

act:onaid

ZIMBABWE



Annual Report 2013 Stories of Change





OUR VISION

A Zimbabwe without poverty and injustice in which every person enjoys their right to a life of dignity

OUR MISSION

To work with people living in poverty to eradicate poverty and injustice

OUR VALUES

Mutual Respect: requiring us to recognise the innate worth of all people and the value of diversity.

Equity and Justice: requiring us to work to ensure equal opportunity to everyone, irrespective of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, HIV status, colour, class, ethnicity, disability, location and religion.

Honesty and Transparency: being accountable at all levels for the effectiveness of our actions and open in our judgements and communications with others.

Solidarity with the poor: powerless and excluded will be the only bias in our commitment to the fight against poverty.

Courage of Conviction: requiring us to be creative and radical, bold and innovative – without fear of failure – in pursuit of making the greatest possible impact on the causes of poverty.

Independence: from any religious or party-political affiliation.

Humility: in our presentation and behaviour, recognising that we are part of a wider alliance against poverty.

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AA Zimbabwe.....	ActionAid Zimbabwe
AMA.....	Agricultural Marketing Authority
AIDS.....	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
Agritex.....	Agricultural Technical and Extension Service
ANC.....	African National Congress
CCMT.....	Centre for Conflict Management
CPC.....	Child Protection Committee
CCZ.....	Consumer Council of Zimbabwe
COPE.....	Congress of the People Election
CCMT.....	Centre for Conflict Management Transformation
DAS.....	District Administrators
DC.....	District Council
DOMCCP.....	Diocese of Mutare Community Care
E Africa.....	Environmental Africa
FACT.....	Family Aids Caring Trust
HIV.....	Human Immune Virus
HEFO.....	Health Education and Food Security Organisation
HRBA.....	Human Rights Based Approach
IGAs.....	Income Generating Activities
ISALS.....	Internal Savings and Lending schemes
LDP.....	Local Development Programme
LGDA.....	Lower Guruve Development Association
MURRA.....	Masvingo Residents Rate Payers Association
NANGO.....	National Association Non-Governmental Association
YDT.....	National Youth Development Trust
PQE.....	Programme Quality and Effectiveness
RDC.....	Rural District Council
RWA.....	Rural Women Assembly
SDC.....	School Development Committee
SCPP.....	Simukai Child Protection Programme
SRHBC.....	Seke Rural Home Based Care
TWT.....	The Women's Trust
USA.....	United states Africa
WCPA.....	Women Cotton Producers Association
ZimRights.....	Zimbabwe Human Rights
ZCTU.....	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF IMPACT STORIES

This Report is a collection of impact stories and forms part of the AA Zimbabwe Annual Report 2013. In this Report we are illustrating the cumulative impact of the Country Programme's Strategy and interventions through the most significant and powerful changes achieved in 2013. The changes are mainly as a result of interlinked interventions implemented over the past 4-5 years. The impact stories are organised around some of the AA Zimbabwe strategic objective focus areas as outlined in the Draft Country Strategy Paper for 2013-2017.

In its Operational Plan for 2013, AA Zimbabwe CP prioritised the following three strategic objectives in relation to the challenges in Zimbabwe's development context, the AA Zimbabwe Draft Country Strategy Plan for 2013-2017 and the AAI global strategy mission objectives:

1. Promote sustainable agriculture and control over natural resources
2. Assist people living in poverty to engage the government and corporates for improved social service delivery
3. Ensure women and girls can break the cycle of poverty and violence, build economic alternatives and claim control over their bodies

The stories indicate the changes in the lives of poor and excluded people (women farmers, children, the youth and their communities) as a result of support from AA Zimbabwe and its partners. The stories seek to demonstrate how the observed changes have come about and challenges in securing the desired changes. The impact stories would be useful to the CP and its partners as the stories seek to deepen our understanding of the relevance and effectiveness of AAI strategies and tools such as the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA). Under HRBA, ActionAid believes **“that an end to poverty and injustice can be achieved through purposeful individual and collective action led by the active agency of people living in poverty and supported by solidarity, credible rights-based alternatives and campaigns that address the structural causes and consequences of poverty.”**

Stories covered under Strategic Objective are illustrating interventions made by AA Zimbabwe and its partners in the area of sustainable livelihoods. The stories of change are mainly showcasing the impact made by partner work on sustainable agriculture projects such as conservation farming and trade justice (promotion of viable agricultural marketing). The conservation farming and trade justice programmes have been implemented in LDP and partner project areas since 2010.

The stories of change under Strategic Objective 2 in this booklets show structures formed as a result of community engagements with corporates and the government. The formation of the structures has seen adult women, young men and women and children accessing some public services such as better school infrastructure after classroom block construction and better road infrastructure. Under the Strategic Objective 2, we will also read stories of adult women

and young women and men who have been promoted as decision makers in community structures through women and youth empowerment programmes. In addition, conflict management and peace building programmes have seen communities tackling community conflict in a peaceful manner and the formation of peace platforms that promote peace within communities.

In Strategic Objective 3, we will read stories of women that are breaking the cycle of poverty and violence through rural women assembly (RWA) initiatives and various economic empowerment programmes being implemented by LDP and project partners. RWA is a women's group formed to improve the lives of rural women by providing them with a platform to share ideas and develop skills to fight poverty, gender based violence and fight for women's rights. AA Zimbabwe has provided capacity building to its eight Local Development Programme (LDP) partners on RWA formation since 2010. The partners have cascaded the RWA skills to the communities where they are operational.

The stories in this booklet were jointly identified in 2013 by the AA Zimbabwe and partner teams. Both the teams gathered relevant information from the field, mainly through interviews with selected community members. Some of the stories were compiled following partner documentation trainings conducted by the AA Zimbabwe communications and programme quality effectiveness (PQE) teams.

The CP acknowledges the valuable input from partner representatives who compiled most of the stories, the AA Zimbabwe Communications and PQE teams, AA Zimbabwe programme team, and administration and finance teams for logistical support and AAI staff for technical support.



Nyanga community members in a participatory reflection and review meeting discussing their priorities for 2014. This meeting was facilitated by ActionAid Zimbabwe as part of the HRBA processes which promote community active participation

2. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Promote sustainable agriculture and control over natural resources

2.1 I will practice conservation agriculture forever, says rural woman

By Yeukai Macherenje FACT Rusape Programme Officer

Agatha Changunda Kambanga (48) used to struggle to grow enough food on her small plot in Makoni District, in Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe. She had no one to help her plough her soil and the plot had swampy areas where nothing would grow because of the dampness. She had to ask her husband for money to buy seed and to get the soil ploughed.

Agatha could not do all the planting, hoeing and weeding by herself. She managed to grow enough maize and beans to feed her four children and two grandchildren for only half the year. The family had to make do with only two meals a day. Sometimes there was only enough food for a single meal. She was late in paying school fees. When her children fell ill, she couldn't afford medicine.

Agatha's life changed dramatically in 2008, when she learned how to use an approach called conservation agriculture. ActionAid Zimbabwe supported Family AIDS Caring Trust (FACT) Rusape staff with capacity building in 2009 on conservation agriculture and FACT Rusape cascaded the training to Makoni communities in collaboration with The Agricultural Extension (Agritex) department. She continued in 2013 to benefit from the knowledge acquired since 2008.

Instead of hoeing the soil, she left the dried stalks and leaves from the previous crop on the surface. She learned how to plant maize seed directly through the mulch. The mulching helped in managing the swampy area such that she is now using the swampy land. Between the maize rows, she planted pumpkin leaves. The mulching smothered the weeds, freeing her of the backbreaking task of weeding the plot. With conservation agriculture she uses less fertilizer and still her maize crop flourished.

In a good yield, she harvests fifteen to twenty bags of maize, instead of the ten she harvested in previous years. She planted beans during the short rains between 2009 and 2010, and for the first time, she was able to harvest enough for her family to eat. There was enough left over for the next season's seed, and some to sell as well. She is now able to provide for her four children with school fees, uniforms, food three times a day and school books. Thanks to conservation agriculture, Agatha has to do less work, her yields have gone up, and she has become an independent wife and a confident member of the community. "It was a miracle. I will practise conservation agriculture forever," she said. My husband has given me a piece of land where I

can plant whatever I want and he is also practising conservation agriculture.” Agatha is planning to buy her own cattle.

Eight other women out of sixty households in the village are already practicing conservation agriculture and there are more who are showing interest as they are seeing good things happening. Over three hundred people have benefited from conservation agriculture in Makoni.



Agatha Changunda Kambanga in front of her maize field

2.2 Farmer practices conservation agriculture to support his family

By Sarah Karani, ActionAid Zimbabwe Inspirator

Jabulani Ndlovu (44) commonly known as Jabu is a single man who resides in Mawindi Village, Ward 16 of Nkayi District Matabeleland North Province of Zimbabwe. He lives with his elderly mother Emma (86), physically challenged sister Sophie (66) and four orphans from his brother and cousin.

Jabu is the breadwinner for the family. Today in 2014, unlike some years ago, Jabu is able to cater for the needs of the family as well as educate all the children without fail. He does all this from his 1.5 hectares piece of land where he practices conservation agriculture farming

practices due to the arid nature of the environment.

Initially Jabu and other community members looked at it “as something for the poor”. On an experimental basis, they started with smaller plots of 100 by 50 metres and that year there was plenty of rain where Jabu managed to harvest more than two tonnes of maize from his small plot. In 2008, hunger came. There was rising food insecurity due to various interlinked factors that include adverse weather conditions in form of persistent droughts, expensive farm inputs, and erratic rains among others.

Being among the first people in the community practicing this method of farming, he survived with his family as they had plenty of food while there was little or nothing in the shops. He has since developed and increased his land size to 1.5 hectares from 100 by 50 metre plot and he says he will never look back. On one hectare he plants maize and the remaining 3000 meters square is for fodder crops and 2000 square meters he uses for conventional planting using the ox-drawn plough for mixed crops such as yams, pumpkins, melons, sweet reeds, cowpeas amongst other crops.

Since 2010, he has continuously attended several trainings on conservation farming practices in the community conducted through Health Education and Food Security Organization (HEFO) a non-governmental organization operating in the area. HEFO promotes sustainable crop and livestock farming practices to improve on the food security of the people and works in partnership with ActionAid Zimbabwe that provides capacity building to HEFO which in turn cascades the training to communities.

Jabu's land is used as a demonstration plot for conservation farming where the successes of the sustainable practice are clearly visible. He is very contented that when food aid is being distributed his family does not qualify for food aid due to the nature of his farming initiatives. He is key in educating members of the community as one of them said “If Jabu can do it, why not me?” said one woman in the group. However, Jabu said: “The work on the farm is very involving and requires a lot of dedication especially during the weeding but in the end you are assured you will get something even if the rains fail,” said Jabu.

Single-handedly, he has managed to educate his orphaned nephews and nieces from when they were small children until now and he is still providing for their needs. He gets the moral support from his mother and sister and the children help him on the farm while they are away from school. Apart from Jabu, HEFO in 2013 supported 812 people (592 females and 220 males) in trainings on climate change, drought and livestock management practices.



Jabu displaying part of his maize crop after early preparations and planting

2.3 Women cotton assembly- beacon of hope for women farmers in Zimbabwe

The Mbire and Guruve Women Cotton Producers Assembly (WCPA), an association started in 2013 as a forum for women to come together as one voice to deal with cotton production challenges in the sector, has scored a first for women in Zimbabwe. The WCPA has given women farmers the power to bargain with buyers and to improve women's access to land. It has reduced gender-based violence. Mbire and Guruve are in Mashonaland Central Province of Zimbabwe and are situated in the arid region of Zimbabwe where cotton is the preferred cash crop.

Because the women are speaking with one voice, they have agreed that they will not be contracted by cotton farmers to produce the product, but they will register as free farmers and hence through their Assembly, they are now members of the Agricultural Marketing Association (AMA).

However, although some women in Mbire and Guruve would like to be free farmers, their biggest handicap is that they cannot afford to buy inputs and they end up being contracted to cotton companies who will exploit them, which becomes a test on how effective the WCPA is.

ActionAid Zimbabwe partner in Mbire and Guruve, Lower Guruve Development Association

(LGDA) in 2013 facilitated leadership and cotton marketing trainings which benefitted women cotton farmers. These trainings enabled the women cotton farmers to launch the Women Cotton Producers Assemblies in Mbire and Guruve.

According to LGDA programmes Coordinator, Sekai Janga, as at December 2013, there were a total of 8223 women (3302 in Guruve and 4921 in Mbire) members of the Mbire and Guruve WCPA and their membership was spreading over six wards in Mbire and five wards in Guruve. Musanyara Musarurwa, Vice Chairperson for the Mbire WCPA who received trainings on leadership, conflict management and marketing said: “Becoming a member of the Assembly has helped me to study my market and know where to sale my produce, to plan and take farming as a business. This year (2013), I will not be contracted by a cotton company and I will not be exploited.”

“The WCPA workshops invited women to come and attend trainings and this enabled women to meet in the absence of men and discuss issues affecting them. Usually only men attend development workshops. If women attend the development workshops, they will not be leaders,” Musanyara said.

In various interviews, members of the Cotton Assembly said the formation of this union has resulted in women who previously did not control land due to the patriarchal nature of society, now owning and controlling some pieces of land where they are growing cotton.

Angeline Dakwa, a member of the Mbire WCPA at ward level said: “Through the WCPA project, I have managed to convince my husband to give me a piece of land to grow cotton this season (2013-2014). Over the years, I did not know how to approach him as I was afraid. The conflict management trainings I received have been helpful.”

Although women provide the bulk of agricultural labour in Zimbabwe, the majority of them do not have control over the money. “If I control the piece of land for my cotton produce, it means therefore I will control the money,” Angeline said. She said her association with the Mbire WCPA had paid dividends for her as the marketing training she had received had seen her withholding her cotton crop in 2013, to push for better prices. “Instead of selling my cotton crop around June 2013, I withheld it until September 2013 when the price improved from US\$0.30/kg, to US\$0.50/kg,” Angeline said.

Shorai Museredza, a ward level treasurer the WCPA in Guruve said the women cotton assembly initiative had provided women cotton farmers with skills on how to produce the crop and value addition. She however said many women ended up being contracted by cotton companies because of lack of money to buy inputs although they were aware of the negative

consequences of being contracted. Some of the farmers had had their household properties attached by the cotton companies due to the failure to pay back agricultural input loans. Mbire Farmers' Association Chairperson, Charles Gunsaru, said although the WCPA was still in its infancy, women farmers from other areas in the country had approached the WCPA in Mbire to help them replicate the same structures in their areas at district, provincial and national levels. Charles noted that, the WCPA in both Mbire and Guruve did not have the capacity to assist the other districts in forming women cotton assemblies as they still had more to learn. However, they were open to share in form of exchange visits. The WCPA is one unique Commodity Association for the Mbire Farmers' Association as its membership comprises only of women.



Musanyara Musarurwa chairperson of the Mbire WCPA

3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Assist people living in poverty to engage the government and corporates for improved social service delivery

3.1 ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

3.1.1 Killer Junction No More

By Brenda Muronda, MURRA Communications and Advocacy Officer

Masvingo residents have heaved a sigh of relief on the construction of a traffic circle along Masvingo-Beitbridge road, at a junction which had been dubbed the “killer junction” after several deaths of pedestrians in car accidents at the spot.

Construction of the traffic circle commenced around September 2013 after endless lobbying on the part of residents to both the local and central government because of the increase in the number of deaths occurring at the intersection which crossed Masvingo-Beitbridge road and a local Rujeko-Mucheke road. The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Infrastructural Development is constructing the circle which is said to be costing about US\$550 000.

Once completed, the traffic circle will benefit over 50 000 residents and millions of non-residents as it is sited along the Masvingo- Beitbridge highway. Once completed, the traffic circle will control traffic entering Masvingo from Beitbridge as well as traffic leaving Masvingo along the same road.

Roselyn Mutsengi, a student at Masvingo Polytechnic College expressed relief that the government was taking action by constructing the traffic circle as this would help to curb speeding by motorists approaching the intersection.

“I saw three students from my college being run over by a speeding lorry which failed to brake in time while approaching the intersection. One of them died on the spot while the other two sustained serious injuries. It was terrible and it was not the first time that people died from car accidents on that intersection, which is why it has been called the Killer Junction” said Roselyn. These are the sentiments of most of the residents in Masvingo about the junction which had caused so much grief and anxiety for people, especially residents with children attending schools close to the intersection.

Masvingo District Administrator, James Mazvidza in an interview with a local newspaper commended the development occurring in Masvingo: “The traffic circle will be an asset to the city as it will reduce traffic accidents at a point which has recorded quite a number of them”.

The construction of the traffic circle came as a result of lobby and advocacy meetings organised by residents with the Traffic Safety Council, the municipal council, ministry of local government and the District Administrator's office and other local stakeholders. The Masvingo residents persistently requested that the construction of the traffic circle be included in the Municipal budget since 2009.

“It is a relief that the local and central authorities have decided to listen to our pleas, because the issue of the roundabout (traffic circle) has been a burning issue for a long time now,” said Robert Makhadho, a Masvingo United Residents Ratepayers Association (MURRA) member from Ward 3 in Mucheke suburb.

“We have been calling for council to do something about that killer junction for over four years, so we are glad” said another MURRA member, Sonia Chirata of Ward 5 in Mucheke Suburb.

MURRA, a partner to ActionAid Zimbabwe, has provided advocacy and lobby training to MURRA ward level members since 2010. To-date 440 people (283 women and 157 men) have been trained. MURRA has lobby structures in the form of ward committees which carry advocacy issues at ward level going up to District level. Residents convene meetings and identify issues and take up them and then engage the duty bearers.

ActionAid Zimbabwe has supported MURRA through trainings on social accountability, governance and advocacy.



Construction at the “killer junction” along Masvingo Beitbridge road

3.1.2 Poverty will not pull us down, dumpsite youths

By Walter Sebele and Thandolwenkosi Sibindi of NYDT

First, help me never to tell a lie. Second, give me neither poverty nor riches! Give me just enough to satisfy my needs, Proverbs 30: 8 outlines in the bible (Kings James Version). Such is the cry of youths who are forced to salvage a living in the dirty slums of Ngozi Mine, a dump site situated on the western outskirts (12km) of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

The dumpsite is an informal settlement where people living in extreme poverty are finding themselves living in since 1993. Due to rural urban migration in Zimbabwe, a lot of the people at Ngozi Mine who come in search of green pastures in Bulawayo and fail to make it eventually find themselves at the dumpsite. Social services such as water, health facilities and education are next to nothing at the slum, which harbours about 300 households and an estimated 1 500 people. Service delivery providers, the bulk of whom are culprits in dumping waste at this site, have turned a deaf ear on this community. However, due to recent Ngozi Mine youth engagements with council, there have been some social service delivery interventions in the area, however to a minimum extent.

Life in the gutters is one that no sane man can envisage living, hence such a life has not proven to be the end of the tunnel for the Ngozi Mine youths. This is only possible with the change of attitude to life by youths like Qhubani, Nonhlalo, Thithibele and Knowledge after having undergone a Life Skills and advocacy and lobby training conducted by the National Youth Development Trust (NYDT) in February 2013. A total of 41 youths comprising 13 males, 28 females were trained on life skills and advocacy at the dumpsite in 2013. NYDT is a partner to ActionAid Zimbabwe and is a youth membership based civic organisation whose lifetime commitment is to empower the youth to be in control of their destiny and that of the country.

Since the dumpsite community's interaction with NYDT in 2013, 10 youths have set up an advocacy and lobby team that has engaged the council servicing the area resulting in the supply of water in form of bowsers since 2013. The community had over the years been turned away by neighbours from nearby suburbs who have water. The nearest suburb is Cowdry Park which is 3km away.



Ngozi Mine youth rummages through waste at Ngozi Mine dumping site

“Currently there is a 1000 litre bowser that comes once in every week; this is a welcome development although the water is not enough for the 300 households,” said Qhubani Moyo (25) the youth the advocacy group leader. Moyo has been residing at the dumping site for 10 years without access to water. Moyo however said Council is sometimes bedevilled with water demands from suburbs in Bulawayo and may not sustain the supply of the water to Ngozi Mine every week.

At 23, Nonhlalo Ncube who is already an expectant single mother of one believes that living in the slums will not deter her from playing a role in the national processes. As such, she has taken it upon herself to go around the slum encouraging other youths to register to vote as the future of the country is “solely” dependent on the manner in which the people choose their leadership.

“This is not life, we need to empower ourselves and get out of these slums and take care of our aging parents so that they have a decent life. However, this is acquired through our ability to participate as voters and the first resort being to register.”

Thithibele Mpofu (32) a mother of four children stated that: “Life has never been a bed of roses for us, however we realized that there is no need for us to sit and wait for the father of the children to bring home the little that he has. As a family, we have resorted to panelling of dishes which we sell in rural areas near us. It affords us with enough to keep us going.”

“Our main constraint as a people is the fact that there is no access to education for us and our children and the only thing that we tend to resort to is the uptake of drugs, prostitution and other unruly activities in life.”

The same sentiments were echoed by Knowledge Ncube (18) who stated that as a result of NYDT intervention, he has managed to make a living through the revenue he gets from selling recycled cans. “I manage to make about \$100 a month. Since I stay with my mother, this money has been assisting to pay for my mother’s hospital bills. This is keeping me away from the streets and from unruly behaviour,” said Ncube.

Knowledge added that besides capacitating him with basic business management skills, the Life Skills training has enabled him to change his attitude towards life in general. “Before the Life Skills training, I was solely dependent on my mother who is also struggling to make ends meet. I used to indulge in unsafe sex and would be involved with older women. However, after interactions with NYDT, I decided to change my lifestyle. I got tested for HIV and the results came out negative. Right now, I am mobilising other young men to get tested and to get circumcised,” said Ncube.

“Most young people in this area spend most of their time drinking hot stuff (ithothotho), smoking and indulging in unsafe sexual activities and hence the need to change this anomaly,” he said.

3.1.3 Children school grades improve after classroom furniture grant

By Allan Sarimana, SCPP Programme Officer

“I can now concentrate on my school work without fearing that I’ll be pierced by a nail or pinched by broken pieces of the wooden bench that I seat on. Sometimes the broken bench legs would collapse sending my classmates and I to the floor,” says Anyway (10) from Dazi Village, Nyatate (ward 17) of Nyanga District in Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe

Anyway waters his family’s portion in a community garden before attending school at Nyabeze Primary School. He is in Grade 6. His family sells vegetables at the local business centre for money to pay Anyway’s school fees, to buy cooking oil, salt and maize. Anyway walks 7 kilometres to school. Anyway and his classmates used to sit on old and broken benches and write from an improvised desks made out of an old classroom door.

“ActionAid partner in Saunyama LDP, Simukai Child Protection Programme (SCPP), purchased 30 benches, 15 desks, 7 standard teachers’ chairs, 3 padded teachers’ chairs, and 2 blackboard erasers for my school in 2013. My classmates and I now seat comfortably in class. My in-class test marks have improved from the 30% and pushed up to 61%. My handwriting has also improved as I am now writing from a stable surface desk. My class

teacher, Mr. Muzarawetu has awarded me most-improved merit star for the month of February 2013,” said Anyway.

“Previously, during inter-schools sports tournaments, colleagues from neighbouring schools with better facilities in the same zone used to mock me and my schoolmates that we had classes on a hot-seating basis. Hot-seating is when pupils have two sessions of classes in a day, some coming to school in the morning and the others coming in the afternoon due to limited facilities at the school. Thanks to ActionAid Zimbabwe in assisting in the purchase of the school furniture, hot-seating is now a thing of the past. I now look forward to my classes at Nyabeze Primary School and I am proud to learn there”. Webster Mashiri, the head of Nyabeze Primary School approached Simukai in August 2012 seeking for assistance for classroom furniture for use by pupils and teachers at his school. Reported incidences of injuries due to old benches breaking have been eradicated because of the new furniture grant.

Anyway applauded the furniture grant and said the new furniture enticed many pupils to come to school as it has positively contributed to the decline in number of absenteeism at the school. In addition to the furniture, a total of 101 (51 boys and 50 girls) pupils at Nyabeze Primary School had their school fees paid for by Simukai and ActionAid Zimbabwe for the period from November 2012 to March 2014.



Anyway (in red t-shirt) practicing his handwriting skills on the new desks and benches, together with his Grade 5 peers at Nyabeze Primary School

3.1.4. No Responsibilities no Rights, Nyanga children demand

By Richard Musarara, DOMCCP Programme Officer

Rosemary (14) from Mandikuvaza village ward 12 of Nyanga District of Manicaland Province is proud to be a member of the in-school child protection committee (CPC). Rosemary was in grade seven in 2013 at Bumhira Primary School where she was the secretary of the in-school CPC.

The CPC is an independent children's committee elected to represent other children and is a watchdog on child abuse. Since its inception of the CPC initiative by the government of Zimbabwe in the early 90s', rural schools like Bumhira had not implemented the child led CPC activities. The model seeks to promote interaction between the public, school, parents and the children. The CPC structure seeks to promote the participation of all the parties and make them to understand the contribution that they can make to provide the best outcomes for the child.

A baseline survey that was carried in January 2013 by Diocese of Mutare Community Care Programme (DOMCCP) following high abuse cases reported to the Social Welfare department revealed that 70% of students at Bumhira primary school were not willing to openly discuss on issues of abuse in the presence of elderly people like school teachers and parents. Along the same line the study also revealed that children were allowed to contribute in family discussions but their contributions were largely disregarded as Rosemary said: 'It is as if we are invisible. They call us to family meetings so that we listen to what they say since they would have already made up their minds on the subject matter'.



Rosemary

DOMCCP, a faith based organization that is promoting the rights of children and women within Nyanga District, is an LDP partner to ActionAid Zimbabwe.

Following an awareness campaign in April 2013 on establishment of in-school CPCs carried out by DOMCCP, Rosemary's school established a committee of 12 members comprising of 10 female and 2 male pupils ranging from grade five to seven in 2013. The two-month awareness campaign was carried in partnership with ActionAid Zimbabwe. The role of ActionAid was to build the capacity of DOMCCP on children's rights and sexual reproductive health and rights of children and the youth. DOMCCP cascaded the trainings to the communities.

DOMCCP has been conducting a number of children's rights and abuse sessions with the CPCs within the school since February 2013. It is from these sessions that Rosemary developed poems on child rights and responsibilities. She has managed to perform a poem entitled "Rights and Responsibilities" on a number of community functions and special events like Africa Day , the Day of the African Child and 16 days of activism against gender based violence.

"To me it's not just a poem but it is spreading the message to my fellow students, parents and friends that, in as much as we advocate for child rights, they also come with responsibilities. Yes, it is our right to be heard when we also contribute a point in the family but it is our responsibility to listen and obey our parents," says Rosemary.

To date, 20 schools have established in-school child protection committees within Nyamaropa LDP. More than 100 young girls aged between 8 to 18 years have benefited through cascading training from this intervention. By November 2013, seven cases of abuses were reported to the police and the cases were still being handled by the courts. Prior to the formation of the CPCs, reports of child abuse were swept under the carpet.

Rosemary has been representing the school at cluster level where more than five schools come together to compete on sporting activities like netball, football and athletics. She had addressed more than 500 students. She is also expecting to develop more poems on a number of topics that are affecting children especially the girl child.



Rosemary standing far right with some of the CPC members at their school

3.2 WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

3.2.1 Woman on a journey to financial freedom

By Tendai Garwe, Communications and Advocacy Unit, TWT

There is a saying, “you empower a woman and you empower a nation.” In Masvingo Province, Gutu District, in Ward 7 there is a testimony aligned to this quote. Women in ward 7 have taken matters into their own hands to change the course of their financial destiny. In post-independence where men left their wives in the rural areas to seek employment in the city; women were left vulnerable without certainty of financial support. Patriarchy has strong and strict rules that clearly outline and reminds women that men were the breadwinners. However, with the gradual decline of the Zimbabwean economy, husbands and wives now work together to support the family, women carrying most of the weight.

This scenario is similar for the women in ward 7 rural Gutu, having to find ways to send their children to school and fend for the family. Women are using a livestock revolving fund to gain financial freedom. The idea was birthed after an economic empowerment training that by The Women's Trust (TWT) in 2009 at the Gutu rural district council hall. The training strengthened the existing business skills and empowered women to come up with fresh ideas towards building a sound financial base and maintaining sustainable businesses.

Vongai Rairai (34) is a married woman and mother of two boys was one of the attendees on the workshops above. She stays with her husband and her 3 year old son the ward 7 in Gutu district. She is the breadwinner for the family.

Vongai was forced into marriage when she was 18. Probing further concerning her marriage, she seemed somewhat uncomfortable talking about her past and situations surrounding her marriage. She said: “women get married for different reasons; mine were good enough for that time and environment. Besides we were taught never to wash your dirty linen in public.” The shackles of Patriarchy and culture seemed to be haunting her. Immediately she shifted attention to cattle that she and 11 other women acquired through a livestock revolving fund.

Prior to the training, these women were functioning perfectly with a revolving fund that bought plates taking turns to furnish their kitchens. After the training, the women group called Tirirparwendo (we are on a journey) put their heads together and started a livestock revolving fund. The journey towards Vongai's financial freedom began. Vongai said: “If it wasn't for the training and the revolving fund, life wouldn't be this comfortable. It changed my life for the

positive. I was just an ordinary person, with a lot of plates (she giggles). Now I have a bull to work in the field and use the manure from the bull for the garden.”



Vongai in a green vest with an unidentified friend

Each woman contributed \$5 but this increased to \$10 for the revolving fund. The money would be lent within the group, at 20% interest. The women used this money to buy calves for their livestock revolving fund. The Tiriparwendo group herds their own cattle, and makes sure they are treated and well sheltered.

Prior to this economic group, Vongai could not look after her children or adequately feed her family. She used to plough the land using her hands and work part time in commercial fields to earn an income. With her own bull, she is able to plough the land quicker, giving her more time to work in the garden and other household chores. She now earns a substantial amount of money to support her family. Vongai is now able to send her children to school and fully cater for their basic needs.

TWT works in partnership with ActionAid Zimbabwe to advocate for women's rights. Vongai is aware of various rights; right to information, right to economic freedom and right to choice,

among other rights. Vongai is among the women in the economic empowerment groups in ward 7 Gutu and is among the groups of 68 women who started a market gardening project in Gutu. Vegetables are now readily available to feed their families and also sell them to the local markets to earn an income.

In Zimbabwe, a majority of women's rights are violated because of the limited economic freedom and knowledge of their rights. ActionAid Zimbabwe and TWT's partnership is presently in five districts in Zimbabwe namely Zvishavane, Matobo, Gutu, Bulawayo Central and Nkayi. If the programmes are rolled out to the rest of the country, it will bring about change in women's decision making abilities and tangible evidence in rights awareness and conscious building thus illuminating the power within.

3.2.2 Woman demystifies cultural trends in Masvingo

By Brenda Muronda, MURRA Communications and Advocacy Officer

"I have learnt to become bold enough to stand in front of others and represent them too". Former Masvingo United Residents and Ratepayers Association (MURRA) board member and NANGO Southern Region Vice-Chairperson Lucia Masekesa sits behind her desk while granting an interview with Masvingo United Residents and Ratepayers Association (MURRA) Information Officer Brenda Muronda. MURRA is a partner to ActionAid Zimbabwe.

A dynamo powerhouse, Masekesa is a 48 year old single mother of 3 children who has worked extensively with various civic society organizations in various sectors. "I started out as a preschool teacher before going into politics and then joining the civic society and informal trading sector" said Masekesa.

Currently she works with Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU), National Association of Non-Governmental Organisation (NANGO) and Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CCZ). The Women's' Trust to mention some. The Women's' Trust to mention some. However she attributes her resourcefulness and capabilities to the various Women Empowerment trainings organized by MURRA. "I was one of the beneficiaries of various trainings organized by MURRA. The trainings were on women local government aspirants, women in leadership positions and electoral processes workshops," said Masekesa.

Having been a board member for MURRA, she has had the opportunity to go as far as Zambia and various other platforms representing Masvingo residents' interests. "I have learnt how we can engage with city council as residents to bring forth positive changes in our community which is essential for its development", adds Ms Masekesa.

She noted that as part of MURRA management committee they were able to advocate for several changes which ensured efficient and affordable service delivery. “We were able to negotiate with council for reduction of maternity fees in council clinics which were extremely high as well as the provision of Antiretroviral Treatment in council clinics”, she said.

However, it has not been an easy road and it is far from over. Masekesa was quick to point out several challenges that women who want to be in leadership face. “It seems that a lot of women have not fully appreciated the importance of women in leadership roles and how much they can achieve if given the chance”, Masekesa said.

Looking at the recently elected MURRA management committee, there is only one woman-Shamiso Siyavezva who was elected out of the eight seats available. Masekesa who had contested for the MURRA Board Chairperson seat lost out to Alderman N. I Tserere who is a man. “There were four seats which women contested for but only one seat was won by a woman despite the fact that almost 70% of members present at the AGM were female. Women need to be educated to vote for other women,” said Masekesa

Undeterred and already looking ahead, Masekesa says she will not stop persisting to get more women representation in leadership roles. It is this sheer determination and resourcefulness which was recognized by the Board of trustees who then made her one of the Trustees of the MURRA and also incorporated three more women into the management committee.



Masekesa: Lucia Masekesa

3.3 YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

3.3.1 A phone call that changed a young man's life, as youth become actively involved in decision making processes

By Sizwile Nyamande, E Africa

Twenty six year old Welcome Ngwenya grew up at Ndlovu Village under Chief Mvuthu in Hwange rural in Matabeleland North Province. He did his primary and secondary level education in the rural areas of Hwange District. While at school Welcome used to play soccer at school with friends and never attended any forums involving young people.

In 2005 he moved to the resort town of Victoria Falls in the same province where he started a curio carving project as some form of employment.

In 2007, he received a phone call from a colleague Kelvin Ncube who was also in the same curio business. Kelvin was inviting him to a District Convergence meeting spearheaded by Environment Africa (EA) Youth Programme. The District Convergence meeting was an annual activity that brought together 150 young people from Hwange district. Issues that were discussed included processes of breaking generation gaps between young people and the older generation where young people were encouraged to participate in decision making processes in their area. EA then in 2007 was the partner of MS Zimbabwe and in 2011 became the partner to ActionAid Zimbabwe partner under the Building Local Democracy theme, focusing on Youth Empowerment.

The Convergence meeting challenged Welcome to become involved in community development initiatives and decision making processes in his home area. After that phone call inviting him to the convergence meeting his life never became the same again. From an ordinary young man accustomed to playing football on the dusty roads, he evolved into a very active and vocal young man in the Victoria Falls community. He then started attending full council meetings and discussion forums on issues affecting young people. He also became involved in exchange visits and experience sharing initiatives with youth counterparts from Zambia.

Between 2009 and 2013 Welcome attended training sessions on leadership, local governance, proposal writing and lobbying and advocacy. He was capacitated with knowledge on good leadership skills. He then started assuming influential leadership position in his organization. He is currently the Vice Chairperson of Busyisland Youth Curio Market. This youth group works

closely with EA youth programme in advocating for social accountability, human rights and peace building initiatives in the community.

In 2010, Welcome Ngwenya was elected as the Board member for Victoria Falls Agenda. The Victoria Falls Agenda is a civic organization advocating for the inclusion of all people despite their race, language in decision making processes and development initiatives in Victoria Falls. Welcome has played a pivotal role in a number of development initiatives in the resort town including lobbying local authorities to change practices in favour of youths. Welcome was part of the 10 youths who advocated for a Victoria Falls Club to be resuscitated as a recreational facility for the youths instead of it being a night (beer) club as it had become. Although the club has been resuscitated under new management, what was important was that consideration and inclusion of recreational facilities was made as evidenced by the presence of sports grounds for volleyball, soccer and netball.

“I will never stop fighting for the social injustices affecting the youth in the resort town of Victoria Falls as long as I live,” says Welcome.

EA has worked with a total of over 1,700 youths like Welcome under its Youth Empowerment Programme whose objective is to promote social and civic rights awareness among youth as well as youth participation in development processes. Of these youth approximately 900 are female and 800 are young men from Hwange urban, Hwange rural and Victoria Falls town. Although the project came to an end in December 2013, the young people in the district have asserted that they will continue the social accountability work that was started by the project.



Welcome Ngwenya

3.3.2 Zengeza youth defy the odds

By Francis Rwodzi, YAT

Zengeza is a sprawling high density suburb located in Chitungwiza about 20km from Harare. Walking down the streets of Zengeza, one cannot help noticing the large number of youths roaming the streets. Some are doing odd jobs while others are milling around street corners. Most of these youths have gone through high school education while others have gone as far as college and university but they cannot find employment.

Chamunorwa Madya (27) is one of these youths who after finishing his advanced level studies has found himself without a job. For Chamunorwa, life has never been easy for him since leaving school almost ten years ago. In March 2012 Chamunorwa was one of the youths who received training on leadership and life skills from Youth Agenda Trust (YAT) under the project, "Breaking the Culture of Silence". YAT is a partner to ActionAid Zimbabwe. Since the training, Chamunorwa has been involved in a number of community projects including standing as a councillor in Zengeza 2 ward (2013 elections) which he however lost.

Since contesting during the elections, Chamunorwa has not only shown leadership to his peers but has become a shining beacon in his community. Although he has not been able to find a job yet, the leadership training that he received from YAT has opened up new horizons for him. In September 2013, Chamunorwa successfully applied to the Education Union of South Africa (ETU) and gained entrance into the institution's Program for Young Politicians in Africa (PYPA). At the institute, Chamunorwa has been able to learn more on leadership, conflict management, climate change, HIV and AIDS, corruption, discrimination, human rights, gender and empowerment. The opportunity has opened up new avenues for him, where he has gone to South Africa for training as well as travelling as far as Switzerland and Canada. He has been able to learn new things, meet people from other countries and exchange notes with them.

He has met with people from South Africa, Mozambique, United States of America and the United Kingdom among other countries. He has also met with youths from other political parties such as Renamo and Frelimo of Mozambique as well as African National Congress African National Congress (ANC), Democratic Alliance and Congress of the People Election (COPE) of South Africa.

"Working with Youth Agenda Trust has opened up new horizons for me. The Breaking the Culture of Silence project seeks to establish democratic communities where over 3 500 youths are empowered to participate fully in social, political and economic development in a culture of

freedom, equality, respect and tolerance. This project has really changed my life and those of my peers that we are working with. I never imagined that one day I will find myself in places as far as Switzerland and Canada, but here I am, courtesy of YAT,” Chamunorwa said.

Chamunorwa said he is going to use the knowledge that he is gaining to develop his community and share the knowledge with his colleagues.

“The program that I am currently doing ends in November 2014 and I shall be visiting other countries and see how they are also doing their community development projects so that we learn from them,” he said. Chamunorwa said that young people should shape their own destiny and not sit on their laurels. He called upon all the youths to get involved in community development work and challenge duty bearers to deliver on their promises.

“As the youth, we should not be complaining about everything. Yes the jobs are not there but what are we doing to ensure those who must create jobs are doing that. We must desist from embarking on compensatory behaviours such as drug abuse and prostitution,” Chamunorwa said.

The youth leadership training programme under the Breaking the Culture of Silence project has had a profound effect on the communities of Zengeza and Epworth. The youths are beginning to realise that democracy and human rights are not given on a silver platter but have to be fought for. Chamunorwa's story is one such example of young men who are determined to change their community.



3.3.3 A journey to success for community volunteer

By Ishmael Mnkandla, Zimrights volunteer

My name is Ishmael Mnkandla and I joined Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights) in 2006. Being a member of ZimRights has proved to be so much beneficial to me and other peers. Zimrights is a partner to ActionAid Zimbabwe. When I first became a member of ZimRights, clearly I could not comprehend the objectives of the organisation and its structure of operation. As such, I was an ignorant young person whose motive was clearly of getting tangible benefits only.

The benefits of ZimRights membership are of high quality and significant. Trainings offered by ZimRights education department really give individuals a complete turnaround in life. As I testify, I have received quite a number of trainings on advocacy, community action, peace building and human rights just to mention but a few. All of these trainings have improved my participation in developmental and networking skills. Surely one can make a clear observation of maturity in me in terms of participation on advocacy activities especially in those issues pertaining to the youths.

In respect of those trainings by ZimRights, I have even established a continuous growing network with other peers from other youths and rights groups. Such one organisation is Bulawayo based community Radio Station. Radio Dialogue I can openly disclose that I am currently working on voluntary bases with Radio Dialogue as a citizen journalist and also doing radio programing and programming and production at one of their office departments called "Youths Press Bureau" Such benefits would have not come through if I had not been part of ZimRights as they are the ones that recommended me to Radio Dialogue.

My participation in local community issues has also improved immensely. A good example is that before I became a member of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association, I never bothered attending public meetings because then I did not realise their benefits. At this moment and time, I make it a point that I attend such gatherings for the benefit of me and the rest of the community. By attending such meetings it provides an opportunity for me to generate radio content in terms of material and issues happening within the community that have to be debated and formatted to concerned stakeholders. As part of my Advocacy initiative, I have been taking some of the issues from my community and forwarding duty bearers and also using the media.

I would like to extend my gratitude to ZimRights. I would like to express my appreciation for the empowerment that ZimRights has given me.



Ishmael showing off his certificates he attained through Zimrights trainings

3.4 PEACE BUILDING AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

3.4.1 Community takes the law by its “horns” as it seeks to end conflict

By Godwin Chigwedere of CCMT

The Chiundura community sits in the heart of Zimbabwe- in the Midlands Province. It is a community that would pass for any other rural Zimbabwe community. The community cannot boast of any extra-ordinary educational facilities or any infrastructural development that would put this community above other communities from other districts and provinces of Zimbabwe. Yet it is a community daring to tackle issues no other rural community has dared to tackle in the District or Province.

When Chief Gambiza of Chiundura Communal Lands approached CCMT to request for an intervention that would address the plight of women suffering injustices as a result of the application of the Customary Law, the district authorities were perplexed. This kind of request was strange. It was a topic beyond this ordinary chief. “This Chief is crazy! What exactly does he want?” they asked. “And why don’t the women approach Courts of Law if these issues are

bothering them. True, the district had not tackled such a challenge before and yes, is it not the job of Parliamentarians to debate laws? Yet the Chief would not stop inviting CCMT to intervene. The Chief had attended dialogue platforms facilitated by CCMT and was convinced the CCMT approach and sustained process of engaging stakeholders to interrogate issues was the way to go if Village Heads and men in his community were to appreciate the pain they inflict on women and children each time they make decisions about marriages, inheritance and other customary practices.

But the Council would not budge. The Council saw no need for intervention by an NGO in this process. The Chief would not give up. In one of the meetings, the Chief raised his issue with council for the umpteenth time. This time he decided to use an anecdote:

“In my community lives a woman, Miriro, 59 years old and recently divorced mother of two. Her youngest child is 25 years old. Her husband has just taken a younger wife and wants Miriro to move out of the matrimonial home where they have lived for 30 years together. The Customary Law cannot protect Miriro. The General Law would be an alternative but Miriro does not have resources to pursue the case in a court of Law which is also very far away from her home. To compound the problem, what benefit could accrue to Miriro if she approaches the General Law? The husband does not have any substantial property and he is basing his decision on customary law.”

The chief feels strongly that the Customary Law does not protect women and children. Yet, as a chief he is expected to be the custodian of this law whose weaknesses he is clear about. The government, through its endeavour to empower chiefs has made it clear, whether intentionally or unintentionally, that Customary Law and General Law carry the same weight and community members, especially men in rural communities are only too happy, in marital conflict to lean onto the Customary laws expediently much to the disadvantage of women.

And still, council was not convinced about how such a challenge could be dealt with!

Playing its mediatory role, CCMT consulted Council to be allowed to carry out a research in Chiundura that would inform on this issue. The data gathering approach entailed that a dialogue platform would be established where the issues would be raised for discussion. Council gave in. Council officials, traditional leaders, women, youth and men would openly raise their observations and recommendations to each other in this platform. The research informed that Miriro was one in hundreds of women who were suffering quietly in the area and that the application of dual legal systems was confusing and disadvantaging women. The passionate views expressed by participants from all sectors have kept council officials riveted to the process.

Following the establishment of the dialogue platform, three dialogues have taken place. These have brought together traditional leaders, women, men and youth. Women have come out strongly to raise their voice on this salient conflict and always they outnumber men in the platforms. The platforms have also brought in NANGO, Child-line, Legal Resources Foundation, Musasa Project and The Department of Women's Affairs to partner CCMT in the dialogues and share ideas and experiences on the two sets of Laws.

What is emerging from the platform is that while the issues initially involved traditional leaders and women, traditional leaders and young people have grabbed the opportunity to raise questions that affect their relationship as well. And more issues are going to emerge. The emerging issues previously unknown and unplanned for have aided justification for such processes in communities.

One village head remarked, " We have attended other workshops before, but the approach where we actually question the laws, freely argue out our needs as different sectors of communities in such a sustained and enriching manner is new to us."

The results of this initiative cannot be prejudged but one thing is for sure; the Chiundura community has opened a new chapter in its life and the District Council can no longer disengage.



A woman representative Mrs Bepete during a dialogue meeting with Chief Gambiza (far right) and others

4. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Ensure women and girls can break the cycle of poverty and violence, build economic alternatives and claim control over their bodies

4.1 From rejection to healing, a story of a woman's victory

By Charity Fengu, Musasa Bulawayo Personnel Assistant

Judith Nkiwane (38) from Ward 4, Ntabazinduna Village at Umguza District in Matabeleland North province, is a living example of a woman who has stood firmly and grounded on her principles. Her challenging circumstances kept her in tears and in each tear she learnt a lesson and each lesson only made her stronger and courageous to live on.

Married at 20 years of age in 1994 to Mr Nkiwane, Judith is a mother of 5 children and comes from a family of 7. Her fate began in 1999 when her husband Nkiwane became unemployed. He left for a Binga in Matabeleland North Province where he met a woman whom he took to his parent's household to stay. She became the focal point of attention in the Nkiwane family as she was able to bear a child for Mr Nkiwane through normal birth. She was even confirmed to be the "best daughter in law" by the family as compared to Judith who bore all five children through Caesarean section surgery.

The consequence of this condition was that Judith was unable to carry on with normal household chores after birthing since the doctor advised that she needed to rest and avoid heavy duties so as to allow the healing of soft tissues as the number of children she had born was too much for that type of birthing. Although Mr Nkiwane had taken the initiative to help his wife through this time, the in-laws scorned his gesture and expressed that their son was bewitched by Judith.

Months went by and in six months, Judith's husband was back at home with her. The new woman was suddenly out of the picture. Meanwhile, tension had mounted between Judith and her in-laws. By this time, Judith had moved out of the family household to her own place. Relations were broken as Judith's children vowed never to set foot at their grandparent's household, and surely they never did so for a good five years.

Shame and fear got the best of Judith. She cut ties with her family, friends and only survived on the love and support of her children and a few of her siblings who seemed to understand her situation. The village headman was the nephew of Judith's mother in law and that even made matters worse for Judith as she was certain at this point that she had nobody to turn to and was

contemplating committing suicide. The police she ran to in 2006 discharged the case after advising Judith's mother-in-law to consider Judith as her own child and resolve the dispute amicably.

Some have said before that “a problem well stated is a problem half solved,” but this was not the case for Judith as the very people she poured her heart to brushed her off as “stupid”. However, one community leader a Mrs Jennifer Sithole, who once encountered Musasa, interacted with the organisation and trained to be a community based counsellor through Musasa, noticed Judith's withdrawal and referred her to a meeting held by Musasa in 2011. This was just the thing she needed, a peace building and conflict management workshop, Judith exclaimed “I acknowledged that I also had my shortcomings and I began to see my faults from the subjects we tackled.” Judith resolved that she wanted a change and she was going to make the first move.

After the meeting, Judith went straight to her in-laws house and invited her mother-in-law for the Musasa workshop which was continuing the following day. It has been proven that forgiveness is the key to action and freedom, indeed, Judith and her mother in law are now peace club members.

In addition to being a member of the peace club, Judith was an experienced member of the mother support group formed in 2007. Judith also got Project management training in 2011 through Musasa and participates in sport as a wellness therapy. She and the peace club members cultivate fields around the community for a fee and use the proceeds to assist the underprivileged in the area. She also assists in referring people to Musasa, who may be in need of professional counselling and assistance to acquire birth certificates and she is a bona fide community based counsellor.

Judith is proudly still married to her husband Nkiwane who now cuts firewood for commercial use. Her confidence and life are normal again and she maintains good and strong relations with her in-laws, family and friends.

Musasa trained 80 community based councillors (all women) in 2011. ActionAid Zimbabwe provides funding towards Musasa programs and facilitates for staff development trainings which include; documentation, lobbying and advocacy. Musasa implements programs of engaging in dialogue with duty bearers and national networks. The organization conducts advocacy training for the youth and trains community based counsellors. In conjunction with other stakeholders Musasa has successfully intervened in various challenges facing communities in the Ntabazinduna area and has contributed to the development within the area.



Judith Nkiwane

4.2 Scorned woman makes a first

By Patience Madzivire, Family AIDS Caring Trust, Rusape Child Sponsorship Officer

Maonandini Sidhuna, a Rural Women's Assembly (RWA) chairperson from Marigidi Village in Ward 22 of Nyanga District in Manicaland of Zimbabwe shines everyday as she has become a light for other women from her ward. She is a mother of two children and is also a widow making her way in life and bearing all the burdens and joys of motherhood.

She was never lucky with marriage as she was married in 1990 and lost her first husband in 2002. She remarried in 2003 and became a second time widow two years later as her second husband also died leaving her to face the world alone.

After the death of her first husband, Maonandini went back to her parents' home in Chipinge, Manicaland Province where the community was not too friendly with young widows as they are viewed as third class citizens. "Life was not easy," Maonandini said, with tears flowing her cheeks, "being a second time widow and with nothing to start from, I sold the only things I had been left with, that is my bed and wardrobe so I could raise bus fare for me and my children so I could return to my parent's home."

The frustrations and stigmatization she faced after losing her first husband pushed her into her second marriage, which was unfortunately an abusive one. Maonandini, a holder of a cutting and designing certificate, fell victim to effects of patriarchy as her second husband would not allow her to work even though she was qualified.

All hell broke loose after the death of her second husband. Her in-laws blamed her for the death of their son and she could not inherit anything from her dead husband. Instead, the family took everything and even collected her husband's terminal benefits from the company he used to work for.

Although more than 10 years had passed after the death of her first and second husband, the community still had not changed their perception on widows and this time stigma and discrimination was coming from her own home which then forced her to flee from Chipinge and relocate in Nyanga where her journey to success began. Chipinge is about 250km from Nyanga.

In 2012, Maonandini joined the RWA in her area, where she became the chairperson of the group comprising 10 women from Marigidi Village in Ward 22, Nyanga District. Maonandini and the other nine women started the RWA initiative to empower poor rural women so they could stand on their own feet and make decisions on matters affecting their homes. This group was provided with trainings on buying and selling and how to start up their own businesses. Family AIDS Caring Trust (FACT) Nyanga in partnership with ActionAid Zimbabwe (AA Zimbabwe) provided the trainings to the RWA group with skills on how to come up with the assembly and income generating skills in 2012. The RWA group of 10 women feeds into other RWA structures at Ward level (Ward22 in Nyanga) where 100 other women are part of the RWA. Maonandini used her skills in cutting and designing to influence the group into venturing into sewing and she became the teacher. FACT Nyanga in partnership with AA Zimbabwe provided them with five sewing machines and material to start up their project. In their group, they fundraise through Income savings and Lending (ISAL) and dress-making. From the profits they are making and with no man to lean on, Maonandini managed to build a two bedroomed house at her homestead in 2013. "I will not let anyone hold me down, enough is enough ...marriage is no longer an option, I am better off without a man. "

Being the hard worker that she is, in 2014, Maonandini managed to send her son to boarding school. It is a thing of the elite to send children to boarding school and very rare in rural areas like Nyanga where people's livelihoods are mainly subsistence farming. "I want to challenge other women that a widow can do great things and achieve better than men." At home she is a

proud owner of a piece of land and with her bare hands she built a pig-sty where she is rearing pigs as another income generating project, “the sky is the limit. Right now I am aiming at getting a driver's licence as I am one day going to buy a car.” At present she is doing yet another good deed as she is helping three orphans with food and uniforms in her village in Nyanga.

Maonandini, 'seeing through me' as her name literally means, is setting an example to other women and hopes to see women especially widows being hard workers and making it in life.

RWA is a women's group formed to improve the lives of rural women by providing them with a platform to share ideas and develop skills to fight poverty, gender based violence and fight for women's rights. ActionAid Zimbabwe has since 2010, provided capacity building to its eight Local Development Programme (LDP) partners including FACT Nyanga on RWA formation. The partners have cascaded the RWA skills to the communities where they are operational.



Maonandini Sidhuna checking her pig

4.3 A Second Chance at Educating My Children

By Mariam Mathew, ActionAid Zimbabwe Inspirator

Vivian Sanyamahwe (37) is a wife to Pios Nyamaropa (42) and a mother of six children. They live in Mandipaka Village, Ward 22 of Nyanga District which is in Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe. Today in 2014 unlike just two years ago, Vivian and her husband can comfortably afford to have all their children in school thanks to the additional income that Vivian gets from taking part in a women's sewing project.

Narrating her story, Vivian recalls that in the past, life for her family was a real struggle. Pios' income from his job as a cleaner at a school was barely enough to provide for the essentials at home such as food let alone school fees and uniforms for the children. The financial troubles often resulted in quarrels between Vivian and her husband.

In March of 2012, Vivian was invited to attend a ward meeting where she was elected to be the Secretary for the newly formed Rural Women's Assembly (RWA). RWA is a women's group formed to improve the lives of rural women by providing them with a platform to share ideas and develop skills to fight poverty, gender based violence and fight for women's rights. After a training provided by Family AIDS Caring Trust (FACT) Nyanga on leadership and livelihood skills, the RWA set out to start up various small scale income generation projects such as sewing, agriculture, cooking, poultry and buying and selling of clothes.



Vivian Sanyamahwe

FACT Nyanga is a community based organisation which works in partnership with ActionAid Zimbabwe to fight for women's rights. ActionAid Zimbabwe provides capacity strengthening to local partners such as FACT Nyanga to implement quality programmes addressing key women's rights violations.

While the other projects didn't require much capital, the women faced a challenge with the sewing project. They lacked capital to purchase equipment and rent premises where they could sew clothes. They were getting a lot of orders from schools nearby for uniforms but hand stitching them was slow and they couldn't meet the demand. They then decided to request FACT for support and within months, they were given 5 machines and materials.

Two years since the establishment of RWA, Vivian has come a long way. She earns \$100 – \$200 in profit per month by taking part in the sewing project. She also has a sewing machine at home and with her monthly income, she manages to buy material and stitch uniforms for her children as well.

“I am really thankful to FACT Nyanga and RWA because I can now sleep well and even my marriage has improved. My husband is very proud of me because of the money that I am able to bring home monthly. I couldn't sleep before because of money problems.” – said Vivian.

When asked what her dreams were for the future she said, “I am hoping that in the future I will be able to at least send one of my children if not more to university. We want to expand the business by buying more sewing machines because we get a lot of uniform orders from schools.”

Vivian's family is just one of the many in the community that faces financial difficulties. Members of the RWA believe that one of the leading causes of poverty is lack of education as most households in this community are of the apostolic sect which often doesn't promote education. Additionally, many women in the community do not have control over finances at home. Men are said to be the head of the homes and believe they have control over finances. In cases where women do not submit themselves to men, they are often beaten. Thanks to the interventions by RWA and other similar groups, women in such circumstances are given a new beginning. Since its formation in Ward 22 in Nyanga District, the RWA was able to help seven women who were victims of domestic violence by working together with local authorities to counsel the abusers.



Vivian Sanyamahwe (right) showing Mariam the uniforms she is making

4.4 Rural woman break cycle of poverty

By Wesley Mukondwa, Seke Rural Home Based Care

Diana Rwausingade (55) from Ruzane ward in Wedza, Mashonaland East Province of Zimbabwe remembers her poverty experience in her marriage. Diana is married and she is a mother of two. The advent of Internal Savings and Lending schemes (ISALs) changed her life for the better.

“At one point in time in January 2011, I used to do part-time jobs so as to bring food on the table for my family. My husband would sit at home doing nothing all day. At night he then goes to the beer hall with the little savings I would have sweated for. The little income that I would earn was from hand to mouth doing casual jobs. It could only carter for food. All the income that I would make as little as it was went for daily upkeep of the house. Other women would shun me because of the level of poverty that I was in. We were so poor to the point of failing to buy a tin to draw water with. We had sold the little property we had, so that we could feed our children. My two daughters had to drop out from school, helping me in my casual jobs because the burden was just too much for me.”

Seke Rural Home Based Care (SRHBC), an ActionAid Zimbabwe (AA Zimbabwe) partner operating in Wedza in 2012 facilitated training on savings mobilisation for production and

supporting social safety nets training in six wards in Wedza. The training's main objective was to capacitate women to mobilize funds to embark on income generating projects. Wedza is in region 3 of Zimbabwe which receives little or low rainfall of about 500 - 700 mm rainfall per year. Ruzane villagers are subsistence farmers.

In 2012, SRHBC trained Rural Women Assembly (RWA) members on ISAL. Diana was one of the 30 women who attended the ISAL workshop which contributed a turnaround of her life. Diana testified said: "We were trained on five modules on ISALs and immediately we formed a group of 10 women and we called our group Tabudirira ("which means we succeeded"). The group majored in sewing bed covers and door mats as one of the income generating activity using proceeds from the pool fund.

The ISAL project has transformed Diana and her group member's live. It silently killed the dependence syndrome that had been holding women success for years. Diana applauded the inception of the revolving fund given to the women by SRHBC to start their projects. She said: "We are now respectable entrepreneurs, I have already purchased agricultural inputs for this season (2013)".

A real change in women's lives can easily be seen: women are now economically empowered; they can complement their husbands' income to fend for their families. Other women managed to engage in buying and selling projects where they are getting income to support their families and they are now able to send their children to school.

A cheerful Diana said: "I managed to take my two daughters in school something I longed for so many years." Some of the women have adopted urban life style for they have the money to buy anything they want as the city women. Through women's different projects they managed to buy cell phones, small generators, new beds and improved infrastructure from mud huts to brick houses roofed with metal sheets or asbestos instead of thatching grass.

Diana's group to date has US\$680 in its coffers, which can be lent to the group members in need.

AA Zimbabwe has provided capacity building to SRHBC in the areas of programming using the HRBA, entrepreneurship skills, advocacy and lobby and on how to engage with corporates and government to make sure communities access basic services.



Diana Rwausingade (middle) with some of her group members holding their income generating products





National Office

ActionAid Zimbabwe

16 York Avenue, Newlands, Harare

Tel: +363-04-788123/5, 776127, Fax: +263-04-788124

Mobile: +263-772164449

Email Address: info.zimbabwe@actionaid.org

Website Address: www.actionaid.org/zimbabwe

Facebook Address: www.facebook/ActionAidZimbabwe

Twitter: www.twitter.com/actionaidzimbabwe

Youtube: ActionAid Zimbabwe

Regional Office

ActionAid Zimbabwe

281 Chimurenga Street, Rusape

Tel: +26325-3537, Fax: +263-04-788124

Mobile: +263-772395967

