



Faces of Climate Justice

Photo stories from the Climate Just Communities project in Zambia



Introduction



The Climate Just Communities (CJC) programme is a flagship initiative under the Scottish Government's Climate Justice Fund, which promotes a people-centred, human-rights based approach to climate action. Running from 2023 to 2026, this £24 million programme supports communities in Scotland's partner countries – Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia – to achieve climate justice.

CJC empowers marginalised communities to lead their own climate responses based on their local needs and priorities, in line with the three pillars of climate justice: procedural, distributive and transformative justice. The programme supports community-led planning and action, inclusive participation, especially of women, youth, and people with disabilities, with the goal of achieving systemic change – helping everyone in the communities to thrive despite the changing climate.

NIRAS is delivering the CJC project in Zambia in collaboration with the Council of Churches in Zambia, Green Living Movement in Zambia, Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia, Civil Society for Poverty Reduction, Centre for Environment Justice, Disability Rights Watch and CBM UK.

CJC Zambia's approach is holistic, integrating infrastructure investments with technical assistance and capacity building, advocacy support, and income diversification strategies. Intervention areas include climate-resilient agriculture, economic development, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), natural resource management, disaster risk reduction, gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) and climate advocacy.

CJC Zambia is being delivered in some of the most climate-vulnerable and marginalised parts of Zambia. In the final months of the project, we spoke to project participants in Sinazongwe District to understand the impact the project has had on their lives and livelihoods.

We share some of their stories here.

Empowered to thrive: How *Zipporah Sidimbila* turned goats into growing businesses





***“The business did so well that within six months, I opened a second shop,”**
Zipporah says proudly.
“My goats and my shop now support each other.”*

Before joining the CJC training sessions, *Zipporah Sidimbila* already kept goats, but – like many small livestock keepers – she sold them without considering market requirements, often returning home with unsold animals. CJC introduced business coaching and mindset transformation training, designed to help community members understand how to start, manage, and grow a business, keep simple records, assess profit and loss, and make decisions that align with customer demand and long-term planning.

Through these sessions, Zipporah learned that well-fed animals attract higher-value customers and better prices. *“Goats are more attractive to buyers when they look healthy and have good-quality meat,”* she shared. *“After the training, I started collecting pods from trees as feed – the feed is free, so I only pay people a small amount to collect it.”* This shift in knowledge and mindset marked the beginning of her journey from struggling seller to confident businesswoman.





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“I no longer return from the market with unsold goats,” she explains. “They are always bought, and this has helped me retain old customers and attract new ones.”

The financial improvement was immediate. With healthier goats fetching higher prices and selling faster, her income stabilised, giving her confidence to reinvest. Inspired by the CJC business coaching, she opened a grocery shop, selecting goods based on product demand in her community.



With improved financial literacy and planning – skills drawn directly from CJC learning – Zipporah transformed from a struggling seller to a confident businesswoman able to attract loyal customers. She now manages stock intentionally, reinvesting profits into the business rather than letting income slip away. *“I no longer return from the market with unsold goats,” she explains. “They are always bought, and this has helped me retain old customers and attract new ones.”*

Her shops have become an essential part of daily community life. Through stronger income management, she has been able to repair her hammer mill – once inoperable – adding yet another revenue stream. Each business supports the other, creating resilience and reducing reliance on a single income source.

“With the profits, I repaired my hammer mill, which had been out of service,” she notes. *“Now it also brings income.”*

Through her increased income from goat sales and diversified business ventures, Zipporah estimates that her profits have grown by over 50%, allowing her to support her family in ways she previously could not. With this additional income, she has financed her child’s education – a milestone she proudly attributes to adopting stronger business strategies and reinvesting her profits. She is now planning for the future: *“These ventures have helped me pay for my child’s education,”* she says. *“I plan to buy a truck to transport goods and livestock more efficiently, reducing costs and expanding my market reach beyond Tekelo Ward.”*



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From seed to sustainability: Winter maize seed and climate-smart farming transform *Passmore Zilundu's* livelihood



When a severe drought hit Mweezya Ward, many households lost their crops and food security. Among those affected was Passmore Zilundu, a farmer and CJC Community Management Committee member, who also serves as a CJC Advocacy Champion, supporting others through climate shocks. With farmers uncertain about replanting due to unpredictable rainfall, CJC provided seed to help farmers restart production after the drought and strengthen food security in the most affected communities.

The project provided Passmore with 10 kilograms of improved winter maize seed, a drought-tolerant variety suited for cultivation during the dry season using irrigation, short off-season rains, or moisture retained in the soil after the rain has ended. For communities recovering from drought, winter maize offered a chance to grow food when it would not normally be possible.

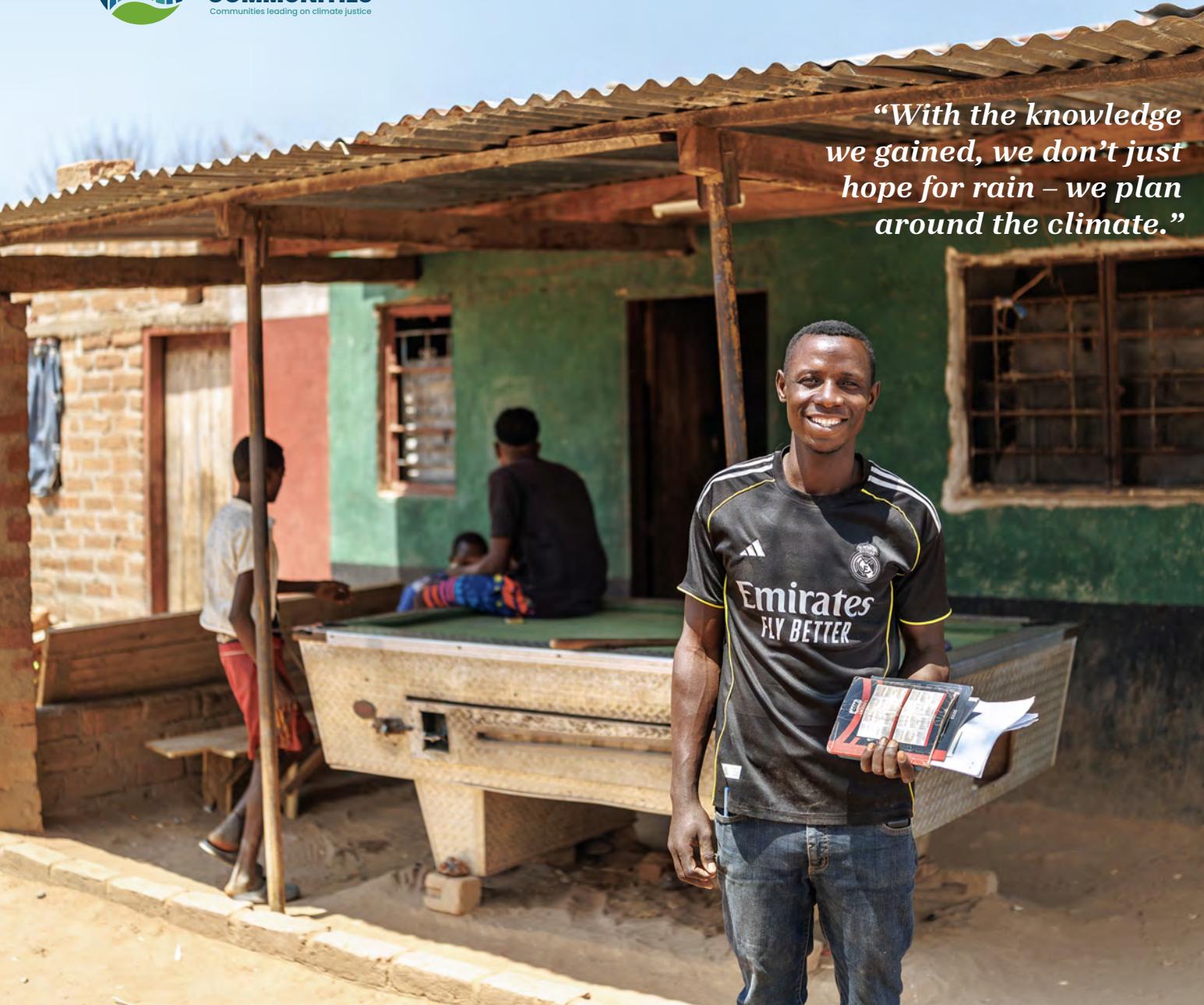
“Winter maize has been a lifeline,” Passmore shares. *“It grows even when the rains fail, and that has given us confidence to keep farming.”*

Applying the climate-resilient techniques introduced through CJC – including improved land preparation, soil conservation practices, and proper spacing – Passmore harvested 25 bags of winter maize. He sold the maize to the Food Reserve Agency (FRA), Zambia’s national institution responsible for purchasing staple crops at guaranteed

prices to support the country’s food supply. Selling to the FRA offered Passmore a stable and reliable market, which played a vital role in his recovery after the drought.

“This was a major turning point,” he reflects. *“From that support, I was able to rebuild my income.”*





“With the knowledge we gained, we don’t just hope for rain – we plan around the climate.”

CJC’s training helped farmers learn how to farm with climate variability in mind. For Passmore, the training meant more than learning how to plant – it meant understanding how to adapt.

“We are now able to farm even when rainfall is limited,” he explains. “With the knowledge we gained, we don’t just hope for rain – we plan around the climate.”

He adds that the winter maize has allowed families to grow food beyond the rainy season, reducing the hunger gap and restoring income streams that would otherwise stop for months.

CJC also introduced Passmore to financial and business management skills that helped him see farming as a planned enterprise rather than a seasonal activity driven by chance. Through the training, he learned the importance of records, savings, and reinvesting profits. This new approach led him to join a Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA), where members save together and access small loans to expand their activities. This helped Passmore diversify into trading baobab fruits and other produce, reducing risk and expanding his income base.

“Being part of the VSLA strengthened my financial discipline,” he says. “The savings and loans help me expand my businesses and meet household needs like school fees and food.”

Leading the way: Local committees turning early warnings into lasting climate action





“We sensitise farmers on early warning systems so they can prepare by choosing suitable crops or exploring alternative livelihoods ... We remind the community that the work we are doing is not just for or with the CJC project – it is for ourselves and our future.”

As Chairperson of the Mabinga Ward Disaster Risk Reduction Satellite Committee, a local government-mandated group composed of representatives from different community institutions responsible for coordinating early warning information and disaster preparedness, Westone Jani sits with community members beneath a traditional shelter, translating climate information into action.

Before the CJC project, early warning messages were rarely understood or acted upon. Since CJC formed the Satellite Committee and delivered trainings on how to disseminate and act on early warning information, the committee now supports households to prepare for weather changes rather than react to disasters after they occur.

The impact of early warning communication is now visible across Mabinga Ward. Families are building stronger shelters, relocating livestock to safer areas, and selecting crop varieties that match rainfall expectations. Daily routines have shifted because people understand the risks and the reasons behind the recommendations shared.



“These homesteads are safer today because early warning messages now influence how and where structures are built,” Westone observes, noting that community knowledge has become a protective tool.

The Satellite Committee brings the community together to merge indigenous knowledge – signs from trees, soil, insects, and elders – with scientific insights from local extension officers who disseminate information from the Zambia Meteorological Department.

“We sit together with extension officers to plan the way forward before sharing updates with the community,” Westone explains. “Since we began, cases of hunger have decreased, and fewer people are being swept away by floods.”

Westone rides through the community on a bicycle provided by CJC, allowing him to reach scattered households and deliver critical information door-to-door. Prior to receiving bicycles, community committees faced challenges covering long distances on foot, which meant some families received messages late or not at all. The bicycles have made the Satellite Committee’s activities more efficient, enabling timely sensitisation on floods, droughts, and unpredictable rainfall – ensuring no household is left behind.

“We remind the community that the work we are doing is not just for or with the CJC project – it is for ourselves and our future,” Westone says. “These actions should continue long after the project ends.”



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Water that works: CJC irrigation support transforms *Kelvin and Eunica's household*





In drought-prone Sinazongwe, farming has historically been limited to the rainy season. Families like Kelvin Choongo and Eunica Siakasya's grew what they could during the rainy months and endured long periods with dormant fields once the rains stopped. As rainfall patterns became shorter and less predictable, the risks increased – harvests diminished, food insecurity worsened, and household incomes dropped.

CJC has drilled new boreholes in communities like Kelvin and Eunica's to reduce reliance on erratic rainfall. Households can use the boreholes not only for drinking water, but productive use.

Today, Kelvin and Eunica can plant and harvest throughout the year. *"Life is much easier now. We can garden anytime,"* Kelvin says, standing proudly beside productive vegetable beds that did not exist in the dry months before.

With access to reliable water, Kelvin and Eunica have expanded their garden, planting vegetables that provide food and income for their family. Year-round production allows them to supply local markets even during dry seasons when demand is high and supply is low. As a result, Kelvin estimates that their income has increased significantly, with profits from vegetable sales growing from about ZMW 200 per month to over ZMW 450 per month (£6.50-£14.50).



"Selling vegetables every week means we always have some money coming in," Kelvin explains. "We can pay for food, school needs, and save a little at the same time."



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Before the CJC borehole, water collection was time-consuming and exhausting, often falling heavily on women and children. Eunica recalls waking up before sunrise to walk distances for water during the driest months. Now, with the water point nearby, Eunica can focus more time on crop management, household responsibilities, and rest.

“We used to carry heavy buckets, sometimes twice a day,” she shares. “Now, the water is close, and life is lighter.”

Reliable irrigation has transformed gardening from a seasonal gamble into a steady source of income and food security. In past years, dry spells often wiped out crops or prevented families from planting altogether. Now, Eunica waters tomato plants and other crops with the expectation of consistent yields.

Their garden has become a symbol of resilience. Vegetable sales are now supporting school fees and daily household needs. With reliable water, the couple can plan – not guess – their planting cycles. Kelvin and Eunica no longer wonder whether their plants will stay alive – they focus on improving their yields and expanding what they grow.

CJC’s work extends beyond infrastructure. The project trained water point user



committees, of which Eunice is a member, ensuring local governance of the water points – members now know how to manage water equitably and contribute small fees to support maintenance of the borehole. Kelvin explains how vital this training has been: *“Without the committee training, we would have struggled. Now everyone knows how to use the water and how to look after the systems.”*

Eunica adds:
“Our gardens survive even when the rains do not allow because of CJC’s support and because we now know how to manage the water.”

Climate resilience from the ground up: CJC strengthens partnerships between farmers and local government





Maxwell Mankwanya, an Extension Officer with the Ministry of Agriculture in Mabinga Ward, has worked with farmers for years. However, before the CJC project, his engagement was largely focused on information sharing and advisory visits, which sometimes resulted in recommendations being heard but not applied due to limited follow-up, limited resources, and a gap between knowledge and practice. Many farmers were not confident to adopt new techniques without seeing them demonstrated or supported.

“When CJC came in, it showed communities what needed to be done and how to do it,” Maxwell explains. “Once farmers saw these practices in action, adoption became easier.”

Through CJC, Maxwell participated in capacity-building sessions alongside lead farmers as part of CJC’s Community-Led Field School model, strengthening his own knowledge in climate-resilient techniques, gender inclusion, and community-driven resilience. The project introduced practical demonstrations – from sustainable land preparation to water-efficient irrigation – allowing farmers to learn by doing. Maxwell notes that this practical model has helped extension officers and farmers learn together, building trust and stronger working relationships.

While extension officers have always been responsible for supporting communities, CJC changed how that engagement looks in practice. Instead of working as the sole source of information, officers now collaborate with trained farmers and community committees who take a leadership role in sharing knowledge. CJC encouraged a co-learning approach where officers and farmers plan, adapt, and troubleshoot together.

“CJC helped bring us closer to the farmers,” Maxwell says. “The way we work now is more interactive – we learn from each other, and the community takes more ownership.”



This shift created space for practical action – promoting gender inclusion, resilience-building, and community-led solutions.

Maxwell has seen a major shift since CJC began. Farmers who were once unsure of how to respond to changing rainfall patterns are now confident, informed, and taking ownership of climate adaptation strategies that were once unfamiliar. Adoption of improved land preparation, irrigation scheduling, and soil conservation practices has increased productivity even with limited rainfall.

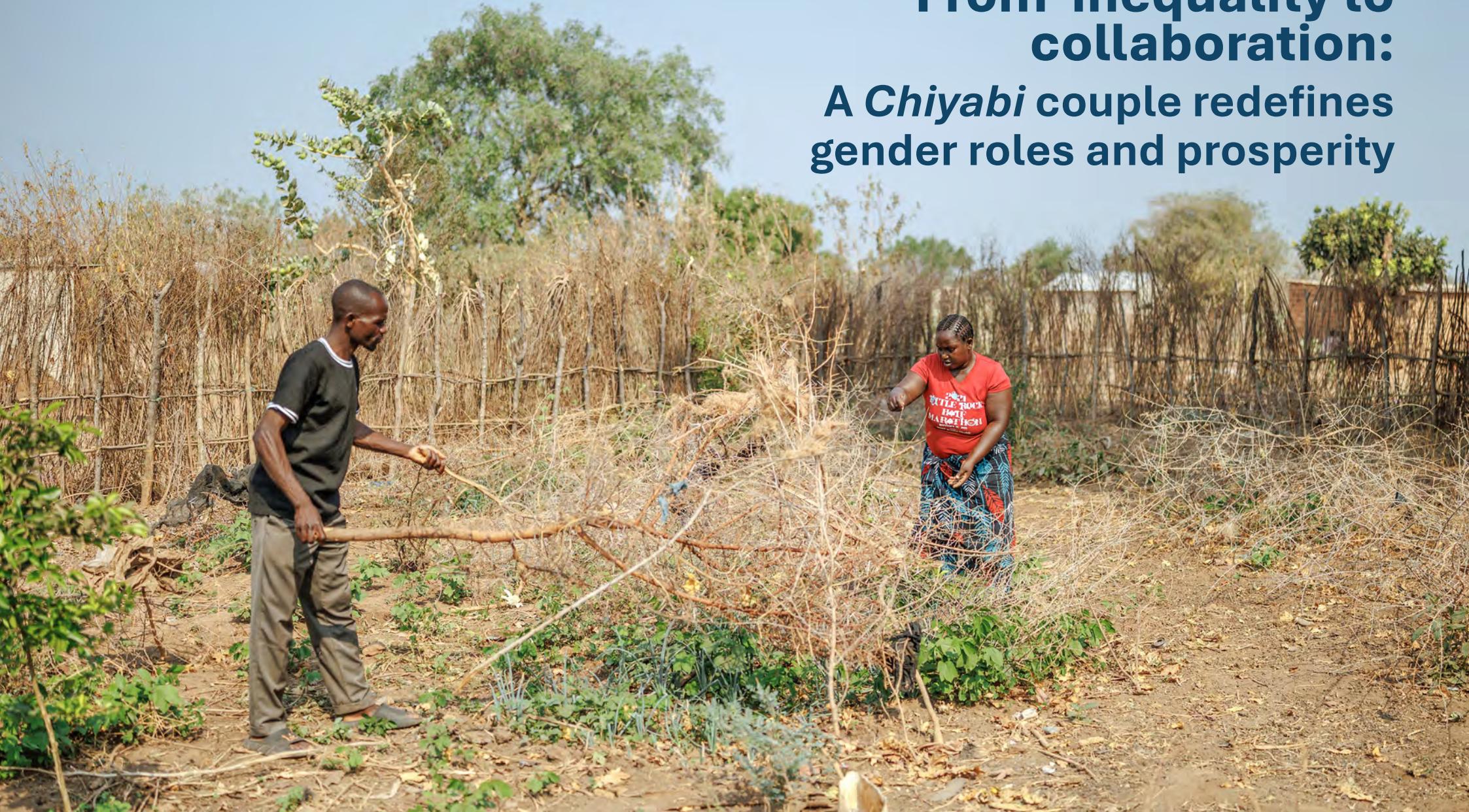
“What stands out is the confidence,” Maxwell reflects. *“Farmers are no longer afraid to try new practices. They are taking charge of the climate challenges they face.”*

He believes the impact will have wider implications for agricultural extension beyond Mabinga Ward.

“This experience has changed how we, as extension officers, engage in Sinazongwe,” he says. *“If farmers lead and we support with knowledge, we achieve more together. This approach can improve extension services across the district.”*

From inequality to collaboration:

A *Chiyabi* couple redefines gender roles and prosperity





“We help to sensitise others on better ways of managing their resources,” Chinyama explains. “We share the knowledge we learned so that the whole community can improve.”

For years, Danny and Chinyama Siakasambo, a couple from Chiyabi ward, Sinazongwe, farmed the same land. However, their household decisions and resources reflected traditional gender dynamics, often limiting Chinyama's participation in key aspects of family life.

Through the CJC project, the couple was introduced to the Gender Action Learning System (GALS), a participatory tool that opened their eyes to the value of shared planning, inclusion, and goal setting as a household.

GALS is a transformative behaviour change approach that helps participants identify gender-related barriers and develop joint action plans to address them at individual, household and community levels. It uses visual methods that are accessible across literacy levels and is facilitated by trained community members. GALS promotes inclusive, collaborative visioning rather than confrontational approaches.

“We learned the importance of working together and involving each other in decision-making,” Danny explains. “Before, men were the only ones who made decisions... now whenever decisions need to be made, I involve my wife.”



Using the “leaking bucket” tool from GALS, the couple realized they were losing income by farming solely for home consumption and selling produce informally. Guided by CJC learning sessions, they shifted to selling part of their maize harvest to the government’s Food Reserve Agency (FRA) and reinvesting their income into new income streams.

“We now salt and dry our fish and sell it in town, not just in the village,” Chinyama shares. “It helps maintain a steady flow of income.”

The transformation was not only economic – it was emotional and relational. The GALS training helped them not only budget but understand the value of each other’s strengths.

“Before, I used to spend money carelessly,” Danny admits. “But now we manage finances together... she is actually better at managing money than I am.”



As equal partners, they now operate their household like a joint enterprise – budgeting, planning, and running businesses together.

Today, their dried fish business supports year-round income and allows them to save, diversify and contribute confidently within the community. Beyond their own household, they now help other cooperative members adopt budgeting and shared decision-making, extending the impact of the CJC approach.

“We help to sensitise others on better ways of managing their resources,” Chinyama explains. “We share the knowledge we learned so that the whole community can improve.”



**Growing livelihoods,
growing futures:
CJC helps a single
mother build
long-term income**



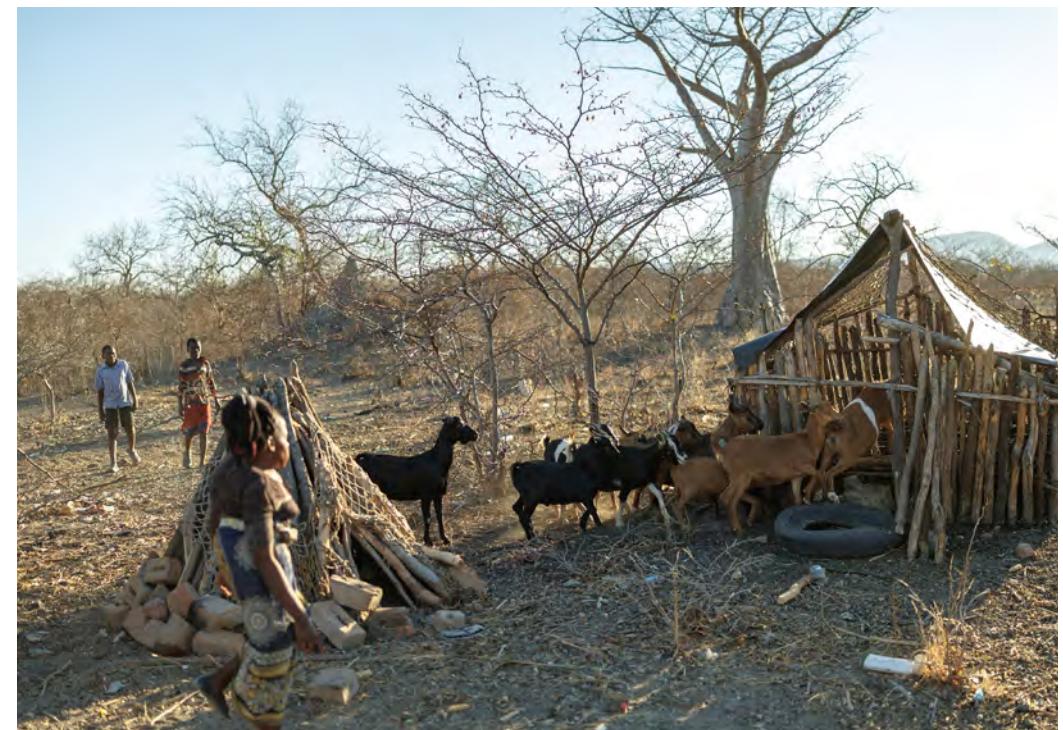


“With the goats that I received, I am doing everything I can to make sure they are well taken care of... I want to use these opportunities to secure my child’s future.”

When CJC gave Queen Dibula, a single mother with a physical disability, two goats – one male and one female, she saw more than livestock; she saw the foundation of a long-term livelihood she could sustain independently.

“With the goats that I received, I am doing everything I can to make sure they are well taken care of... I want to use these opportunities to secure my child’s future.”

With many families having lost livestock during the previous year’s severe drought, she takes careful steps to protect her goats, which have already started multiplying. She built a simple but secure kraal and applies animal husbandry practices she learned from CJC.



Queen is committed because she understands the potential of livestock – goats reproduce twice a year, allowing families like hers to scale up quickly and break cycles of financial insecurity if well managed.

“The goats rearing business is very good because goats deliver twice a year,” she says with optimism. “This will quickly transform my life.”

For women-led households, the effects of climate shocks are magnified – often resulting in loss of income, food, and empowerment. Reintroducing goats through CJC is restoring dignity and agency, one household at a time.

“Last year we were hit by the worst drought ever and our livestock died,” Queen shares. “With this support, we will be able to restore our livelihoods.”

Queen’s ambitions do not stop with goats. Through CJC, she also received seedlings for guavas, bananas, and oranges, which she plans to grow into an orchard business.

“I hope this support will reach more people in other areas so that the whole country can be transformed,” she says.





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