



Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund



ECGRAS

**Enhancing
Community
Resilience &
Sustainability**

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Editorial

Food security is an urgent matter in Zimbabwe. According to the United Nations over 5,5 million people were left food insecure after the poor harvest in the 2019/2020 season due to low rainfall. The country is pre-dominantly agro-based and agriculture contributes approximately 17 % of Zimbabwe's GDP.

CARE, PLAN and ICRISAT supported by the ZRBF are implementing the Enhancing Community Resilience and Sustainability (ECRAS) project aimed at increasing the capacities of communities to sustain development gains and achieve improved well-being outcomes in the face of shocks and stresses.

The 2020/2021 season was characterised by hot conditions with temperatures ranging between 22 degrees Celsius and 40 degrees Celsius for Mwenzezi, and 22 degrees Celsius and 42 degrees Celsius for Chiredzi. The rainfall season continued and cumulative rainfall by March 2021 was 717.08 mm for Chiredzi and 759.38mm for Mwenzezi. This was a favourable increase from the 318.55mm and 280.36mm received during the last season in Chiredzi and Mwenzezi respectively, indicative of the shift from an el-Nino induced season to a la-Nina induced season.

Although the rainfall was fairly good, there were other recurrent shocks including floods and locusts which ravaged some parts of Chiredzi and Mwenzezi districts. This affected the good harvest recorded in most parts of the districts. On the other hand climate change is affecting many of the lives and livelihoods in Zimbabwe undermining the nation's economic development.

Coping strategies such as climate smart pest management and community ward based disaster risk reductions plans were key for communities during these shocks. Also layered and sequenced interventions by ECRAS programming have reduced the severity of these shocks and stresses.

Hence, the project continued to recognize key milestones indicating that communities in Chiredzi and Mwenzezi are becoming more resilient to shocks and stresses as compared to 2016 when the project started. Zimbabwe's operating environment, on the other hand, has been generally stable and conducive for operations, however communities have had face the adverse trickle down effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Cover Image: Emma Nyenyai an ECRAS beneficiary in her two hectare sorghum field .

This page: Sister Hlongwani sitting in her kitchen with some of the kitchen upgrades she managed to do through VS&L.

ECRAS PARTNERS

care





Photo: Rosie Farai from Chiredzi district during sorghum harvest.

Region IV and V areas like Chiredzi are negatively affected by climate-related disasters such as droughts and floods. These harsh weather conditions are severe on livelihoods and the national economy which is agro-based.

The increased use of suitable crops for the local environment is one of the mitigatory methods being emphasised by ZRBF ECRAS. Small grains such as millet, sorghum, among others have been adopted in low rainfall areas, in Mwenezi and Chiredzi, where ZRBF ECRAS is working in. These have been proven to be strategic in addressing challenges of food and nutrition security, in these drought prone areas.

Their resilience to drought, the high micronutrient content and easy management make them a priority solution compared to other cereal crops. Many farmers scaled up small grains production and crop diversification this farming season.



Images: Aaron Mutimbe (Blue worksuit) harvesting sorghum from the plant stalks.

It is a good year for Aaron Matimbe (42) from Gundandi village Ward 10 in Chiredzi. He is expecting 40 tons of red sorghum, one ton of white sorghum and 0.5 tons of millet after harvest. Aaron joined ECRAS project in 2017. At community level, he was trained in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), small grain and livestock production, gender issues and fish farming. At household level after training he engaged in water harvesting, fish farming, goat breed improvement, indigenous chicken rearing, vegetable production, the 5-cow-winner system and small grains. He plans to invest his proceeds from this season partly in a homestead feedlot and a drip irrigation system since he has drilled a borehole at his home.



Controlling locusts outbreaks in Mwenezi & Chiredzi



In spite of the good rainfall season, pests and heavy rains posed serious threats to crop yields. The locust outbreak resulted in damage of 142 hectares in both Chiredzi and Mwenezi and this was likely to reduce yield by 30%. The project activated a Crisis Modifier to the value of US\$38145. for procurement of pesticides, protective clothing and awareness raising.

The project through Plant Protection Research Institute (PPRI) together with community members conducted chemical spraying of 500ha of crop using biological insecticide that are environmentally friendly in both districts, in seven wards in Chiredzi, and ward 5 of Mwenezi.

The *Rospolia differens*, a nocturnal feeder, was found to be the dominant locust in both districts and due to its nature of hiding in the lower leaves of millets and sorghum during the day, chemical sprays were directed below the millet/sorghum heads down to the lower leaves to ensure effectiveness of the chemicals.

ZRBF ECRAS partnered the government to respond to the locust outbreaks in Chiredzi and Mwenezi district, by procuring bio-friendly chemicals to control the locusts ravaging crops, affecting over 4897 households in the area.

In 2020 the ZRBF ECRAS project supported the training of 152 Agritex field officers in Chiredzi and Mwenezi on locust identification and surveillance. The Agritex field Officers in turn trained a total of 22, 321 farmers in Chiredzi 12, 772 and Mwenezi 9549. The communities were also capacitated with traditional control methods including harvesting and drying the locusts for consumption. This helped to reduce the impact of the locusts.



Eight pilot 9-cubic biogas digester systems are currently in use in Mwenezi and Chiredzi. These are to be fed with waste daily to avoid any glitches in functionality. The digester is fed with bio-degradable waste around the household and other livestock waste including chicken waste.. ZRBF ECRAS sought not remove the usage of firewood entirely but rather to minimise its usage among households. A family of 5 needs 7,5 kg of firewood for cooking per day. This means that, through this technology per year a total of 5 490kg of forestry used as a source of fuel of cooking has been preserved. The reduced use of chemical fertilizer has also assisted GHG emission reductions. The households who benefitted from the technology continue to realise advantages which include time saving during cooking, gender equality (both men and women are now involved in food preparation) as well as adoption of smart way of cooking . [See full story on page 6](#)



Image: Mr and Mrs Hlongwani explaining how the bio-digester works .

Reducing animal poverty deaths

From a 0.1ha plot under fodder production, each household under the Ecras programme is expected to produce a tonne of biomass which can sustain 5 cattle for three months under maintenance feeding (50% supplementation) thereby reducing poverty deaths.

Trust Shumba owns over 15 cattle, 35 goats and chickens. With lack of pasture and recurrent droughts in Dungwe Village in Mwenezi district, he planted 0,1 ha of velvet beans.

“Very soon I will be producing urea treated stova using forage sorghum and velvet beans. This has really helped our livestock survive the long dry spells in our area. We no longer record poverty deaths of livestock in our area,” said Trust.

As a result of fodder production and preservation intervention 394 cases of poverty deaths in Chiredzi and 211 cases in Mwenezi were reported in the aftermath of 2019/2020 El-nino drought. This is 5,6% of the total 10899 reported in the 2018/2019 season.



Image: Trust Shumba’s cattle feeding on urea treated fodder from the previous season.

Traditional grain seed multiplication

Thirty seed producers supported as part of Covid-19 Livelihoods Recovery intervention managed to sell their seed at Nyangambe irrigation in Chiredzi.

On average each farmer harvested 1.5t/ha of sorghum and 1.0t/ha of pearl millet. Judith Makuzwa of village 5A (Right) sold highest for Pearl millet receiving USD1260.

This was a way of rebuilding stocks of high yielding small grain varieties required by the project to scale up small grains production by Chiredzi farmers. Locally seed suppliers usually supply maize seed compared to small grains, seed multiplication will make the improved seed available and accessible to farmers, thereby, increasing production. Each producer received an average of USD412 which is enough income for a household in Chiredzi and Mwenezi to buy two weaner cows at USD200 per beast to improve the productivity of their herds.



Image: Judith Makuzwa being assisted to carry 50kg sacks of grain.

Since the introduction of goat breed improvement in 2017, each beneficiary has sold an average of 15 male castrates earning a total of USD1050 at an average market price of USD70 per goat. This is against an average of USD20-30 fetched by a local goat breed because of the general small body size.

Furthermore, each household has consumed an average of 16 goats improving their nutrition and fight against malnutrition reportedly affecting most of the under 5 years old children in the operational areas of the project.

“During times of drought or in order for us to pay school fees for our children, we used to sell our goats at an average of US\$30 but now we sell them at US\$60 or more. We can now buy everything we need and we are no longer living from hand to mouth”.



Youth empowerment: 24 youths trained in post harvest preservation

ECRAS facilitated the capacitation of 24 youth from Chiredzi and Mwenezi on processing of horticultural products. The training was conducted by Chatukuta Dried Foods and covered aspects of drying, packaging and export linkages, key elements of post-harvest food preservation and value addition.

The youth will engage in food drying as a business enterprise for income security, reduce post-harvest losses for horticultural products and also enable off-season consumption, contributing to food and nutrition security.



Nutrition integration

In line with the integration on nutrition in resilience building, the project capacitated district officials on the Healthy Harvest Concept and Barrier Analysis (BA) survey on nutrition practices using the "doer and non-doer" approach for utilization of good nutrition practices. A total of 8 government staff drawn from the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water and Rural Resettlement and the Ministry of Health and Child Care in Chiredzi reached extended the training to 37 extension workers in Mwenezi. The training covered four modules on principles of nutrition, growing and collecting nutritious foods, harvesting, preparing and preserving food and nutrition in the life cycle. 21 extension workers were also trained for Barrier Analysis. Cumulatively, 78 households are practicing fish farming in Chiredzi harvesting an average of 20-30kgs of fish a month, and selling at an average of R45 per kg, contributing towards household food and income security. 29 nutritional gardens at solar pumped borehole sites and established dams, micro nutrition gardens, fish farming are contributing towards **improved household nutrition**. Meat from the chicken and fish, and leafy vegetables, maize, butternuts and tomatoes from the gardens all contribute to household dietary diversity.



37 households were left stranded by tropical cyclone Eloise in Wards 23 and 8 of Chiredzi district in January and February. Heavy rains, coupled with the occurrence of Tropical Cyclones Chalane and Eloise affected households as the rainfall increased to above-average.



Image: ECRAS facilitator assessing people affected by Cyclone Eloise in Chiredzi District.

Several people lost their homes and livelihoods. In response, the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Committees District Civil Protection Unit supported them with temporary shelter. The ZRBF-ECRAS project collaborated with the CPU and Plan DRM Team and visited the affected households to assess the damage and ascertain the response required. The affected households in ward 23 received support in the form of WASH and Shelter Non-Food Items. The communities also implemented their DRM Plans to respond to the effects brought about by Tropical cyclones, crop and livestock management considering the heavy rainfall.

Disaster Risk Reduction



Image: DRM committee in Mwenezi closing gullies and holes to smoothen the road.

DRR committees lead infrastructure rehabilitation

Disaster Risk Reduction committees in Mwenezi across the 12 operational wards are leading community driven rehabilitation process of weir earth dams and access roads which were damaged by excessive rains during the quarter. The communities are also controlling gullies that had destroyed road infrastructure.

Vetiver grass provides thatching for underprivileged homes

Following the establishment of the Vetiver Nurseries by Chiredzi Wards 3 and 22 communities have started harvesting. The harvested grass is being used for thatching of houses of underprivileged farmers by the Disaster Risk Management Committee.



Image: Vetiver grass in the field



For the 2020/2021 season increase food security at household level and scale up Climate Smart Agriculture, the project supported 9837 farmers with improved varieties for sorghum, pearl millet and cowpeas for diversified crop production, intercropping and velvet bean for fodder production. This contributed to good harvests and consequently improving food security in the region.



ZRBF ECRAS through a layered and sequenced approach which involves crop and livestock management, income generation has turned around the fortunes of many communities is contributing to building resilience against future shocks and stresses such as drought.



Image: Household shows diversified harvest in Mwenezi

Meet Mr Machukela from Guluji Village.

ZRBF ECRAS is enhancing Chiredzi household and community resilience by helping them to build capacities and assets to deal with economic and climate related shocks and stresses.

Meet Mr Machukela from Guluji village Ward 22 in Chiredzi. Through crop and livestock diversification, he has managed to purchase a tractor which he is using to transport grain for other community members at around R400 per ton.

"Since ECRAS started the project we have seen a huge difference in our lives. This area is drought-prone so we were always suffering from problems such as hunger. We almost lost all our livestock due to wild animals and the effects of drought, but now through various trainings such as PSP (participatory scenario planning) and on disaster management we have enough food for ourselves and our animals."

"We were taught, and we have been implementing what ECRAS has been teaching us, it is practical. We were used to receiving food hand outs but now we are focusing on business, buying assets. I now have a tractor and motorbike. I was able to get money to buy these assets because I have enough food to eat and I have been taught how to diversify my income in case of unforeseen events or shocks such as drought."

This season Mr Machukela says he expects to make over R8000 through his tractor as he will be carrying grains to the nearest GMB depot which is 20km away, since most farmers managed to produce good traditional grain yields this year. He also uses his tractor on his 4-hectare farm, where he is producing sorghum, pearl millet, ground nuts, velvet beans, among others. From his own production, he expects over 6 tons of yields from Sorghum and pearl millet. His motorbike is mostly for travelling to town which is over 60km away.

#resiliencebuilding



Image: Mr Machukela about to drive off in his tractor.



Image: School pupils accessing water at Pambe Solar Powered piped water scheme

Rehabilitation of boreholes pays off

A total of 103 boreholes were rehabilitated in Chiredzi and Mwenezi. The rehabilitation decongested households from overburdened nearby boreholes and improved access to clean potable water for 6847 households in Chiredzi and Mwenezi. The time taken to travel to water sources has reduced from +1 hour to 30-45 minutes and the distance women and young girls travel to access portable water, from 4km to a maximum of 2 km.

During the dry season boreholes are a sustainable water source as compared to open sources which quickly dry up and predispose communities to WASH related diseases such as dysentery and common diarrhoea.

Restored hope through water access- WASH borehole drilling



Image: Children draw water at Newly Drilled Zvihwa Borehole In Ward 2 Mwenezi

Fourteen boreholes were drilled and equipped with Type B Bush Pumps in Chiredzi and Mwenezi. The 14 boreholes are directly benefiting 316 households. The distance women and young girls used to travel to reach water points has drastically reduced from 4km to a maximum of 1.5 km, and they now have safe and clean water for both human and livestock consumption.

The investment has decongested existing water points and reduce the transmission of Covid-19 when beneficiaries observe the social distancing. Beneficiaries' productive time and labour is saved when less time is taken for queuing for water. The risk of communities resorting to the use of unsafe water sources has also been reduced thereby contributing to good water and sanitation practices.

Increased piped water schemes decongest water points for 1143 households

The project established seven piped water schemes, four newly drilled boreholes and three high yielding solarised boreholes. The piped schemes decongested 1143 households to 35 new access points. The average household user ratio per access point/ tap is 33 which is below the standard under a bush-pump scenario of 35 households and indicative of reasonable access to water within the SPHERE Standards. The distance travelled to access water was reduced from 3km to an average of 500 metres. The time taken to walk to the water source was also reduced from more than an hour to less than 15 minutes. The piped water schemes improved efficiency in the drawing of water thereby reducing the amount of labour and time.



Image: Family draws water from a piped water scheme in Chiredzi

Multiplied impact through WASH



To multiply impact and increase access to water for essential services such as diptanks, schools and clinics, one of the piped water schemes Masukwe in ward 13 is providing water to Masukwe Clinic. Two piped water schemes are supporting two schools increasing access to water by 1647 school children. Pambe Piped water scheme in Mwenezi Ward 4 is supporting Pambe Primary school pupils and Tshovani Scheme ward 3 Chiredzi is supporting 1423 pupils at Nyahanga School with access to water. Previously, the school children and teachers would travel a return distance of 3 km to access water for drinking and school usage. Additionally, Tshovani piped water scheme is supplying water to a 16000 litre diptank thus ensuring regular dipping of 1687 cattle owned by 241 households. Previously, women and children had the responsibility of filling up the diptank, hence the availability of water has freed up productive time for women. The availability of water at the diptank contributes to absorptive capacity through reduction in tick borne diseases such as theleriosis which are common during the rainy season, thus protecting farmers' livestock investments. One borehole was drilled adjacent to a school in Mwenezi Ward 8, serving the community households and 866 school pupils.

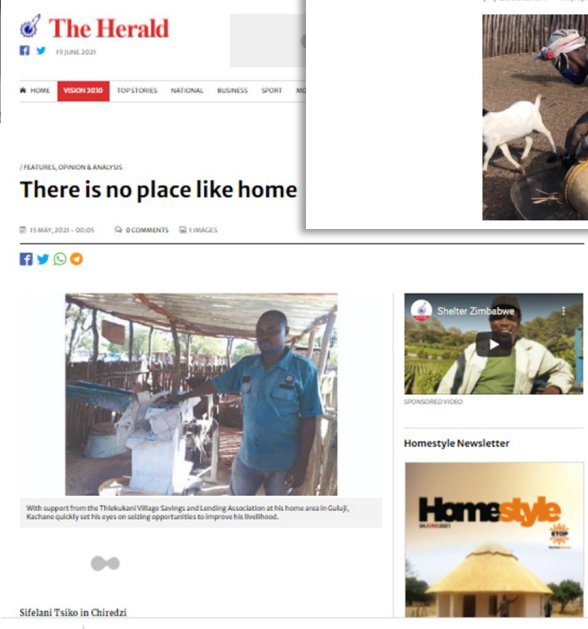


ZRBF-ECRAS holds a successful media visit



Image: Rosie Farqi ZRBF-ECRAS beneficiary explaining the fodder production process to journalists.

The ZRBF-ECRAS held a media tour in conjunction with the ZRBF Resilience Knowledge Hub (RKH) from the 10th to 13th of May 2021 with ten journalists from different mainstream media houses and online news agencies, such as NewZimbabwe.com, Herald, Sunday mail, Newsday, Reuters News Agency, among others. The journalists toured several ZRBF-ECRAS beneficiary households with various layered interventions including climate smart agriculture approaches, fodder production diversified crop production, promotion of gender equality, Disaster Risk Reduction structures, use of renewable energy, water harvesting technologies, among others. [Read more on page 12](#)





Stepping Up Post Emergency Recovery – Empowering Vulnerable Communities (SUPER-EVC) a consortium of Save the Children and ICRIAT on Thursday, applauded ECRAS for a solid program which has built tangible resilience to shocks and stresses such as drought among communities in Chiredzi and Mwenezi.

The consortium visited the ECRAS project in Chiredzi and Mwenezi Districts from 21 to 23 April to learn lessons and best practices in implementing resilience building programs.

SUPER- EVC is implementing a Resilience Building Programme in Beitbridge and Matobo, a project aimed at improving resilience of households to cope with and recover from recurrent livelihoods shocks and stresses.

ZRBF-ECRAS learning visit in Zvishavane

Three farmers under ZRBF Enhancing Community Resilience and inclusive Market Systems (ECRIMS) in Zvishavane wards 3 and 6 were visited with the objective of appreciating the low-cost biogas and solar cook stoves technology and to share experiences.

The host farmers for the three drum biogas digester technology appreciated and appraised it saying it is a

convenient way of cooking since it is time saving and discourages deforestation.

This technology can also be tapped by the youths in welding enterprise as they manufacture and supply the solar stoves in the community. These initiatives will also be adopted by the ZRBF-ECRAS.



Image: ZRBF-ECRAS team leader Fungai Gutusa and M&E specialist Rungano Mapfungautsi analysing the ZRBF-ECRIMS solar cookstove.

“

My name is Liznetty Mudzingo. I am 29 years of age and I live in Guluji village in Chiredzi. I never thought I would be able to work and take care of my family as a person living with a disability. Despite having one hand I am the breadwinner in my home. I take care of my two children and my mother and father. I was taught by ZRBF-ECRAS to work on my own and plant small grains which are good for our dry region and this year I am happy because I have two tons of red sorghum and my family is guaranteed to have enough food and income. Through our youth group under the project we also managed to open this shop and the income is helping my family to invest in livestock. With all these streams of income my hope is also to finish my studies pursuing a degree in Development studies to develop my community.

”



Saving time while saving the environment

Zimbabwe's forests continue to diminish due to heavy usage of firewood in the rural areas. This has also been ascribed to be closely linked to climate change effects ravaging most parts of the country. Climate change-induced drought has been traced in the southern parts of Zimbabwe like Mwenezi where people are inevitably forced to rely on wood for both cooking and selling to earn an income.

For Sister Hlongwani a 61-year-old woman who lives with her family of 9 in Neshuro Village in ward 2 of Mwenezi District, wood has been their lifblood throughout generations, but she has also seen the grazing lands and forests diminishing throughout the years.

"From time immemorial, firewood was the source of energy we could afford because of its convenience, but our lives have since turned around since we started using the bio-gas. Now the town is in the village," said Sister as she chuckled in laughter.

Sister was one of the model households supported with materials for construction of a 9 cubic bio-gas digester. Her household was supported with materials such as cement and piping, while she mobilized locally available resources such as sand. The bio gas digester has capacity to cater for a family of 12 per day, hence two households can feed on the system cooking three meals per day.

This intervention was layered on other interventions such as crop and livestock management, small grain and legume production, diversified livelihoods and income generation and village savings and lending schemes which Sister was already participating in.

ZRBF ECRAS sought not remove the usage of firewood entirely but rather to minimise its usage thus saving time as well as encourage gender equality and the adoption of smart way of cooking.

"ECRAS taught us the importance of the biogas technology that it will save us time while serving the environment. Now we interchange chores with my husband. We now spend more time working on the farm and other activities instead of always looking for firewood. This year we managed to plant round nuts, ground nuts, sweet potatoes, millet, sorghum, velvet beans and maize.

All these take time but for cooking we just go to our kraal for cow dung. We have 19 cattle," said Sister.

The household uses readily available water and fresh cow dung from their kraal as fuel for the bio-gas digester. The gas is ready after seven days. The remaining slurry from the system can be used as a high value environmentally friendly fertilizer which can be used for the nutrition garden.

"When ZRBF ECRAS project came with this program we could not believe that we could use a stove in the village to cook food like we are doing now. Now we boil water and cook everything including the relish on the gas stove expect the sadza in the evenings be-



By Pauline Hurungudo

"My grandchildren no longer have to fetch firewood before going to school, they simply boil water and cook their food on the stove and pack into their lunch boxes. They are so happy. This has also reduced conflicts between us. As long as they use the gas stove, they can do any other chore," said Sister as she smiles freely.

In rural Zimbabwe most chores such as fetching water and firewood are confined to women and girls leaving them vulnerable to abuse. Thus, the clean energy production technology contributes to reduced dependency on firewood, as well as saving time that used to be spent by girls and women looking for firewood reducing risks of abuse.

"My granddaughters now have more time to focus on school and their morning chores have declined. This also means they will not get to school tired or late and they have more time to read. I am now planning to connect the gas to have lights in the house so that they can read more and do well in school."

Indoor pollution from open fires has also reduced significantly with a corresponding reduction in respiratory diseases for women and children who spend most of their time in kitchens or around fireplaces.

The biogas is contributing to off-setting greenhouse emissions associated with livestock production by reducing burning of firewood and fossil fuels.

A family of 5 needs 7,5 kg of firewood for cooking per day. This means that, through this technology per year a total of 5 490kg of forestry used as a source of fuel of cooking has been preserved. Given that 1kg of methane is used, it will also lead to 21kg reduction of carbon dioxide emitted. In total the clean energy technology has prevented an estimated 22 689 072 kg of carbon dioxide from being emitted into the atmosphere. Thus, in the long term, this also helps to reduce climate change.

Sister was equipped with the diversification model which has equipped her to become a bread winner for her children who lost jobs due to the trickle effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The bio-gas is changing our lives. ECRAS also taught us about Mukando (VS&L), and I have managed to buy goats, chickens and kitchen utensils and even plates, pots and pans which I now use since I have transitioned to gas and less of firewood. We also continue to grow our cattle head of 19 not only for the dung for the gas but also to help us to pay school fees when we fail to sell the grain. Also, soon the biogas will start to produce manure for us for our nutrition garden," happily said Sister.

Sister has not only increased the resilience of her family and the community but this has also extended to the environment.

From a subsistence Farmer to a business man

Moscow Mache gula proudly smiles as he stands in his tuck shop which he recently operationalised, pointing to all the commodities he is now selling to other community members.

He confidently holds recently harvested ground nuts in his hands and proudly exclaims,

“I am now doing value addition to the ground nuts I am farming, and this year, I am expecting 100 buckets. We only used to get 5 buckets before the Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund’s (ZRBF) Enhancing Community Resilience and Sustainability (ECRAS) programme project came in 2016. I also package 2kg packs of small grain seeds to sell to farmers during the farming season. We only used to get about 5 buckets but now we have enough to sell to other villages.”

Moscow, a model farmer under the ZRBF ECRAS Project, embraced trainings on layered and sequenced approaches to crop and livestock management, diversified livelihoods and income generation which has turned around his life thus helping him to build resilience against shocks and stresses such as drought.

Like his parents before him, Moscow was living in poverty and could not afford basic food stuff and had for years failed to build his homestead to accommodate his big family of seven. He was among the villagers that ended up without livestock, due to the dry spells which led to the death of several livestock in the last decade.

There was no hope for his children and taking them through University was a dream that he didn’t even think could come true, seeing he could not even afford enough food for his household.

“Life was hard for my family because we were not educated. The government and organisations like CARE used to help us with food for the family and for our livestock, but this was also never enough. Our region is very dry and the most I got from my farm was 10 buckets of maize and small grains. My granary was never full. In 2002 I lost most of the cattle I had and was left with two. These also eventually died, so we had nothing,” lamented Moscow.

Moscow’s homestead is in ward 1 of Mwenezi District located about 8km from Neshuro township, 5km from the Masvingo – Beitbridge highway. Ward 1 is located in the north western part of the District and is in the Southern Cattle and Central Farming economic zone with erratic and poor rainfall distribution and very high temperatures. The ward is located in Region IV and V which receives low rainfall that ranges from less than 450mm to 600mm/annum with frequent seasonal droughts and severe dry spells, suitable for semi-extensive farming based on livestock, drought tolerant small grain and fodder crops.

Before the introduction of ZRBF interventions in 2016, the community was losing over 70% of its crops and livestock due to drought and other disasters. Moscow participated in diversified livelihoods including goat breeding, legume and small grain production which has allowed his village to have food and income to buy other assets to expand their livelihoods.

Today I am actually selling one of my cows to pay school fees for my daughter who is now in the university studying to be a Pharmacist, she is finishing school this year and I am very pleased. ECRAS really came at the right time just when she was about to finish high school. It’s rare and not easy to send a child through university from the village but those who used to laugh at me no longer laugh and they are coming to ask me for advice,” said Moscow



By Pauline Hurungudo

“ Through PSP (participatory scenario planning) we were taught not to rely on one thing. So now, if we don’t manage to produce much in the farm, I know I am earning income at the shop, and if that is not working due to economic hardships, I know I can sell my cattle to get by. I am now a business man. ”

ECRAS also introduced his community to fodder production, livestock feed processing and preservation. Through livestock protection mechanisms, he was taught the importance of rearing livestock for business.

“A lot of livestock died in our village. My family were left with two cattle that we also lost due to drought in 2002. This dissuaded us from livestock rearing. Since then, I was not able to buy cattle. I no longer had chickens, goats and turkeys, I sold them for fees. But now I have also been able to buy livestock using the money I am earning from selling small grains. And I am now able to run this shop in the village,” said Moscow.

ECRAS also helped the community to better plan for and identify strategies to deal with these recurring disasters through participatory scenario planning and disaster risk reduction. Identifying hazards before they occur has helped the community to feel more prepared for the future .

The community has been able to increase and safe guard their assets like cattle due to education on fodder production. Moscow explained that the education was timely seeing the grazing land is slowly diminishing due to new settlements so this has transformed the community’s livelihoods.

“Now we have 8 cows and no cow has died from hunger because we were taught how to prepare food for our livestock. It moved us from grade zero to grade seven,” jokes Moscow.

Diversification of business has increased resilience not only for Moscow and his family but the community as a whole.

While pointing to his homestead which consists of a hut, four roomed modern house, a raised goat pen, a modern fowl run and a modern granary and store room Moscow adds, “Since ECRAS started in 2016 I was able to build a proper homestead with these five structures through small grains such as sorghum macia, and pearl millet okashana which they gave us as seed, this was only a dream.”

“With the knowledge I have been given, I am also imparting it to others. After I was equipped with seed and produced good yields, I also start giving out to other farmers so that they also grow velvet bean for livestock feed and small grains to feed their families. Last year I gave around 50kg of seed away to people from my shop. I gave 2kg each so that other community members can also plant small grains and keep some for seed.”

ECRAS through a layered and sequenced approach which involves crop and livestock management, income generation has turned around the fortunes of Neshuro community helping communities to build resilience against future shocks and stresses such as drought.

“From Mukachana to Bukuvani, I am teaching people in different villages including youths. I have taught around 200 people and I continue to teach more and more so that people are equipped instead of begging for food,” he boasted.

“I also have a mill to my name which is adding on to my income. I also use it to mill my own grains. I would like to acquire another machine which can help me process some small grains to sell. I am planning to have a transition in my life. I also want to buy a car next year because I am now done paying school fees for my children. This will also help me to travel to shops in town to stock up my shop easily,” said enthusiastic Moscow.



ECRAS KNOWLEDGE HUB



[2020/21 Agricultural Season Rapid Assessment for Chiredzi and Mwenezi districts of Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe](#)



[Lifeskills Handbook](#)



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<https://www.newzimbabwe.com/chiredzi-farmers-turn-to-lucrative-fish-farming/>

<https://www.herald.co.zw/there-is-no-place-like-home/>

<https://www.sundaynews.co.zw/just-in-fisheries-change-lives-of-chiredzi-villagers/>

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