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Takunda Insights

April - June 2024, Issue 3

USAID Takunda Project Internal Newsletter



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HIGHLY ANTICIPATED CAHW POLICY REVIEW DIALOGUE MEETS EXPECTATIONS

On 20 June 2024, the USAID Takunda Project, in collaboration with the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) and the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) convened a Community Animal Health Worker (CAHW) Policy Dialogue at Cresta Msasa, Harare, Zimbabwe. This timely event focused on Community Animal Health Workers as the key players in the development of the livestock sector, especially in rural Zimbabwe.

In working with the CAHWs in our different districts of operation, several issues have come up such as capacity, mandate and engagement with public and private stakeholders. The impact of these CAHWs in supporting livestock production is quite compelling, necessitating a need to engage key stakeholders so as to effectively address the issues listed above. To this end, the policy dialogue brought together key stakeholders from the government, private sector, academic and research institutes, non-governmental organizations, and the local community to discuss ways to strengthen the existing public and private livestock extension systems. Participants explored policy recommendations and models to better support CAHWs in addressing the ongoing challenges of poor animal health and production among others.



Key issues discussed included:

- The Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water, and Rural Development recognized and acknowledged the alignment of the CAHW model with the efforts of the Government of Zimbabwe.
- The Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water, and Rural Development recognized the absence of a designated place for Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) within the current statutory acts, frameworks, and policies. Therefore, there is a pressing need for a policy review to address this gap.
- The stakeholders also highlighted the necessity of establishing a well-defined model for the Community Animal Health Worker (CAHW), which involves examining the boundaries of the CAHW role and formulating a standardized curriculum.
- The Stakeholders present expressed their sincere appreciation for the active participation of farmers from the four districts in the Community Animal Health Worker Model.
- In addition, stakeholders strongly recommended the imperative of scaling up the Community Animal Health Worker (CAHW) model at the national level.

Next Steps

- Policy review: Facilitate a comprehensive policy review dialogue through a holistic multisectoral approach, involving the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ), development partners, program participants, donor organizations, farmer organizations and associations, private sector players, and other stakeholders, to collectively address and enhance policy effectiveness in the targeted area.
- Developing a CAHW model and scaling up strategy: Convene a roundtable discussion to define and develop a standardized Community Animal Health Worker Model, incorporating a comprehensive curriculum that can serve as a widely accepted standard for effective implementation and training.

LIVESTOCK LEARNING DAY

In May, our Buhera District team hosted a Livestock Learning Day in Matide Village located in Ward 9 at a homestead of one of the Lead Farmers. The event brought together program participants to learn about various animal husbandry topics on livestock management, from a fellow project participant. The well attended event was supported by key government stakeholders from Agritex, the Veterinary Department, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, the Ministry of Health and Child Care, and various NGOs. It was a valuable opportunity for the community to gain practical knowledge and skills to enhance their animal rearing practices. Events like these are instrumental in equipping smallholder farmers with the expertise needed to improve livestock productivity and household food security.

Earlier in April, the Buhera District team had hosted yet another Livestock Learning Day in Ward 7. One farmer Gandani Nhachi (44) shared with the community regarding his climate-smart agriculture experiences. From dead-level contours to mobile kraals, Gandani's diversified farming methods are making a difference. He is expecting 250kgs of Velvet Bean (Fodder Crop) from just 1 hectare, a crucial livestock feed which is anticipated to adequately feed his livestock during this El Niño season.

“Next season, I plan to increase the number of dead-level contours in my field because I have noticed that they help a lot in retaining soil moisture.”

**Gandani Nhachi. Lead Farmer,
Ward 7 of Buhera Rural District.**



SOLAR POWERED BOREHOLES AND GARDENS SUSTAIN COMMUNITIES AMIDST EL-NIÑO CRISIS

USAID Takunda RFSA continues with its efforts on resilient assets creation to increase agricultural production among participants. To date, the project has constructed 73 functional irrigation sites out of the targeted 109 gardens with solar powered boreholes. Additionally, the project to date has completed construction of five weirs which will all go a long way in making sure that the communities that we serve are climate proofed. The program's asset creation intervention aims at providing an alternative to rainwater.

We are growing tomatoes in our garden. For every 20-litre bucket of tomatoes that we sell, we earn US\$7.00. we use this money to buy a 20-litre bucket of maize for household consumption. This is how we manage to obtain maize for sadza, considering that we did not harvest any maize in our fields.” Anna Chitiyo, Ward 14, Mutare Rural District.

“Being a part of this garden is earning us a living in such trying times.” Sipiwe Matunga of Muchefa Garden Ward 15 in Buhera Rural District

A significant number of households are already benefitting from these interventions considering the widespread harvest failure caused by the effects of El-Niño during the 2023/2024 agricultural season. For example, program participants are accessing green mealies and vegetables for household consumption. They are also selling surplus produce to neighbouring villages and to local markets, thus earning reasonable income to meet other basic household needs. Below are some quotes from participants in the different USAID Takunda operational areas where these assets were set up.

“We experienced the El-Niño induced drought. However, we can testify that we are not as desperate in such times as our fellow neighbours who are not a part of this garden because we have access to vegetables, and we have an income which enables us to purchase additional basic foodstuffs for our households.” said Jonathan Mukwindidza, Vice Chairperson of Mupudzi Solar Powered Borehole.



PERMANENT SECRETARY AND USAID/BHA JOINT VISIT TO BUHERA RURAL DISTRICT



On June 1, 2024, the project welcomed Prof. Obert Jiri, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development, to the Muchefa solar-powered borehole and garden in Ward 15 of Buhera Rural District. The 50 dedicated garden members, now in their second production cycle, are cultivating a variety of crops, including tomatoes, rape, covo, spinach, carrots, okra, and onions. Since its inception in December 2023, the garden has generated US\$7,863, significantly enhancing the livelihoods of its members despite the challenges posed by the El Niño-induced drought.

Prof. Obert Jiri commended the project for its critical role in complementing government efforts towards rural development and achieving national targets. “When vision 2030 was announced most people did not understand it, but here we are seeing Vision 2030 being implemented.” said Prof Obert Jiri

The event also welcomed Acting Deputy Mission Director of USAID Zimbabwe, Mr. Theophilus Thorpe, who met with Farmer Field Business School participants at a lead farmer's homestead and toured the Muchefa Solar-Powered Garden. During his speech, Mr. Thorpe stated, “We all have seen how Takunda is improving household incomes and food and nutrition security through improved horticultural production, productivity, and marketing. I appreciated hearing from the farmers about how the training, skills, and new knowledge has helped improve the condition of their livestock and crops.”

TAKUNDA COMMEMORATES WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

On 5 June 2024, the project joined the rest of the world in commemorating, the World Environment Day under the theme: “Our land. Our future,” with the hashtag **#GenerationRestoration**.

Land restoration is crucial for reversing land degradation and combating drought. Through innovative soil and water conservation techniques like half-moons, dead level contours, and stone check dams, the project is empowering rural communities in Buhera, Chivi, Mutare, and Zaka. These initiatives help manage the environment better and solve challenges like the El Niño-induced drought currently impacting Zimbabwe.

In 2023, the project supported the Mupudzi Community in Ward 21, Mutare Rural District, to reclaim a 1-hectare piece of land degraded between the late 1990s – early 2000s during the construction of a dam in the area.

Now, this steep land boasts a solar-powered community garden supplying fresh produce such as covo, beans, okra, and green pepper to markets as far as Mutare town. This initiative not only improves livelihoods but also uplifts the community's living standards through sustainable agriculture and natural resource management.

“

Most of the topsoil from this land was removed during the construction of the dam. This place was not suitable for farming and it almost looked like a gully. Since this is a sloppy area we had to embark on a lot of conservation works. At this garden we have a storm drain which is about 2m width and 1m depth and the drain helps us to conserve water.”

Jonathan Mukwindidza, Vice Chairperson of Mupudzi Solar Powered Borehole and Garden.



EXCITING TIMES AHEAD AS GLYTIME – TAKUNDA SIGN MOU

On 13 June 2024, the project marked yet another significant milestone in sustainability and collaboration by signing an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a private company - Glytime Foods in Marange, Mutare Rural District. Among other key interventions, the partnership aims to empower rural farmers in Masvingo and Manicaland Provinces through enhanced access to markets.

Key highlights of the MOU include:

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

It is envisioned that this partnership will scale up the production of locally made enriched porridges and will see the establishment of production hubs in communities. Additionally, the partnership will create employment for local communities especially women and youth.



TECHNICAL LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING

The Technical Leadership Team (TLT) met from 10 – 14 June at Elephant Hills Lodges in Buhera Rural District for yet another exciting opportunity to share updates, train, plan and reflect on ongoing program activities. Themed, Deepening Impact – The Final Push, this year's meeting had TLT members collectively brainstorm on key issues such as strengthening the accelerated implementation model for wider participant coverage, alleviating data processes and re-visiting the program knowledge management and learning plan. Selected intervention sites were visited and feedback regarding reflections from the field was shared with Buhera district field staff.

Action plans were developed to enhance the program strategic collaboration both internally and externally, as well as to effectively map the local service providers and asset handover. USAID Takunda's Chief of Party, Mr. Walter Mwasaa emphasized the need to drive new thinking as the program prepares to disembark the direct implementation phase, onto the sustainability phase.



INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES (IGA) AND START UP KITS UPDATE

USAID Takunda continues to make great strides in availing startup kits to the youth and the women in VSLA groups, thus propping them up for success as they begin to actively engage in income generating activities. These activities will earn them an income to sustain their families, a move which promises a lasting change in their standards of living and wellbeing. At least 38 Technical Vocational Education Training graduates received startup kits worth US\$16,012.80. VSLA group income generating activities which numbered a total of 263, were awarded startup kits worth US\$119,461.00.

The most common income generating activities which were awarded the startup kits were for sewing, poultry production, goat production, bakery and welding.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TEAM HOSTS SUCCESSFUL CLME REVIEW WORKSHOP



From June 3 to 6, 2024, a Community-Led Monitoring and Evaluation (CLME) Review Workshop was held at Marisa Lodge, Birchenough Bridge in Buhera District. The workshop brought together 36 representatives from 16 CLME committees across four Takunda operational districts).

The workshop highlighted the significant progress, enthusiasm, and self-confidence of the CLME committees. Notably, model committees were identified in ward 28 of Chivi District, ward 18 of Mutare District, and ward 27 of Buhera District. The committees' active engagement with communities is exceptional. While recognizing model committees, the workshop participants also identified areas for improvement, such as increasing community awareness regarding the role of the committees, fostering social cohesion between the committees and project participants, enhancing their resource mobilization efforts, improving stakeholder engagement, and refining documentation practices to boost the effectiveness of CLME initiatives.



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KEY DATES AND EVENTS

15 JULY	WORLD YOUTH SKILLS DAY
1– 7 AUGUST	WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK
12 AUGUST	INTERNATIONAL YOUTH SKILLS DAY
19 AUGUST	WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY

This publication is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of CARE Zimbabwe and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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