

SACP rolls out village business units

The Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project (SACP) has started establishing of Village Business Units (VBUs) across its operational areas. The project has so far established 20 in Matabeleland North Province, VBUs in 13 in Hwange District and 7 in Lupane District.

The project will establish a total of 100 VBUs in Matabeleland North, Midlands, Mashonaland West, Mashonaland East and Mashonaland Central provinces over a four year period.

Establishment of VBUs includes solarisation of existing boreholes.

SACP installation water tanks , provision of portable water, construction of wash basins, livestock troughs and 1.25 hectare nutrition gardens form part of the scope of works.. One hectare of the 1.25 hectare will be used for production of commercial crops while the 0.25 hectares will be used as a nutrition corner where crops for household consumption will be produced.



Left-Water storage tanks mounted at a village business unit in Jabatshaba, Lupane

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Hwange farmers food secure after adopting traditional grains

A Hwange couple, Mr. Robert and Mrs. Maria Dube, are food secure after heeding the Government call to plant traditional grains and adopt improved seed varieties. The couple participated in a demonstration facilitated by the Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project (SACP) and emerged as a shining example, that heeding extension officers' advice to plant crops suitable for a given agro-ecological region, can result in huge benefits to farmers. They cultivated three Pfumvudza plots and planted the Macia variety of sorghum, known for its superior drought tolerance and nutritional value.

In April this year, the couple hosted a field day to showcase their thriving sorghum crop. The event, themed "Promoting resilience and improved nutrition through the adoption of climate-smart value chains," began with presentations by the Dube family. In the presentation, Mr. Dube outlined the various steps taken to achieve such impressive results, in view of the devastating El Niño-induced drought, which the government described as the worst in the past 40 years.

Addressing stakeholders, including government officials, traditional leaders, farmers, and the media, Mr. Dube said, "When the season started, we planted some maize, however, due to prolonged dry spells, it was a complete write-off. At that point, we decided to try traditional grains after receiving training from SACP. By adopting improved seeds of the Marcia variety of sorghum, my family and I are now food secure. I encourage all farmers to heed the advice of extension officers as this will ultimately help the whole community to achieve greater food security, especially in these semi-arid areas where our challenges compounded by the frequent droughts."

The Dube family combined conservation agriculture

practices with innovative technologies, such as the use of hydrogel for moisture retention. From one of their three plots, the couple harvested an impressive 0.37 tonnes of sorghum, underscoring the effectiveness of their approach. Chief Shana, who attended the field day, praised the couple for adopting climate-smart initiatives promoted by SACP. The Chief said, "I can see that this farmer listened attentively to all the training he received from SACP. His commitment to applying the knowledge gained will greatly benefit my community. I will task him to share his experiences with farmers in eight other villages and encouraging them to adopt the practices the Ministry of Agriculture has been promoting. This will enhance food and nutrition security in our area."

Matabeleland North Provincial Director, Mr. Dumisani Mbikwa Nyoni, encouraged farmers in the province to heed the Government's call to grow traditional grains. He said, "The changing climatic conditions, including recurrent droughts, shifts in the rainy season, poor rainfall distribution, and long mid-season dry spells, have made maize cultivation in semi-arid regions like Matabeleland North increasingly risky. Therefore, it is crucial for farmers to embrace traditional grains and improved seed varieties that can withstand these challenges."

SACP National Project Coordinator, Dr. Godfrey Nehanda, who was the guest of honor, reiterated the project's commitment to promoting the traditional grains value chain. He added that this was being achieved by organizing farmers into clusters and connecting them with off-takers. Sorghum is a key value chain being promoted as part of the six value chains by the project.



Mr and Mrs Dube showcase their crop during a field day in Hwange

World Food Day... PS Obert Jiri calls for partnerships to end hunger



From left -Francesco Rispoli (IFAD Country Director, Zimbabwe), Joylyn Ndoro (IFAD Country Liaison Officer), Prof. Obert Jiri (holding maize cob) and WFP Country Representative at the celebrations in Chipinge.

The Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project participated in the World Food Day Commemorations held at Tongogara Refugee Resettlement Camp in Chipinge. The celebrations were also attended by the Smallholder Irrigation Revitalisation Programme (SIRP), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) World Food Programme and various departments in the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development.

In his address, Guest of Honour and Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development, Prof. Obert Jiri said the Ministry's drive was premised on leaving no one and no place behind in transforming the agricultural sector to a more efficient, inclusive,

sustainable, and resilient agri-food system that will guarantee food self-sufficiency and increased incomes at both household and national levels. He further noted that agriculture was multi-faceted hence there was a need for a multi-sectoral approach for long-lasting solutions. Partnerships remained important in the different programs and projects to end hunger.

Prof Jiri noted that the prospects for eliminating poverty and achieving zero hunger in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the attainment of Vision 2030 lay in producing more food, creating more on-farm and off-farm jobs, raising incomes and ensuring equitable participation of women and the youth along value chains.

Fastest route out of hunger and poverty is through investments in agriculture and rural areas..... Rispoli

Addressing the same gathering, IFAD Country Director for Zimbabwe and Eswatini, Mr Francesco Rispoli said IFAD was uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between humanitarian aid and sustainable, long-term development in rural areas. He added that the institution was purpose-built to respond to the root causes of instability, conflict and crisis, by strengthening the productivity, livelihoods and climate resilience of small-scale food producers and rural people with a strong focus on women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and persons with disabilities.

IFAD's agricultural initiatives significantly contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those that are aimed at eradicating hunger and promoting sustainable agricultural development. Mr Rispoli indicated

that, the fastest route out of hunger and poverty had been proven to be through investments in agriculture and in rural areas, a principle shared between IFAD and the Government of Zimbabwe.

He highlighted that the Zimbabwe IFAD country strategy is underpinned by medium to long term investments, most notably, the Smallholder Irrigation Revitalization Programme (SIRP), the Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project (SACP) and the soon to be introduced Horticulture Enterprise Enhancement Project (HEEP).

These three investments totalled an estimated US\$ 187 million and are all united by a focus on climate resilience, increased productivity and improved market linkages and access for smallholder farmers.

Mutoko farmer goes commercial after SACP demo, inspires 14 others



The story of Mr George Muchena of Chitora Irrigation Scheme in Mutoko is reminiscent of a journey of a thousand miles that begins with a single step. Mr Muchena is a horticulture farmer at the scheme which grows okra, carrots, butternut, cabbage, fine beans, green mealies and tomatoes.

He is one the six farmers that volunteered to take part in a demonstration plot supported by the Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project (SACP). The project supplied the farmer with 50kgs of Compound C fertilizer, 50kg of Ammonium Nitrate and Belt, a type of pesticide. The project also supported the farmer with extension advice on off-season cropping as well as introducing climate smart initiatives such as tied ridges and deep ploughing. Additionally, the project introduced a high yielding tomato variety, Trinity, which was planted by the farmer. The farmer was further advised on the use of organic manure and foliage fertilizer.

Mr Muchena planted his 0.06-hectare tomato crop on the 11 of November 2023, planting 950 plants of the Trinity variety. The farmer harvested 6000kg of tomatoes which he supplied to Choppies Supermarkets at the price of US\$0.70 and this earned him US\$4200. His costs of production amounted to US\$1200 and he further deducted fixed costs of US\$550, leaving him with a net profit of US\$2250.

After the successful demonstration by SACP, Mr Muchena planted a second crop in February 2024 and increased the hectareage planted from 0.06ha to 0.5ha using proceeds from the first crop. Mr Muchena used \$1750 from his first crop to finance the second crop. The farmer went on to plant 8000 plants in the



extended plot and sold 2000kgs of the crop every week for 12 weeks. He managed to make an income of US\$14 400. From the income that he earned, Mr Muchena bought a water pump, a water engine and 200 metres of irrigation pipes.

Due to the positive and profitable outcome of the first crop, farmers were enlightened and seven more farmers adopted the climate-smart tomato production techniques promoted by SACP. Each of these seven farmers also planted 0.5 ha of tomatoes using SACP promoted climate-smart technologies. A field day was held on the second crop and seven farmers who adopted the SACP concept participated in the competition. Mr Muchena emerged as the winner.

The guest of honour at the field day, Mashonaland East Provincial Director for the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development, Mr Leonard Munamati urged farmers to adopt high yielding tomato varieties such as Trinity. He also encouraged farmers in the irrigation schemes to use water efficiently and urged farmers to embrace group marketing. He also highlighted that Government was in the process of introducing village business units where farmers would utilize water from solarized boreholes to produce crops for sale.

Farmers were encouraged by the characteristics of the Trinity variety including yield potential, disease resistance, fast growth rate and short time taken to maturity. This summer Mr Muchena planted a third crop of the Trinity tomato variety on a 0.5ha plot. The crop is in good condition and at the early fruiting stage. Fourteen other farmers at the irrigation scheme have adopted the Trinity variety as of October 2024.

Leaving no one behind...SACP exhibits at National Disability Expo



SACP Climate Smart Agriculture specialist, Bornwell Musindo attends to a visitor at the SACP stand

In an effort to ensure inclusivity of PWDs, the project exhibited at the National Disability Expo held in Bindura, Mashonaland Central Province, from the 10th to the 12th of July 2024.

The expo, organized by the Office of the Disability Advisor in the Office of the President and Cabinet, brings together organizations that cater for persons with disabilities. The expo ran under the theme, “Accelerating the attainment of Vision 2030 disability targets for enhanced inclusive sustainable development”

The Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project utilized the expo to interact with organisations that represent and work with PWDs in order to understand the work that they do and how they can work with SACP.

SACP officers also recorded contacts of PWD organisations with a view to creating a database of these organizations so that the project can contact them in future activities. The project also created awareness on the project among Persons with Disability, eliciting interest from some of the, particularly those who came from districts where

SACP is being implemented.

The expo was officially opened by the Vice President, Hon. Kembo Mohadi who represented the President, His Excellency, Cde Emmerson Mnangagwa. In his address, the Vice President said, in line with the Second Republic's philosophy of leaving no one behind, the National Disability Expo provided a platform to enhance the mainstreaming and inclusion of the PWDs in national development agenda. He further indicated that Government had made strides in empowering PWDs through appointments to parliament, senate and other senior government posts.

Vice President Mohadi said, “Persons with Disabilities must be visible in all sectors of development in Zimbabwe. Their voices must be heard and listened to. Instead of the traditional charity model of giving them fish, let us give them the fishing line, emancipate them and empower them. The Zimbabwe National Disability Expo, spearheaded by my office, is an opportunity to tap the inherent potential of PWDs and support them to be self-reliant and self-sufficient.”

SACP staff undergoes gender and nutrition training

Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project (SACP) officers underwent training on Gender and Social Inclusion in July. The training, attended by staff from the Project Management Unit, Provincial Project Implementation Units, Ministries of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development and Women Affairs was meant to strengthen the capacities of the trainees on gender, social inclusion and nutrition. The training was conducted after realising that some of the staff tasked with addressing social inclusion, gender and nutrition, were proficient in one area and had a gap in the other.

To bridge this gap, capacity-building training was organised to focus on gender transformative approaches and nutrition.

The training focused on the importance of gender, nutrition and climate resilience in attaining sustainable food systems. Sustainable food systems can be attained through adoption of technologies and best practices leading to increased agricultural production in a profitable, sustainable and resilient manner. This is achievable when there is rural household transformation; all household members are equally valued and have equal rights to all dimensions of well-being.

Climate change results in low rainfall and leads to a decrease in crop production, food deficits, nutrition gaps and poor food intakes. Climate change affects nutrition, gender and youths. There was emphasis on the need to consider gender disruptions in production and marketing, how gender influences production and the socio-cultural norms as well as certain ascribed roles. Women are responsible for seeing that food is put on the table thus, the need for empowerment.

Targeting

The poverty and target group analysis, along with government and IFAD priorities, is key in selecting target groups and developing the targeting strategy. The project targets women, men and youth smallholder farmers who mainly fall into poverty categories B1 (poor but able) and B2 (transitory food insecure). At most 10% come from poverty category C (self-sufficient) and around 20% from category A (poor and unable). Gender considerations on distance to the FFS, time for the meetings as these factors affect attendance and should be taken into consideration.

Value chains have the potential to include or exclude other people, for example, youths want value chains that will give quick returns on investment, while enhanced female participation can be promoted through having more female trainers. Development of educational and communication materials should also strive to include more youths by using their stories and testimonies.

Participants were advised to rectify gender inequalities through:

1. Doing something - promote access to inputs and services to address some inequalities in pursuit of productivity, livelihood diversification, climate adaptation and efficiency
2. Do a lot: broaden and deepen inclusion, climate resilience, and empowerment taking into account structural barriers but without challenging them
3. Doing something differently – examine, question and change the underlying gender norms, beliefs, practices leading to unequal distribution of power; ensure women are equitably involved in high-value commodities and livelihood activities; ensure women have equitable access to CSA technologies



Exploring new technologies.... Project hosts green roads learning event



Road water harvesting in Makueni county, Kenya

Borrowing from the Green Roads for Water (GR4W) project in Kenya, the Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project recently held a learning event on road water harvesting. The event was attended by officials from the project, Department of Irrigation and the Rural Infrastructure Development Agency (RIDA). Officially opening the workshop, SACP National Project Coordinator, Dr Godfrey Nehanda said the workshop was necessitated by the need to get introductory exposure to road water harvesting since it is a new phenomenon in Zimbabwe.

The workshop was facilitated by, Frank van Steenberg of Metameta, South Africa, who highlighted that the country's roads can become green roads. Green roads present a triple win with very little additional investment, such as reduced road maintenance costs, reduced degradation of the landscape around roads and beneficial use of water by roadside communities. The other benefits of green roads include water security, increased agricultural production, risk management, connectivity, land protection and health. Van Steenberg said the technology of road water harvesting is currently being implemented in countries like Ethiopia, Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi, Sudan and Kenya.

He indicated explained that there is great need to engage community members so that the project is well received by communities and there is willingness to take part in the project. Van Steenberg noted that there could be encroachment into fields hence the need for additional

land for the green roads will be on a case-by-case basis. With regards to water quality the presenter highlighted that water is not necessarily harvested from the road surface. He further indicated that this was just an introduction since the actual training takes a period of five days.

Mr Micahel Maluki shared the Kenyan experience where green roads for water are key in rainwater harvesting for climate resilience, improved community livelihoods and resilient transport functions. The Green Roads for Water program includes creating beneficial water and land management systems, improved livelihoods for local communities fostering inclusive growth, climate resilient infrastructural development, reduced roads maintenance, reliable road connectivity, reduced transport costs to access vital services and economic integration, pollution control caused by dusty roads, preserving biodiversity and achieving climate resilience.

The Deputy Director for Roads in the Rural Infrastructure Development Agency, Engineer Mapako expressed gratitude for having had his team take part in the Road water harvesting training as it came at a relevant time when they were working on a road erosion control project. He emphasized the importance of harnessing road water especially in the rural areas where the water can be used for livestock watering. The workshop was also attended by the Director of Roads, in the same agency, Engineer Dennis Dzvene.

Nuggets from learning events



The SACP team joined other stakeholders at a learning event hosted by SIRP in Mushandike, Masvingo

The Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project's Project Management Unit (PMU) participated in a number of learning events hosted by its sister project, the Smallholder Irrigation Revitalisation Programme, which is now in its closeout period. One of these was the project's closeout and lessons learnt workshop.

The event's objective was to reflect on the experiences by the project's different components and draw lessons from the seven years of implementation. The Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project was expected to draw lessons from the sister project since it will implement similar interventions, particularly irrigation rehabilitation, nutrition gardens, market linkages, natural resources management, nutrition, gender and social inclusion.

KEY LESSONS LEARNT FROM SIRP CLOSEOUT AND LESSONS LEARNT WORKSHOP

1. There is need to operationalize the MIS early in the project

2. There is need for SACP to expedite the project baseline and empowerment survey.

3. Capacity building of traditional leaders in Natural Resources Management as well as NRM subcommittees needs to be prioritised

4. For irrigation schemes, there is need to consider capacity building needs from the feasibility study reports

5. Under Climate Smart Agriculture, record books for farmers need to be distributed early, while lead farmers will require monitoring by extension officers

6. There is need to evaluate the performance of farmers production per cycle and to promote exchange visits to facilitate learning

The Climate Smart Agriculture Unit came up with the following action points from the closeout workshop, which they will implement;

- Integrate feasibility report suggestions into training programs to enhance irrigators' skills and knowledge.

- Provide training on natural resource management for local leadership and ENRM committees, subject to budget availability.

Nuggets from learning events

- Implement the lead farmer approach in Agricultural Productivity Groups (APGs) or clusters under extension officer supervision to foster peer-to-peer learning and best practice adoption.
- Assess farmer performance seasonally to monitor progress and identify areas for improvement
- Prioritize conservation works for infrastructure projects to ensure sustainability and environmental stewardship.

The Kenya Nutrition Learning Route



Importance of Partnerships

Collaborating with various stakeholders and partners enhances project outcomes and effectiveness. However, harmonizing partners' goals and roles is crucial to avoiding overlap and ensuring synergy.

Community-Led Initiatives

Empowering communities to identify challenges and propose solutions fosters sustainable development. Community-led approaches generate more impactful and lasting results. Continuous meetings, joint planning, implementation, and monitoring with stakeholders and beneficiaries throughout the project

cycle guarantees that the project remains relevant to their needs and priorities. Intervention model: The Alliance project developed a model of Community based approach linked to rigorous scientific based research design with an added policy dialogue engagement component.

Farmers are the best teachers

The peer-to-peer farmer's education model has led to effective delivery of training to other farmers on practical ways of production, the use of CHPs has also mainstreamed nutrition issues easily, given their regular activities revolving around health and nutrition. It is also a very sustainable model considering that the expertise remains within the

same community and is cheaper to mobilize as well. With the peer-to-peer farmers approach most constraints are overcome and it has been proven to work in this setting. Clear Communication and Documentation: Simplifying technical terms and ensuring clarity in communication materials aids in promoting better understanding among farmers, contributing to effective implementation and adoption.

Value Addition and Diversification

Encouraging value addition beyond green vegetables and diversification of crops can expand income opportunities for farmers and enhance overall project impact. The deployed technologies on solar drying, cleaning seeds and packaging hold a lot of promise in creating products that would meet market requirements easily.

Seed security and seed quality

Food sovereignty requires that farmers have control over the availability and use of seeds relevant to their ecological setting. Through the establishment of seedbanks and good agricultural practices farmers are able to identify appropriate seed varieties, harness them, process and store them in the CSBs for future use and sell, thus sustaining agrobiodiversity which is linked to food and nutrition security.

SACP Mat North undergoes SECAP, GRM and site management training

The Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project held a five day training workshop on construction site management for infrastructure projects that will be set up by the project. SACP will establish 70 multipurpose community water points in 2024 and 20 sites have so far been established in Hwange and Lupane. Extension officers will be the resident supervisors of the projects backed by technical expertise from SACP district extension officers as well as the Rural Infrastructure Development Authority (RIDA) personnel.

The training, held in Lupane in December, was attended by extension officers from Lupane, Nkayi, Hwange, Binga and Kwekwe.



Mabhikwa VBU committee members undergo a GRM training session

importance of safeguarding the environment during the implementation of the project. SACP is rehabilitating irrigations schemes, last mile feeder roads as well as establishing community water points.

The group was also taken through training on the Grievance Redress Mechanism, (GRM), an instrument through which dispute resolution is sought and provided. The project will receive, evaluate and address project related concerns of communities or persons.

The Grievance Redress Mechanism allows affected communities to have their concerns resolved in a fair and timely manner through an independent process. The process requires;

i) working pro-actively with affected parties to resolve complaints

ii) ensuring that the complaints procedure is responsive and operates effectively

iii) maintaining records of all complaints and their resolutions.



Officers participate in a practical session for site management

The officers also underwent training on Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures, which are adopted from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). These provide guidance on how to identify potential risks and impacts, how to avoid, minimize, reduce or mitigate them. SECAP ensures that appropriate preventative actions are incorporated into project design and implementation, and provides guidance on procurement implications. The training will enable the officers to train communities that have benefitted under the project on the

THE YEAR IN PICTURES



SACP and ZINWA officers inspect VBU sites in Cross Dete and Kamativi



Mat North SACP Provincial Coordinator, Virimai Madzivire inspects a Village Business Unit which is under installation in Mabhikwa, Lupane



SACP officers disseminate project information through community radio in Binga



SACP officers in Mashonaland East participated in this year's International Day of Rural Women held in Murehwa



SACP officers at the World Food Day commemorations in Murehwa

The project participated in World Food Day commemorations at Tongogara Resettlement in Chipinge

THE YEAR IN PICTURES



Some of the community members who attended a SACP field day in Jambezi, Hwange



A community consultation meeting on the establishment of a village business unit underway in St Paul's, Lupane



Happy faces.... Sights from the team building exercise held in Kwekwe in July



Team building in Kwekwe



SACP, collaborated with the Strategic Policy, Monitoring and Evaluation department in hosting policy awareness workshops on the Horticulture Development Policy. Workshops were held in Bindua and Marondera and participants included smallholder and commercial farmers, government departments and agencies.

In the picture above, stakeholders follow proceedings at a workshop in Bindura



Deputy Director Gender and Wellness represented the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development at a Gender Action Learning System (GALS) policy dialogue held in Harare. SACP officers attended the dialogue



Stakeholders at the GALS policy dialogue, which called for a gender policy in agriculture