



Sustainable AgriVentures for Empowered Women and Youth (SAVE-WY) Intervention Program in Zimbabwe



Tanyaradzwa Rukasha, Lovemore Musemwa and Seipati Mokhema

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Author affiliations

Tanyaradzwa Rukasha¹, Lovemore Musemwa² and Seipati Mokhema³

1. Marondera University of Agricultural Science and Technology-Zimbabwe
2. Bindura University of Science Education-Zimbabwe
3. International Water Management Institute-South Africa

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The CGIAR Initiative on **Diversification in East and Southern Africa**, also known as **Ukama Ustawi** (UU) aims to help smallholders transition to sustainably intensified, diversified, and derisked agri-food systems based on maize in 12 ESA countries. Specifically, it seeks to enable 50,000 value chain actors, including farmers (at least 40% women, 40% youth), to adopt climate-smart maize-based intensification and diversification practices and one million to access digital agro-advisory services. Emphasizing the role of the private sector in driving such transformation, UU targets to support at least 60 start-ups and SMEs.

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Executive Summary

The Sustainable AgriVentures for Empowered Women and Youth (SAVE-WY) project is implemented by Marondera University of Agricultural Science and Technology in partnership with Bindura University of Science Education. This project is supported financially by the International Water Management Institute in South Africa and is an Ukama Ustawi Work Package 5 Project activity. Funded by CGIAR with a budget of USD 45,000, the SAVE-WY project targeted 150 households in Mashonaland Central and Masvingo provinces of Zimbabwe.

Through the SAVE-WY project, a revolving fund was established to provide financial support to households with a strong emphasis on promoting gender equality and social inclusion. Then revolving fund provided seed funding and a sustainable avenue for wealth regeneration that would enable beneficiaries to access essential resources and services, facilitating the development of resilient livelihoods and transforming household and community dynamics. In addition to establishing a revolving fund, the SAVE-WY UU WP5 project also provided support through capacity building and mentorship for the youth and women who were recipients of the revolving fund. The project provided extension services to minimize default risks, ensuring a gender-transformative approach throughout its implementation.

The SAVE-WY project was thus launched to address the critical challenges faced by marginalized groups in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector, particularly women and youth. With a youth unemployment rate of approximately 14% and agriculture accounting for a significant portion of employment and GDP, this project aimed to empower these demographics through capacity building and financial support.

Key findings demonstrate that the project successfully improved participants' business practices across sectors such as poultry farming, mushroom farming, vending, baking, and agro-retailing. However, challenges like climate-induced droughts and limited resources necessitated adaptive strategies. This report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the project objectives, activities, financial assessment, impact, challenges faced, and recommendations for future sustainability.

The SAVE-WY project demonstrated a holistic approach to capacity building, emphasizing both skills enhancement and practical support. By empowering women and youth in agriculture, it contributed not only to individual economic resilience but also to broader community development.

1. Introduction

Zimbabwe's agricultural sector plays a pivotal role in the country's economy, contributing significantly to employment, food security, and export revenues. Agriculture accounts for approximately 13% of Zimbabwe's GDP and employs over 60% of the rural workforce (Amankwah and Gwatidzo, 2024). Despite its importance, many marginalized groups, particularly women and youth, face substantial barriers to full participation in this sector. These challenges include limited access to financial resources, inadequate education and training opportunities, and socio-cultural norms that often prioritize male involvement in agriculture. Women, who comprise a significant percentage of the agricultural workforce, often lack ownership rights, access to land, and control over resources. Youth, on the other hand, encounter high unemployment rates and limited opportunities for economic engagement. In rural areas, young people are particularly vulnerable, as they struggle to transition from education to productive employment, further exacerbating the cycle of poverty.

Recognizing these challenges, the Sustainable AgriVentures for Empowered Women and Youth (SAVE-WY) project was launched to empower these marginalized groups. The project aims to create a more inclusive agricultural sector by enhancing the skills, knowledge, and financial capabilities of women and youth. By focusing on capacity-building activities and providing direct financial support, the SAVE-WY project seeks to foster sustainable livelihoods and promote economic resilience among participants.

2. Background

The Ukama Ustawi Project, under its Work Package 5, fosters youth engagement in Zimbabwe's agribusiness sector to promote food security and social inclusion. As part of this effort, the project undertook a dialogue in November 2022 to identify key stakeholders in Zimbabwean agribusiness, discuss bottlenecks and opportunities for more inclusive agribusiness, and plan next steps for 2024 activities.

In May 2024, a follow-up validation workshop was organized by the Ukama Ustawi WP5 and the [Development Reality Institute \(DRI\)](#)¹ to achieve two key objectives: First is to validate the findings of the 2022 dialogue on youth engagement in agripreneurship in Zimbabwe, and second is to build upon the recommendations from that dialogue to develop a concrete plan for implementation in 2024. During the validation discussion, participants brainstormed proposed interventions and collaboratively crafted a detailed implementation plan for 2024.

Following the stakeholder validation discussion, participants were divided into three groups to brainstorm potential interventions in youth agripreneurship for UU to undertake in 2024.

¹ DRI is a social innovation hub that specialises in climate change innovations. They also promote sustainable socio-economic development and build the capacity of community based and civil society organisations to transform livelihoods of the marginalized groups through participatory and innovative solutions. LinkedIn Profile: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/development-reality-institute/?originalSubdomain=zw>

These projects aim to address the capacity, resource, and cross-cutting risks identified earlier. Each group then completed a detailed template capturing the intervention name, description, objectives, rationale, alignment with UU WP5 goals, potential risks, and sustainability strategies.

The three groups presented their proposed projects in a plenary session, receiving feedback on their proposals. After all groups had presented, participants voted to establish the project that best met the pre-determined impact criteria. While the voting was not used to directly determine the final intervention design, it served as an important gauge of the participants' opinions based on the information available. This collaborative process enabled the stakeholders to co-create context-appropriate interventions to support the development of Zimbabwe's agripreneurship ecosystem

Of the three proposed Intervention Programs from the groups, the Sustainable Agriventures for Empowered Women and Youth (SAVE_WY) proposal was chosen as the winning proposal and was to be implemented through Marondera University of Agricultural Science and Technology (MUASt) as IWMI's partner organization. The proposal was selected on the basis that it aligned perfectly with Work Package 5 objectives of achieving social inclusion. The aim of intervention program in this regard is to deliver tailored demand-driven gender inclusive programs, particularly around market needs, and linking youth in agripreneurship to financial opportunities through a revolving fund to advance their agribusiness activities.

3. Objectives

The main objectives of the SAVE-WY project included:

1. Increasing Access to Financial Services by enhancing financial literacy and providing tailored financial support to women and youth agripreneurs.
2. Building Technical Capacity through equipping participants with essential skills in business development, marketing, and financial management.
3. Promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion through fostering an inclusive environment that encourages participation from marginalized groups.
4. Establishing a Self-Sustaining Revolving Fund and creating a model that can be replicated and scaled for broader impact.
5. Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation and assessing the impact of training and support on participants' business practices and overall growth.

4. Methodology

To ensure that the intervention program was effectively implemented, the methodology below outlines the steps that were employed by the implementing partner organisation. The methodology below includes a description of the field work preparation, data collection methods (Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs)), sampling techniques and participant demographics. They are detailed as follows:

4.1 Fieldwork Preparation

Prior to data collection, the implementing partners developed qualitative and quantitative data collection tools. Quality data were obtained from the extension officers through the KII and the FGD for extension officers. Quantitative data was collected from the smallholder farmer using the smallholder farmer interview questionnaire. This was programmed into Kobo toolbox and deployed for use on android Tablets using Open Data Kit (ODK) Collect². Tablets were used for capturing data when administering the smallholder farmer questionnaire and for recording audios during the KII and FGD interviews. Six enumerators were recruited and trained on how to administer questionnaires from the project team members. All the tools were tested for consistency, possible errors and for time taken to complete. Before departure to the field all protocols were done. This involved getting in contact with all district stakeholders and sensitizing them about the study.

4.2 Key Informant Interviews

Using approved tools, the SAVE-WY project team conducted Key Informant Interviews (KII) with a number of stakeholders starting with the District Extension Officers, District Administrators, Ward Councillors and other Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) representatives providing support in selected Districts. The baseline assessment for the SAVE-WY project involved gathering critical information from key informants, including District Extension Officers, District Administrators, Ward Councillors, and representatives from NGOs active in the selected districts. This qualitative approach is essential for understanding the nuanced landscape of women and youth in agribusiness, enabling a more informed implementation of the project.

The interviews began with background information, where key informants provided insights into their roles and experiences in the agricultural sector. This context helped establish their credibility and understanding of local dynamics. Following this, participants shared their perspectives on the current involvement of women and youth in agribusiness. This was done to capture the types of agricultural activities prevalent in the community and any observable trends in participation among these groups.

A significant focus was on the challenges faced by women and youth, especially regarding access to essential resources such as land, finance, and training. Understanding these barriers was crucial for tailoring the SAVE-WY project to address the specific needs of these underserved populations.

² ODK Collect: ODK Collect is a data collection platform that helps researchers, field teams, and other professionals collect the data they need wherever it is. It can be used for managing and filling out forms. It supports a wide range of question and answer types, and is designed to work well offline.

Financial access and support were also be a key area of inquiry. Informants were asked about the availability and accessibility of financial services for women and youth in agribusiness, as well as any successful programs that have previously provided support. Their insights helped identify best practices and areas for improvement in financial service delivery. The discussion also extended to specific indicators for monitoring and evaluation, such as income levels, dietary diversity, and food insecurity. Informants were asked to reflect on how women and youth experience these issues compared to their male counterparts, providing a gendered perspective that is critical for understanding the broader impact of agribusiness projects. Additionally, insights into business growth and employment creation were sought, allowing for an assessment of the economic contributions of women and youth in agribusiness. The informants shared their observations on the factors that influence business success or stagnation, which were invaluable for shaping future support strategies.

The interviews concluded with recommendations for the SAVE-WY project, where informants suggested strategies for effectively empowering women and youth, as well as potential training programs and partnerships that could enhance the project's impact. This method was crucial as it allowed for a rich, qualitative understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the community. By engaging with those who have first-hand knowledge of the local context, the SAVE-WY project was able to better align its objectives with the needs of women and youth in agribusiness, ensuring a more targeted and effective approach to empowerment and support.

4.3 Focus Group Discussions

The SAVE-WY project team conducted focus group discussions (FGDS) as a counterfactual for the potential project beneficiaries. Two FGDs were conducted, per province, one per District from the selected two Districts per province in Masvingo and Mashonaland Central Provinces of Zimbabwe. Each FGD had 6-10 participants to make it manageable but at the same time having ample diverse views. The proceedings of the discussions were recorded and transcribed for analysis. The recordings are kept as part of raw data sets which will be shared with the funding partner. Dictaphones were used to record the proceedings of the meetings. The focus group discussion for the SAVE-WY project collected valuable insights from participants regarding the experiences of women and youth in agribusiness, along with the challenges they faced and their perspectives on the project. The discussion began with an icebreaker, allowing participants to introduce themselves and share their involvement in agribusiness. This set a comfortable tone for the conversation.

Participants then discussed the current state of agribusiness in their community, including the types of agricultural activities prevalent among them. Following this, the group addressed financial access and support, exploring the resources available for their agribusinesses and the challenges encountered in securing financial assistance. Key indicators for monitoring and evaluation were also examined. Participants reflected on their household income levels,

dietary diversity, and experiences with food insecurity, sharing personal stories that highlight the impact on their lives. The conversation shifted to business growth, where participants assessed the progress of their agribusinesses over recent years, discussing factors that have contributed to or hindered their growth. Employment creation was another focal point, as participants identify job opportunities generated through their agribusiness activities and the types of roles created within their communities. The inclusion of women and youth in decision-making processes was assessed, with a discussion on barriers to their participation.

Finally, participants were invited to provide recommendations for the SAVE-WY project, suggesting the types of support and training that would empower women and youth in agribusiness. They were also encouraged to identify potential partnerships that could enhance the project's effectiveness. The discussion concluded with an open floor for any additional comments or suggestions, ensuring that all voices were heard. This comprehensive approach generated rich insights, which were crucial for shaping the SAVE-WY project to meet the community's needs effectively.

4.4 Potential Beneficiaries Interviews

The SAVE-WY project team conducted individual interviews with randomly selected potential project beneficiaries within the project areas. The objectives of the quantitative portion of this evaluation were to provide initial estimates of project indicators, which were used in monitoring and evaluation and to measure changes in indicators over the project cycle, and to also provide evidence to prioritize and refine future interventions. To make sure that a holistic approach was provided, the team interviewed both male and female project beneficiaries. The key indicators used during the assessment included but not limited to:

- **Income Levels:** Assessment of current income sources and levels for households involved in agribusiness.
- **Dietary Diversity:** Measure the variety of foods consumed by households to evaluate nutrition quality.
- **Household Food Insecurity Access Score (HFIAS):** Use of HFIAS to assess the food security status of households.
- **Child Nutritional Status:** Assessment of the nutritional status of children in y households using indicators such as height-for-age and weight-for-age.
- **Health Access:** Monitoring access to healthcare services among beneficiaries, including the frequency of health visits and preventative care.
- **Business Growth:** Evaluate existing businesses in terms of scale, income value, and growth potential.

- Employment Creation: Identify current employment levels and potential for job creation through the project.
- Women and Youth Inclusion: Assessment of the involvement of women and youth in decision-making processes and access to resources.
- Gender Parity in Business Ownership: Measurement of the proportion of businesses owned by women and youth compared to men within the targeted communities.
- Savings Rate: Measurement of the percentage of potential beneficiaries who report increased savings.
- Loan Repayment Rates: Tracking of the repayment rates of loans issued other sources to assess financial sustainability and beneficiaries' adherence to repayment schedules.
- Area under cultivation, business size, Crop Yield and Diversity: Assessment of current crop yields and the diversity of crops planted by the potential beneficiaries to assess improvements in agricultural practices and food production.
- Access to Inputs: Tracking of the availability and use of agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizers, etc.) by potential beneficiaries and their impact on productivity.
- Business Survival Rates: Monitoring of the survival rates of businesses started by potential beneficiaries before receiving support.

4.5 Sampling

A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted. They are as follows:

Stage 1: Purposively selected the district where evaluation is supposed to be held.

Stage 2: Purposively selected the trained Agricultural Extension Officers from each district. A list of trained farmers was obtained from District Agricultural Officer. A simple random sampling technique for selecting the project beneficiaries was conducted.

Stage 3: The key stakeholders were purposefully selected based on their participation in the project for KII.

4.6 Determination of sample size for Extension Officers

The sample for the potential beneficiaries was randomly drawn from the list of people who may be eligible to get the support from the project. The list was obtained from the District Extension Officers of the two-participating district per province in consultation the District Administrator.

4.7 Reporting

The implementing partners produced frequent interim technical reports to the funding partner which were shared for comments. The comments from the interim technical reports were incorporated into the final technical report. Furthermore, the implementing and funding partners regularly meet online to discuss the progress of the intervention program and resolve any difficulties that arose as a result of the implementation activities.

5 Project Activities

The SAVE-WY project was implemented over four months (September to December 2024) and involved several key activities:

5.1 Revolving Fund Establishment

A revolving fund was established to provide direct financial support to participants. The fund aimed to facilitate access to capital for participants engaged in various agribusiness projects. The selection criteria focused on targeting women and youth, ensuring that those most in need received assistance.

The revolving fund's model allowed participants to pay back a portion of their disbursement, which would then be reinvested into the fund to support future participants. This sustainable approach not only provided immediate financial relief but also fostered a sense of responsibility among participants. The initial stage saw 83 participants benefiting who were involved in various activities along the agricultural value chain including mushroom production, poultry and baking.

5.2 Capacity Building Workshops

Workshops were conducted to cover critical topics, including:

i. Business Planning and Strategy Formulation

Participants learned how to create comprehensive business plans that outlined their goals, strategies, and financial projections.

ii. Marketing Techniques and Customer Engagement

The workshops emphasized the importance of understanding customer needs and developing effective marketing strategies to reach target audiences.

iii. Financial Management Basics

Participants were introduced to essential financial concepts, including budgeting, cash flow management, and accounting practices.

Interactive sessions, group discussions, and practical exercises facilitated hands-on experience, enabling participants to develop actionable business plans.

5.3 One-on-One Mentoring

Personalized mentoring sessions were implemented to address specific challenges faced by participants. Mentors provided tailored advice on:

i. Individual Business Challenges and Opportunities

Participants received guidance on how to navigate unique hurdles within their specific agribusiness endeavours.

ii. Personalized Advice on Marketing and Financial Management

Mentors assisted participants in refining their marketing strategies and improving their financial management skills.

iii. Goal-Setting and Accountability

Mentors helped participants set realistic goals and provided accountability to ensure progress.

5.4 Continuous Monitoring of Participant Projects

Continuous monitoring of participant projects was conducted to assess implementation progress and challenges. Site visits allowed for immediate feedback and support, reinforcing the training provided.

The monitoring process included:

- i. **Regular Site Visits:** Facilitators visited participant projects to observe implementation, assess challenges, and provide support.
- ii. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Participants were encouraged to share their experiences and challenges, allowing facilitators to adapt training and support as needed.

5.5 Media Engagement

Media coverage was secured through local radio stations, enhancing visibility for the SAVE-WY project and fostering community support. For Masvingo Province, the project engaged Great Zimbabwe University [Radio](#) while [Madziwa Community Radio](#) was engaged for Mashonaland Central. Each radio station was allocated \$1,000 to disseminate information related to project activities, success stories, and community engagement projects. This investment aimed to enhance the project's reach and encourage community involvement.

6. Financial Overview

6.1 Disbursement amounts per District

A total of USD 13,571 was disbursed to a total of 82 participants in Masvingo and Mashonaland Central Province (Table 1). Furthermore, total additional expenses for operations in Masvingo (Chivi District) amounted to USD 4,237 and in Mashonaland Central (Shamva District) amounted to USD 4,104 (Table 2). A detailed breakdown of the disbursements and additional expenses is presented below:

6.2 Breakdown of Disbursements

Table 1: Disbursement Amounts by Project and District (number of beneficiaries are in brackets).

Participant Project	Amount Disbursed (USD) - Chivi District	Amount Disbursed (USD) - Shamva District	Purpose
Poultry Farming	USD 5431 (32)	USD 4200 (15)	Chicks and feed
Mushroom Farming	-	USD 1630 (14)	Purchase of spawn, plastic tubing, straw, plastic sheet, twine and jik (bleach)
Vending	USD 100 (2)	USD 1050 (13)	Inventory
Baking	USD 660 (4)	-	Ingredient purchases
Agro-Retailing	USD 500 (2)	-	Inventory
	USD 6691	USD 6880	

6.3 Breakdown of Additional Expenses

In addition to the direct disbursements made to participants, the following additional expenses were incurred during the implementation of the SAVE-WY project. These additional expenses were essential for ensuring the smooth operation of the project, enabling effective monitoring, communication, and project support (Table 2).

Table 2: Additional Expense Table by the District.

Expense Category	Chivi District Amount (USD)	Shamva District Amount (USD)	Description
Car Hire	USD 880	USD 880	Costs associated with hiring vehicles for project-related travel.
Fuel	USD 430	USD 445	Expenses for fuel used during project monitoring and support activities.
Travel and Subsistence (T&S)	USD 2145	USD 2000	Costs incurred for travel and subsistence for staff during field visits.
Data Entry	USD 200	USD 100	Expenses related to data entry services for project

			documentation and reporting.
T&S for Local Authorities/ inception meeting	USD 160	USD 200	Specific T and S for Local authorities
Printing	USD 64	USD 130	Costs for printing training materials and other project-related documents.
Tollgate Fees	USD 12	-	Fees paid for tollgates during travel for project activities.
Bank Charges	USD 296	USD 294	Charges incurred for bank transactions related to project funds.
Airtime	USD 50	USD 45	Costs for mobile communication to facilitate coordination and support.
Bank account opening	-	USD 10	To ensure accountability, a dedicated account was opened
TOTAL	USD 4,237	USD 4,104	

6.4 Utilization of Funds

i. Poultry Farming

Funds were effectively used for purchasing equipment and training on ventilation techniques, leading to improved management practices. Participants reported significant enhancements in production rates, with many noting a decrease in mortality rates among their flocks.

ii. Mushroom Farming

Participants reported successful growth of mushrooms and emphasized the need for better marketing strategies to access local markets. The proactive support from government extension officers facilitated market access, allowing participants to sell their products in local markets effectively.

iii. Vending and Baking

Participants reported increased customer engagement and successful repayment behaviours. Vendors in Shamva District demonstrated remarkable repayment rates, with no defaults noted. The project's support allowed bakers to expand their production capacity and reach new customers.

iv. Agro-Retailing

Improved inventory management practices contributed to enhanced sales and customer satisfaction. Participants expressed a need for additional training in customer service skills to retain clients, emphasizing the importance of building strong customer relationships.

7. Challenges Identified

i. Climate-Induced Drought

The on-going drought adversely affected agricultural productivity, particularly in poultry farming, highlighting the need for adaptive strategies. Participants faced challenges in sourcing feed and maintaining optimal conditions for their livestock.

ii. Time Constraints

Many participants struggled to attend all training sessions due to personal commitments, limiting their engagement and learning opportunities. Feedback indicated a desire for more flexible scheduling options for training sessions.

iii. Record Keeping

A significant number of participants lacked formal documentation practices, necessitating additional training in financial literacy. Many participants reported difficulty in tracking expenses and maintaining accurate records.

iv. Resource Availability

Limited access to quality inputs hindered the progress of several projects, affecting the application of skills learned during training. Participants reported challenges in sourcing necessary materials, such as feed and equipment. This was even more prudent for the poultry farmers in both districts who faced challenges in accessing chicks.

v. Individual Differences

Varied levels of prior experience among participants created challenges during training, necessitating tailored approaches to accommodate different learning speeds. Some participants required additional support to grasp fundamental concepts.

8. Project Outputs

8.1 Radio Promotional Material

Great Zimbabwe University Radio and Madziwa Community Radio stations were contacted to provide media coverage for the project. Each radio station was allocated USD 1,000 to support the dissemination of information related to project activities, success stories, and community engagement projects. This investment in media coverage aimed to enhance visibility for the SAVE-WY project and foster community support, ensuring that the messages reached a broader audience.

The radio stations were also tasked with 1) raising awareness about the revolving fund and its benefits. 2) Encouraging youth and women to engage in agri-entrepreneurship and apply for financial support, provide training and educational programs on sustainable agricultural practices, business management, and financial literacy, equipping participants with the skills needed for successful ventures. 3) Highlighting success stories of local agripreneurs so as to inspire others in the community and demonstrating the positive impact of the SAVE-WY project 4) Creating a platform for collaboration and networking among agripreneurs, local farmers, and stakeholders, fostering partnerships that can enhance business opportunities. 5) Encouraging community participation by soliciting feedback on the needs and challenges faced by agripreneurs (Image 1), ensuring that the radio station serves as a voice for the community and addresses relevant issues.



Image 1: Radio Press Team interviewing a vendor.

8.2 Capacity building

The SAVE-WY intervention program aimed to address critical challenges faced by marginalized groups in the agricultural sector, particularly women and youth in Zimbabwe. Recognizing the vital role that these demographics played in fostering sustainable economic growth, the project focused on enhancing their capacities through targeted training and support. As part of the capacity-building efforts, the SAVE-WY project implemented a workshop and a one-on-one mentoring session designed to equip participants with essential business development skills (Images 2 and 3). These activities aimed not only at improving individual competencies but also at fostering a supportive community where participants could share experiences, knowledge, and resources. The project specifically targeted various agribusiness projects, including poultry farming, mushroom farming, vending, baking, and agro-retailing. Each of these sectors presented unique opportunities and challenges, particularly in the context of Zimbabwe's evolving economic landscape. By tailoring the training to meet the specific needs of these sectors, the project sought to empower participants to develop sustainable livelihoods and improve their overall quality of life.

In addition to skill development, the SAVE-WY project closely monitored the implementation of participants' projects to provide on-going support and identify areas for improvement. This hands-on approach ensured that participants not only learned theoretical concepts but also applied them in real-world scenarios, enabling them to overcome challenges effectively. One significant challenge highlighted during the project was the climate-induced drought that affected Chivi District, where many participants operated. The rising temperatures and increased frequency of heat waves severely impacted agricultural productivity, particularly in poultry farming, where heat stress could lead to high mortality rates among chickens.

To address this, the project incorporated training on proper ventilation techniques for poultry housing, emphasizing the importance of adapting to climate-related challenges.



Images 2&3: Revolving fund beneficiaries in a capacity building event.

Overall, the SAVE-WY project represented a holistic approach to capacity building, emphasizing the need for both skills enhancement and practical support. By empowering women and youth in agriculture, the project contributed to individual empowerment and economic resilience, fostering broader community development and sustainability.

8.3 Virtual Reality Field Trip

The success story of the SAVE-WY Intervention program is showcased through a Virtual Reality site to encourage individuals, organisations and groups of interest within the Water and Agriculture Sectors to learn more about agripreneurship in Zimbabwe and in turn, encourage investment and support to vulnerable social groups such women and youth engaged agripreneurship. The VR platform serves as a data repository for SAVE-WY Intervention Program work done by Ukama Ustawi WP5 team and its partner organisation.

The Virtual Field Trip (VFT) is a simulation of key sites in Zimbabwe where the SAVE_WY Intervention Program was implemented. It includes interactive case studies from the revolving fund beneficiaries, interviews with implementing partners as well as key learnings from the intervention program reports. The virtual experience is accessible through a web-based platform which offers a comprehensive and engaging educational journey.

The Virtual Reality component in this regard offers flexible learning opportunity that is made inaccessible by geography and logistics, provide an enhanced learning experience that traditional methods cannot offer, and helps interested parties gain a nuanced understanding of issues faced by women and youth agripreneurs in Zimbabwe based on real-world examples through virtual reality (Images 4 and 5).



Images 4&5: Virtual Reality Field Trip with beneficiaries in Chivi and Shamva Districts-Zimbabwe.

9. Project Outcomes

9.1 Monitoring of Participant Projects for Improved Agricultural Practises

Throughout the monitoring process and capacity-building program, we conducted on-going monitoring of participants' projects to assess implementation progress and challenges:

9.1.1 Projects Monitored

- Poultry Farming: Focused on proper ventilation techniques to mitigate heat stress caused by rising temperatures in Chivi District.
- Mushroom Farming: Assessed growth conditions and market access for products.
- Vending and Baking: Evaluated business operations and customer engagement strategies.
- Agro-Retailing: Reviewed inventory management and supplier relationships.

9.1.2 Monitoring Activities

Regular site visits and check-ins allowed for observing project implementation and providing immediate feedback and support to agripreneurs.

9.2 Key Findings

9.2.1 Poultry Producers

Many poultry producers reported facing challenges due to climate-induced drought and heat stress. Training on ventilation techniques was particularly well-received, leading to improved management practices. Participants noted that understanding how to create optimal living conditions for their poultry significantly enhanced their production rates and overall animal health (Image 6).



Image 6: Poultry Farmer in Masvingo.

9.2.2 Mushroom Farmers

Participants expressed a strong need for better marketing strategies to effectively reach local markets. Many acknowledged that while they had the skills to cultivate mushrooms, expanding their projects to improve financial viability was essential. Training on marketing and sales tactics was identified as a critical area for further development, enabling them to tap into broader market opportunities (Images 7 and 8).



Images 7&8: Mushroom Farmers and their mushroom produce.

9.2.3 Vending and Baking

Participants successfully connected with new customers during the workshops, but they highlighted the necessity for ongoing support in marketing and financial literacy, particularly

in record-keeping. Many vendors and bakers (Images 9 and 10) reported that understanding their financials was crucial for scaling their businesses and ensuring profitability.



Images 9&10: Agro-retailers-Fruit and vegetable vendor and a bread baker.

9.2.4 Agro-Retailers

Improved inventory management practices were noted among agro-retailers, which helped streamline their operations. However, participants requested additional training on customer service skills, emphasizing that strong customer relations are vital for retaining clients and building a loyal customer base.

Interestingly, some retailers as a result of the one-on-one mentorship and training on effective record keeping started selling small packages for feed and seed, for example selling of feed in 1kg bags as it allowed those who couldn't afford the bigger 10 kg packs to be catered for as well (Image 11).



Image 11: Bags of Feed.

10. Overall Assessment and Recommendations

- i. Providing additional training sessions focused on financial management and record-keeping to empower participants with essential skills.

- ii. Implementing a structured monitoring process to track fund usage and project implementation, allowing for timely interventions.
- iii. Offering training sessions at varied times to accommodate participants' diverse schedules, enhancing their ability to engage fully.
- iv. Incorporating climate resilience strategies into future training programs to help participants adapt to environmental challenges.
- v. Collaborating with local organizations and government agencies to enhance resource availability and support for participants, creating a more sustainable ecosystem for agribusiness.

11. Conclusion

The SAVE-WY project has made substantial progress in empowering women and youth in agriculture, enhancing their business skills, financial management capabilities, and overall resilience. The successful establishment of a revolving fund has provided crucial financial support, while tailored training and mentoring have improved participants' skills and confidence.

However, the project must continue to adapt to the challenges posed by climate change and resource scarcity. By investing in on-going support, training, and partnerships, the SAVE-WY project can further strengthen its impact, contributing to sustainable agricultural development and improved food security in Zimbabwe.

The SAVE-WY project has laid a strong foundation for sustainable development in the agricultural sector, contributing to food security and economic resilience in Zimbabwe. Continued investment in the skills and capabilities of women and youth is vital for fostering an inclusive and thriving agribusiness community.

This comprehensive report outlines the SAVE-WY project's efforts to empower women and youth in agriculture, showcasing the successes, challenges, and recommendations for future sustainability. By continuing to support these groups, the project can foster resilience and contribute to economic growth in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector.

12. Reference List

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