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USAID Takunda Project Newsletter



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ZIMBABWE GENDER COMMISSION HONOURS USAID TAKUNDA PROJECT FOR GENDER RESPONSIVE SERVICE PROVISION

Gender equality is CARE Zimbabwe’s central organizing principle. We believe that we cannot achieve women’s economic justice, climate justice, health equity, the right to food, water, and nutrition, or equal access to humanitarian assistance without addressing gender inequality. By 2030, CARE International seeks to support 50 million people experience greater gender equality in their lives.

To play our part in realizing the above targets, the USAID Takunda Project is implementing a number of gender responsive initiatives such as social analysis and action trainings, community gender dialogues, male engagement initiatives, and GBV messaging, in the targeted districts of operation. Among other successes, these initiatives have resulted in significant changes at community level.

For its efforts, the Takunda Project was awarded an honorary certificate in recognition of Gender Responsive Service Provision in the Civil Society Organization Category at the Manicaland Male Engagement Symposium, held in Mutare on July 11th. This award highlights the Project’s unwavering commitment to promoting gender equality and empowering communities. Takunda extends a huge thank you to our partners and everyone who has supported us over our years of operation.



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REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA VISITS USAID TAKUNDA PROJECT SITE

We are excited to share that on July 23rd, we hosted Matthew Pickard, CARE's Regional Director for southern Africa at Mambwende-Tsvazvivi Weir and Garden, located in Zaka Rural District, Ward 29. The site is one of the 79 community gardens established by the project across the four districts of operation. Mathew was accompanied by CARE Zimbabwe Country Director and some of CARE Zimbabwe's Advisory Council Members to witness how the Takunda Project is transforming communities in rural areas. The visiting team was impressed by how the Project is turning barren lands into thriving gardens in Zaka Rural District.

A total of 83 households are benefiting directly from this establishment as participants, while up to 3,000 additional community members are benefiting from access to agricultural produce from the garden through sales. Their engagement with project participants shows how communities are now able to provide and sustain their families through the interventions being supported by the project.



QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE GENERATION AND DOCUMENTATION FOR ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

We are happy to share that the Project collaborated with the USAID-funded Implementer-Led Design, Evidence, Analysis, and Learning (IDEAL) Activity in a year-and-a-half-long initiative which developed tools, including the [Activity Learning Cycle Toolkit](#), to enhance qualitative evidence generation and documentation for interventions implemented by Resilience Food Security Activities. The Collaboration, Learning, and Adaptation (CLA) team piloted the tools and applied them to select Project interventions and activities to strengthen Project staff's capacity to design and implement evidence-base adaptations and to track implementation at the district level.

A key lesson learned is that the targeted, intentional development and subsequent use of tools which simply illustrate adaptive management processes can help staff generate a strong qualitative evidence base for use in decision making, ultimately resulting in enhanced learning.

The IDEAL Activity recently published this work in August, and you may read more about it [here](#).

TAKUNDA ASSISTS WOMEN AND CHILDREN WITH SUPPLEMENTARY FEEDING PROGRAMME (SFP)

The ongoing El Niño induced drought is one of the worst in Zimbabwe's history. This has led to significant changes in consumption patterns for the affected. Although the Project is supporting communities by building their resilience to respond to climatic shocks, this year's drought period has proven extremely harsh. Some communities are even struggling to get water for household consumption, since water points in some areas have dried up.

In July and August, to make sure pregnant women, lactating women, and children under 23 months have access to supplementary and nutritious meals, the Project, through its Supplementary Feeding Programme (SFP), reached a total of 23,702 participants with food assistance (186,244 tons of corn soya blend and 62,857,35 tons of vegetable oil) to vulnerable people in Buhera, Chivi, Mutare, and Zaka Rural Districts. In times of extreme drought, the SFP played a key role in reducing severe acute malnutrition in these targeted areas.



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MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH GLYTIME FOODS OPERATIONALIZED

On June 13th, the Project signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the private sector company, Glytime Foods. Among other things, the partnership aims to empower rural farmers being supported by the project in Masvingo and Manicaland Provinces with enhanced access to markets, through which the Project promotes sustainability. The appeal of organic foods is growing, with products now reaching markets beyond the Project's target districts. The fast-moving blends, primarily made from pearl millet, sorghum, and finger millet, are well-suited to the region's agricultural landscape.

As a way of operationalizing the MOU, Glytime Foods staff members visited Chivi and Zaka Rural Districts enriched porridges producer groups to explore how these groups source their ingredients and market their products. This initiative aims to maximize raw material production for cross-market subsidization, with a target of moving over 500MT of cereal blends within the district and beyond.

The producer groups are not only focused on enriched porridges but are also engaged in drying and adding value to indigenous fruits and vegetables, such as blackjack, amaranth, and baobab coffee. Glytime Foods will be a key partner in the take-off of these underutilized nutritious fruits and vegetables.



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TAKUNDA PROJECT PARTICIPATES IN MICRO, SMALL, AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES EXPO IN MUTARE

On August 8th, Takunda, together with other development organizations, participated in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Expo in Mutare District. The Expo presented project participants trained in entrepreneurship, Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA), and enriched porridges production to showcase and sell some of their products. The event focused on empowering women and youth in business under the theme, “Building Bridges: Unlocking the Potential of MSMEs and Zimbabwe's Economy Towards Vision 2030.” The primary objective of the Expo was to expose women- and youth-owned businesses to new markets and facilitate linkages with large corporations.



SUPPORTING LIVESTOCK HEALTH IN RURAL ZIMBABWE

Livestock plays a vital role for rural communities in Zimbabwe, providing income, employment, food, and a means of storing value. On July 18th, the Project hosted a Livestock Health and Nutrition Innovation Platform in Mutare Rural District, Ward 18. This crucial event brought together diverse stakeholders, including government departments, local leadership, the private sector, and the community. The platform aims to build local capacity to develop and adopt sustainable and context-specific livestock health management systems. Additionally, it fosters collaboration among key actors to explore and experiment with solutions to livestock diseases in the smallholder sector.



Some of the key action points that came from the platform include but are not limited to: pilot livestock village level watch committees; encourage resource mobilization in communities; increase the number of dip tanks; and promote a farmer-to-farmer learning approach.

CHIVI DISTRICT CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL YOUTH MONTH IN STYLE

Our Chivi District Team celebrated the International Youth Day in style by conducting sporting competitions, including football, netball, and chess, from the three constituencies in the district (North, South, and Central) with youth who are participating in the project.

The activity offered a platform to improve stakeholder relationships as the event was attended by the Provincial Sports Officer as the guest of honor, emphasizing on the use of sports to manage stress and reduce drug and substance abuse. This was also emphasized in the performance put on by the youth of Ward 10 on Positive Youth Development.



BREASTFEEDING COMMEMORATIONS IN MUTARE

The Takunda Project joined the rest of the world in commemorating World Breastfeeding Week from August 1st through 7th, celebrating the theme, Closing the Gap: Breastfeeding Support For All. The Project assists communities by supporting breastfeeding mothers through messaging in expanded care groups. This has resulted in men assisting their spouses with household chores and subsequently creating more time for mothers to breastfeed. Additionally, the engagement of traditional leaders, religious leaders, and grandmothers as custodians of social norms has resulted in the deconstruction of norms that currently discourage breastfeeding.

It is also important to note that protecting, supporting, and promoting breastfeeding addresses inequalities that stand in the way of sustainable development. Addressing these inequalities is vital, as breastfeeding can act as an equalizer in Zimbabwe, particularly in Buhera, Chivi, Mutare, and Zaka Rural Districts where the Project is being implemented.

On August 2nd, Takunda held a commemoration in Mutare Rural District's Mafararikwa High School, an event that was attended by development partners, Government Officials, and community members.



August 23rd, our Gender and Social Dynamics team participated in Manicaland Provincial Gender Forum and Engagement Sessions, held in Buhera Rural District. The forum was convened by Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) under the theme: “Gender, Environment, and Climate Change: Building Resilience and Sustainable Development.” Takunda promotes women and girls’ empowerment, by engaging with men and boys to transform unequal power relations and address gender inequality, including gender-based violence.

Among other interventions, the project focuses on strengthening the voice of women and girls and enabling them to effectively participate in and influence the decisions that affect their lives. To make sure that this is achieved, the Project participates in key and strategic platforms convened by the Government, development partners, communities, and other stakeholders.

The forum, which was attended to by members of the communities who do not participate in Takunda interventions and those who do, identified and discussed critical issues impacting communities due to climate change and the adverse effects of the El Nino phenomenon currently being experienced in Zimbabwe.



Some of the key issues raised from the forum include:

- Women are disproportionately affected by climate change, leading to Gender-Based Violence (GBV), reversed gender roles, and increased burdens.
- People with Disabilities (PWDs) face exclusion, health challenges, and water accessibility issues.
- Young people engage in drug use due to lack of activities and income sources.

To curb the key issues raised which affect women and youth, Takunda is implementing interventions like the Men’s Fora and Elderly Women Groups’ engagements with communities via the Social Analysis and Action [1] (SAA) sessions conducted through Care Groups. These continue to create a supportive environment for the adoption of promoted behaviors like enhanced knowledge about gender roles and responsibilities and increased support with household chores from spouses. Youth participating in Takunda interventions received startup kits to enhance their participation in socio-economic activities.”

Key recommendations and the way forward:

- Enhance behavior change campaigns, including anti-drug abuse initiatives.
- Explore and develop youth-friendly projects and economic opportunities.
- Include PWDs in community projects and ensure accessibility to water points.
- Consolidate and present gender, environment, and climate change issues at the National Gender Forum and to Parliament for policy formulation.

[1] 1-30 to 2 hours of action-oriented participatory conversations facilitated by community gender champions to address gender norms and social barriers around inequitable decision-making in private and public spaces, access and control of assets and resources, women's time poverty, and gender-based violence. Sessions usually are conducted monthly, riding on Takunda-established safe spaces of men-only, women-only, youth-only groups, and/or at times mixed groups.

KEY DATES AND EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

16 International Day of Science, Technology, & Innovation for the South

October

10 World Mental Health Day

11 International Day of the Girl Child

13 International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction

15 International Day of Rural Women

16 World Food Day

17 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

November

19 World Toilet Day

20 World Children's Day

Stories from the field

- ◆ Growing Hope: Community gardens flourish amidst El Niño challenges. [Read more](#)
- ◆ Rumbidzai's journey of resilience and hope. [Read more](#)

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