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Takunda

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Takunda Insights Newsletter
Issue Number 5



Aletah Zimbeva (29), one of the 83 members of the Takunda supported Mabwende-Tsvazivi Weir & Garden located in Zaka Rural District. ©Tanaka A Chitsa / CARE Zimbabwe.

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It is my pleasure to connect with you all as 2024 comes to an end. Throughout the year, the Takunda Project experienced highs and lows, but I am happy to share with you all that the project managed to achieve most of its set objectives, albeit with minor adjustments. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our donor USAID, project staff, various government departments, other stakeholders, and the communities that we work with for all the support during the year.

The El-Niño induced drought tested our ability to respond and adapt. Although the project was designed to support communities to withstand shocks such as drought, the drought meant that we had to reallocate resources to some critical areas such as small livestock production, startup grants, and water provision to make sure that the gains which had been achieved by the project over the past four years are not eroded.

I am happy to share that the solar-powered boreholes established by the project proved to be critical in not only making sure that targeted drought-prone communities had access to food and water, but also ensuring they had surplus food to sell to earn extra income in line with our mantra: Production, Income, and Resilience.

Takunda has achieved immense results and participants have managed to maintain their household incomes despite the challenging El Niño period. In April 2024, the average household income in Zimbabwe was US \$88, a decrease from US \$116 in April 2023, largely due to the hardships faced by citizens following the devastating effects of the El Niño-induced drought. However, Takunda participants reported an average monthly income of US \$103, which not only surpasses the national average for 2024, but is also in line with the figures from the previous year. This remarkable stability in income among program participants highlights the effectiveness of Takunda's community-centred approach in helping households to withstand shocks.

This year marked a critical turning point for the project as the project entered what we call the sustainability phase. This phase speaks to desires to make sure that communities are truly empowered and will be able to thrive well after the project. In this phase, we are moving away from direct implementation and focusing most of our energy towards mentoring support to community members also known as Local Service Providers (LSPs). These were trained to sustain project interventions after project implementation.

Looking ahead to 2025, our primary goal will be to ensure that the communities we have supported are now reaping the benefits of their involvement in the project. We will focus more on helping them realize profits from their initiatives and provide continued support, such as connecting them to new markets to expand their opportunities.

Happy holidays and New year.

*Ndatenda
Thank you*



2024 in Review

USAID Mission Director Visit

We kicked off the year with an inspiring field visit from USAID Mission Director, Janean Davis, in February. She toured the Mupudzi Solar-Powered Borehole and Garden in Ward 21 of Mutare Rural District, where the community has made incredible strides.

Community members showcased a variety of sustainable initiatives, including soil water conservation techniques, and are now supplying fresh produce to local markets in Mutare—generating additional income for families.

During the visit, the team also had the chance to meet Patience Marange, a Lead Mother who is now producing and selling enriched porridges after receiving Takunda training.



USAID Zimbabwe Mission Director Janean Davis (center) with Patience Marange (Right). ©Tanaka A Chitsa/CARE Zimbabwe



Jonathan Mukwindidza (left) of Ward 21 showing USAID Zimbabwe Mission Director Janean Davis a half moon.

Visits by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture

In April, we were honored to host Professor Obert Jiri, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water & Rural Development, for a field visit to Chivi District. During his visit, he observed firsthand how our project is strengthening rural resilience through climate-smart agricultural practices. At the Dumbuguru Solar-Powered Borehole and Garden, he witnessed how the community is generating income and meeting household needs.

“On January 2, 2023, USAID Takunda drilled a borehole for us in this garden and also provided fencing for our 1.3-hectare plot. We have 72 beneficiaries in this garden, and we work closely with our local Agritex extension officers. We started in October last year, and after deducting the costs we incurred, each farmer earned US\$67. Our goal is to earn US\$35 000 as garden within five years, an amount seeded into the programme by USAID,” shared **Letiwe Nkompilo**, the garden secretary.

The visit included a stop at Sibangani Dhibha's resilient field, which weathered the challenges of the El Niño season. Sibangani, a remarkable weather forecaster, Lead Farmer, and market facilitator, embraced traditional grain farming and was able to produce an impressive 2 tons of Rakodzi sorghum from just 0.4 hectares of land.

On May 31, the Permanent Secretary visited the Muchefa Solar-Powered Borehole and Garden in Buhera Rural District. Between December 2023 and April 2024, the garden generated an impressive US \$7,863—significantly improving the livelihoods of its members, despite the challenges of an El Niño-induced drought.

Visit by USAID Acting Deputy Mission Director

On May 31, USAID Acting Deputy Mission Director, Theophilus Thorpe, met with Farmer Field Business School participants and toured Muchefa Solar-Powered Borehole and Garden in Buhera District, Manicaland Province, in a joint government and donors' visit.

The Acting Deputy Director witnessed how the project is assisting farmers in Buhera District to fight the effects of drought through several resilient strategies aimed at improving productivity which include soil conservation techniques through resilient design structures.



USAID Acting Deputy Mission Director, Theophilus Thorpe (center, with cap) Muchefa Solar-Powered Borehole and Garden participants. ©Tanaka A Chitsa/CARE Zimbabwe.



Visit at a Lead Farmer's homestead. ©Tanaka A Chitsa/CARE Zimbabwe

US Ambassador Visit: Handover of Community Assets

On October 9, in a true testament to our commitment to long-term sustainability, US Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Pamela Tremont, officially handed over key community assets established by the project in Masvingo Province. The handover ceremony took place at the Rubweruchena Solar-Powered Borehole and Garden in Chivi District. This garden is one of 44 created by the project across the districts of Chivi and Zaka, each designed to empower local communities and ensure lasting benefits long after the completion of the project.

"Today, we are here to hand over all the community assets in Chivi and Zaka Districts. These assets include four dams, 44 solarized boreholes, and 44 productive gardens. The community engagement in the project from its inception through completion has created a lasting impact that will extend well beyond the project's duration. The handover today is a celebration of the community's self-reliance and full ownership of these assets," said the US Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Pamela Tremont during the event.



US Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Pamela Tremont (second from left) being shown around Rubweruchena Solar-Powered Borehole and Garden by a garden participant. ©Tanaka A Chitsa/CARE Zimbabwe



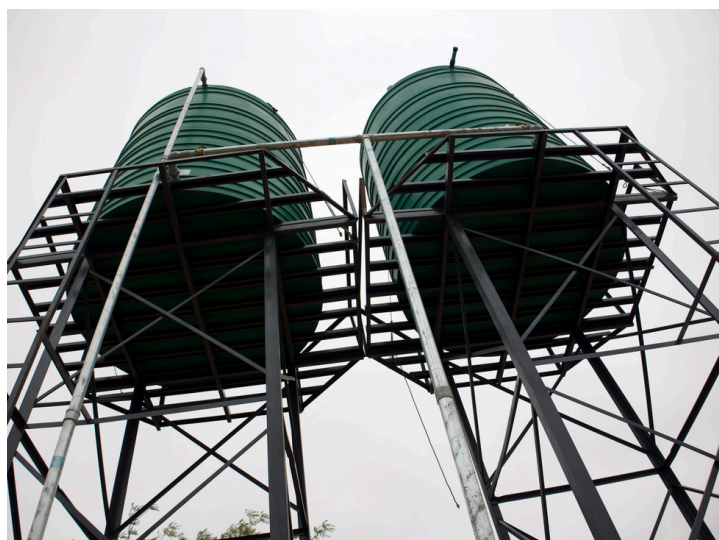
US Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Pamela Tremont (R) handing over assets to the community. ©Tanaka A Chitsa/CARE Zimbabwe



The project played an important role in supporting communities facing the impacts of the 2024 El Niño-induced drought. The project’s comprehensive approach, including early warning systems, community engagement, and adaptive management, has helped participants maintain resilience despite harsh conditions. Key interventions like solar-powered boreholes, community gardens, and income-generating activities have bolstered food security and provided stable incomes.

Women have seen significant benefits, with participants like Winniemore Chitiyo turning their agricultural efforts into sustainable livelihoods. Takunda’s efforts to enhance livestock production and promote climate-smart farming practices have led to increased yields and improved nutrition. Moreover, the establishment of community gardens has not only ensured steady food supplies but also fostered social cohesion and mutual support.

Full article can be accessed on this [link](#).



Collaboration with the Private Sector to Promote Sustainability

On June 3, the project marked a significant milestone in sustainability and collaboration by signing an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Glytime in Marange. The partnership aims to empower rural farmers in Masvingo and Manicaland Province through enhanced access to markets.

Key highlights of the MOU include:

- Ensuring sustained access of nutritious foods for mothers, children, and other demographics needing special nutrition.
- Establishing production hubs in local communities and creating employment opportunities.
- Boosting income levels for farmers and fostering resilient communities.

USAID Funded Projects Staff Technical Learning Visit

In August, Takunda engaged other USAID-funded projects in Zimbabwe to explore areas of collaboration in a learning visit.

Projects which are participating include the Mechanization and Extension Activity (MEA), Zimbabwe Fostering Agribusiness for Resilient Markets Activity (FARM), Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe Activity (DREAMS), Sustaining Prevention, Increasing Access to Care and Empowerment for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (SPACE for OVC), Farmer-to-Farmer Southern Africa, and Amalima Loko.

As a result of these consultations, onsite visits to eight sites in two districts (Mutare and Chivi) were successfully held from November 25 – 29 and a total of 26 staff from five of the projects participated. Key highlights of the visit included identifying areas of collaboration namely food security, livelihoods, women’s empowerment, youth employment, and environmental conservation.

Projects resolved to pursue collective action towards availing startup capital for technical vocational education trained youth, facilitating easy access to farm machinery, expanding private sector contract farming networks, scaling climate-smart agricultural practices, and strengthening sexual reproductive health and life skills.



Glytime CEO, Lesley Marange (L) with Walter Mwasaa (R), Country Director for CARE Zimbabwe during the MOU signing ceremony. ©Tanaka A Chitsa/CARE Zimbabwe



Staff members from different projects supported by USAID during a field visit.

Last Mile of 2024 – Update

As we wrap up a remarkable year—one filled with unforgettable moments and valuable lessons—we eagerly turn our focus to the opportunities ahead in 2025. Below, we are excited to share some of the standout highlights from September, October, November, and early December.

Annual Innovation in Sanitation Award for Takunda

On November 19, the project was recognized with the Annual Innovation in Sanitation Award by the Water+ team. Through the power of Human-Centered Design, Takunda has pioneered innovative solutions to improve access to toilets for the poorest and most vulnerable communities in Buhera, Chivi, Mutare, and Zaka Rural Districts. This award is a testament to the hard work and dedication of everyone involved in this life-changing project. A huge congratulations to the entire team for making a real impact where it's needed most. Click this [link](#) for more information.

USAID Takunda's Sustainable Management of Climate-induced Shocks in Zimbabwe

To mitigate the damaging impacts of the El Niño induced drought, the project closely worked with participants to ensure that they are resilient to climate shocks. Much of this work includes initiatives like resilient asset creation and constructing irrigation sites, solar-powered boreholes, and community gardens to help manage the environment better and cope with climatic challenges, like El Niño.

Takunda's work was published on Agrilinks - an online community for food security and agricultural development practitioners. The article can be accessed on this [link](#).

Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) Annual Report

Takunda's VSLA Impressive work features in CARE's VSLA Annual Report. Click this [link](#) to access the full report.

Utilizing the Theory of Change as a Learning Instrument for Takunda RFSA

Discover how Our Theory of Change is Driving Learning and Impact—Click the [link](#)



Strengthening Collaboration, Learning and Adaptation (CLA) Approaches in Takunda RFSA

Beginning in May 2024, Takunda participated in a seven-month Qualitative Research Learning Lab, a capacity-strengthening opportunity hosted by the Implementer-Led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning (IDEAL) Activity to expand learning on qualitative research design, data management, and analysis for emergency and resilience food security implementers who are interested in using qualitative methods. As part of this initiative, Takunda collaborated with Technical Assistance for Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO) International in conducting qualitative research to determine the experiences of program participants during the disbursement of startup kits and cash grants to support their income generating activities (IGAs), for adaptive management. Findings from the research showed that Takunda's startup kit and cash grant distribution processes were simpler compared to external financiers. Participants also shared that the IGAs which they started are viable and they are earning good incomes, one of the reasons why they maintained higher incomes compared to national averages despite the hardships caused by the 2024 El Niño drought. Due to these findings, Takunda will be able to strengthen its targeting strategy for distributing startup kits/ cash grants when scaling up the intervention, and further link program participants to external financiers.

Takunda was able to disseminate the knowledge from this research on two platforms: the [Qualitative Monitoring and Evaluation \(QualME\) peer community for an online discussion on Designing Qualitative Research](#) and the [Qualitative M&E for Better Programming Session](#) under IDEAL's Culmination Event named Insights and Impact: Lessons Learned from Six Years of IDEAL.

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