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# Takunda

WE HAVE OVERCOME

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## Improved Quality of Life for Ngonya Village Households Participating in the USAID Takunda VSLAs

Representatives of households who are a part of at least 5 VSLA groups in Ngonya village, Ward 12, Mutare, Manicaland Province, availed themselves (amidst the rains and busy farming season). They met with USAID Takunda and CARE USA staff to share their experiences. It was an eye-opening engagement that provided insights into how their lives improved because of participating in the VSLAs and how their groups are growing as other



community members realize the positive change. Ngonya village is widely a small-scale farming community near the Marange Irrigation Scheme. *“When the USAID Takunda staff came to our village, we joined the village savings and loan association (VSLA) training since we did not know how to participate in them. We were trained, and now we have the knowledge, and we possess the certificates which show that we underwent training. We are grateful that USAID Takunda collaborated with educational institutions which gave us the certificates,”* said a participant.

Takunda, meaning “we have overcome” in Shona, is a \$55M five-year (October 2020 to September 2025) USAID/BHA-funded Resilience Food Security Activity in Zimbabwe. The primary goal of Takunda is to achieve *“Sustainable, Equitable, and Resilient Food, Nutrition, and income security in Manicaland and Masvingo provinces of Zimbabwe.”* the program is being implemented by CARE together with partners: Bulawayo Projects Centre

(BPC), Environment Africa (EA), Family Health International (FHI360), International Youth Foundation (IYF), and Nutrition Action Zimbabwe (NAZ).

Before joining VSLAs, members of this community shared that they struggled financially. Some of the shared financial hurdles included the inability to secure basic food and household items (like cooking pots, water carriers, and warm blankets for the winter season), failure to pay school fees, incapability of securing agricultural inputs and pesticides, difficulties finding manure for gardens, no productive assets, and no savings. One participant narrated the extent of the hurdles, *“My financial struggles were bad; I remember that I was able to get soap to bathe children only when going to school and to wash their school uniforms only. I have ten children in my care, so I could not afford all their school fees; they are in primary and secondary school. I made them take turns going to school. For instance, those sitting for*

crucial examinations would go to school that year while the rest stayed at home, and so on. This is what I could afford.”

Now, VSLAs are a source of income for many households. First, they can afford basic food and household items and are not going hungry. Second, they can afford to pay school fees for their children. Some write up payment plans for school fees in agreement with school principals, and they meet their obligations. Third, acquiring agricultural inputs is easy since they have ready savings. USAID Takunda partnered with Arda Seeds (Private) Limited. This is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Agricultural and Rural Development Authority, a Parastatal under the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water, and Rural Development. Some VSLA group members were selected as agents to sell seeds for Arda, while they bought some for use. They are, therefore, able to earn some extra income.

Fourth, many households

have small livestock like goats and chickens and are obtaining manure for gardens from livestock pens. Those participating in VSLAs can afford to dress well, and their social status is enhanced.

Asked if they would continue to engage in VSLAs, most households said they would because they were satisfied with the benefits. One elderly woman explained that her group had grown by two members. *“We will not stop participating in VSLAs because we are generating incomes and have learned to care for each other. We support each other’s income-generating activities like banana selling, pot selling, vegetable selling,*

*livestock selling, blanket selling, etc. Each group has a goal, and we need to achieve our goals. Supporting each other will ensure that we all make it.”*

The group members also shared the key things which they learned. *“I learned that with sufficient guidance and knowledge, we can earn a decent livelihood through VSLAs income invested as capital into income generating activities. We did hear about VSLAs, but we did not participate in them because we did not understand what they are, how to do them, and why they are important. Consequently, we struggled financially. We now know*

*we engaged in them and overcame those financial struggles.”* For some groups, monthly contributions per member increase as agreed, suggesting growth. Besides their monthly contributions, which range from USD1 to USD10 per group member, some groups have a social fund that assists members in case of an emergency. One group said it sets aside USD1 per monthly member for this social fund. Households are also keen on getting USAID Takunda support in creating linkages with financial institutions and the private sector.

To date, 10,261 individuals have been reached in VSLAs

by USAID Takunda, and these are 8317 adult women, 1944 adult men, 1005 young women, and 334 young men. Thus, the participation of women is 81%, against male participation of 19 percent. The program continues to use male engagement during men’s fora to sensitize men on the benefits of VSLAs and targets technical vocational education training (TVET) graduates to view VSLAs as a source of income which they can, in turn, invest into IGAs in which they apply their skills and create employment for themselves.

**Written by:** Rumbidzai Matemba-Mutasa



## Building Resilience amongst youths in Mutare, Zimbabwe – Case Stories from The USAID Takunda Mastercrafts Short Courses Takunda VSLAs

Life-Enhancing & Trendy Sewing by Female Youths in the USAID Takunda Mastercrafts Short Course

Takunda, meaning “we have overcome” in Shona, is a \$55M five-year (October 2020 to September 2025) USAID/BHA-funded Resilience Food Security Activity in Zimbabwe. The program is being implemented by CARE together with partners: Bulawayo Projects Centre (BPC), Environment Africa (EA), Family Health International (FHI360), International Youth Foundation (IYF), and Nutrition Action Zimbabwe (NAZ). The primary goal of Takunda

is to achieve “Sustainable, Equitable, and Resilient Food, Nutrition, and income security in Manicaland and Masvingo provinces of Zimbabwe.”

USAID Takunda will reach more than 300,000 participants with training and support for sustainable, equitable, nutritious, resilient food and income security. Of these, 173,000 will be youths (aged 19 to 35 years) who are going to be engaged in various activities in the program’s

Youth Interventions Model. The model is informed by consolidated findings from at least six research studies undertaken during the program's 'refine and implementation' year. Through these findings, USAID Takunda's Youth Strategy intentionally streamlines best practices for meaningful youth engagement. Recommendations included fostering intergenerational partnerships, life skills training, and leveraging of existing youth-friendly spaces and youth champions. This influenced the program's selection and adoption of Positive Youth Development-oriented approaches and interventions.

A recent visit to Gombakomba Training Center in Gombakomba village, Ward 6, Mutare in Manicaland province, gave insights into how the lives of a group of six female youths are being positively transformed through the enhancement of their skills, knowledge, and professional networks in a USAID Takunda funded Master crafts short course in sewing (six months long). Fiona Maparanyanga (24), Yvonne Tizai (21), Lorraine Mubvuta (24), Rumbidzai Gondo (20), Enia Chafanza (20), and Rumbidzai Gaya (25) have varying numbers of months in training. Their trainers, Mrs. Muradzikwa and Mrs. Museta were also available when the interviews were done. The Master crafts also involve community apprenticeships facilitated by local artisans like the trainers.

Amongst the six female youths interviewed, most shared that they had successfully written their ordinary level examinations but failed to get back into advanced level education due to a lack of finances to fund their school. Only a couple had failed the exams. Consequently, the girls had to stay home doing nothing meaningful to earn a living. Considering the high rate of unemployment in Zimbabwe (...), it is almost impossible for

youth to secure employment with such a level of education. For those married, they took care of family and waited on provisions from their husbands which were tough because, being informally employed, their husbands did not make much money, and financial strain was always evident in their planning for household day-to-day needs. Four of the youths shared that the major reason why they took on training in sewing is that they would like to enhance themselves and their families by making sewing a livelihood. The remaining two shared that sewing interests them and, in addition, they would like to make a living out of it.

*"I am one of many siblings, and so if I make sewing a source of income, I can be able to help my family once I begin to make money,"* said Yvonne Tizai.

So far, the youths have had positive experiences in their learning journey, namely acquiring advanced level knowledge in handling sewing gadgets, threading, as well as cutting and designing to make several types of clothing. They are happy with the course content as it is relevant to the market needs. The youths have high hopes for the future after the training. Some shared that they plan to move to a bigger city, for instance, Mutare, which is the nearest, and then through a relative, try to find sewing space to begin working independently, obtaining client networks too.

*"After my training ends, I plan to work whilst at home. I do not have sufficient funds to pay for rentals for my own sewing space, so that is why I plan to begin at home. However, I have not yet decided on exactly what to sew because, through my training, I learned to sew various types of clothing."* said Lorraine Mubvuta.

Asked how much profit they were making per month, the girls highlighted that this depended on a particular



month as influenced by demand. For instance, sales during the time when schools resume were high in comparison to sales during a normal month which would be low. The youths shared that the advantage of sewing is that one made good profits depending on the number of orders placed and gave an example of profits that they had just made from sales of boys' school uniforms to a nearby primary education school.

"When schools opened at the

beginning of January 2023, we received an order for 12 primary school-going boys' uniforms. The breakdown of costs incurred was such that we needed 2 meters of cloth per uniform at USD6 per meter to give USD72 for buying cloth. Then 82 buttons were needed for the 12 uniforms costing USD8.40. The sewing thread needed for the work to be done was USD5, 12 zippers needed cost USD6, and the total costs were USD91.40. We sold each uniform at USD9 and got a total of USD108. Subtracting our costs, we made a profit of USD16.60 for

this order. It took us less than a week to complete the order; thus, the more orders we get, the more profit we can make."

Some challenges they face are power outages which have become a menace throughout the country.

"We are training 21 female youths in total. However, you were only able to interview 6 of them who came today because when there is a power outage like this, those who will be at the stage where they need to do overlocking cannot

as the sewing machines are electrically powered," explained Mrs. Muradzikwa.

Another challenge is that the sewing machines are few, while the number of students is growing.

The Master Crafts program of USAID Takunda has the potential to provide adequate vocational training to youths for better livelihood choices.

**Written by:** Rumbidzai Matemba-Mutasa

# Takunda Overview

**TAKUNDA**, meaning "we have overcome" in Shona, is a \$55M five-year (October 2020 to September 2025) USAID/BHA-funded Resilience Food Security Activity in Zimbabwe. The program is being led by CARE

Interwoven between the purpose areas, and embedded in all program activities, are the following cross-cutting themes:

- Gender, Youth & Social Dynamics
- Social Behavior Change
- Environmental Safeguarding
- Collaboration, Learning and Adaptation
- Community Visioning
- Governance & Accountability

### Guiding principles

- Engaging communities through the Community visioning process to influence activity selection.
- Ensuring effective integration, layering, and sequencing of approaches and interventions

to increase positive outcomes for participants and enhance sustainability

- Adaptive management

- Local systems strengthening and sustainability

### Beneficiary targeting

Inclusive: targets areas with higher concentrations of extremely poor and chronically vulnerable households (HHs). HHs will be scored, ranked, and selected based on vulnerability indicators:

- (1) poverty prevalence,
- (2) stunting,
- (3) mean hazard index,
- (4) population food insecurity,
- (5) access to safe drinking water, and
- (6) agro-ecological zone

**Intervention specific:** tailored targeting approaches for primary participant groups including extremely poor HHs (23,163); chronically vulnerable HHs (46,327); HHs with adolescents, children, and women at risk of chronic malnutrition (74,508); and whole communities (for some WASH interventions) (282,925).

## RESILIENCE FOOD SECURITY ACTIVITY




**Sustainable, Equitable, and Resilient Food, Nutrition, and Income Security in Manicaland and Masvingo.**

301 636 Participants


**PURPOSE 1**  
Increased gender equitable income among extremely poor and chronically vulnerable households, women, and youth.

**PURPOSE 2**  
Improved nutritional status among children under 5 years, adolescent girls, and women of reproductive age.


**PURPOSE 3**  
Reduced impact of shocks and stresses for extremely poor and chronically vulnerable households, women, and youth.



173 000 Youth (age 15-35)



114 000 Women of reproductive age



57 980 Adolescent girls (age 10-15)

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## STUDIES



- Agriculture Value Chain Analysis Report
- Care Group, Water Point, Ward Food and Nutrition Security Committee and Ward Water and Sanitation Sub-Committee Inventory Report
- Community Visioning Culmination Report
- COVID-19 Socio-Economic Analysis Report
- Gender Analysis Report
- Off-Farm Opportunities Capacities Financial and Labor Market Assessment Report
- Social Behavior Change Formative Research Report
- Village Savings and Loans Association Functionality Review Report

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

