



# Success Story Booklet

# 2025

Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project



ZIMBABWE





## Production and sales take off at Ndimakule VBU



*Farmers at Ndimakule display their cabbage crop which is being sold to the market*

Farmers at the Ndimakule VBU in Hwange have started selling their produce to off-takers in Hwange and Victoria Falls. The garden, established in September 2024 has cultivated two crop cycles and is selling produce from the second cycle.

Ndimakule VBU secretary, Tracy Zulu said, “We cultivated the Candella variety of tomatoes. After sales, we made an income of US\$2000. We were quite happy with this crop.”

She added that, “For this second cycle, we grew 6753 heads of the Fabiola variety of cabbage. We planted the crop on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May and started harvesting and selling in September. We have been selling the cabbages for US\$1 for two heads. We are still looking for more markets, especially from vendors who wish to buy in bulk as well as individual customers. So far we have made US\$459.”

Revilla Madzimbamuto, a farmer in the VBU said, “We sell our cabbages to horticulture off-takers such as bulk horticulture off-takers as well as vegetable markets. These markets are in Victoria Falls.”

The nutrition corner in the garden has improved diets in the community. Madzimbamuto highlighted that, “We also have our nutrition corner where we have planted carrots, leafy vegetables, onions and maize. The biggest change that we have seen in our community has been that we are now able to consume a wide variety of nutritious vegetables. Our families are now able to eat a balanced diet. We are now very healthy as you can see.

Among the crops that we have cultivated is spinach. One of the reasons that we grew spinach was that we have a number of women of child bearing age. It helps our bodies to produce more blood.”



*Left- Ndimakule farmers during a recent field day for the village business unit.  
Right- SACP DEO assists farmers to load their produce onto a customer's vehicle.*



*Left - A farmer harvests cabbages from the Ndimakule VBU for customers*

Constance Hadebe said the establishment of the multi-purpose water point had provided relief for women who are mostly responsible for fetching water. She said, “We are pleased with these taps that we received. As women, these taps are extremely helpful for us. When I knock off from the fields or from the VBU, I just turn the taps and fill my bucket. Its unlike the situation before, where I had to pump the water when I was already exhausted from working in the fields.”

### **More farmers eager to grow upland rice after successful demo**

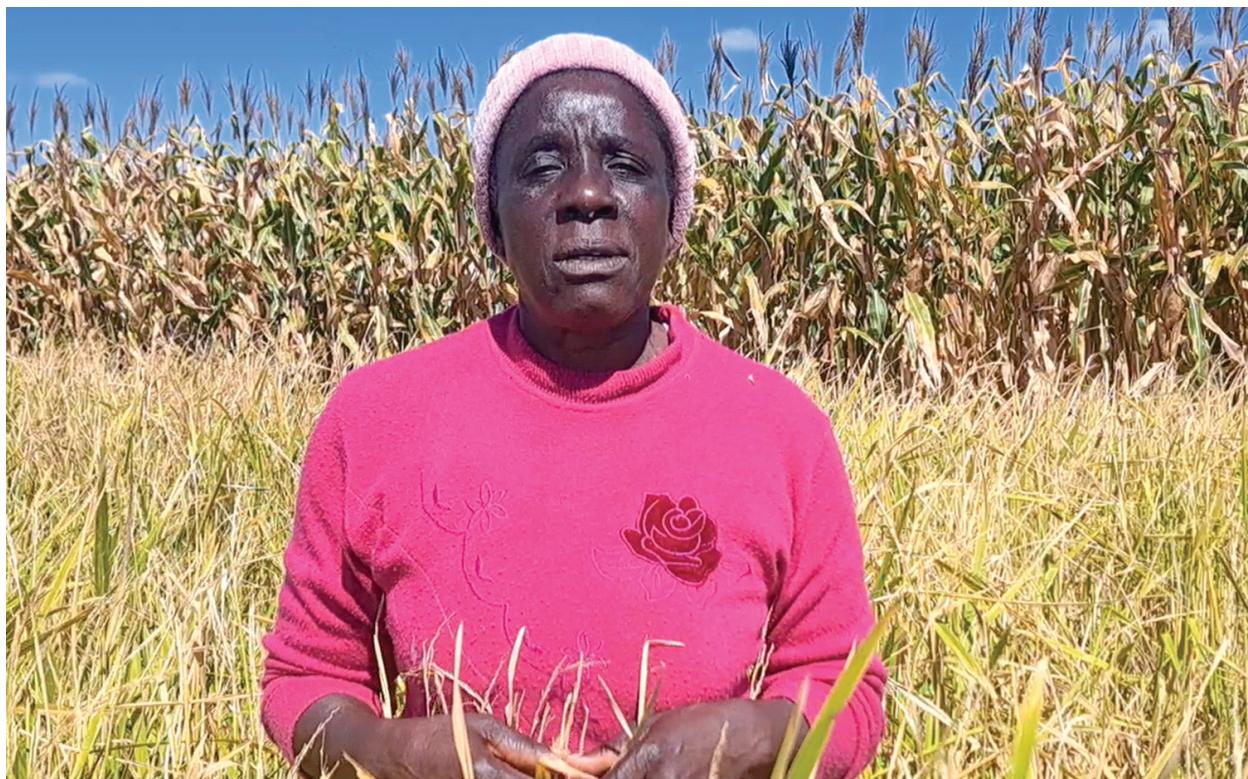
The Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project established an upland rice demonstration plot in Exchange Irrigation Scheme in Midlands Province to cultivate the Nerica rice variety. The activity was carried out in partnership with Department of Research and Japanese International Cooperation Agency. Prior to the establishment of the demonstration plots, trainings were conducted to 126 farmers (61 males and 65 females) and 12 extension officers from different irrigation schemes on production of the upland rice. The purpose of the demonstrations were to make farmers aware of the production of upland rice and to produce rice seed to increase area under production.



The farmers were given seed and inputs for establishment of 200m<sup>2</sup> plots. At Exchange Irrigation scheme, the 11 farmers who participated in the demonstration requested for more seed to plant 0.1 hectare and they were supported with inputs. The demonstration plot for Exchange irrigation scheme was harvested and the total production from the 0.1 ha plot was 260kg and this translates to 2.6 tonnes per hectare.

Commenting on their experience, one of the farmers at the scheme, Memory Shapure said, “When the trainers from the Department of Research first came, they advised us to make sure that our field is level. We then created lines using pieces of wood and wire. We planted 5kgs of rice in this plot. Our children love eating rice, I would definitely love to participate in future programmes to grow rice. We noticed that growing rice is not laborious or expensive. The fertilizer that needs to be applied to the rice is not much such that if you don't have a lot of money, you can afford it.”

Mr Wellington Makura said, “We are pleased with the programme that we received from SACP and our extension officers, which allowed us to cultivate an alternative cereal crop. We planted Nerica 7 variety which has high yield potential. We planted our rice on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2024. Our rice germinated on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December and we harvested our rice in April. Our yield was 262 kgs. Our trainers said 1kg of seed should give us 50kg yield so this was a successful demo for us.



*Mrs Magaya, one of the farmers that participated in the upland rice demo*

I learnt that we can grow a variety of cereals as well as the fact that preparing rice is easy for our families. After working in the fields, rice is a quick and easy meal to prepare. Our children love rice and we no longer have to go to the shops to buy rice. We now have our own seed and we can expand the area under cultivation.”

Mrs Magaya said, “We initially thought growing rice was a difficult experience. After planting the rice, we soldiered on and managed to produce a good crop such that when we held our field day, many farmers expressed interest in growing the rice. We continue to get a lot of enquiries from fellow farmers on how they can get the seed for the rice. We are going to make money through the sale of the rice seed since many farmers want the seed. As you can see, we cultivated a small plot but we managed to get a good harvest.”

The extension officer for the irrigation scheme said, “When we first created the demo plot, there were about 47 farmers. As we continued with the work of establishing the demo plot, other farmers dropped off until 11 remained. As extension officers, we realized that there is no need to force people to come and participate in the demo. Those who remained were committed, that is why you see that this demo was so successful.”

*Ready for processing... A farmer displays the harvested rice crop.*



He added that, “I hear that a section of the irrigation scheme used to cultivate rice. This is a new crop that farmers have received well. We receive a lot of rain during the summer season for a short period, some crops fail to do well under such conditions. We think we can fully utilize those field to grow rice. Farmers can get a good rice harvest since those kinds of field were failing to produce rice. We have quite a number of such field and we hope that we can sell that rice to other communities.

This demo plot was for seed multiplication and we want this rice to be distributed to many more farmers within the scheme. We will prioritise farmers whose fields often get water logged. We will avoid fields that drain so much that they do not retain moisture as this may cause the crop to fail. We aim to put 10 hectares under rice, hence we need assistance to acquire a polisher to process the rice. The quantities we are anticipating to harvest after expansion of the area under irrigation may not be manually processed. We also have a vision where farmers will also package the rice and sell to shop owners.”



## Watering life - Jabatshaba VBU brings better nutrition and increased incomes

Jatshaba Village Business Unit, 50 km north-west of Lupane, the provincial capital of Matabelend North was established for the rural community by the Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project (SACP) co-financed by the Government of Zimbabwe, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID).



*Above - Farmers clean carrots from the nutrition garden for sharing among farmers*



*Left - Carrot crop in the nutrition corner  
Above - Tomato crop at Jabatshaba*

Jabatshaba is one of the seven VBUs established by the project in the Lupane district, which falls in Agro-ecological Region 5 characterised by very hot temperatures, erratic rains and worsened by the predominantly Kalahari sands in the area. Farmers at the garden said the garden has become a source of hope for improved livelihoods.

Lucy Moyo, the Chairlady of the VBU said, “Our garden was completed in December 2024. We planted our first crop in January 2025. Among the crops that we planted was the Fabiola variety of cabbage, the Candella variety of tomatoes. In our nutrition corner, we had carrots and leafy green vegetables. We harvested our tomato crop until August.”

The farmers harvested 636 buckets of tomatoes which they sold for prices ranging from US\$4 to US\$7 depending on the tomato sizes and quality and made a total income of US\$3 672.00. Out of the 3 332 heads of cabbage sold, they made an income of US\$2559.

Lucy Moy added, “Out of the sale of all the crops we managed to make US\$6017. We deducted 10% from the amount that we made for each crop before sharing the proceeds for infrastructure maintenance. We remained with US\$4055 and each member received US\$150. We used US\$1044 to purchase inputs for the current crop. We also used part of the money to build an additional ablution facility. We currently have US\$375.00 in our account.

As farmers, we were extremely pleased with the crop and the income from our first cycle. Personally, the funds from the garden assisted me as I managed to pay school fees for my children, one is in secondary school while the other one is in primary school. I also managed to buy additional food items for my family. This has encouraged me to continue working in the garden.

Another positive is that we now have nutritious foods from our nutrition corner. Previously we only cultivated tomatoes and rape vegetables. We now appreciate the nutritional value of spinach and carrots.

The farmers harvested and shared 120 cabbages which were shared among the 30 households for consumption. The farmers also consumed 120 buckets of tomatoes which were shared among the 30 beneficiary households. In addition to the crops in the commercial plot, the farmers had cultivated carrots and leafy green vegetables rape which were shared among households. These were however, more than adequate for the farmers who were selling the surplus to nearby boarding schools, Mabhikwa and Fatima High Schools. For the community the intervention had also brought other benefits to the community where water is scarce, especially during the dry months after the rainy season. The intervention had made it easier and faster to access water for the community.

Lucy Moyo added that, “Before this intervention, it was very hard to operate this borehole. It had 16 pipes and was very heavy. Women were forced to pump as groups as one person was not able to operate the borehole. Now, we just open the taps and fetch water, there are less conflicts over water and watering livestock. Before SACP, community members spent a lot of time at the water point, and there were endless arguments over who came to the borehole first. This water point has made it easier for all community members including the elderly and PWDs to easily access water.

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*Cattle drink water from a trough which was established as part of interventions by the Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project*

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## Kwekwe APG hosts successful sorghum demo

An Agriculture Producer Group from Kwekwe has expressed satisfaction with the results of a sorghum demo hosted by one of their group members. The demo plot was supported by the Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project.

erson of the Ebenezer Agriculture Producer Group, Crescentia Chipangura said, “Out of our Pfumvudza plot we managed to harvest 19 buckets of sorghum, each bucket weighs 20kg. We are happy with the yield because we had cultivated a small area, measuring 16 by 36 metres. We learnt that if you follow advice on conservation farming, you can get a good yield from a small area. As farmers we also learnt that conservation agriculture that is practised with mulching retains moisture for long periods. There are minimal weeds that grow around the crops so we had minimal weeding of the plot.



The fact that you put manure and fertiliser into the small pit means that the ground is very fertile so your crop grows well. Community members have been making enquiries about how we managed to grow such a good crop.”

Another farmer Mrs Idah Ndlovu said, “As group members for Ebenezer, we are now looking forward to the new season so that we can go and grow what we learnt here in our own fields. My husband and I are committed to this method of farming as we have realised that it ensures food security for the family. We realise that we can harvest big yields by cultivating a small area. We have learnt that there is no need to cultivate unnecessarily large fields and harvesting very little. This Pfumvudza method that we were trained on is good.” Edmore Mamombe, a member of the Ebenezer group said, “We have realised that this sorghum crop is good. In areas where there is little rainfall, sorghum farmers do not go hungry. I notice that all farmers that cultivated sorghum this last season are food secure and will make money through selling grain to those who are food insecure.

## **Growing sorghum in Hwange...the story of Nambikwa Ncube**

Nambikwa Ncube of Jambezi in Hwange, hosted a sorghum demonstration plot in his field. He is part of the Siyaphambili Agriculture Producer Group and this was his first demo plot with Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project (SACP). The sorghum variety was SV4 and the farmer has two Intwasa plots, one with mulch and another without mulch. The farmer received inputs from SACP and these included seed, fertilisers, pesticide and lime from SACP.

Land preparation by the farmer was done in August and planting took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2024. The farmer applied organic manure and Compound D during land preparation. Six plants were planted in one hole and germination took place between the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of December. Thinning out and gap filling was carried out on 30 December 2024. The crop was attacked by the fall army worm on 27 December and the farmers sprayed the crop using a pesticide called Demise. The farmer then applied AN fertiliser at a rate of 7,5kg per hectare.



Despite the prolonged dry spell which affected the area at grain filling stage, the farmer harvested 0,3 tonnes from the 0.062 hectare plot which would translate to a 2,5 tonnes per hectare.

### **Observations made by the farmer**

- a) The stem from the demo plot with mulch was bigger than other crops planted using other farming methods.
- b) The farmer used less labour in the plot
- c) The inputs for the plot were adequate

### **Lessons learnt from the demo plot**

- a) Farmers must have enough inputs by the time of planting
- b) The use of pesticides is important in order to safeguard the crop from pests which can lead to deteriorating crop conditions
- c) It's important to have adequate stocks of pesticide for the crop
- d) Conservation farming methods which include mulching are important in retaining moisture in arid areas such as Hwange



*Above -Nambikwa Ncube's crop in February 2025*

## **SACP supports successful tomato demo in Mutoko**



My name is Garikai Muchena from Chitora 1 Irrigation Scheme in Mutoko. I hosted a demonstration plot for tomatoes in collaboration with the Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project (SACP). This year I had the Cadella tomato variety. Last year, we tried the Trinity variety, which performed extremely well. After the crop matured, we hosted a field day to show case the crop. There was also the added advantage stemming from the availability of a ready off taker, Choppies Supermarket who collected the crop from the irrigation scheme.

From the Trinity demo that I hosted last year I planted 6000 plants and harvested 108 crates, weighing 40kgs per crate (7240kg). I sold my tomatoes for US\$0.40 per kg. I managed to make an income of US\$5000 and from the proceeds of last year's crop, I bought a water pump and inputs for this year (2025) which included 6 000 seeds and fertilisers.

From the experience last year, with Trinity, the variety became very popular in the area and has become a variety of choice among many farmers in the scheme.

I noticed the following advantages of cultivating the Trinity variety;

- i. It can be grown throughout the year
- ii. It can be grown in both the field and greenhouses
- iii. It is resistant to nematodes
- iv. It is high yielding and allows the farmer to harvest tomatoes for six months with consistency of yield and fruits size

As you can see, we are doing farming as a business in the irrigation scheme. From the same of the variety that I grew last year, I managed to send children to school.

From the variety grown this year, I managed to harvest 6 384kgs from a 0.1 hectare plot which gave a total income of US\$2539. After deducting expenses I was left with a total income of US\$1 505. I used US\$300 to pay school fees for my child and also managed to buy a set of sofas for US\$300. I also managed to buy clothing for my family, food and inputs for the next crop.



*Right - Packed and ready for the market.. Mr Muchena with his crop ready for buyers*



# Testimonials from Mathambo VBU

My name is Bekezela Sibanda. I am a member of Mathambo VBU. Our VBU has 38 members comprising 5 men and 28 women. Out of this group 4 are youth and 1 person has a disability. In January, we planted 23 ridges of cabbage and 21 ridges of tomatoes. In March we started harvesting and selling cabbages.

After selling the crops we sat down to consider the amount that we had made which totaled US\$3500. Out of this amount, we deducted 20% for infrastructure repairs such as leakages, solar repairs. We then shared the remainder of the funds and each member received US\$63. People used their income in different ways. Some members cleared school fees arrears. I managed to buy a solar system for my homestead. My family feels more secure when they move around the homestead in the evenings and my children have adequate lighting which enables them to write their homework.



*Bekezela Sibanda*



*Above - A collage of the first crop cycle at Mathambo*



*Lillian Ndlovu*



*The nutrition corner at Mathambo*

In this nutrition corner, each farmer received their area for cultivation. We first planted carrots, then we planted leafy vegetables, spinach, tomatoes and onions. We were trained about the nutritional benefits of these crops, for example, we learnt that carrots are good for eyesight while spinach contributes to healthy blood. We no longer have challenges of relish for our meals. As you can see, I look strong and healthy because of the variety of nutritious crops that we cultivate here. Every VBU member is food secure.

As women, we previously had challenges in accessing water to irrigate the crops. We used to carry water in buckets to come and water the crops, all that has changed as we now use the drip irrigation system. The process of irrigating the garden is no longer laborious for us as women and the elderly. Now we just turn the taps to fetch water for domestic use. We are grateful to SACP for the intervention.



## VBUs are rural development at its best -PS Jiri

The Permanent Secretary for Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development, Professor Obert Jiri has described the establishment of village business units as rural development at its best.



*PS Jiri is led on a tour of the Jabula VBU in July 2025*

Speaking after touring the newly completed Kasikili Jabula Village Business Unit which commissioned in Hwange in July, the Permanent Secretary said, "This is rural development at its best. In this dry area, falling under Agro-ecological region 5B and we see the enablement of the community. It's the upliftment of the community due to the availability of water, establishment of a solar powered irrigation scheme. We say this is a village business unit, they say this is their irrigation scheme. The impact of this one hectare irrigation scheme. The impact of this 1 hectare solar powered irrigation scheme is immense in this rural area.



*PS Jiri commissions  
Jabula VBU*

The villagers here have already started to harvest and their first cycle has yielded more than US\$4000 in this village. If that is not impact, then nothing can be more impactful than this. We are seeing great organization of the villagers, upliftment of livelihoods and also provide enough food for their own households. Nutrition here is good and no one here suffers from malnutrition not only that, their lives have been uplifted from the proceeds of this village business unit. The impact of the Presidential Rural Development Programme is seen right here as we journey towards 2030.”

One of the beneficiaries of the VBU, Lillian Sibanda commented, “We are now generating income from the garden produce, which we are using to pay school fees. Additionally, the solarisation of this borehole by SACP has reduced the distance livestock travelled to Zambezi River for water and minimized instances of stock theft by cattle rustlers in the border areas. We planted okra, spinach, covo, carrots, and garlic, with a dedicated nutrition corner for family consumption. This garden also serves as a source of relish for neighbours.”



A traditional leader in the area, Christopher Tshuma said, “The community of this area now have an easier life, because of the support we received from Government. We used to access water from a borehole in this garden but it was a bush pump. After the SACP intervention, the garden was expended and resultantly, food insecurity has decreased. In past seasons, it was quite difficult but now have readily available relish from that nutrition corner.

Its now easier to water our cattle. They used to walk about 5km to the nearest water point or sometimes even more. Some of the cattle would go missing after being eaten by wild animals. Because of SACP, we now water our cattle in the drinking trough that is part of this VBU.



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