emerge to provide services in the south
The development thrust changed with Northern NGOs working through and with local and indigenous people and groups. Many NGOs in the South began to emerge but often serving as intermediary organizations through which development assistance from Northern NGOs was passed to communities. People in the South gradually participated in development discourse, which was traditionally the preserve of the Northern intellectuals. At this stage, their Northern partners created most of the Southern NGOs.

Fourth decades (1970s and 1980s): Tackling the political dimension of poverty
The NGOs introduced advocacy as another dimension of development after realizing that poverty was both an economic and political issue. The new focus was to address structural issues and to mobilize people to liberate themselves and transform their livelihoods. In the south, the work of Paolo Freire of Latin America challenged people to liberate themselves. Northern NGOs began to challenge their governments while advocacy groups emerged in the south. Establishment of some north-south networks of advocacy groups increased the power of NGOs to fight for structural change. The new thrust sought to transform the role of people from being passive beneficiaries to being the active participants in the development process, where they were involved in knowledge and meaning making processes.

Fifth and sixth decade (1990s and 2000s): Participatory development, partnerships and advocacy work
Many NGOs in east and southern Africa were established in the 1980s and 1990s. Their activities ranged from relief, service to advocacy organizations. Some of these NGOs emerged during the dawn of national independence. At an international level NGO collaboration was intensified as manifested at major global events such as the Earth Summit of 1992 and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) meetings. Partnerships between different development actors began to be seen as a strategic approach to doing development work. NGOs began to attach more value to knowledge management and advocacy as key development strategies. The role of Northern NGOs in the development of the South was questioned prompting a re-definition of the relationship between NGOs of the South and those of the north. Some NGOs in the South began to support the development of popular movements.
NGO development in Africa

NGO development in Africa was inspired by the need to support government efforts to provide services to its people. Many NGOs developed and soon after independence. NGOs received most of the support from the international donors. However, some governments such as Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa also had provision for supporting NGOs. African governments have generally viewed service and welfare organizations positively. However, NGOs interested in advocacy work have been less welcome unlike in Asia and Latin America.

1.2 Current roles of NGOs in development work

While the first part of this chapter dwelt on the history of the growth and development of NGO, this section looks into what NGOs do today. Some analysts have looked at NGOs in relation to the kind of services and support they provide to the people and organizations that they relate with. The International Institute of Rural Reconstruction of the Philippines identified four roles of NGOs as:

a. Providing services to communities: In the agricultural sector, this means training farmers on various production and processing techniques, marketing and leadership skills;

b. Development education and advocacy: Helping people became aware of policy problems that have a bearing on their lives. It focuses on empowering people to articulate their demands, views and aspirations;

c. Catalysing people-to-people cooperation: NGOs facilitate purposeful networking among communities;

d. NGO interaction with government to influence policy and strategy.

Table 1: Four generations of development-oriented organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation 1: Relief and Welfare</th>
<th>Generation 2: Service provision</th>
<th>Generation 3: Advocacy</th>
<th>Generation 4: Catalysing people’s movements</th>
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<tr>
<td>Provides handouts to communities and has a strong welfare and relief orientation. The mode of support may be called assistance</td>
<td>Provides training and research services for community projects. The thrust is facilitation.</td>
<td>Provides support for continued and sustainable change beyond individual communities, seeking policy change at local, national and international levels. The mode of support may be termed promotion through social mobilisation.</td>
<td>Creation of people’s movements networked across countries and driven by a vision for a better world and not limited by budgets and organizational structures. The mode of support may be called catalyzing self-mobilisation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from David Korten: 1990, in the Harvard Business Essentials, 2003 (check date)
1.3 The immediate context in which PELUM Association developed

The 1980s were marked by the conception and birth of many developmental NGOs in east and southern Africa. Many of these NGOs were interested in strategic development, which involved strengthening the capacity of the communities to look after their own interests and needs. Areas of focus included household food security, sustainable land use and participatory development. This development was informed by greater confidence that communities could articulate their positions and issues. During the same period, the notion of sustainable use of resources was gaining ground in the region and beyond. Sustainability included maintaining the productive potential of land and water resources and with equity between generations, genders, nationalities and different peoples. Land degradation, falling production levels, rising costs of agricultural inputs, growing environmental consciousness and greater control of the agricultural production and distribution chain by the corporate sector characterised the environment in which PELUM emerged.

Another new developmental dimension characteristic of the 1980s and 1990s was the gradual shift in thinking, from a compartmentalised approach to development to a holistic and integrated approach. The new development thrust emphasised multi-sectoral linkages instead of looking at agriculture separate from natural resources management, people’s understanding, ownership and control. Peter Senge captures the old approach well when he writes, “From a very early age we are taught to break apart problems, to fragment the world… we lose our intrinsic sense of connection to the larger whole”.

1.4 Conclusion

It was under the above circumstances that many rural development NGOs that later became members of the PELUM emerged. The NGOs who formed PELUM were underpinned by ecological sustainability and participatory values. Many of them were still in the process of establishing themselves, in the pioneer phase of organisational development. Only a few had existed for over 10 years. The other feature of the member organisations was that they were dependent on foreign funding to do their work. They were mostly involved in providing training services to the members and most had limited experience in networking and advocacy. So when they decided to set up a regional network, it was a bold leap into the dark where few footprints marked the terrain.
CHAPTER 2: THE CREATION AND EMERGENCE OF PELUM

“This field of agriculture needs people who are happy and prepared to work together and work patiently. Inspiration and knowledge, the two go together,” Machobane and Berold

2.1 Bird’s eye view of PELUM Association

PELUM Association is a regional network of NGOs in east and southern Africa, which was launched by 25 founding members in 1995. The number of member organizations has since increased to 160 in 2004 in nine member countries. It facilitates learning, networking and advocacy in people-oriented development in east and southern Africa.

Origin

The emergence of PELUM was inspired by an environment that made it hard for smallholder farmers to prosper and prevail. Some of the issues troubling the farmers were tired soils, wrong agricultural techniques and technologies promoted by extension workers who were trained to promote high external input agriculture. At the same time, food insecurity was growing, land and water were getting degraded, peasant access to good land and markets was problematic. Meanwhile the rich corporate sector was appropriating and patenting knowledge and genes that came from the farmers in the first place.

More specifically, PELUM was formed to link the many “islands of success” in different parts of east and southern Africa, to link approaches in participatory development and in sustainable agriculture so that NGOs approach to development is more wholesome and comprehensive. It was also formed to unite NGOs in development.

Ngugi Mutura, a founding members said, “ We wanted a forum where we would share our good practice, a platform where we would form opinion that would influence the development discourse because there was no such thing for agricultural and rural development NGOs in east and southern Africa.”

Conceptual basis of PELUM

In PELUM jargon, there is PELUM and pelum. The former is the organisation, the later is what the organisation stands for and promotes. PELUM work is informed by the thinking of such people as Paulo Freire, Robert Chambers, Allan Savory, Fukuoka Masanobu, Bill
Mollison, James Lovelock, Fritjof Capra, and Peter Senge. Some of the concepts and approaches that shape pelum are: holistic management, liberation theology, revolutionary pedagogy, participatory development, appropriate technology, indigenous and local knowledge, logical framework analysis, living systems theory, low input external agriculture, a rights-based approach to development.

**PELUM vision and mission**

PELUM’s vision is, “to see communities in east and southern Africa become self-organised to make choices towards an improved quality of life that is socially, economically and ecologically sustainable.”

PELUM Association’s mission statement is: “We are a network of civil society organisations promoting participatory ecological land use management by local communities in east and southern Africa. We aim to build the capacity of members to respond appropriately to changes and challenges towards the empowerment of communities, valuing and capitalising on their indigenous knowledge, resources and initiatives. We want to build the capacity of PELUM at all levels through linkages and action-learning among members.”

Speaking to the BGM in connection with the PELUM Advocacy Policy in 2001, Russel Mushanga then chairman of the regional Board said, “One day, ten years today, I would like to hear a smallholder farmer say, ‘PELUM is the organisation that helped us make agricultural, trade and land policies work for us’.”

**Guiding values**

PELUM is guided by a set of values that include: people-centred development, empowerment of land users and respect for indigenous knowledge. It values self-criticism, creativity and innovation, creation of impact, gender sensitivity, transparency, sustainability and an integrated and holistic approach to development.

**Networking principles of PELUM**

PELUM has a set of principles that guides the way it operates and relates with others in the development sector. This helps to create cohesion and cooperation, while at the same
time unleashing the potential of the NGO network. Some of the core networking principles are:

- Respect for good partnership while at the same time maintaining the separate identities/autonomy;
- Professional and ethical conduct in doing business together;
- Making, concrete, practical commitments and honouring them;
- Gradual and focused growth effective impact;
- Reciprocity: shared responsibility in mobilizing resources for implementing activities under the partnership; and
- Creating synergies through utilizing the comparative strengths of each partner.

**PELUM’s focus**

PELUM works in the areas of sustainable agriculture and rural development. Its strategies are training, research, documentation, information sifting and dissemination of good practice, networking and advocacy. PELUM brings together approaches, people and institutions for greater capacity and impact.

**PELUM Structure**

The structure and systems of PELUM (Figure 1) were designed to provide for accountability, participation and transparency at country and regional levels. The CWGs, which are made up of all members in a member country, are a site for thinking, reflecting, learning and implementing development. There is provision for a country secretariat and so far six out of the nine member countries have employed country desk coordinators (CDCs). Each member country elects a chair that automatically sits on the regional Board, which in turn meets biannually to make policy and management decisions on behalf of the members. The regional Board provides the regional secretariat with direction, leadership and governance. Above the board is the biennial general meeting (BGM), which acts as the general assembly and defines the strategic direction of the Association. All structures of PELUM that hold resources, time and knowledge in stewardship for the membership are accountable to the BGM.

The cutting edge of the Association lies in the regional nature of its ownership and control by the membership, and its culture of participation and action learning.
2.2 The conception of PELUM
The “courtship” for the conception of the PELUM Association started in 1991. Fambidzanai Training Centre in Zimbabwe, consulted with the Permaculture Trust of Botswana on how each development organisation could enhance the effectiveness and impact of its training. Both institutions were training in permaculture and had each been involved in training for at least three years. The organisations realised that permaculture could not address poverty adequately which necessitated incorporation of other development approaches in their strategies. An associated challenge was the scarcity of development workers with well-rounded skills and knowledge in an holistic approach to land use management and community development.
The two organisations realised that the only effective way to address the challenges was to involve other development organisations with complementary competencies and facing similar constraints. Members were recruited from agricultural, training and natural resources management NGOs in Tanzania, Botswana, South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Lesotho, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Some of the founding and pioneer organisations are Fambidzanai Permaculture Centre (FPC), Nyahonde Union Learning Centre (NULC) of Zimbabwe, Permaculture Trust of Botswana (PTB), Sustainable Agriculture Development Programme (SACDEP) of Kenya, Environment and Development Agency (EDA) of South Africa, Berea Agricultural Group (BAG) of Lesotho, Tanzania Organic Producers and Promoters, and Environmental Alert (EA) of Uganda.

In November 1991, FPC and PTB convened a regional workshop in Zimbabwe to look at how sustainable agriculture and rural development NGOs could, “amalgamate those approaches to resource management, which have the same conceptual base,” (PELUM, 1995). The integrated approach was put together in the form of a curriculum framework. After the meeting, two people were tasked to serve as a secretariat and do further work on articulating the thematic linkages. In November 1992, a second regional meeting involving NGOs from South Africa, Tanzania, Botswana and Zimbabwe was held. It finalized the curriculum framework and defined the values that would guide the implementation of the curriculum. In June 1993, the third regional workshop set up a regional steering committee, which represented the participating countries. Between the meetings, the two people continued to work on how the curriculum framework could be operationalised.

In December 1993, the steering committee met again to formulate a three-year plan of a regional network of NGOs that was to be set up. They also developed the first draft of the constitution. Then in June 1994 the steering committee met again to interview candidates who were to implement the three-year plan. They also met potential funding partners and marketed their idea of a regional network. In February 1995 the Steering Committee met South Africa and strategized around how the network could function at country level, how to recruit more countries and NGOs to join the network. The meeting also planned for the launch of PELUM, which took place in October 1995.

During the launch of PELUM, a delegate from a founding organisation in Kenya, Maina Waiganjo Mwangi had this to say, “We wanted to see whether this was a Zimbabwean need
or a regional need … I am now convinced that this is a good initiative. I needed to see people involved. We can contribute by promoting PELUM in Kenya because we see it as a needs driven network, (PELUM, October 1995).

2.3 PELUM Identity
The general consensus within PELUM is that it has evolved from a simple network to a complex network of networks. This refers to its strategies, structure and purpose, which are multi-layered. The key strategies of PELUM are capacity building, networking and advocacy. It also supports small farmer organisations and groups to speak for themselves.

A Network of Networks

“The activities of PELUM Association have had a positive influence on members by creating an environment and climate of encouraging innovative and collaborative approaches. Members acknowledged that the Association has created opportunities for organisations to get to know each other. ‘We can share our work -- one can identify who is able to do what and at what level. PELUM has helped us to get out of own bubble’ was mentioned several times by the respondents during the interviews,” Wilson and Munachonga, 2003.

This section looks at the different levels of networking within PELUM. We can use a definition from PELUM Tanzania on networks to help us clarify the concept, “… a voluntary interaction of autonomous individuals or organisations having a common vision and shared values with the object of sharing ideas, knowledge, experiences and other resources ... for the purpose of increasing each other’s capacity," Djax, 1999.
Table 2: PELUM as a network of networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of networking</th>
<th>Description of networking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>This is networking at the level of east and southern Africa as a whole. There is sharing between all CWGs. Learning and networking workshops, the regional Board meetings, and the BGM exemplify networking at this level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-regional</td>
<td>CWGs in the same geographical region share strategies, experiences and projects. As the number of CWGs and member organisations increased, the Board found it prudent to create three sub-regions to facilitate decentralisation. East Africa: Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania; central Africa: Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi; southern Africa: South Africa, Botswana and Lesotho. Common projects with rotational leadership and increased sharing bind the sub-regions together. This initiative started in the east African sub-region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>The third level of networking happens at country level. When the number of member organisations in each country increased potential for constructive country level networked emerged. In addition, from 1997, member countries began to demand more space from the regional body. PELUM realised that it could only become effective if the network operated well at national level. Member organisations thus come together to share lessons, experiences and information. They plan together and develop common projects that draw on their collective strengths. This is one of the oldest levels of networking. Country desks have been established to facilitate this level of networking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-country level</td>
<td>The fourth layer of networking happens at sub-national level where a group of member organisations in a province or region or other such geographical grouping of a country come together to work as a PELUM “sub-family”. For example, Zimbabwe has four “clusters” around which projects and meetings revolve; in Tanzania, zonal workshops are built on the same notion. The idea is to draw on the many common elements and to address problems at grassroots levels. This is relatively new development, as decentralisation happens within countries as well. PELUM South Africa and Tanzania made the initial proposal for provincial groupings owing to their vastness. Sub-country level networking cut travel costs for capacity building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local level</td>
<td>Member organisation facilitates networking and is part of a network of local farmer groups. This level falls outside PELUM internal networking because it involves actors that are not members of the association. However, it is an important level that PELUM also supports. In this scenario the main role of the member organisation is to facilitate and catalyse the social capital development of farmer organisations so that they can speak for themselves. This is a fairly new role for PELUM, which evolved after the Small Farmer Convergence (SFC) process of 2001 and 2002. This kind of networking was prompted by the emergence of farmer groups and organisations that had an interest in speaking for themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic type</td>
<td>Members to the thematic sub-network can be drawn from any part of the east and southern African region. For example, members with experience in gender and development came together to design the initial policy of the Association, which was improved with time. In Zambia five member organisations worked with a community to support production of certified seed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2: Networking at five levels within PELUM
A represents the regional networking, B the sub-regional, C the country level, D are the sub-national groupings of member organisations called clusters or zonal groups and where E are the members organisations while F represents local farmer groups.
**Promotes participation, sustainable agriculture and food security**

PELUM promotes sustainable agriculture and natural resources management. It is a member of the International Federation of Organic Association Movement (IFOAM) which is concerned with organic farming and marketing on one hand PELUM is also a member of the International Union of Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) which is concerned with wise utilisation of natural resources on the other.

At a more practical level sustainable agriculture and natural resources management have been extensively defined during five PELUM workshops that looked into “Mainstreaming Sustainable Agriculture” in 1999 and 2000. PELUM promotes sustainable agriculture because it recognises the importance of indigenous, knowledge and technology, promotes use of locally available resources and farmer control of the agriculture production and distribution chain. It further seeks to build the ecological capital of the small farmer and to enhance agricultural and genetic diversity.

**A capacity building and advocacy organization**

PELUM builds the capacity of its members to do development work more effectively. The initial thrust was to increase their skills in sustainable agriculture participatory development. However, the member needs diversified to include organizational development, financial, information management. Initially members were trained in effective campaigning, advocacy and lobbying. Capacity building also focused on increasing member understanding of the local, national and international issues that have a bearing on their work. PELUM also participates in global, sub-regional and national processes that seek to influence policies on food security, seed security and agricultural research for development. PELUM has been involved in some international advocacy work, which include the World Food Summit (WFS) and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

**Supporter of small farmer organisations**

PELUM support for small farmer organizations started formally in 2001 following a decision taken at the BGM of the same year. PELUM has facilitated the development of the East and Southern African Small Farmers Forum (ESAFF). Member organizations support local groups to articulate their policy concerns through research, policy analysis and advocacy skills training. Regional issues raised so far include: the need to take part in policy
formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; seed security and marketing. PELUM has supported farmer exchange visits between farmer groups in different countries and regions of the world, including West Africa, Europe, India and Latin America.

2.4 Conclusion
An interesting point to note about the emergence of PELUM is that at the beginning, no one intentionally planned to set up a network. The initial focus was to work together to develop a curriculum that was trans-disciplinary enough to reflect the complexity of development. It was only in the process of doing this, and after lengthy and numerous debates that those involved decided to eventually form a network.

Another noteworthy point is that the decision to initiate a network was reached completely independent of any funding source. PELUM thus managed to avoid the trap of linking its vision, mission, strategies and activities to easy funds or to any kind of donor pressure. This kind of organisational integrity has remained invaluable to the growth and development of the association. The growth and development of the PELUM has been largely shaped and sustained by it being entirely a southern initiative. However, it gets most of its funds from its partners in the north.

From the conception of PELUM, we see four possible lessons: organizations are formed around a purpose, which is derived from the opportunities and threats in the environment. In forming an organisation, there is need to work at two main levels: the policy and the plan. Another lesson is that the purpose precedes the strategy: people have to agree on the reason for their existence before they work on the strategy. Most interesting perhaps is the fact that it takes a while to develop a network, especially if it brings together organizations from different countries. It took PELUM four years from conception to birth.

Every time the focus and thrust of PELUM changed or broadened, there was a corresponding change in strategy. There was often a demand for new capacities, a need to align ambition and abilities, which would be done. For example, when the organisation moved into advocacy, it sought advocacy capacity, developed relevant policies and employed someone. When it embarked on decentralization and CWG strengthening, it employed CDCs and developed country plans.
Perhaps the key challenge that PELUM faced was on projecting its true identity adequately and timely as new developments unfolded. There was evidence that some members were not aware of some of the new developments in their organisation. Our communication strategy was to slow to pick up changes and convey them to the publics. The PELUM Bulletin and the Ground Up could have been better used to share about important changes going on in the organisation.
CHAPTER 3: KEY CONCEPTS USED TO DISCUSS PELUM

“Theory without practice leads to empty idealism, and action without philosophical reflection leads to a mindless activism,” John L. Elias and Sharan Merriam

3.1 Introduction to the selected concepts

There are many lenses that one could use to look at PELUM Association for lesson learning. I have selected a few concepts to illuminate the main issues and lessons. However, they are limited in their use because they cannot capture all the finer details and the complexities of the life of PELUM. The concepts that I have found useful for this purpose are:

- Organisational and Institutional Development;
- Change Management;
- Action learning and Learning Organisations; and
- Leadership in NGOs.

3.2 Organisational and institutional development

Understanding organizational development

Organisational development (OD) is concerned with the building of the leadership, planning and management capacity of an organization for resource development and utilization. It refers to the how the organization is both formally and informally run. The formal aspects are policies, procedures, goals, technologies, structures, products and financial resources while the informal ones are perceptions, attitudes, feelings, values, informal interactions and group norms (CPHP Annual Report, 2003).

Understanding institutional development

Institutional development on the other hand is concerned with building the capacity of an organization to interact and relate meaningfully with the outside world. It is concerned with programme performance and external linkages (to do and to relate). Institutional development involves the consolidation and improvement of the quality and quantity of the work of an organization. It is generally understood that the NGO must strengthen itself first before it can support and strengthen others.
3.3 Phases of Organisation Development

Alan Kaplan (1994) suggests that there are three main phases that an organization goes through in its life: independent, differentiated and integrated. However, in all cases, the phases are not rigid and clear-cut. Alan argues that in many cases an organisation may swing between phases and carry features of different phases at the same time.

Table 3: Three phases of organisational development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pioneer: Dependent Phase</th>
<th>Differentiated: Independent Phase</th>
<th>Integrated: Interdependent Phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• There is a charismatic and respected leader</td>
<td>• The organization becomes formal, with clear systems and procedures</td>
<td>• The leadership is shared throughout the organization, at the various levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The organization operates like a family</td>
<td>• Specialised sub-systems are formed</td>
<td>• Basically the strong points of the two preceding phases are combined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Staff are dependent on the leader and happy about it</td>
<td>• Power shifts to the top</td>
<td>• The organization becomes more purpose oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leader is personally involved in all aspects of the organization</td>
<td>• The organization becomes far less flexible and more authoritative</td>
<td>• Systems become more purpose oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Systems are few and decisions are informal</td>
<td>• Interaction is limited, warmth dwindles and communication is on paper</td>
<td>• Systems become more responsive and flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is warmth in the relationships between and among staff</td>
<td>• Staff valued for their specific contributions</td>
<td>• Warmth and enthusiasm return to the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bound together by strong visions and values.</td>
<td>• Loss of close relationships leads to some independence</td>
<td>• Teamwork characterizes the organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A crisis will often set in leading to movement towards the next phase or a collapse of the organization. This change is triggered by a call for formality, death or departure of the pioneer or increased complexity of the organization.

Standardisation and specialization lead to a feeling of loneliness and alienation. Division of labour limits learning, creativity and flexibility. Autonomy of department leads to fragmentation.

This is seen as the ideal state of an organization and it may grow so much that new and smaller organizations have to emerge from it, prompting a new cycle of organizational development.

3.3 Change management in organisations

As organizations grow and develop, some changes are bound to take place. The Harvard Business School identifies four types of change that can occur within organizations:

a. **Structural change**: Top management reconfigure the parts of the organization and how they are related to one another for greater performance.

b. **Process change**: Modifying operational procedures and approaches to make the process faster, more user-friendly, reliable, efficient and effective.

c. **Cultural change**: The relationship between employer and employee, manager and staff alters to a more interactive one.
d. *Cost cutting:* The removal of non-essential activities to increase efficiency, relevance and effectiveness.

The Business School further identifies two kinds of approaches to change: the economic approach (Theory E) and the organizational capabilities approach (Theory O) described in the Table 4 below.

**Table 4: Theories of change management**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of change</th>
<th>Theory E</th>
<th>Theory O</th>
<th>Theories E and O combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>Increase stakeholder value immediately</td>
<td>Develop organizational capacity for better performance in future</td>
<td>Embrace the paradox between economic value and organizational capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Change is managed from the top</td>
<td>Change is developed at all levels</td>
<td>Set direction from the top and engage people from below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Focus is on structures and systems</td>
<td>Focus is on employee behaviour and attitude at work</td>
<td>Focuses simultaneously at the hard and the soft components of the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Plan and establish programmes</td>
<td>Experiment and evolve new and effective ways of doing business</td>
<td>Plan for spontaneity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward systems</td>
<td>Motivate through financial incentives</td>
<td>Motivate through commitment, using pay as a fair exchange</td>
<td>Use incentives to reinforce change but not to drive it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Consultants</td>
<td>Analyse problems and shape solutions</td>
<td>Supports management in shaping their own solutions</td>
<td>Use consultants as expert resources who empower employees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from M. Beer and N. Nohria, 2000.*

### 3.4 Action learning in organisations

**Action learning as a concept**

Action learning has become an important development approach among many NGOs in the region. The Community Development Resource Association (CDRA) of South Africa has been grappling with clarifying and developing this notion for development practitioners and I draw from it.

Action learning is about growing from experience for improved action and impact in the future. It is built on the notion that people can learn from what they do, feel and think. The action learning cycle can be simplified into four major related parts: Action, Reflection, Learning and Planning (Figure 4).
The values that underlie action learning are:

a. Respect for all people’s experiences and knowledge;

b. Emphasis on horizontal relations and learning; and

c. Social change that helps people change themselves as well as the structures and systems within which they operate.

Figure 2: The action learning cycles and some of the features

Adapted from Taylor et al, 1997

**Learning organisations**

The purpose of learning is to acquire knowledge in order to bring about desired change in the life of an individual, a group of people, society or an organization. Therefore learning can be said to have an emancipatory interest. In participatory development, knowledge and meaning are socially constructed. Knowledge is also dialectical: an interplay of subjective views, histories and cultural frameworks in which it is found. The facilitator and
the participants are viewed as co-learners, each with something to contribute and to learn from the process. The participant may be described as, “critical and constructive co-participant in society who sees self-actualisation in a social context, who pursues the true and the good in transforming and being transformed by society” (Fien, 1993). Learning organizations learn from all actors in the system and profit from it.

**Characteristics of learning organisations**

Organizations that work with action learning are characterized by:

- Leaders who ensure that a vision is developed, shared and owned by all;
- Recognition and valuing of all members and their contributions;
- Members that strive for excellence;
- Treating mistakes as sources of learning;
- Creating balance between action, reflection, planning and learning;
- An atmosphere of trust;
- Transparent and regular information sharing; and
- Adequate systems, procedures and structures to support the learning processes.

**Levels of learning within organisations**

Learning within organizations can be either unconscious or conscious. Unconscious learning happens when learning occurs automatically, instinctively or unintentionally. It is not planned for. The other level of learning is deliberate and intentional. In such organizations, learning is conscious, continuous and integrated.

### 3.5 Organisational Leadership

Allan Kaplan (2001) argues that there are three main functions of leadership, which are associated with people, structure and identity.

**People dimension**

The leader should help people find meaning in their work as well as help them relate with each other constructively and productively. He/she should be able to tap into their potential and creativity (Kaplan, 2001) For this to happen, the leader should balance two opposing but complementary functions: confronting and supporting. Confronting means making suggestions for improvements and change, teaching skills and rejecting certain
behaviours. Support is based on trusting the ability and integrity of the other person. It involves providing mechanisms that allow individuals and team members to arrive at their own decisions and answers.

**Identity Dimension**

The leader and her group ensure that the organization is relevant, effective and leading in its area of operation and interest. The two complementary functions are focusing and grounding. Focusing involves priority setting and drawing the necessary energies towards a goal. Focus involves choosing what to do and working with it. Grounding where the leader carries out activities that consider constraints, capacity, time and resources available.

**Structural Dimension**

It has two opposing functions: holding the whole and breaking boundaries. Wholding the whole means that the leader ensures that there are structures, systems and procedures that facilitate communication and decision-making. Structures provide security and predictability, internal coherence and integrity, objectivity and stability. The mobilizing role is concerned with moving out of the boundaries to question the very structures and systems that are in use so that the procedures and structures that have outlived their purpose are identified and replaced by appropriate ones.

**Four duties of a leader**

Another useful way of looking at the role of a leader has been provided by David Inger based on his work with NGOs in Botswana. He outlines four basic duties of an NGO director. These are:

*Duty of Loyalty*

This means avoiding conflict of interest and personal gain through taking a gift, commission or consultancy for oneself. It also means respecting the confidentiality of the organisations’ information, which is not meant for the public.

*Duty of Care and Skill*

This duty entails performing duties prudently, taking decisions based on all relevant facts, in good faith and in the best interests of the organization.
Duty of Knowledge
The director must be thoroughly familiar with the operations of the organization. It is his/her duty to know.

Duty of attention
The director is expected to attend all necessary meetings of the organization, study documents ahead of such meetings and monitors company documents for their alignment with the values, policies and strategic plans of the organization. Basically he/she should pay attention to what goes in the organization and around it.

3.6 Conclusion

The use of models and frameworks of development, change management and leadership can be helpful for NGOs as long as the application is adapted to suit circumstances. Frameworks tend to provide good guidelines and reduce the chances of going astray. It was through the use of OD frameworks that PELUM was able to anticipate crises. The use of frameworks was accompanied by tapping into resource organizations and people who served as teachers, mentors and coaches. This facilitated learning especially among the leadership of PELUM, making the growth and development smoother than it could have been. For OD, PELUM depended mainly of one organisation. While this provided coherence and consistence in the approach to issues, there were concerns later that the OD organisation appeared to have become part of PELUM. The distance between client and consultant had diminished to unhealthy levels that undermined listening and objectivity. As a result, a two-pronged strategy was employed: getting co-consultancy from other organizations and engaging new OD organizations that worked independently. This broadened the learning base for PELUM. The consultancy used images to put across some of the frameworks and concepts and this made it easier to reach their audience. They also elicited visual contributions from PELUM. This approach not only helped people grasp complex ideas easily but also made the sessions more enjoyable.
CHAPTER 4: PELUM GOVERNANCE AND ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT

“First develop man and man will develop the land,” J.J. Machobane

After delving into the context in which PELUM arose and looking into how it started, I look at how PELUM is run, how it relates to its environment and what it does. I have argued earlier on that PELUM’s structure provides for accountability, ownership and transparency, this chapter goes further to show how I bring to light, the niche of PELUM in development.

Former coordinator of PELUM, John Wilson has this to say about PELUM, “When one takes a step back from the busyness of day to day work, it is very apparent that this association is an essential and potentially powerful step forward in the attempt of NGOs in east and southern Africa to promote sustainable communities,” (PELUM Bulletin, 1997).

4.1 How PELUM is run

Regional Board

Composition

PELUM Association Regional Board is made up of the chairpersons of the Country Working Groups. Each elected chairperson holds office for two years up to a maximum of three successive terms. The Board can co-opt up to 3 other people. The executive of the Board is made up of the chairperson, the vice chair and the treasurer. These are elected at the BGM. The Secretary General (SG) is an ex officio member of both the Board and the executive committee. Board members are the official representatives of the organisation but may from time to time delegate this responsibility to members, the SG and other senior members of staff.

Role of the Regional Board

- Balancing country and national interests

The Board brings the experiences and aspirations of their CWG to inform regional work. They also serve as the regional representatives and leaders of the PELUM network.
Board members are answerable to their CWGs at one level and to the BGM at another. It also reports to donors through PELUM secretariats.

- Policy development
The Board makes policies on behalf of the membership and some of the policies are ratified at the BGM. The Board delegates the actual drafting of the policies to the secretariat but critiques and improves the policies until they are satisfied. Over the past eight years the Board has produced the following policies: the Constitution, Gender and Development, Advocacy, Campaigning and Lobbying, HIV/AIDS and Development. These policies relate to the institutional development of PELUM because they are about how PELUM relates with its operational environment.

- Strategic planning and guidance
The Board is also responsible for developing the regional strategic and annual plans, concept and strategic papers with assistance from the regional desk. The Board also develops and approves internal policy documents such as the Personnel Policy and the Financial Manual. These documents are concerned with how PELUM is run, how it functions. The Board does not seek BGM approval on these policies.

- Finance and fundraising
The Board has a finance and fundraising committee that keeps track of all the fundraising that is being done by receiving all proposals sent out. The Board approves the regional desk budget yearly before fundraising may be carried out. The Board was actively involved in fundraising for PELUM activities in 2002 and 2003. In 2002 they raised funds for the SFC while in 2003 the chairperson then, Mary Jo Kakinda spent two weeks in five countries in Europe fundraising with the assistance of the SG. The Board also appoints auditors and approves audited accounts.

- Recruitment and appraisal of the SG
In 1995 and in 1998, the Board recruited the SG of the organisation and was actively involved in the recruitment of all programme officers. In 2000, the Board chairman and the vice chairman appraised the SG. The appraisal involved interviews with staff he worked with, donors and other key stakeholders.
• Sharing information and knowledge
The Board regularly shares progress on country developments through circulars and through their biannual meetings. Other Board members do the orientation of new Board members. Board development is largely effected through workshops that run prior to or post Board meetings.

• Setting up structures
The Board has committees that facilitate the growth and development of regional desk programmes. This increases its level of involvement in the affairs of the organisation. Some of the committees that have been set up include: Learning and Networking; Seed Security, Finance and Fundraising; Advocacy, and the Constitutional Committee. The committees have a direct relationship with the responsible programme officer. These committees look at strategic issues within a programme and make recommendations to the Board. Each Board member is can belong in two-four committees depending on interest and competence.

• Coordination of country programmes and activities
In the early days, the Chair of the CWG coordinated programmes. New country working groups employ country desk coordinators to implement member plans at national level.

• Monitoring and supporting CWGs
The Board supports CWGs that are under-performing, especially since the initiation of the decentralisation process. A Board member facilitated a “Rejuvenation Workshop” in South Africa for the SA members in 2000. While in 2001, the Board chairman and secretary general visited members in Lesotho to understand why there was limited progress and the outcome as worthwhile. Two Board members and the SG also organised a workshop in Malawi in 2003 to try and reinvigorate PELUM Malawi, with limited success. In 2003, a Board member and a country desk coordinator went to Rwanda to meet 10 potential PELUM member organisations, which resulted in the formation of PELUM Rwanda.
The Biennial General Meeting

A minimum of three selected full member organisation representatives from each CWG attend from each PELUM member country once every two years.

BGM functions

• Scanning the environment and setting direction

The BGM is a place for self-renewal and defining the vision and mission of PELUM. For example in 1997, it decided that PELUM should prepare to take on an advocacy role and this was realised three years later. In 2001, the BGM decided that PELUM should help farmer groups to speak for themselves and this resulted in the Small Farmer Convergence that culminated in the formation of the East and Southern African Small Scale Farmers’ Forum (ESAFF). The BGM also adopts and ratifies PELUM policies that have been discussed above. In 1999, the BGM defined the strategic areas for the Association for the years 2000-2004. These have remained the same, except for the addition of Support for Small Farmer Organisations, which was made in 2001. Box 1 shows how the BGM sets direction for the network.

Box 1: Direction-setting by the BGM: Adapted from the 2003 BGM

• Achieve the growth and development of CWGs in a manner consistent with the different country level circumstances,
• Help farmers’ organisations to do their own campaigning, advocacy and lobbying,
• Develop impact tracing mechanisms, for learning and for justification of our existence,
• Implement programmes at country and regional levels in a way that draws upon the strengths of the members across the region,
• Foster horizontal learning within the entire Association, starting at country level,
• Generate optimum multiplier effects from the learning and networking that happens at regional level so that impact can reach as many people as possible,
• Set up country desks that support and coordinate the activities of the membership and,
• Each country should document best practices, which should then be shared widely with other CWGs for the benefit of one another and of farmers. The best practices should be at both organisational and farmer levels.

• Adopting policies and reports

The BGM, being the supreme policy-making body of the organisation, does not actually make the policy but it comments, rejects and accepts policies whose development it delegates to the Board. In 1999 it adopted a Gender Policy and gender had been implicitly incorporated in all PELUM work. An Advocacy and HIV/AIDS policies were adopted in 2001 and 2003 respectively. The BGM reads and ratifies two-year financial reports of the regional PELUM.
• Election of the Board’s office bearers
  The BGM elects the Board chairperson, the vice chairperson and treasurer. These are selected from the chairpersons of each CWG.

The Regional Desk
The Regional Desk is made up of the Secretary General, Programme officers who head different units, and support staff. The Board recruits the SG. It also recruits programme officers consultation with the SG. The SG and officers make up the management team.

Functions within the Regional Desk
It implements all PELUM policies and strategies and coordinates regional activities. It also runs programmes, which include learning and networking, advocacy, information and communication as well as seed security, Gender, HIV/AIDS and development. The RD supports the organisational development of CWGs and ESAFF.

Country Working Groups
The CWGs are made up of all PELUM members (voting full and non-voting) in a given country. Full members are those NGOs involved in advocacy or learning and networking in agriculture, natural resources management and whose policies are made in east and southern Africa. Non-voting members also do similar work but are either government, academic or research institutes, international NGOs or quasi-government organisations. A CWG is formed when there are at least four full PELUM members in a country. The CWGs together form the regional PELUM Association.

Functions of CWGs are to:
• Develop policy and plans at country level;
• Fundraise for the national activities;
• Support the social capital development of local and national small farmer groups and organisations;
• Liaise with government on matters of mutual interest, in support of farming communities;
• Define issues and strategies that are then taken to the BGM to inform the vision and mission of PELUM;
• Elect a chairperson, who leads the CWG and sits on the regional Board;
- Develop a constitution that is approved by the Regional Board based on its congruence with the regional constitution.

**Box 2: Highlights of CWGs achievements**

In South Africa, the main activities were around training in land use management, seed and information management. Lesotho’s focus has been on lobbying for policies that support farmers’ development, especially in the area of seed security. Zimbabwe’s major project was the PELUM College, which trains development workers in agro-ecology and community development. Tanzania on the other hand has been involved in running “echo” or “ripple” workshops for members who could not attend the PELUM regional workshop, and in policy analysis and lobbying. It supports a small farmer organisation, MVIWATA. Zambia led in the implementation of a seed programme by a group of PELUM members in a selected area. Recently, it got involved in lobbying government and information and communication technology management. Uganda has been involved in the promotion of local innovations and the implementation of a food security programme. Kenya initiated a sub-regional project on food security and conflict resolutions, which moved beyond PELUM members and culminated in the recruitment of Rwanda as a PELUM member in late 2003.

**Country desks**

The country desk is made up of the Country Desk Coordinator (CDC) programme staff and support staff. By 2004, six of the nine CWGs were employing CDCs. Some CWG employed support and programme staff.

**Functions**

- Implement policy decisions at country level;
- Organise and hold meetings with members at least once a year to plan, reflect, review and re-plan;
- Fundraise for country activities;
- Coordinate country activities and communicate with members and the regional desk;
- Support the social capital development of small farmer organisations as determined by the CWG; and

**Box 3: Pains and pleasures of PELUM growth**

South Africa was the first country to employ a country desk co-ordinator in 1997. The desk was initially housed in a member organisation. The SA CWG was the first to demand some level of space to do things beyond what the regional constitution stipulated. It proposed that CWGs should have a share of the membership fee, all of which was going to the regional desk then. This demand was well received at the October 1997. Since then CWGs have been getting the bigger proportion of the fees. At its AGM, questions...
such as, “How do the members take PELUM Association into their organisations? How is power distributed in the network? How will power shift?” were explicitly discussed. Since then, the questions have been resolved and six country desk coordinators have been employed (in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and Lesotho) with a clear mandate to serve the interests of member organisations in their respective countries. Experience in South Africa suggests that the placement of the coordinator happened too soon before the members had built enough unity of purpose, momentum and self-understanding as a network.

**Member organisations**

*Types of membership at country level*

Four kinds of membership exist at CWG level: full, associate, individual and sponsor. Full membership (voting) is open to NGOs that have been operating in the region for a minimum of two years and/or engage in participatory ecological land use management training or advocacy. Associate membership (non-voting) is open to international NGOs, networks, governmental departments, parastatals and newly established NGOs. Sponsor (non-voting) membership is open to any organisation/person wishing to sponsor the activities of the Association. Individual membership is open to those individuals who share PELUM values and can contribute towards it. The reason for having full members as only those NGOs whose policies are made in the region is to retain the sense of ownership and to ensure that PELUM Association remains a true indigenous network of African NGOs.

*Functions of member organisations*

- Determine the work of PELUM through responding to learning needs identification;
- Design policies and strategies in their areas of competence and interest;
- Document and share experiences with others within and outside the network;
- Host PELUM workshops, seminars and meetings;
- Occasionally coordinate other member organisations towards an agreed goal;
- Represent PELUM Association at international forums;
- Formulate and review strategic plans and annual plans; and
- Implement PELUM thinking and practice on the ground.

**4.2 PELUM’s role in development**

The role of PELUM is documented in various literature including in its strategic plans, reports, policy documents and other publicity materials. Its role is expressed through its
programmes at both country and regional levels. PELUM is both a capacity building and an advocacy organisation, although advocacy is a relatively more recent development.

**Facilitating networking among NGO members**

PELUM has been able to help 160 member organisations to utilise their collective strength towards a common, stated goal. A notable example is the setting up of PELUM College Zimbabwe, which brings together NGOs, government departments and universities to implement a multidisciplinary curriculum on development. The college has so far produced over 50 graduates who attended a two-year part-time course. In Zambia, five organisations with different strengths in seed security. In Uganda members worked together in a food security project in the Nakasongola district, each bringing its strengths towards seed saving, crop protection, land preparation, record keeping and market planning. PELUM’s approach is informed by interdependence, symbiotic relationship and drawing synergies.

**Facilitating learning of development workers**

PELUM has created numerous opportunities for its members to learn from each other as well as from outside. In this regards it has trained over 3,500 development workers in over 7 years. The training focus included Participatory Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Seed Security, Advocacy, Participatory Land Use Design and Communicating Rural Development. Feedback from participants who attended the learning sessions indicates learning and networking workshops increased the capacity member NGOs to meet the needs of the communities that they work with.

**Developing and adapting new ways of doing development**

One of the main and initial objectives of PELUM was to effectively combine the different participatory approaches and emerging sustainable resource management practices, through workshops and information sifting. The approaches include Participatory Rural Appraisal, Holistic Management, Participatory Action and Research, Participatory Action and Learning, Training for Transformation and Action Learning. The practices included Permaculture, Agro-forestry, Low External Input Agriculture, Organic Farming and Planned Grazing Management. PELUM also ran workshops in a participatory manner allowing participants to take an active role through the formation of Newsletter, Documentation, Monitoring and Coordination teams. The documentation of good farmer practice involved a long and involved process that resulted in the farmer innovators becoming co-authors.

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The manner in which farmers were mobilized to attend a Small Farmer Convergence and the fact that they took over the facilitation of that convergence of 10 days, also demonstrate PELUM’s search for better and more empowering ways of doing development. Another innovative approach has been the holding of workshops to brainstorm key issues ahead of business meetings at Board and BGM levels.

**Promotion of sustainable agriculture and natural resource management**

PELUM believes in sustainable development and promotes those techniques, attitudes and values that encourage sustainable utilisation of resources. Some of these approaches are: Low Input External Agriculture, Holistic Management, Agro-forestry, Organic Farming and Permaculture. These are promoted through networking workshops, documentation and dissemination of success stories, linking products with markets and showing that such farming is viable in the long run. It is important to note that the teaming of two NGOs, which led into the teaming up of 160, of them is a process that seeks to influence the NGO development sector to do development that is sustainable.

**Promotion of democratic development practice**

PELUM views people as the engines of development. It believes that people must be active participants in the development process. As such PELUM has published literature on how development could be more democratic, sustainable and empowering. PELUM has distributed over 5,000 copies of books, and other publications that discuss and promote participatory development. It has run several workshops focusing on both the principles and the techniques of participatory development. After realising that most people concentrate on learning the tools only, PELUM, together with Vredeseilanden Coopibo (VECO) and Crop Post-Harvest Programme, Southern Africa (CPHPSA) compiled a field guide called Beyond Participatory Tools, which is in print.

**Developing and strengthening partnerships different development actors**

NGOs, farmer organisations, universities and research institutes contribute to development in different and potentially complementary ways as well. However, there is inadequate conversation, sharing and poor consolidation among them resulting in unnecessary duplications and developmental in initiatives. PELUM contributed to bridging gaps among these actors through sitting on the Consultative Group of International Agricultural
Research, NGO Committee, which fought for the inclusion of a farmers’ committee within the CGIAR system. It also entered into a memorandum of understanding with the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT). PELUM has also been involved in facilitating linkages between CIAT and NGOs in development and farmer groups. It held informal talks with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Small-scale Farmer Network, which seeks to represent the under-represented peasant farmers. During the Small Farmer Convergence Process, PELUM worked jointly with the Global Peasant Movement Against Globalisation (APM), Institut Africain de Developpement Economique et Social (INADES) West Africa, and the Network of Organic Farmers in Africa (NECOFA).

**Facilitating the social capital development of people’s movement**

PELUM engaged small farmers to participate in local and international policy formulation processes in recognition of the vital role of family farming, peasant agriculture and pastoralism in 2001. This was prompted by PELUM’s concern over the exclusion of small producers in the sustainable development discourse when they are the custodians of a vast part of the earth. PELUM is convinced that farmers contribute to sustainable development and should be afforded the opportunities to speak for themselves, about themselves and their own problems and aspirations, to reconstruct their context and shape their future, for example the Small Farmer Convergence Process (Box 4).

**Box 4: Phases Of The Small Farmer Convergence process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The conception phase:</th>
<th>PELUM members proposed the idea of a small farmer convergence at the October 2001 Biennial General Meeting which was attended by 40 delegates. The delegates set up a Task Force, which met in November 2001 to outline the scope, purpose, and programme for the small farmer convergence process.</th>
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<tr>
<td>The engagement and courtship phase:</td>
<td>The BGM and Task Force deliberations were discussed in PELUM member countries. The members presented the idea to farmer organisations and communities. The community representatives agreed to tackle local and international policy issues. An agenda setting process was initiated in each country. Fellow farmers selected Farmer representatives so that they could take part in the SFC.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The deconstruction phase:</td>
<td>This phase was characterised by undoing the earlier plans in view of unfolding realities. This was especially necessitated by the increased participation of farmers who articulated their own priorities and had to take over some of the responsibilities that the Task Force carried.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The reconstruction phase:</td>
<td>This phase was characterised by farmer defining the issues and the way forward by renewed strength and conviction among PELUM members, farmers and the funding partners. All countries began to resuscitate their efforts. Meetings were held, issues were defined and alternatives were sought.</td>
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generated. Songs were compiled, papers were prepared and media was engaged. The Task Force visited interested potential partners and NECOFA, INADES, APM and Via Campesina they agreed to join. PELUM linked up with International Partners in Sustainable Agriculture (IPSA) who helped us get accredited by the United Nations so that we could access the UN deliberations.

The solidarity building phase: The farmer leaders and representatives from different parts of the world shared ideas and worked out a way forward. It was also a time when a large part of the leadership process was handed over to the farmer leaders and representatives. The relationship building was achieved through farmers attending the SCF and working together for eight days and in part through the four days of travelling together. The SFC linked with other farmer organisations and leaders such as Vandana Shiva. Solidarity with the rest of civil society was expressed through attending sessions in Nasrec, the People’s Earth Summit, Soweto Mountain of Hope and Ubuntu and by participating in the march and in the protests on the last day of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

Formation of East and Southern Africa Farmers Forum (ESAFF): Farmers developed visions for both their countries and regions at the end of the SFC. They elected leaders and undertook to form a movement and also provided feedback to their respective constituencies. In 2003, the farmer representatives from 7 countries (Uganda, Lesotho, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Tanzania and Namibia) met and formed ESAFF, which later developed a draft constitution and agreed on the primary activities.

Adapted from Mukute, 2002.

Documentation and socialisation of experiences
PELUM Association has facilitated the documentation of NGO and farmer innovations. In 1999, an official from the Honey Bee of India spent a few days with Board members explaining how to capitalize and socialise their experiences. PELUM also learnt from IIRR who are reputed for producing good resource materials. By 2003, it had documented over 30 cases of good farmer practice at regional level and compiled a field guide that captured innovative practice by NGOs and farmers. The decision was taken for each organisation to document its best practice. The main strategy of socialisation of experiences has been through books, films and slides.

Facilitating dialogue between civil society and government
Since the inclusion of the advocacy function in the work of PELUM, many CWGs began to embark on policy work. This involved critiquing draft policies, participating in national deliberations ahead of key international events such as the WFS and the WSSD. Some PELUM CWG sat on important government policy formulating bodies. The general strategy was to work in close partnership with government on matters that are important to smallholder farmers.
4.3 Conclusion

The governance of PELUM is well defined in the constitution and in relevant policy documents. There is a clear separation of duties and this limit the potential for conflict. Noteworthy is the fact that as the network became more complex, the organisation responded by adding the necessary structures and systems. While most of the power lies with the BGM, the regional Board, the country Boards, members have a great deal of influence: first, because the people who make up the above structure are members and therefore represent members. The second reason is that it is members who elect representatives at all levels.

The role of PELUM in development is multi-layered and answers to the four NGO functions outlined by the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR), which are:

- **Providing services to communities**, through capacity building of its members and other NGOs, who then build the capacity of NGOs.
- **Developing education and advocacy**, through exposing members, research organizations, farmer groups and funding partners to development issues of a structural nature.
- **Catalysing people-to-people cooperation**, through the facilitation of exchange visits among farmers and the formation of ESAFF at local, national and international levels.
- **Interacting with government to influence policy and strategy**, through sitting on important international and government committees such as the CGAIR, Global Forum for Agricultural, SADC Smallscale Farmers Grant, and the International Steering Committee of the Civil Society during the WSSD.

Given that PELUM does all the above, the question might be, “What is the focus of PELUM?” In my view the answer is simple: PELUM operates in different countries facing different challenges and opportunities, which it is responsive to. Second and perhaps more important is the fact that PELUM member organisations tend to concentrate on the first mentioned function, CWGs tend to facilitate people to people cooperation and interact with their governments while the regional PELUM’s current thrust is around education and advocacy,
building the capacity of members and CWGs. PELUM’s size and diversity in membership allows it to tackle all four functions without losing focus.
CHAPTER 5: THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF PELUM

“What leaders really do is prepare organisations for change and help them cope as they struggle through it,” John, K. Kotter

One of the key driving forces behind the growth and development of PELUM was decentralization, which was identified as an issue in 1997 and embarked on since 1999. The then chairman of PELUM Association, Russel Mushanga said, “The biggest assignment for us all is to make our country working groups the powerhouses of PELUM Association (PELUM Bulletin, 1999).

The organisational development model that PELUM predominantly works with is the three-phases of organisational development: pioneer; differentiated; and integrated. This has been largely because our major facilitators in organisational development, Community Development Resources Association (CDRA), work with this model. Besides, I have found it to be relatively simple to share and apply.

5.1 Changes that took place in PELUM

In examining the growth and development of PELUM I have found it hard to locate the OD of PELUM in three phases in a manner that would also be easily accessible to others. This is primarily because PELUM members, CWGs, sub-regions and regional grew and developed at different rates and times. Even the nine CWGs developed differently. I therefore have found it simpler and more useful to look at the OD of PELUM by discussing some of the key changes that took place during the first and the last four years of PELUM’s life since 1995.

Table 5: Notable changes in the growth and development of PELUM

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<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>Service provision to members through capacity building workshops, networking, information sifting and dissemination was the primary goal set by the regional Board and implemented by the regional desk.</td>
<td>Advocacy dimension was added. The Seed Security, influencing agricultural research agenda, capacity building of CWGs and SFOs became key additional goals initially implemented at regional level and later at country level. Members through CWGs and the BGM were responsible for goal setting, with two major evaluations feeding into the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Centralized at regional level where the Board and the regional desk operated. Few and</td>
<td>Decentralized resulting in the greater inclusion of CWGs in the decision-making processes.</td>
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</table>
inactive members. Planning and decision-making were concentrated in the Regional Board and the BGM. Board, the coordinator and senior employees of the regional desk did planning. Period characterized with a mainly top-down approach with limited feedback from the members. RD and CDs and the sub-regional levels emerged as three major coordination sites. BGM and CWGs planned for the regional strategic and country activities respectively. Period characterized with improved communication and a more bottom-up and horizontal communication.

**Policies and Procedures**

| Personnel and Vehicle Policies | Gender, Advocacy and HIV/AIDS policies; the Networking, Fundraising and Learning Strategy Papers and Financial Manual were developed and adopted. Information and Communication Strategy Papers drafting was initiated. |

**Financial resources**

| PELUM RD initial budget was about US$200,000 with the funding base limited to those organisations with offices in Zimbabwe. Contractual period with funding partners averaged a year. All membership fees went towards the regional desk. A consultancy function at the RD was established. The first Fundraising and Relationship Building Trip to Europe was in 1997, which helped increase funding partners base. | PELUM RD annual budget reached $600,000 in 2002 and the donor base increased. Membership increased from about 80 to 150. Contractual period with funding partners increased to three years. Most of the membership fees (90%) went to CWGs. Donor Conference Fundraising and Relationship Building Trips conducted in 2001 and 2003. RD consultancy function dropped in favour of outsourcing expertise. |

**Human-social resources**

| People-orientation and largely informal leadership style typified by regular teambuilding sessions. Training Materials Development Manager, Information Manager, Administrator, Advisor and Co-ordinator staffed the RD. Relatively low levels of staff skills and knowledge, and the associated rewards as compared to other NGOs. The Board gave the coordinator considerable leeway and trust to implement the programme. There was heavy reliance on external consultants to facilitate processes in the Association. Employment was mainly on a permanent basis. | Result oriented and more formalized leadership style necessitated by the increased activities, budgets and staff. More systems and procedures put into place, thus reducing the warmth and informality of the earlier period. Two major evaluations of PELUM Association created some tensions since it resulted in non-renewal of some contracts Employment conditions changed from permanent to contractual basis. An Appraisal system introduced at the regional level contributed to improved performance and rewards. Gender balance at Board, Regional and consultancy levels became a topical issue. |

**Scope of programmes and activities**

| RD implemented most of the programmes: Needs-based learning for development workers; developing mechanisms for the implementation of a long-term curriculum; workshop facilitation for member organizations; training materials production and distribution; knowledge management; organisational development; networking and partnership development. | New programmes on the Documentation of Good Farmer Practice, Influencing the Agricultural Regional Research Agenda, Conducting Advocacy Training, Supporting the emergence of a farmers’ movement and incorporating cross-cutting issues of gender and HIV/AIDS were added to the existing portfolio. Ground Up Magazine was created. CWGs initiated their own programmes and activities. Regional workshops were replicated at country level, creating a multiplier effect. |

**External Interface**

| Data screening and collection largely done through publications, slides, CD-ROM and cassettes, physical visits, interviews and workshops. PELUM was influenced by developments in communities, member needs, like-minded organisations and donors. PELUM entered into a memorandum of understanding with CLADES, an older and capacity building organisation in Latin America. | The Internet became a key additional source of information resulting in less visits to members by the regional desk, fewer slide and publications were acquired. PELUM’s sphere of influence grew to include farmer groups, governments, research institutes, and international organisations. PELUM entered into formal relationships with more organisations including GRAIN, GRET, CPHP, NECOFA, INADES West Africa, ETC, ESAFF and CIAT. |
5.2 How and Why PELUM Evolved as a Network of Networks

This process was driven by three main factors: the increase in the number of member organisations from 25 to 160; the decision to decentralise; and the need to cut costs of travelling to workshops and meetings and there realisation that neighbours tended to have more in common with each other. The decision by PELUM to support small farmer groups and organisations also created an opportunity for PELUM members to network at another level. Structurally, the fact that there is SADC and the East African Community (EAC) also encouraged sub-regional networking, especially from an advocacy point of view.

Regional

The early years were characterised by the 25 founding members from eight countries meeting at regional level to discuss the formation of PELUM among other things. Initially, networking only happened at regional level. They shared their experiences directly, visiting one another. The first few workshops that were run by the regional desk in 1995 were to address the individual needs of member organisations. Courses were run for member organisations such as Fambidzanai Permaculture College and Berea Agricultural Group. Later regional networking was about CWGs networking among themselves, not member organisations, where sharing of experiences was not only meant to directly benefit the participating member organisations but done for the benefit of others. The others would benefit through reports or workshops that would be convened to share lessons.

National

Members in South Africa, Kenya and Zimbabwe were among the first to come together to define common activities. The regional desk played an important role from 1997 onwards to assist CWGs to develop plans and do activities together. The BGM of 1997 and then of 1999 inspired the process of decentralisation, which was the theme for the 2001 BGM. The energies were directed at making CWGs work so that more impact could be created on the ground. They developed common projects and implemented them together.

Sub-national

As countries implemented common projects, there was a strong feeling that members of the same sub-national area had more common issues to address and would benefit from working together. This was expected to costs. Another notable development was that meetings and
workshop venues were moved away from the capital cities to the rural areas where most PELUM member organisations operated. This created greater opportunity for members to visit and learn from each other. The sub-regions were also useful for running “echo” workshops of the regional workshops so that more people could be reached at lower costs.

**Sub-regional**

The sub-regional networking emerged when the cluster level networking was taking root. The primary idea was to share leadership in the change process and to complement one another since the member countries had different strengths. When decentralisation was being developed as a concept, the Board, at their November 2002 decided that having sub-regions would enhance the quality of decentralisation. The seed security and advocacy programmes ran three similar workshops of the three sub-regions. At that time, Kenya was already embarking on a sub-regional project that subsequently involved PELUM Tanzania and PELUM Uganda. It was decided that it would be far cheaper for participants in a sub-region to attend workshops running in that sub-region.

5.3 Sharing examples of how PELUM manages change

**Change Management Example 1: Campaign, advocacy and lobbying programme**

The preparation for incorporating campaigning, advocacy and lobbying in PELUM programmes started in 1997, when the BGM realised that the organisation’s efforts could be easily eroded by unsupportive legislation, polices and institutions. The Board began to educate itself about the notion of advocacy, with the assistance of well-established advocacy organizations such as MWENGO and the European Research Organisation (ERO). The 1999 BGM recommended activities that should be carried out at the regional level and the programme was established in 2000. The first workshop on Advocacy was held in 2000. It took two years to develop and finalise the advocacy policy. The process involved the SG, competent members and the Board, external resource people and the BGM.

**Change Management Example 2: The Seed Security Programme**

In 1997, PELUM conducted a survey to find out whether members would be interested in a seed security programme. The result was affirmative. A process to design a seed security programme was initiated. The first workshop, held in September 1998, drew on PELUM
members who were already working on the subject, Board members, and some of the best brains on the theme, notably Melaku Worede from Ethiopia, Pat Mooney from Canada and the Seed Savers Network of Australia. The second workshop that was attended by nine member organisations, including board representatives clarified and prioritised the vision, mission and objectives of the seed programme. It was decided that the seed programme would focus on capacity building and advocacy. The third planning workshop, held in September 1999 concentrated on designing a course for development workers. The regional desk and CWGs began implementing seed programmes in 2000, which included running sub-regional learning workshops in one year. An evaluation was carried out in 2001 and noted that the programme had created member awareness and stimulated them to act as the connection between seed and food security become clear. Seed saving, multiplication and sharing strategies had been implemented an. The evaluation then recommended that capacity building in seed security should be carried out at country level while the advocacy dimension was to fall under the new advocacy unit. This was accepted and implemented.

**Change Management Example 3: Establishing Ground Up Magazine**

The regional desk investigated the need for a regular PELUM publication among members, potential readers, distributors, potential contributors, advertisers and editors of similar publications in early 1998. The study was carried out in Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe and South Africa. A report on the possible themes, objectives, readership, article writers and quality of the magazine was produced. A one-week workshop that was attended by five experienced editors from The New Internationalist, The Baobab, Splash, the Horizon Magazine, Forestry, Trees and People Newsletter and Gender Review. Two regional desk staff members and two Board members also attended. It defined the focus and structure of the magazine and created a business plan. Ground Up was proposed as the name of the magazine. A Zero issue was produced with editorial assistance from a local journalist and an editor from ILEIA of The Netherlands. The Board approved the inaugural issue, set up an editorial committee and employed a full-time information and communication manager in 2000. Ground Up was produced quarterly up to 2002 when a review was carried out among readers, member, contributors, and magazine distributors in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Tanzania. Some of the recommendations were that the articles needed to be more grounded in development work and less academic; increasing the number of staff working on the magazine and providing an internet version of it. About 70 % of the magazine
copies had not been distributed and the idea of raising income from the sale of the magazine had failed. So the other recommendation was to distribute it free of charge. Another observation was that the cost of production had increased by over 60% in one year. It was recommended to find ways to cut these costs.

**Change management Example 4: PELUM College Zimbabwe (PCZ)**

Ten of the 25 PELUM founding members developed a curriculum framework to address the fragmented approach to development between 1991 and 1994. The PELUM members in Zimbabwe, coordinated by the regional desk developed a curriculum through a series of workshops held between 1995 and 1997. Outside expertise was sought wherever desirable. In 1996, the University of Zimbabwe and the Africa University as well as two universities and two government departments, the Zimbabwe College if Forestry and the Agricultural Extension training branch the NGOs and helped develop a national curriculum from the regional framework. This culminated in the agro-ecology and community development curriculum that had a good theoretical and practical base. The 15 organisations that took part in curriculum development then decided to implement it. PCZ was able to utilise the strengths of member organisations, drawing synergy from their diversity as they shared the implementation of the curriculum. In 1998, course implementation started with 20 students, mostly from the 15 organisations that took part in curriculum development. In 1999, the college was handed over to PELUM members in Zimbabwe, who employed a coordinator. The college was registered and the curriculum accredited with the Ministry of Higher Education in 2003. In 2001, the SG wrote a thesis on an evaluation of the course design and implemented and recommended that there was need for more coherence and consistence in course philosophy, design, learning methods, resource materials, and implementation of projects was students. In 2002, PCZ commissioned an evaluation, which among other things, highlighted the tensions between the urban and rural-based, the academic and practical oriented participating organisations.

**5.4 Conclusion**

From the above, we can conclude that PELUM manages change by combining the strengths the economic and organisational approaches described in chapter three. This way, members get the benefits for which they created and joined the Association, while at the same time building the capacity of the Association to perform its current and future tasks. It is also
evident that PELUM works with four strategies to manage and institutionalise change: gradualism, a process-oriented approach, creativities and innovation and teamwork.

PELUM manages change in a participatory and gradual manner as evidenced in policy development, setting up new projects and in establishing country desks. This allows for rigour, depth and collective growth and development. Once the objectives and strategies are clear PELUM moves swiftly with incredible intensity, robustness and focus. For example, in a mere four months PELUM mobilized 300 farmers and development facilitators from 19 countries to attend the Small Farmer Convergence. In June 2003, the Board chairperson and the SG went fundraising and visited 23 organisations in The Netherlands, Belgium, France, Italy and Germany, in just 10 days. When, in 2004, the regional office was relocated to Lusaka from Harare and some staff were lost, it took a month to find new staff, two months to open the offices and three weeks to develop a new plan for the remainder of the year.

Another important element of change management in PELUM is the recognition that change is a process, not a product. A process orientation to change in informed by action learning. It is also informed by the knowledge that development cannot happen overnight. The third strategy in bringing about change is informed by a continuous search for new and innovative ways of doing things. PELUM tackles problems and opportunities creatively.

PELUM uses teamwork to draw on the strengths of the members and staff to create a result that is greater than the sum of the individual contributions. The major driving forces behind all key PELUM changes were teams, for example the Gender and Advocacy policies, Evaluations and the Small Farmer Convergence Process. In most cases, the teams had to strike a balance between professionalism and representation, which considered gender, nationality, race and interests.

Some people have argued that PELUM should have started by building country level networking first before becoming regional. Others reckon that it would have been difficult to found a regional NGO network by building national networks first. It would also appear that the pioneer member organisations were motivated to form and join PELUM because it was a regional organisation. What PELUM found useful is that decentralisation works better when there is a strong, focused and central unit that can offer support and direction.
at various levels. The central unit is made up of the regional Board, the BGM and the regional desk.

Another important observation is that the extent to which the different sites of networking developed was different from place to place. The evolution was not neat, cut and dry but rather complex.

PELUM encountered challenges when some of its parts developed from the pioneer to the independent phase. It became too structured, undermining flow of information and flexibility. The 2003 PELUM Evaluation identified this issue, “There is a danger of putting too much emphasis on the ‘structural’, more visible aspects of the relationships. While they certainly matter, it is the unseen (or much more difficult to see) aspects wherein the potential really lies.” During this period, regional desk staff had limited contact with the member organizations because they were expected to work at CWG level. This distance starved the regional desk of the direct connection with beneficiaries. The decision of the Board to have new staff oriented right up to the farmer can be seen as a wise attempt at regaining this grip on development.

In connection with keeping in touch with the people, Zimbabwean poet, Chenjerai Hove writes,

“If you stay in comfort too long …
You will forget the cracked dusty lips
Of the woman in the valley
On her way to the headman who isn’t there.”
CHAPTER 6: HOW PELUM MANAGED INTERNAL TENSIONS

“As we reflect on the times we personally have descended into chaos, we can notice that as it ends, we emerge changed, stronger in some ways, new. We have helped in us the dance of creation,” Margaret Whitley

Tensions visit organisations and can be harnessed creatively and constructively, but they can also undermine the healthy functioning and growth of an organisation. Tension can serve as clues of what needs attention and change. As PELUM Association grew and developed, many tensions arose and the general approach to them was constructive. The nature of tension encountered can be described as:

- Structural;
- Procedural;
- Relational; and
- Organisational thrust and focus.

6.1 Structural tensions

Board Committees and the Secretary General

When Board committees were initially set up in 1998, the boundaries between their work and that of the SG were not clear. As a result, when the committees began operating and supporting programmes, there were tensions. In this scenario, it was left to the programme officers to decide on issues to take to the Board Committee and or the SG. The programme officers wanted to be noticed by the Board and while the SG wanted to be recognized as the head by programme officers. While the Board committees offered useful expert and moral support, sometimes they got too involved. It took about two years to achieve the complementary but different of the committees and the SG. Arguably, the SG was stuck in the bureaucratic phase of the organisation when the Board had graduated to the interdependent stage. The other source of the tension was between directing and facilitating; the committees advised, the SG coordinated and supervised. The key success factor in resolving the tension was the building of trust and confidence in each other, which came through open discussion of the concerns and good quality guidance from the committees.
**Programme officers and country desk coordinators**

The emergence of country desk officers meant that where regional desk programme officers had dealt directly with member organizations (through the country representative), they had to work through the country desk coordinators. This tension manifested itself around the running of learning and networking workshops. The limited involvement of the country desk officers in the design of regional workshops and lack of budgetary control triggered tension. The regional desk controlled the budget since it was the one accountable to donors. This tension was resolved by increased and active involvement of the CDCs in determining, planning and monitoring of the workshops. The perception that the regional desk was relatively well resourced compared to CWGs fuelled the tension. Sharing financial reports and linking CDCs with donors partially resolved this. Power relations between RD programme officers and CDCs caused tension. Two meetings that brought together the two key actors tackled these issues. There were three main problems: the relations are not defined up to now, the RD programme officers felt they were above CDCs and there was limited communication among each other at an informal level. The attachment and orientation of new RD programme officers to CWGs, where they were hosted by CDCs helped develop a better basis for a healthy and warm relationship between them.

**Universities and community based organisations**

The process of developing and implementing the agro-ecology and community development curriculum in Zimbabwe brought universities and NGOs to work together. Universities valued theory, scientific rigour and individual excellence while NGOs valued course relevance to community needs on the ground. As course implementation progressed, the more academically inclined and urban-based organisations and universities took a leading role (assessment of students and their projects, finding time to attend meetings held in the urban areas etc) and this resulted in some NGOs expressing
fear that an NGO project was being hijacked. The matter was partially resolved by holding some of the meetings and workshops in areas where the rural NGOs were operating. er, brought tensions in the approach to curriculum implementation. The key tension of values was resolved by making a concerted effort to try and benefit from both through more thoughtful implementation of the curriculum.

Individual excellence  

Community relevance

6.2 Policies and procedures

The regional constitution is above the country constitutions. The regional Board has the responsibility to approve country constitutions to ensure that they are in line with the vision, mission and culture of the organisation. While this has worked well for most countries, one CWG included in their constitution a clause that said that they were not bound by the regional constitution. The regional Board rejected the constitution and assigned the Board member from that country to go and seek clarity on that matter. It took about two years to get the understanding that the member organizations in that country were not sure how that clause found its way into their constitution. However, the matter still remains to be resolved. The centre of tension was around autonomy, the degree of independence of the different parts of the network in relation to the bigger network. In my view, the current relationship between the regional and country constitutions should be maintained for coherence and consistence.

Autonomy  

Interdependence

6.3 Relationship with others

**PELUM and the CGIAR**

The SG was selected onto the NGO Committee of the Consultative Group of International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) with approval of the Board. There were subsequent concerns about whether PELUM was not going to be co-opted by an establishment known for promoting high external input agriculture. The same sentiments were expressed when PELUM, through the regional Board, entered into a memorandum of understanding with CIAT. This was a tension between “reformers” (those who believed in authentic
engagement) and “revolutionaries”, (those who believed that the CGIAR system would not change and therefore should not be engaged at all). The majority of Board members appear to favour working with other development agents that share its goals and aspirations and have a history of achievement. In this case, CIAT has a demonstrated interest and capacity to do people-centred research.

Fear of cooption \[\triangle\] Hope for authentic engagement

**PELUM and donors**

PELUM gets funds from donors. This potentially creates a “parent-child” relationship where an “adult-adult” relationship is preferred and often articulated. For example, although PELUM had gender as one of its values right from the inception of PELUM, it received subtle pressure to develop an explicit policy. In my view, this resulted in constructive tension because when the policy was developed, it was informed by contextual realities in PELUM’s operational environment. However, there was another kind of tension with donors was rather disruptive. It revolved around recruitment and placement of development advisors workers through a funding partner, who supported the budget of the same advisors. PELUM was not involved in the actual recruitment and selection. The conditions of service were changed without adequate consultation with PELUM, raising questions of equity between those from the north and those from the south and undermining teamwork. An inherent tension in such situations relates to loyalty. If one is assigned to work for an NGO but selected and paid by another organization, one’s loyalty is more likely to be with the sponsor. The other problem was that the SG insisted that the advisors should directly implement, not only advise. While this helped increase capacity, it was not provided for in the terms of reference. Three meetings were held with the funding partner to try and find a happy compromise. This tension has not been fully resolved. My opinion is that it is unwise for NGOs to have their donors giving them advisors for reasons outlined in this paragraph. Advisors should be sought from elsewhere and the NGO should participate in choosing them.

Dependence \[\triangle\] Equal partnership
6.4 Organisational thrust and focus

The bigger and the smaller member organisations
Most of the big and older member organizations joined the network in order to share learning with others and to create a critical mass to engage in advocacy. The newer and smaller members on the other hand joined to improve their capacity to support participatory ecological land use management on the ground. So when PELUM attempted to become a primarily advocacy organization there was an outcry from those who joined for capacity building. The potential tension had been anticipated as indicated by the 1997 BGM statement that the difference between a service organization and an advocacy organization was that the former “was about addressing a diversity of needs, “a facilitative, learning, nurturing, empowerment, tolerant” stance” while the later, “would demand resolution of differences, presentation of a consistent position to the outside world, being, “articulate, assertive, judging, pushy”. This tension arose not only from these different needs but also from the different stages of organizational maturity between the two groups. The resolution at the 2003 BGM was that PELUM would be both an Advocacy and a Capacity Building organization.

Service provisions - Advocacy

On what the PELUM Magazine ought to publish
The Board and members wanted the magazine to publish material on best practice in participatory ecological land use management. However, most members did not contribute the articles, as initially discussed and agreed. So journalists and academics tended to contribute most of the articles. PELUM tried to address this gap by holding three two-week workshops to train development workers to write articles but the level of contributions form members and development facilitators remained below 50 %. I think there are two major problems: development facilitators are often busy doing development and writing is often not a priority. The other is that most of the stories are sent via the e-mail and many development facilitators have no access to such facilities. A solution would be for members to incorporate documentation of their best practice in their work plans so that these can be shared any time as recommended by the PELUM 2001 BGM. The other solution, which was proposed by the information and communication committee is to use workshops to write and edit articles by development facilitators.
Stories of others  

Sharing development stories

**Capacity building or advocacy?**
The CWGs working with governments that were more open to criticism from civil society pushed for PELUM to openly declare itself as an advocacy organization, even at country level. Those operating in more restrictive environments preferred the exclusion of any such terminology. In the end CWGs were left to decide on what was most suitable for them. At the 2003 BGM, 40 members present decided that the identity of PELUM would be both capacity building and advocacy. Essentially, the demands of both types of environments were accommodated. A related tension was that whereas in capacity building the members are less active and derive benefits from learning from others, in advocacy, they have to take a more active role in defining what must be done and in bringing it to fruition. The level of commitment in the later is far higher and the amount of interaction, more. The 2003 PELUM Evaluation report notes, “What tends to happen in capacity-building networks is that members remain passive recipients of the services offered… An advocacy network requires members that are very active participants in the network.” I believe that as a network with some 160, and still growing, PELUM should work towards becoming a serious advocacy organisation. In any case, one of the PELUM values is to fight against exploitative policies and practices.

Caution  

Boldness

**Time to do and time to reflect**
Most of the plans of PELUM are ambitious, some of them to the point of not being possible. This has been good in that it stretched PELUM to perform. However, the downside is that it often forced staff at regional and country levels to mainly focus on doing the activities leaving little time for deep reflection and monitoring. Reviews, Board meetings and BGMs accommodated regular reflection but this was inadequate for effective programme monitoring and evaluation.
Acting

Balancing time spent building the organization and on relating with others

As PELUM grew in size and reputation, it got invited to participate and contribute to many fora. During 1999 and 2000, the SG spent a considerable amount of time contributing to World Food Summit, CGIAR, Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR) processes on the documentation of good farmer practice through GRAIN and Promotion of Local Innovation (PROLINNOVA) among others. The SG also sat on a good number of regional bodies and visited CWGs to facilitate strategic plans. As a result there was tension within the SG himself who had to perform other equally important and perhaps even more strategic regional functions. The core question was whether it was the Board or the SG who had the legitimacy to represent PELUM. A related tension was about the perceived excess exposure and limelight being received by the SG in the process. In this connection, the 2003 Evaluation report quipped, “Regional PELUM needs to take a step back out of the limelight and operate more from the shadows, doing everything it can to facilitate the country PELUMs coming more into the limelight.” In 2001, the matter was resolved by sharing this role among the Board, the SG, member organisations and programme staff, depending on the issues. This released more time for the SG and programme officers to concentration on strengthening the network.

Ownership

Consolidation and expansion

There was a constant search for a balance between increasing the number of members and keeping them at a level that would allow the network to support itself effectively, given limited financial and institutional capacity. The key strategy was to allow a gradual growth in membership. Generally there was no aggressive marketing of PELUM to recruit new members. This worked very well as the numbers increased steadily almost in direct relationship to the growing capacity of PELUM. However, PELUM strongly promoted itself in Malawi and Rwanda. There were also instances when PELUM denied membership requests from Ethiopia, Ghana, Somalia, Sudan and Ghana since it had made a decision
to operate in east and southern Africa only. The other part of the response was that PELUM would assist these countries in the formation of similar networks that could then work with it. Up to now, this has not been actively pursued. My opinion is that PELUM should reconsider its position in the next five years or so. There may be merit in expansion.

Consolidation       Expansion

Mentoring, supervising, advising, serving letting go
In 1998, the current SG took office in a phased process. During the first eight months, he was the Counterpart Coordinator, and assumed the coordinator role fully in September. Looking back now, I notice that there were four main phases to the handover process. During the first three months or so, the former coordinator was fully in charge, showing the ropes to his counterpart. During the next three month, some of the functions were passed on to me and I did not mind my mentor taking decisions on the running of the regional office. He supervised me on how effectively I took on the new tasks. It was a period of shared responsibility even though my predecessor was still in charge. In the third quarter, I began to take the leading role and my predecessor gave me unsolicited advice. I listened to him and adopted most of it. During this period, I was careful not to introduce anything new partly because I was not confident enough and because I did not want to step on my mentor’s toes. In the last quarter, I began to define the areas in which I needed support from him and approached him. He became a servant leader. Finally, when he left, we still maintained informal contact and I occasionally sought his opinion on a number of issues. The areas of potential tension existed between one phase and the next. We managed to pre-empt the tension by communication regularly but more importantly because there was profuse trust in each other. Figure 5 below tries to capture the process.
Potential areas of tension exist between phases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1: Mentoring</th>
<th>Phase 2: Supervising</th>
<th>Phase 3: Advising</th>
<th>Phase 4: Accompanying</th>
<th>Phase 5: Letting go</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old leader mentors and retains control</td>
<td>Old leader hands over some functions and responsibilities</td>
<td>Old leader lets go of more functions and responsibilities, focuses on advising</td>
<td>Old leader responds to requests from new leader</td>
<td>Old leader leaves the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New leader learns and follows</td>
<td>New leader exercises limited leadership under observation</td>
<td>New leader gains more authority and takes some over responsibilities</td>
<td>New leader becomes the initiator of dialogue and directs the nature of support</td>
<td>New leader gets in charge and is comfortable to initiate new changes. Occasionally seeks former mentor’s support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5: Degree of responsibility, power and control over time during a handover process**

### 6.5 Conclusion

I think that tension provides the creative force that drive organisations forward. In order to use tensions creatively, organisations should anticipate tensions or actively seek them out. The earlier tensions are identified, the less damage they may cause. It would appear that a culture of talking to each other transparently and honestly makes the identification and management of tensions easier and more constructive. In some cases, the manifested tensions may not be the real issue but mere symptoms of deeper challenges and care ought to be taken to identify the root cause in order to address it. From experiences and managing the tensions in PELUM, I learnt that good intentions are not good enough, good work is not good enough to create harmony in an organisation. People must talk to each other to trust each other, because many tensions arise from perceptions, which need to be managed through communication. Lack of communication breeds unnecessary suspicion and trust. In my experience with PELUM, one of the key sources of tension was around,
who had the power to decide and act, was that power legitimate and was it being used properly.
CHAPTER 7: PELUM AS A LEARNING ORGANISATION

In chapter three we discussed learning organisations and concluded that they manifest the following features: a vision developed, shared and owned by the people, recognition and valuing of each other, strive for continuous improvement and excellence, use of mistakes to learn, a balance between action, reflection, planning and learning, trust, transparency and regular information sharing. Although PELUM cannot claim to have all these qualities, it has a way of doing business is very much consistent with how learning organisations operate.

PELUM considers learning as a continuous, conscious and deliberate process. It defines what to learn about, creates and finds time to reflect and crystalise insights, which it then applies in what it does. Beyond this, PELUM deliberately learns from others and shares its own lessons with them.

7.1 Strategies employed
PELUM employs the following learning strategies:

- Reviews, reflections and evaluations of and within PELUM,
- Learning from successes and mistakes;
- Identifying and learning from “mentor” organisations;
- Forming partnerships;
- Documenting and sharing PELUM lessons with others; and
- Supporting others to learn and develop.

7.2 Selected Examples of Learning in PELUM
The examples discussed below come from many experiences of collective reflections. The examples illustrate how the five above-mentioned strategies were implemented.

Learning from Reflection: The PELUM Evaluation of 2003
PELUM carries out periodic reflections involving its membership to learn lessons and transform itself to become more relevant and effective in realising its mission. One of the key participatory forms of reflection in PELUM are formative evaluations that involve at least one third of the membership in the process. The Board plans evaluations with input from members. The evaluation reports are discussed and adopted by the Board
and the BGM before they are incorporated into the organisation’s strategic and annual plans. This gives adequate time to digest recommendations and proposals. At country level, reflections are carried out at least yearly during annual planning and review. Board meetings are another important site of reflection. It is from these reflections that PELUM developed several policies and procedures that enhance learning within the organisation.

Learning from mistakes
It is inevitable that in trying out new ways of doing development, some mistakes will be made. These mistakes can be valuable if they become a source of learning. Perhaps one of the most empowering strategies in PELUM is to learn from mistakes. For example, in 2002 the Task Force for the Small Farmer Convergence met and agreed to a set of activities that would be carried out. Since the time was limited, it did not work out the budget details well and gave a budget estimate of US$50,000,000 which was quite high given that the average annual budget of PELUM was a mere 1% of this. When this figure was sent to donors, it shocked them and resulted in them questioning the real agenda of PELUM. The Board then advised the SG to apologise to all funding partners who had received the proposal. It proceeded to make strategic changes within the Task Force and shifted the coordination function to the SG. The SFC went ahead and was one of the major successes of PELUM.

Learning from and with others
A learning organisation learns not only from itself but also from around itself. It is unnecessary to reinvent the wheel. As noted in earlier chapters, PELUM worked with other organisations that were older and wiser in particular areas. These organisations mentored PELUM in different ways. There were also other organisations that coached it, presenting it with challenges and questions to which it had to respond. This is amply illustrated in the making of the Advocacy and Gender Policies as well as in the magazine production. In addition to these examples, PLEUM also benefited from consultants who had wide experience in their field of work facilitated PELUM workshops. FAKT of Germany assisted with participatory monitoring skills, Community Resources Network Association taught us action learning and organisational development, the Rhodes University provided a conceptual framework for the analysis and refinement of the agro-ecology and community development curriculum. We learnt more about
documentation of good practice from Honey Bee, INADES Formation and the IIRR. Biotechnology Trust of Zimbabwe was instrumental in the seed programme, providing most of the training.

**Partnerships**

PELUM partnered with other organisations to learn from them well as to strengthen one another. For example, in the area of HIV/AIDS and development partnered with ETC of The Netherlands to gain their international perspective and experience. In the documentation of good practice, it took part in the GRAIN global process where it contributed a slightly different method of documenting and shared this with people from other continents. PELUM contributed to the development of a new international programme called Promotion of Local Innovations (PROLINNOVA), which involved tremendous input from mostly European based organisations, especially ETC. Regionally, PELUM partnered with VECO-Zimbabwe and Crop Post Harvest Programme, Southern Africa to write a field guide on the wise use of participatory tools. PELUM also entered into partnership with CIAT, an international research institute in order to help farmers access the good science that may be there as well as for farmers to influence the research agenda of the institute. Towards the end of 2003, PELUM went into partnership with GRET of France that has experience in working with small farmer groups and organisations in Africa and beyond.

**Documenting and sharing lessons with others**

PELUM has done well in writing about itself through newsletters, briefs, reports for its meetings and evaluations. Successful lesson sharing starts with documentation and storage of information on the organisation and what it does. At the 2001 PELUM BGM, member organisations undertook to write about their best practice. This commitment forms the backbone of sharing for growth and development. In 2000, PELUM coordinated the documentation of 20 cases of good farmer practice in east and southern Africa. Development workers and innovative farmers carried out the documentation. The idea was to scale out good practice to other countries and regions. The documentation process involved developing a framework for documentation, identifying and documenting good farmer practice, validation of reports by the innovative farmers, presentation and processing of the cases documented at a regional workshop. Farmer innovators, policy makers from the region and the development
workers who had co-documented the cases attended the workshop. A video and three booklets were produced and circulated among the members. Analysis of innovations that were documented revealed some interesting patterns. Generally, the need for innovations arose from difficult circumstances such as the corridor disease that wiped out draught power in Zambia, the hiking of fertilizer prices in Malawi, putting them out of the reach of the ordinary people, the smothering of soils through siltation in the rivers of Tanzania. Another noteworthy pattern was that success stimulated further experimentation and improvement.

**Supporting others to learn and develop**

PELUM also helps other organizations from its experiences. Perhaps PELUM’s most profound contribution in this aspect has been facilitating the formation of ESAFF, a farmer network in east and southern Africa. It further assisted the farmer leaders to define critical issues, to learn about organizational development, leadership and networking. PELUM linked ESAFF leadership with other farmer organizations to facilitate horizontal learning. It invited more seasoned farmer groups such as Via Campesina and ROPPA to shared their experiences in setting up and running farmer organisations. In order to emphasize the importance of building a solid national farmer group ahead of a regional one, PELUM also invited MVIWATA of Tanzania to share its lessons and experiences with ESAFF in 2003. PELUM hosted the Sustainable Land Use Forum, an emerging network from Ethiopia and Eritrea for a week, sharing ideas on how to start and run a development network. It later hosted Caritas Angola for a similar period, sharing on the same subject. PELUM Tanzania and PELUM Kenya shared their organizational development experiences with interested development organizations in Rwanda. This culminated in the formation of PELUM Rwanda. The PELUM experiences of participatory curriculum development and implementation have been widely shared through environmental education seminars hosted by the SADC Environmental Education Centre in Howick, South Africa. PCZ work has been cited in some academic papers.

7.3 Conclusion

We have noted earlier that regular information sharing is critical for a learning organisation. In my view, PELUM as a learning organisation faced the challenge of inadequate horizontal communication, sharing and networking among member...
organizations and among country working groups. From this nature of interaction there was tremendous potential for learning and cross-pollination of ideas and experiences. In any case, that was part of the reason for setting up PELUM as a regional organisation. This was less of a limitation within countries because members met regularly. The other related challenge was that culture of mentoring each other was not established. I suggest that in future, PELUM should design an internal mentoring strategy that would make those who are more advanced in one field, support those who are behind. These would intensify learning and growth.

The second challenge relates to continuous and systematic impact monitoring. Some systems have been developed at regional level and shared with CWGs but they have not been used enough. The impact has to be largely measured on the ground where members operate. PELUM therefore needs to find a more creative way to engage members to monitor the impact of their work and to share these with others. The several workshops and publications so far held and shared with the membership have not produced desired results. Follow up of workshop alumni by CDCs has not succeeded either, partly because of limited financial provisions.

In short, much more learning can happen within PELUM.
CHAPTER 8: LESSONS FROM PELUM ASSOCIATION

8.1 The kind of lessons

This chapter attempts to crystallise and highlight the lessons that PELUM has learnt over the years. It also serves as a summary and conclusion to this book. I have drawn the lessons from the preceding chapters. Most of the lessons are insights generated from reflections in PELUM. They have not really been articulated in this form anywhere but they are often implied and understood. My task in this book has been to try and make them more conscious, explicit and visible. They, however, exist in as tacit knowledge within PELUM. Rather than look at all possible lessons from what has been discussed in this book, I concentrate on a few key ones.

8.2 Lessons for networks

*Members of a network should develop an identity before employing a secretariat*

In a network, if a secretariat is prematurely established before the members are clear about who they want to be and how, when their identity and purpose are not clear, it is likely to be left with excessive responsibility and burden. Furthermore, the members’ ability to contribute to their network gets undermined. This results in limited member understanding, commitment and ownership of the network.

This experience was drawn from PELUM South Africa, which employed a CDC in 1997 ahead of common projects and necessary strategic planning. She noted in one of her writings, “The PELUM South Africa may have come a lot quicker if the country working group had defined their own objectives and the coordinator’s role in achieving them prior to employing one,” (PELUM Bulletin, 1998). Without clear direction, the CDC struggled to put together programmes and unnecessary responsibility was left on her to hold members and the CWG together. What has been found strategic and effective instead has been having the country representative playing the role of the pioneer in the CWG mobilising members and ideas and building the initial foundation for networking. Another important dimension is to get members’ commitment and to establish needs-driven common projects that draw on their strengths before a secretariat is formed. Figure 4 below shows what has tended to work in PELUM.
**Networks should develop and implement common programmes**

Networks should be created around a purpose, which should be collectively constructed by the membership. Common projects tend to bind members together by drawing on their combined strengths and addressing the associated gaps and interests. There are elements of giving and getting to create mutual benefit. A network will sustain itself if the members see that it adds value to their individual efforts. Common projects tap into the energies, strengths and passion of the organisations and people involved, creating synergies that produce results which none of the members alone would have been able to accomplish. On the other hand, if there are no common projects, sharing becomes limited, and so do benefits. The network will collapse from inaction and lack of relevance, as was the case with PELUM Malawi and PELUM Botswana. The Nakasongola Food Security Programme in Uganda, tapped into the combined strengths of members there and provided a good basis for active and constructive networking. The PELUM College Zimbabwe which is made up of NGOs, government and academic institutes and which implements the agro-ecology and community development programme thrives because there are common activities that were co-constructed by those involved.

**Networks should avoid competing with their members**
The thematic and geographical focus and activities of a network ought to be separate and distinct from those of its members. If there is an overlap, destructive tension is likely to arise because the network then competes with its members for space, resources, power and influence, the limelight, and for an audience. On one hand, it is important to have clear boundaries and on the other, a certain amount of trust needs to be built between the members and the network. Whenever boundaries are crossed, often unintentionally, the tension should be resolved amicably. The perception that the regional desk was taking much of the limelight, influence over national processes and competing for funds with PELUM Zimbabwe created tensions that caused problems for the later. This was partially responsible for the relocation of the regional desk to Zambia in mid-2004. Having benefited from the regional desk experiences in Zimbabwe, The Board tasked PELUM Zambia and the regional office to draw up a memorandum of understanding to avoid a repeat of the problem. PELUM Botswana did not take off mainly because the coordinating member organisation was also the national coordinator of another network that had similar interests due to a serious conflict of interest and loyalty. The situation was further worsened by unproductive competition for space, power and control.

**Networks should strive to meet the diverse needs of their members**
People and organisations that come into networks bring different energies, strengths and demands. While some members may be more assertive and articulate, it is important for the network to try and address the interests of all groups of members (member organisations, members countries and sub-regions) fairly. The Board has a key role in ensuring that this kind of justice prevails. The different legitimate motivations for joining the organisations should receive attention. For example, in PELUM those interested in capacity building wanted their capacity built while those interested in advocacy wanted room and support to express their positions. At any given time there will be new members and old ones and both groups will need to be treated fairly.

In PELUM, the smaller and often younger member organisations tend to prefer to be trained in non-advocacy areas while the bigger ones are more interested in bringing about policy and institutional changes. Agriculture-based NGOs form the majority of the PELUM membership while those who work in the natural resources sector such as Botswana members are in the minority. There have been complaints from natural resources oriented member organisations that PELUM projects a predominantly
agricultural image. The different needs of the 2 types of member organisations have been debated and addressed during planning at both country and regional levels. There are also two main instruments that have been used to establish the needs: Group discussion, reflection meetings and needs assessments have been instrumental in defining the priorities of the different categories of partners. PELUM internal and external evaluations have been useful in assessing effectiveness of the organisation in meeting the diverse needs of the members and in providing recommendations to address identified gaps and enhance impact. Membership has grown in countries where all the members have actively participated in the programmes and also benefited from the networking as evident in Uganda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

**If a network starts at a regional level, decentralisation needs to follow**

The ultimate aim of a network, whether regional or global is to make a difference on the ground. The network should be structured and operate in such a way that it positively impacts on the members at all levels. So a regional network such as PELUM should establish functional lower level networks in order to ensure that the benefits are enjoyed at the various levels. In PELUM’s case this has involved decentralising plans and activities to sub-regions and CWGs. At country level PELUM also found it prudent to further decentralise to clusters that bring together members working in a particular geographical area. PELUM Tanzania and PELUM Zimbabwe have been at the forefront of establishing clusters of networks. At local level member organisations have started networking with local farmer groups to support farmers to speak for themselves. This development arose because NGOs who are members of PELUM realised that it was not sustainable to continue speaking on behalf of farmers but that they should build the capacity of farmer groups to advocate, lobby and campaign for themselves. All these layers of networking create a pathway for the movement of energy, support, experiences and lessons from one site to another. PELUM has also learnt that decentralisation should be paced according to the different needs and capacities of the diverse CWGs and members. The kind of support that PELUM Rwanda (a new CWG) needs is quite different from that which PELUM Kenya needs (an old CWG). Decentralisation does not mean destroying the “centre” but it involves a shift in focus, roles and responsibilities from the “traditional centre” to other “new centres”. The “old centre” is used to strengthen the “new centres” and it needs to be strong enough to support them.
**Tensions in networks are necessary and potentially useful**

Chapter 6 in this book is devoted to discussing some of the tensions that accompanied the development of PELUM. The first point perhaps is that tensions in networks are inevitable because of the diverse interests, needs and aspirations of members and stakeholders. The second point is that they help direct a network’s energies towards areas needing attention, which are usually areas of potential growth and development. Thirdly organisations can grow faster and more effectively through good management of tensions. One of the key roles of the leaders of networks is to identify and manage tensions in a constructive manner. Tensions are more likely to emerge in networks because they are made up of different organisations and individuals who may have a common goal but diverse specific interests. The tensions can create energy that can be tapped into to construct more powerful solutions. Some level of balance has to be struck between and among different stakeholders, strategies and timeframes. The short-term and the long-term interests need to be balanced so do the interests of the more powerful and the less.

**Expansion of a network needs to be managed**

There is always the temptation for a network to judge its success by the size of membership. This can lead to rapid expansion, which then puts too much demand on the systems, staff and resources of the network, resulting in compromised services. It resisted this temptation by developing criteria about who may join, from which countries and by not actively marketing itself. PELUM defined its geographical boundaries and observed them in the face of fierce pressure to exceed them. NGOs from countries such as Ethiopia, The Sudan, Ghana, Eritrea and Somalia could not be admitted into PELUM because they fell outside the constituency that it had decided to work with. PELUM also waited for new member organisations to approach it based on its reputation. It was more concerned with efficiency and effectiveness of the network not with numbers alone. This approach has allowed PELUM to build a solid foundation for networking. Consequently the number of members grew steadily at a pace that allowed the human and material resources to match the needs of the network. Thus one learns that it is important to manage the expansion of a network so that it retains its capacity to hold itself together and carry out activities that add value. Otherwise unbridled expansion overloads the system and may lead to collapse and not growth. The idea of
managing expansion goes together with deliberate gradualism, a concept PELUM has applied to enhance learning from itself through regular reflection, reviewing and action. A related clarity that emerged was that PELUM should be more interested the adoption of what it stands for by more people, organisations and governments as opposed to its expansion as an organisation. So outside its geographical area, PELUM supports the setting up of similar networks. It has shared its experiences with the Sustainable Land Use Forum of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

**Staff of a network needs to understand and serve the membership**

During the period 1999 and 2004 there was a relatively high staff turnover at the regional desk. Most of the pioneers left the organisation while new staff joined. Some left because they felt that they had done their bit and had to move on. Others left for greener pastures. However, there were some who left because they failed to comprehend PELUM and their respective roles in it. As a corrective measure the Board then decided, at its April 2004 meeting to improve on the induction and orientation of all new and senior members of staff. They were to spend the first few months of their employment with PELUM, visiting member organisations, ESAFF and CWGs. At the time of writing this book, only one member of staff had gone through this induction and the relationship building with CWGs appeared to be going on well. This experience enhanced his appreciation of the members and their issues, together with the issues of smallholder farmers. The main point here is to ground staff in the realities of the membership and farmer groups they serve during the orientation phase.

### 8.3 Lessons for NGOs

**Use your cause to find money not the reverse**

During the four years of the planning of PELUM, there was considerable thought put into its identity and purpose. When the members were clear about it, they launched PELUM. Even though they continued to read the dynamic environment and to respond to it appropriately, they stuck to what they believed they could do well, to their niche in development. PELUM avoided falling into the trap of being drawn towards those areas where donor money was plentiful. It tried to convince donors to support its cause. The use of values and principles helped PELUM achieve this level of integrity. But occasionally it meant starving, going without a salary for a month or two. In short, while
the temptation to be pulled towards resources is great, it appears prudent to start with the cause and then look for resources. This is what PELUM did and I believe that this has helped it to achieve the stability and respect it currently enjoys. Many of the organisations that were formed by donors without adequate research into their needs have collapsed. Similarly most of those that were formed solely because there were funds and not a cause have also collapsed.

Financial sustainability is impossible for development NGOs

Financial sustainability is not feasible for NGOs doing development work because they normally provide a free service to poor people who cannot afford to buy it. NGOs have to largely depend on funds from donors and national governments. What is essential and feasible is to achieve a certain degree of financial predictability that allows for strategic planning. NGOs should strive to achieve a broad base of funding partners so as to reduce monopoly and undue influence by one funding partner. PELUM established a consultancy unit to try and improve on its financial sustainability. However, it only managed to raise 5% of its budget. This was partly because consultancy was not its core business. Besides, as a community development organisation, there were questions about where the loyalty of staff would go, to consultancy or to members. In the end, the role of the regional desk in consultancy was changed so that they would link up members to consultancies and charge “brokering fees”. So far, this has not worked well. A related lesson is that one of the most effective ways of fundraising is to produce and publicise good quality work as well as accountability to both the donors and members. It is not good enough to do great work. The work has to be articulated and the use of the funds has to be sufficiently explained. This then helps the funding partner to explain to its donors how the funds were utilised and the changes they have brought about.

Good and great work is the major fundraising tool

Although in the initial stages and in the short term it is the quality of planning and proposal writing that matters most, in the long run, it is the quality of the work an organisation produces that keeps donors interested. Good planning and quality work exude integrity because the former is a promise while the later is the excellent performance. Great work is about keeping and honouring a promise. PELUM was forced to overspent during the successful Small Farmer Convergence Process that it
facilitated because more farmers than initially planned for turned up and some of the pledges were not honoured. However, funding partners covered the deficit since PELUM had done a good job. Most of the member organisations that PELUM has recommended to donors received the funding. However, some of these organizations lost the funding quickly because donors considered their work as not good value for money.

**It helps to identify and work with model and mentor organisations**

PELUM sought out and found model organisations to play a mentoring role in order to quicken the pace of its growth and development. This helped it to evolve with fewer mistakes. Other organisations may find this approach both efficient and effective. What was especially useful was to find an appropriate model organisation(s) in various areas including organisational development, learning and networking, documentation, advocacy and supporting small farmer organisations. For example, CDRA mentored PELUM in organisational development. ITDG, GRAIN, RAFI, and BTZ assisted in seed security. Advocacy and lobbying support was mainly drawn from MWENGO, ERO and FAKT. PELUM benefited from many organizations including the Natural Farming Network (NFN) and the Africa Centre for Holistic Management in Zimbabwe, Folk Schools in Denmark, the Open University in the UK and CLADES of Latin America in the design and implementation of the Agro-ecology and Community Development curriculum. PELUM’s learning strategy it of proactively looking for organisations that were excelling in specific fields of interest, and enlisting their support proved very successful.

Sometimes PELUM studied how other organizations successfully managed their programmes and incorporated the relevant factors/components into its activities. As a result, it benefited from the wisdom of those well experienced in working in the development sector. Having profited from others, PELUM is happy to play a mentoring role to others. I also learnt that funding partners are useful mentors on various levels. HIVOS was particularly good at critiquing our annual work plans and seeking clarity on aspects such as the purpose, indicators and the capacity to effectively implement the designed activities. Bread for the World was useful in linking us to other resource organisations such as FAKT and Vandana Shiva while FOS-Belgium linked us up with ERO. VECO exposed us to international thinking on advocacy, knowledge management.
and partnerships. NOVIB challenged us in the area of gender. Many of our funding partners gained a lot of useful experience over the years and are well exposed to the current international development thinking and most of them are willing to share their lessons. The problem with getting advice from them is usually associated with the “vertical” relationship that exists between them and NGOs. In order to bridge this gap, it is important for funding partner and recipient NGO to have a good understanding of the operational framework and their respective roles and responsibilities in development.

**Developmental partnerships enhance capacity and impact**

PELUM has established partnerships with other development organisations in Africa and beyond. It partnered with GRAIN, CPHP, NECOFA, APM, INADES West Africa, and more recently with GRET and CIAT. PELUM found out that by going into partnership with INADES West Africa and APM, it was able to bring together far more farmers from various countries that it would not have been able to do on its own. It also discovered that by going into partnership with NECOFA South Africa, it was able to avoid logistical headaches ahead of the Small Farmer Convergence. This enabled it to concentrate on the things at which it was most effective which further reduced the human and financial resource needs. PELUM also increased its capacity by partnering with CPHP and VECO on the writing of a field guide: *Beyond Participatory Tools*, drawing on their experiences and skills, complementing its own. Partnership with GRAIN in the documentation of cases of effective biodiversity management resulted in PELUM knowing about how other developing NGOs had helped farmers to document their own successes. Consequently, the PELUM regional desk worked with 15 farmers to document their successes in organic farming and marketing in Zimbabwe.

**NGO roles tend to shift over time and place**

The traditional capacity building role of NGOs may become less relevant as farmers mobilize and organise themselves to tackle unfavourable policy issues that undermine and erode their achievements. This means that NGOs may need to evolve new ways of relating with farmers that usually leads to a shift/changes in power relations with the later just becoming part of a local network of civil society organizations. According to the 2003 PELUM Evaluation report, it can be difficult for NGOs that have been giving technical support to shift into a more proactive advocacy role. These challenges are also highlighted in Tanzania’s experiences (Box 5).
Box 5: PELUM Tanzania: The changing role of support organizations

- Facilitating and supporting the emergence and development of farmer organizations is an art: “the art of metamorphosis” as described by two development workers reflecting on their 10 years experience in working with Uluguru Mountains Agricultural Development Programme (UMADEP), a support organisation that is also a member of PELUM Tanzania. Their experiences demonstrate the four main stages of strengthening of farmer organizations. The support organisation: Facilitates the formation of local farmer groups, usually at village and ward levels. It is central and links these farmer organizations;
- Moves out of the centre and helps link farmer groups among themselves, facilitating their meetings and exchanges. It thus becomes part of the network of farmer organizations;
- Facilitates the emergence of intermediate farmer organisations at district and regional levels as they grow in number thus becomes the link among these networks;
- Assists leaders of the provincial farmer networks form a national farmer organisation that facilitates farmer networking.

The role of the support organisation becomes more complex as the farmer organisation becomes more organized. It inevitably has to adapt the nature of its support to suit the changing needs of the farmer organisation. The process often evolves from dependence to independence and graduates to interdependence where both parties discover their complementarity and recognize their respective legitimacy.

Yve Marche (adapted from “The Art of Metamorphosis”, by A.M Mgumia and T. Capall, October 2003)

Development models and concepts are invaluable tools

PELUM experiences in development suggest that it is important for NGOs to work with concepts and models. The models tend to be useful tools for analysis and action. More importantly, they help one to understand and anticipate impending crises and opportunities. While on one hand models/concepts serve as binoculars to see things that are far and on the other they can be used to reflect back on what has happened. For PELUM, understanding the three phases of organisational development helped it to deal with CWGs that were demanding more space and independence. At the regional desk, when programmes became more independent and the threat of fragmentation was approaching, the Board moved in swiftly and encouraged the regional desk to move to the next phase of interdependence characterized by teamwork and shared leadership. The graduation of PELUM from a network into a network of networks again came about with increased appreciation of the concept of networking within the organization.
8.4 Conclusion

The developmental journey of PELUM has been characterised by movement and direction, learning and unlearning, mapping, negotiating bends, arriving and starting afresh, discovery, pain and celebration. For direction, PELUM carried a compass made up of its values and principles. For movement, it designed plans and activities that were informed by member needs and interests. During the movement, sometimes walking barefoot, PELUM stepped on thorns and removed them, came across snakes in the grass and avoided them, encountered rapids on youthful rivers and built bridges. In the process PELUM tried to leave behind footprints for those who might follow. Occasionally, it fell and picked itself up, made mistakes and managed to correct most of them. It was in walking through difficulties that PELUM developed and matured.

The PELUM journey was always made up of three dimensions: the dream, the actual movement and travelling, which involved the realisation of the dream, and then the retracing of footsteps to see where the organisation has been and whether the route could have been better and different. This book speaks to the third dimension of the journey, which focuses on remembering, reflecting and sharing insights and maps that show where the organisation has been.

The development terrain through which the path was crafted is contested, with clues few and far apart. It was on reaching some mountaintops that PELUM was able to scan its environs and to shout to those following whether to come up or to change course or go to another jungle. From these experiences, PELUM tested some assumptions about development, creating lessons for it and for other development organisations and networks. Through its publications such as the Ground Up magazine, the field guide and seed manual, this book and contributions to international debates, PELUM tried to map its development terrain for others to see and appreciate and to challenge if need be.

In development there are many maps, with important but inadequate information. By sharing the maps together development workers can co-construct another bigger, better and more detailed map of development in east and southern Africa. In deed, the configuration of the territory is shifting and the map will need constant updating.
Nevertheless, old beacons will still remain important guides. Along the long journey, which has no definite ending, PELUM gathered fruit and made kills, celebrating each time this happened. Those around beat drums whistled and ululated.

During the journey PELUM created relations of dependence and interdependence with people and organisations that it encountered. PELUM depended on funding partners for resources who in turn relied on it for the articulation and implementation of a shared vision of improving the livelihoods of poor people in east and southern Africa. PELUM grew and positioned itself as a dependable development organisation. It created many interdependent developmental friends with whom it shared ideas, strategies and resources. Within PELUM, member organisations remained autonomous and became interdependent as they pulled together their energies and strengths towards achieving its mission. This journey has therefore been concerned with people and places, connecting and constructing, observing and organising, process and purpose, organisations and communities.

I am happy to have taken part in this journey even though sometimes my feet ached from treading on hot and hard ground. Now and then, my energy plummeted. Sometimes I knew not where I was headed. Almost always, I enjoyed support from my leaders, colleagues, development and funding partners so that I was able to make a humble contribution towards the development efforts of PELUM. Working with PELUM and writing this book have been both part of my journeying with PELUM. I hope that the readers will experience some level of satisfaction in sharing these insights with me. Documenting and sharing experiences and lessons should therefore be prioritised. But more importantly I hope that this book will inspire others to share their successes, challenges and failures in development work. Other wise how else can we can learn more from one another and add value to our collective efforts?
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**Personal Communication:**


