

January 28 2004

Mr. Luc Tayart de Borms
Managing Director
King Baudouin Foundation

and

Dr. Peter Piot
Chairman of the Prize's Selection Committee
Executive Director of UNAIDS

**Re: The nomination of Mr. Zephaniah Phiri Maseko for the 2004-2005 King
Baudouin International Development Prize**

To the Honourable Messrs. Tayart de Borms and Piot and Selection Committee
Members:

I, Professor Ian Scoones, Ph.D., Fellow, Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, UK, am duly honoured to nominate, in the personal capacity, Mr. Zephaniah Phiri Maseko (Mr. Phiri) of Zimbabwe (c/o Zvishavane Water Project, P. O. Box 118, Zvishavane, Zimbabwe, Tel: (263-151) 3250) as a candidate for the 2004-2005 King Baudouin International Development Prize.

Details of Nominator

Professor Ian Scoones, Fellow, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, UK BN1 9RE. Tel: 44-1273-678274; email: i.scoones@ids.ac.uk

For the past 8 years I have been a fellow at the Institute where I carry out research, teaching and training on issues of environment and development. Before working at IDS I was a research associate with the International Institute for Environment and Development in London.

I have known Mr Zepheniah Phiri since 1986 when I was carrying out research in Zvishavane district as part of my PhD programme. Mr Phiri joined the research team through the invitation of Dr Ken Wilson who was also working in Mazvihwa communal area at that time. Mr Phiri explored some of the development implications of the work being carried out at the time, and, on the basis of the experiments carried out on water management and harvesting at his own home since the 1970s, he initiated a water project involving the construction of shallow wells, small dams and watering points for gardens and livestock. With support from Oxfam(UK) this became the Zvishavane Water Projects NGO which has been operating from a base in

Zvishavane town ever since. Over the past 18 years I have kept in touch with Mr Phiri and his family and he has been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement for my work.

The candidate

Mr Zephaniah Phiri is based in Runde communal area, Zvishavane district, Zimbabwe. He can be contacted through Zvishavane Water Projects at Box 118, Zvishavane, Zimbabwe (see above). He was the founder of ZWP, and its director until his retirement a few years ago. Since then he has continued his work both at his home and in neighbouring areas.

Supporting letter

The remarkable life and achievements of Mr Phiri are documented in the book '*Water Harvester*', a book written in his own words and published by Weaver Press in Harare. Mr Phiri was born in Runde communal area 77 years ago, the son of an immigrant Malawian preacher. He went to Dadaya mission school for primary education. He later worked for Rhodesian Railways and became active in the liberation politics of the time. He was later interned, and released only under effective house arrest.

It was at this time when he started experimenting with his ideas about water harvesting and sustainable agriculture at his home. He transformed a formerly dry, barren landscape into a productive, green oasis. He developed a range of technologies and adapted others to local conditions. He attracted the attention of the authorities who regarded his work as illegal, because it contravened colonial environmental restrictions. He challenged these in court and won concessions on the basis that no one who visited could deny that what he had done was remarkable. After Independence in 1980, Phiri worked with the Lutheran World Federation on water projects in southern Zimbabwe. Later, in 1986, he founded the Zvishavane Water Projects, which he directed until his retirement in 1997. This phase of his life saw the spreading of his ideas to a wide number of people, both in his home area, throughout the operational area of the ZWP and more widely as more and more people heard about Mr Phiri's work.

The long list of dignitaries, officials, development professionals and, above all, Mr. Phiri's farmer peers more than attests to his contribution of more than forty years of dedication to improving the lives and livelihoods of his family, his neighbours and his fellow small-scale farmers across the region. Mr. Phiri's personal example, utilising low-cost sustainable methods, has shown countless individuals and families that perseverance and careful ecological stewardship can facilitate food security and family survival under harsh agricultural and political conditions.

Based on my previous Zimbabwe-based investigative, academic and professional collaboration with the nominee, I harbour no doubt that the contributions of this candidate fully meet, indeed exceed, the desired qualities stated by the King Baudouin Foundation with regard to an individual whose life work has been dedicated to "sustainable achievements in improving the lives of people in the developing world". Moreover, the significant "multiplier effect" of Mr. Phiri's life work resonates fully

with the Foundation's goal to reward the "opportunities they (nominees) give to the people they serve to take control of their own development". As part of candidate's file, an excerpt from my book *'Hazards and Opportunities: Farming Livelihoods in Dryland Africa'* is included which uses Mr Phiri's work as a case example.

In order to consider Mr. Phiri's laudable qualifications, may I respectfully refer the committee to the nominee's enclosed curriculum vitae and supporting documents in order to better discern his distinguishing characteristics and achievements with regard to the King Baudouin International Development Prize.

Additional matters

1. Relationship with the Prize

Zephaniah Phiri's achievements fit squarely within the aims of the prize. He has done an enormous amount to promote appropriate development in the dryland areas of Zimbabwe and beyond: not as a qualified 'expert', not as an international figure, not as a policymaker, but, as an ordinary farmer, who people on the ground can relate to. As discussed below, the impacts of his work has not been confined to a small area. He has inspired others – in other districts in Zimbabwe, in South Africa, Namibia, Zambia – to follow his approach and he has led by example.

As an inspiring speaker he has engaged with those at policy level, for instance around issues of wetland cultivation and inappropriate environmental restrictions. He has been on Zimbabwe radio and TV sharing his ideas, and his work has been shared through magazines, articles and books written about his achievements. This has had substantial impact, and a constitutes, without doubt, a significant contribution to the advancement of developing countries.

Through his links with Oxfam, ITDG and other international development NGOs he has also inspired increased understanding and good relations between developing and industrialised countries. On several occasions he has visited the UK, for example, and carried out speaking tours with local supporters' groups of such organisations as the World Development Group, Oxfam and others.

2. Multiplier effects

From his initial work at his own home, this spread across Zvishavane district through the establishment of Zvishavane Water Projects. The small amount of seed money provided by Oxfam and an EU small grants scheme allowed the extension of activities across Zvishavane and into neighbouring Chivi district. This attracted the attention of others – both ordinary farmers and organisations working in other places. Soon Mr Phiri was being invited all over the country to share his ideas. And his home in Runde communal area become a place visited almost on a daily basis. Farmers' groups from Zimbabwe, and post 1994 from South Africa visited regularly, as did extension workers, researchers, policymakers and others. All left inspired, and the effects can be seen in the enterprising work carried out by farmers – infiltration pits, rock catchments, wells, wetland gardens and so on soon spread across the countryside. This was not a 'big project' approach. The ZWP never had a large amount of external

support, this was locally led development, responding to real needs and ambitions of ordinary farmers, inspired by a remarkable man and his dedicated team.

As a citizen of a less-developed country, Mr. Phiri is himself unique and inspirational. His local-level achievements have been lauded across southern Africa, and beyond. Perhaps more than his affinity for the gentle stewardship of fragile natural resources, his humanitarian generosity belies the standard notion that one must be a financial magnate or one's heir in order to benefit the family of man. With resources no more than his keen intelligence, intuition, fortitude and devotion, Mr. Phiri has laid the groundwork that exemplifies the contribution that any of us can offer to our communities, if only we were as well possessed of the same remarkable level of self-giving.

3. Impacts and organisation

It is difficult to assess the number of people directly affected by the initiatives of Mr Phiri over the last 20 years or so. They may add up to millions. Certainly if you travel around the southern part of Zimbabwe, you can see the tell-tale signs of pits dug following Mr Phiri's designs. But the farmers concerned may never have met the man himself, as the Phiri message has seeped into other organisations, been shared farmer to farmer and even been taken up by the national agricultural extension organisation.

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Since his retirement Mr Phiri has been reliant on his own farming resources as a source of food and income for himself and his family. He has carried out visits overseas – including the UK – at the invitation of other organisations in the last few years, for which expenses have been paid. To my knowledge, he has no other source of income. The ZWP which he founded continues to operate, although under very difficult financial circumstances due the withdrawal of donor support in Zimbabwe over the last two years. A prize donation would enable Mr Phiri's work – and through their close connection – the work of the ZWP to continue to encourage, inspire and stimulate, both in Zimbabwe and more broadly.

4. Short summary

Mr Zephaniah Phiri has demonstrated through his individual example, the building of an organisation (Zvishavane Water Projects) and through his interactions nationally and internationally how it is possible to transform dryland areas in Africa to productive, sustainable farming opportunities. As a farmer, without education beyond primary school level, he has demonstrated the potential for Africa – Africans – to

transform environments and livelihoods. His work has inspired many across southern Africa and beyond, and many poor, small scale farmers have adopted his techniques and approaches. This has had tangible impacts on the lives of the poor, and has contributed to shifts in policy thinking more generally. His interactions at the international level - through visits, meetings, and the writings of others - have improved people's understanding of the conditions, challenges, and hopes of those living and working in dryland areas of southern Africa, encouraging solidarity and commitment at a global level to local struggles. He would be a very worthy recipient of the prize.

Yours,

Ian Scoones (Professor)