

USAID TAKUNDA PROJECT NEWSLETTER: APRIL 2024



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Takunda



USAID Mission Visit Highlights USAID Takunda Project Success

On 5 February, the USAID Takunda Project proudly welcomed Ms. Janean Davis, Mission Director of USAID Zimbabwe, along with her team, for a field visit to the Mupudzi Solarised Garden located in Ward 21 of Mutare Rural District. This visit showcased the project's commitment to enhancing livelihoods and fostering resilience in the community. During the visit, the community demonstrated various initiatives, including resilient water and soil conservation designs. Thanks to these efforts, the community is now supplying produce from the garden to markets in Mutare, generating additional income for household needs. "Before the coming in of Takunda, we would struggle to get vegetables to feed our families since this area is dry. Things have now changed and we are now supplying markets as far as Mutare with produce such as covo, beans, okra, and green pepper," says the 56-year-old Jonathan Mukwindidza who is the Vice Chairperson of the Mupudzi Community Garden. The team also had the opportunity to engage with Patience Marange, a lead mother who received training under the USAID Takunda Project. She is now producing and marketing enriched porridges, providing vital income to support her family's well-being.

In her speech, Ms Janean Davis applauded the partnership, "I understand that Takunda means to overcome and as USAID we are very proud to partner with you so that together we can overcome."

Updates

- USAID Mission Visit Highlights USAID Takunda Project Success.
- Zimbabwe's Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development Commends USAID Takunda Project
- USAID Takunda Project commemorates International Women's Day
- Steering Committee Review Meeting
- Global CARE International Institutional Funding (CIIF) Community of Practice Webinar
- All Staff Meeting



USAID Mission Visit in Mutare





Zimbabwe's Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development Commends USAID Takunda Project

Prof. Obert Jiri, Perm Secretary in the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water & Rural Development

The USAID Takunda Project hosted Prof. Obert Jiri, Perm Secretary in the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water & Rural Development, on a field visit in Chivi on Friday 12 April 2024. The Perm Secretary witnessed how the project is enhancing rural resilience through initiatives like climate-smart agriculture. The Perm Sec had an opportunity to visit Sibangani Dhibha's field where he witnessed how Sibangani, a remarkable community weather forecaster, lead farmer, and market facilitator under the USAID Takunda Project, embraced traditional grain farming and climate smart agriculture and is now anticipating an impressive yield of 750kgs of Rakodzi Sorghum from just 0.4 ha of land in this El Nino-induced dry spell. His yield surpasses those who did not opt for traditional small grains and climate smart agriculture underscoring the importance of choosing crops suited to the local environment.

The Permanent Secretary also visited Dumbuguru Solarized Borehole & Garden, where the community is now generating income from the garden, meeting household needs & boosting community sustainability thanks to the USAID Takunda Project. Between Jan – March 2024, Dumbuguru Solarized Borehole and Garden managed to register sales worth US\$4500 from selling produce such as tomatoes, vegetables and green mealies from the garden. A total of 72 community members are part of the garden. The Perm Sec stated that, "Rural development must be led by Rural Industrialisation. Here we witness generation of income and improvement of livelihoods and ultimately leading to Rural Industrialisation".



USAID Takunda Project commemorates International Women's Day



Buhera IWD Commemorations

USAID Takunda Project joined the rest of the world in commemorating this year's International Women's Day under the theme - **Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress**. The project identifies gender and women empowerment as one of the cross cutting themes interwoven between the purpose areas and embedded in all program activities. The celebrations were held in Buhera, Mutare and Zaka and were meant to acknowledge past achievements but at the same time cognisant of the ongoing journey towards gender equality and empowerment in the districts that we are currently implementing interventions in. CARE Zimbabwe, the lead partner of the project puts women and children at the centre of all its interventions in Zimbabwe.



Steering Committee Review Meeting

The project's steering committee converged on the 8th and 9th of April 2024 in Mutare for a review meeting. The program implementing partners comprising of Nutrition Action Zimbabwe (NAZ), Environment Africa (EA), Bulawayo Projects Center (BPC), FHI 360 and International Youth Foundation (IYF) all attended the meeting. The project's technical partner, the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) also participated.

The project had the pleasure to welcome the incoming Director for the Nutrition Action Zimbabwe (NAZ), Mr. Tapiwa Magaisa, who was attending the meeting for the first time. The Steering Committee toured the projects' operational areas in Mutare Rural District and then later met to reflect on their observations and other matters like financial planning. It was an enlightening experience as members were able to agree on what to amplify for the remaining part of the program and areas of improvement.

Below are some major highlights:

- In the face of the El Niño, the gardens set up by the project are easing food insecurities in communities. As a result of El Nino, communities did not get good harvests from their fields. It was pleasing to note that those participating in garden activities decided to work on their allocated portions in the garden on a full-time basis because of the constant supply of water. As a result, they are harvesting green chillies, okra, tomatoes, and vegetables among others for household consumption and with surplus for sale. The drought amplified the impact of these solarized borehole gardens.
- Program participants are aware of the program's exit. It was inspirational to see the measures they were putting in place to build an income base that will support their future needs. This was evident from the two gardens which were visited which clearly attested to the fact that they can afford security to guard the garden premises at night.
- The power of the Master craftsmen intervention was witnessed as youth in ward 6 shared their experiences regarding the training which they received from the project and how they are cascading this to fellow youth in the community. The story of Christian, who graduated from being a student to a trainer was encouraging.
- It was evident that women are actively participating in Takunda's interventions as they clearly articulated how they saw positive behavior changes like the adoption of healthy diets, diversification of livelihoods to build resilience and the reduction of GBV, as more men take up the task of educating other men in communities on gender related issues using platforms like the gardens.



Steering Committee Members



One of the Master Craftmen under the USAID Takunda Project



Global CARE International Institutional Funding (CIIF) Community of Practice Webinar

The project applauds the Knowledge Management and Learning Specialist, Thamsanqa Maphosa, for representing the program in the Global CARE International Institutional Funding (CIIF) Community of Practice Webinar on the USAID Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting Approach and Adaptive Management. The webinar’s aim was to assist CIIF CoP members with possible options on how to integrate CLA in program and project design. Takunda’s CLA in practice illustration presented was a 2023 USAID CLA Case Competition submission made by USAID Takunda’s CLA Lead (Rumbidzai Matemba Mutasa) and the Community Visioning Lead (Reginald Sithole) entitled “Adaptive Program Design Through Community Visioning in Zimbabwe”. The submission was selected by USAID as a finalist. To address the needs of the CIIF CoP, the webinar presentation focused on the community visioning challenge initially faced by project (the challenge of the CV process not being accepted by project participants and some project staff), then the subsequent CLA approaches implemented to address the challenge and the enabling conditions that influenced the outcome (that is the availability of resources, internal capacity building, pause and reflect sessions and transformational leadership training) to achieve project adaptation.

Key Lessons in line with the CIIF Community of Practice were drawn from USAID Takunda Project’s CLA approach, including budgeting for CLA level of effort in staff remuneration to promote the integration of the CLA process within the project, the evolution of organizational culture from activity “siloization” to integrated planning, leadership to provide an enabling environment for CLA implementation (provision of human and financial resources), CLA capacity building of project staff, and improved engagement with project participants to ensure CLA priorities are realized.



All Staff Meeting

Takunda held its Annual All Staff meeting at Caribea Bay, Kariba from 18 – 22 March 2024. About 130 staff attended the exciting event which allowed staff to review progress, strategically plan, and have fun! Several conversations propped staff up for the year ahead which will have some new concepts on mentoring and coaching program participants to strengthen their capacities, link them to government, private sector, and other Civil Society Organizations, support their efforts to fund their activities and motivating them. A consultant, Mrs. Precious Murena-Nyika, graced the event with some nuggets to also prepare staff for the future through packaging their experiences and positioning themselves for success. Staff participated in games, quiz, debate, and a massive talent show where they showcased their abilities in singing, dance, poetry, catwalk, to mention but a few. Lots of prizes were won and a big congratulations to the Mutare district staff who scooped prizes in all categories of the competitions!

