

ISLAND REACH



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Welcome to the 2024 Annual Report for Island Reach

This year saw IR continue our focus on agroecology and the struggle for food system transformation. We've been working primarily with partners in Africa, where the fight against industrial agriculture, with GMOs, chemical fertilizers and pest management, and corporate seed control is ongoing.

Many argue that we need "climate-smart" agriculture, that is, corporate technological solutions to ensure food security in a time of climate crisis. This is simply the next phase of the "Green Revolution", keeping control out of the hands of farmers. Seed saving and sharing, organic inputs, diversity: these are a few of the real solutions that can improve farmers' lives and feed local communities.

In this report, you'll read a bit more about our work in Africa in 2024 and our commitments to supporting an agroecological food transition.

Thanks for reading, and be sure to check out the forthcoming videos.

In solidarity,

Janis and Brooks



AGROECOLOGY PARTNERSHIPS

With the conclusion of our two-year project in Bangladesh, 2025 brought a search for new partners. We continued to deepen our understanding of themes and concerns in agroecology through meeting with international thought leaders and activists in the movement for food system transformation and from those conversations and research, formulated our plan of action.

We revised our website and positioned ourselves to stage a reverse call for proposals. What this means is that as funders, we would essentially apply to support and partner with community-led initiatives, thereby flipping on its head the usual grantmaking approach where communities and local organizations approach funders for support. This model is more in keeping with decolonizing efforts in philanthropy to shift authority to local stakeholders, and subverting their typical hierarchies of top-down approaches.

With this approach, we entered into agreements with two organizations in Africa: Soils, Food and Healthy Communities (SFHC) in Malawi, and PELUM Kenya (Participatory Ecological Land Use Management).

In Malawi, SFHC employs a participatory research model that depends on farmer-led experimentation with a wide range of agroecological farming techniques. Climate change, along with practices like charcoal and brick production, are among major drivers of deforestation and degraded farmlands. SFHC is committed to supporting sustainable farming strategies to help farmers increase their yields from small farmlands and have better livelihoods, while regenerating soils and forests.



We first found SFHC through viewing the superb film, [The Ants and the Grasshopper](#), produced with the participation of SFHC.

After conversations with the organization's Director Esther Lupafya , along with a Zoom walk-through their training centre and demonstration permaculture gardens, IR offered an unrestricted grant of \$10,000 USD to support their work in agroforestry and forest regeneration. The project would entail farmer-to-farmer training on agroecological methods of soil fertility management, pest control strategies and furthering their established tree nurseries.

Our second application went to PELUM Kenya. The following description is taken from their website:

PELUM is a network of Civil Society Organizations / NGOs working with Small-scale farmers in East, Central, and Southern Africa. The Association membership has grown from 25 pioneer members (in 1995) to over 280 members. PELUM Kenya is the Kenyan country chapter of the PELUM Association and has a membership of 63 Member Organizations. PELUM Kenya network promotes agroecological principles and practices through the following approaches: advocacy and policy influence, networking, capacity development, information, and knowledge sharing. The various agroecological practices promoted include organic agriculture, sustainable agriculture, regenerative agriculture, agroforestry, permaculture, conservation agriculture, biodynamic agriculture, family farming, and bio-intensive agriculture. All PELUM Kenya Member Organizations do not promote GMOs or the use of synthetic agricultural inputs.

In collaboration with Country Coordinator, Rosinah Mbenya, we agreed to work together to support PELUM's advocacy and knowledge sharing capacities through documentary storytelling, providing them with \$15,000 USD to run the project, as well as our *pro bono* services.

Working with them remotely over the year and funding preparatory field visits, Janis and Brooks eventually traveled to Kenya in October. We were able to visit 6 sites, conduct numerous interviews, and document a variety of agroecological practices. Since that visit, we have been working on producing short videos for PELUM and the network.



Preparing organic soybeans and other local products at ADS Western



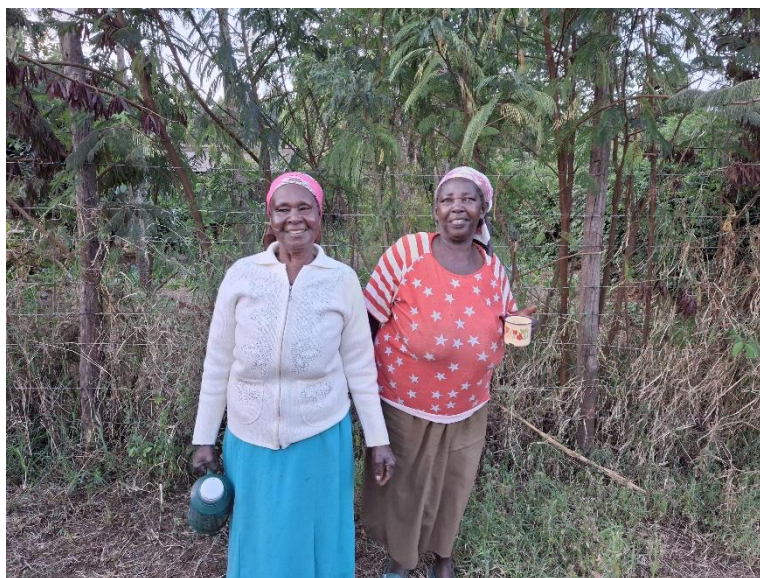
CHSEP Ndeiya entry

With farmers and members of CHSEP Kiserian





*Maasai herders slaughter a sheep
at Laikipia Permaculture Centre*



*Women farmers near
CSHEP Ndeiya*



Filming in the gardens at Manor House Agricultural Centre

*Janis is honored
to plant a
Neem tree in
Kibwezi as part
of GREEN
ACTION WEEK*



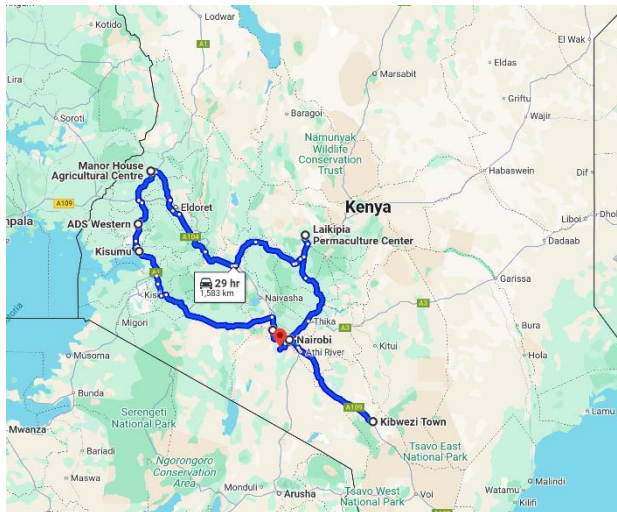
Our first video project was a rushed rough cut for the COP 29 in Baku, Azerbaijan in November where Rosinah was making a presentation.

*IR video screening at COP
29*



At the time of writing this report, we are continuing to produce videos from the over 2000 clips shot during our time in Kenya.

It was a packed-full trip visiting, visiting 6 member organizations, farms, and attending the Green Action Week festival.



Our route around Kenya

AGROECOLOGY PUBLICATION

We were pleased to see the publication of a co-written commentary article “Fertile Grounds: Co-creating agroecological knowledge in a pluriverse” about our project with United Purpose Bangladesh. The article appears in the open-access journal, *Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene* as part of a special issue devoted to ways of knowing and being for agroecology transitions.

Available here at:

<https://online.ucpress.edu/elementa/article/12/1/00080/203107/Fertile-grounds-Co-creating-agroecological>

Here is the abstract:

How can civil society support community-based organizing that puts ways of knowing and being at the heart of food systems change? Drawing upon a collaboration between 2 nonprofit organizations and a community-based network of rural women across Bangladesh, this essay explores frictions and contradictions that trouble our efforts to co-create knowledge for agroecological transformations. Rather than suggesting these troubles can be resolved, we attempt to stay with them in this article, locating them as vital disruptions to the hegemonic order of one-world-making. Using personal vignettes as framing

devices, we combine critical analysis, art, and poetry to explore working with and within a plurality of ways of knowing and being. With a vignette about soil, we begin with unsettling questions about what constitutes knowledge in a world where constructs of truth and belief rub up against each other. We then tension this in the context of agroecological markets and social justice activism as these intersect with different notions of relationality. We pursue this further by introducing a narrative-framing tool called a “value web” which mobilizes both material and immaterial domains of agroecology. Finally, we conclude by examining the role of international civil society in food system transformation and raising fundamental questions of allyship which help us navigate the constitutive contradictions of knowledge co-creation.

VANUATU

We were pleased to receive a report regarding funding IR Vanuatu had provided to Sista, a nonprofit organization in Port Vila, Vanuatu, and their program “Strong Mama”, supporting women’s empowerment. Our small contribution helped Sista with providing solar lights.

WEBSITE

As mentioned previously, we undertook an extensive revision of our website. Please check it out!

Thanks for reading this report. Watch our website and social media for new videos and projects.



At a local tea & veggie farm near the Organic Agriculture Centre of Kenya