

Peace Empowerment Group, Mutasa District, Zimbabwe
Partnered with St. Luke's UMC in Orlando, March 2022 – March 2025

FIRST YEAR ACHIEVEMENTS REPORT - 2023



Members of the Peace Group helping one of their groupmates harvest groundnuts on her farm

Group Projects

Nutrition garden: The Peace Group established a nutrition garden on one acre of land allocated to them by the local traditional leader. The produce from the garden includes tomatoes, green peppers, onions, carrots, covo, maize, rape, peas, and beans. The garden has allowed the families to eat a more varied and balanced diet. They share the harvest for household consumption and sell the surplus. They used the profits to boost their businesses and pay for the school uniforms of five siblings.

Future projects: In the second year, the group plans to start a potato growing project after realizing the high demand for potatoes in their community. They have already secured farmland to grow the produce which the group will rent for a small fee. The land is near a perennial water source which will allow them to water the field both in and out of rainy season.

Table banking: After establishing their businesses and realizing the importance of investing, the group decided to start a table bank fund. Members contribute \$3 each month and the money is then available to be loaned out at a 10% interest rate. Currently their total savings is \$700. They plan to expand their table bank and use the funds to renovate their homes, construct toilets, and start businesses for their siblings. They also contribute \$1 monthly to a group emergency fund.

Group Outreach Activities

The Peace Group initiated periodic clean-up campaigns that are conducted in the community every first Friday of the month. They pick up litter around school premises, shopping centers, and clinics. This has been an excellent way of fostering community and business connections among group members, most of whom had previously experienced segregation and rejection. The group has also participated in mutual help activities; they take turns to plant, weed, and harvest in each other's fields and help each other repair their toilets. They also fetch water for two elderly people in their community.

Household Agricultural Activities

Through the establishment of businesses and farming projects, the quality and quantity of meals for all the families of this group have improved. Whereas before they often experienced hunger, they now eat two meals each day which include a variety of healthy foods. As detailed in the full class report below, the youth received both training and resources from Zoe to help them start producing their own food. The following are the group specific details of their accomplishments after the first year.

- All 26 households planted maize after they received seed and fertilizer from Zoe. They expect to harvest about 15 bags at 50 kg each of maize per household.
- Many households purchased seeds to grow additional staple crops as follows: sweet potatoes (26), groundnuts (15), pumpkins (2), beans (20), and cow peas (4).
- All households have kitchen gardens where they grow vegetables such as cabbage, covo, tomatoes, okra, onions, and cucumbers.
- All households are raising livestock and have more than one type. Out of the 26 families, two received small livestock from Zoe, the rest used their own profits. These are the number of families which have each type: goats (13), turkeys (4), rabbits (2), Guinea fowl (6), and traditional chickens (26).

Household Income Generating Activities

All households received grants or start-up kits to begin their individual businesses and 11 of these have already started second income activities. The following are the numbers and types of all income generating projects:

| | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| 11 do market gardening | 13 breed and sell livestock | 1 hairdresser* |
| 2 do banana farming | 2 retail projects | 1 does craft work* |
| 9 do fish farming | 3 barbers* | 2 tailors* |

Seven members are running vocational skills businesses (marked above with asterisks) and received training and support from Zoe. Four youths used their own funds for training and to purchase materials to start new businesses in the future.

First year report from Zimbabwe on groups which began meeting March 2022

The following review focuses on the 15 empowerment groups which were formed in March 2022. It is a general outline of the support that Zoe Empowers provided to the participants in terms of trainings and inputs during this first year. There are 425 households and 1392 children in this class.

Before Zoe Empowers, 97% of orphans and vulnerable children in this class had no means of livelihood. They survived on piece jobs, begging and some resorted to delinquent behaviors such as theft and prostitution for survival. Children dropped out of school due to a lack of school fees and could not afford to purchase food, blankets, or clothes. They did not have savings to cushion them in times of crises such as illnesses and disasters.

During an initial meeting with the local stakeholders held in February 2022, one traditional leader noted *"Orphans and vulnerable children in our communities are being incarcerated for theft. The sad thing is that they mostly steal food because they are hungry. The girl child also is at a greater risk when there is poverty. If you go to Mushunje, our local clinic, you will hear a ridiculous number of underage pregnancies recorded per month. Our girls are engaging into prostitution and are being used by illegal gold miners because they want to survive. They want to live a better life but unfortunately, they end up making wrong choices. Some end up contracting sexually transmitted diseases, become victims of child marriages, and drug addicts."*

Income Generation

In May 2022, 425 households received trainings on entrepreneurship from the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprise Development with the aim of equipping them with the requisite skills and mindset for identifying and starting new business ventures. In June 2022, 275 households received micro-grants to start income-generating projects after their business plans were approved. These initial businesses include keeping livestock, fish farming, market gardening, banana, and pineapple farming, and retail of things like clothes, shoes, groceries, and kitchenware.



Youth from four of the 2022 groups (Miracle, Parable, Genesis, and Peace) attend a training session on bookkeeping presented by the Zoe Empowers Zimbabwe finance officer.

The other 150 heads of household already had vocational skills and Zoe supported them with tools and equipment to start their trade businesses. Some members who wanted to acquire a skill of their choice were supported with training fees and later their start-up kits. These businesses included barbering, hairdressing, building, tailoring, baking, carpentry, basketry, welding, crafting, and blacksmithing.

Panashe (age 18), from the Mushandirapamwe Group, speaks for the youth after being in the Zoe Empowers program for a year when he says, *"I have a business of which I am proud. Thanks to Zoe Empowers. It gives me an income, which enables me to fend for my siblings. Gone are the days of gambling, stealing, or engaging in piecework for survival. I also feel that I have a family [through my group] that will stand by me in case of emergencies. Our relatives don't see us as equally important; they don't visit us, and even if they hear that we have problems, they distance themselves. Thanks to the trainings and support provided by Zoe Empowers, I now have confidence to move forward with the journey of life."*

With the profits from their income projects, the heads of household have been able to construct toilets, buy livestock, pay school fees for their siblings, buy food items, and meet other basic needs. They have been encouraged to save some of their income in cash or in livestock.

Groups were trained and encouraged to start table banking. Members contribute to their group table bank during meetings and the money is made available for short term, low interest loans to boost businesses or address other needs. The funds continuously grow from regular contributions and returned interest so that dividends can be shared among the households or used for group benefit. In January 2023, the groups began "social assistance funds" which can be used to address emergencies among members like covering costs for hospital bills, the death of an immediate household member, pandemics, and natural disasters.

In their second year, the 15 groups will create business plans and then receive grants to start group income generating projects.

Food Security

The baseline survey that was conducted at recruitment indicated that 97% of the children ate only one meal per day or slept on an empty stomach. The others could manage two meals a day, but all the children lacked nutritious diets. They did not grow their own crops even when they had land because they could not afford to purchase farming inputs. Instead, they worked in other people's fields and were unfairly compensated. *"Being a provider at a young age with no livelihood is a heavy burden. How do you go back home and greet your siblings with nothing in your hands knowing that they have not eaten the whole day and are waiting for you to come with food?"* remembered Lucky (age 18) from Munotida Group.

In April 2022, all the groups received training on horticulture from the local agricultural extension officers and received garden seeds from Zoe Empowers for vegetables like cucumbers, carrots, cabbages, covo, onions, and spinach. Each group was given access to land to start their nutritional gardens by traditional leaders, mentors, or caregivers. These group gardens provide produce for the members to share among themselves and surplus to sell. They also gained experience so they could start kitchen gardens at their homes which 91% of the households have done, the other 9% have inadequate access to the water needed to support such gardens.

Following training on animal husbandry in July 2022, 40 households were selected to receive chickens to enhance their food security. Other households are using the profits from their businesses to buy livestock such as rabbits, traditional chickens, turkeys, goats, and guinea fowl. They are getting milk, meat, eggs, and manure for their gardens from their livestock.

In September 2022, households were trained on conservation farming (modern farming methods) by the agricultural officers in preparation for planting crops. Each of the 425 households received 5kg of maize seed and 50kg of ammonium nitrate. Households are currently in the process of harvesting this crop. The rainfall patterns have been better than in the previous years and households are anticipating a harvest of 15 x 50 kg bags of maize each. Additionally, 70% of the household bought and planted small grains such as beans, groundnuts, and cowpeas. Since their training also included how to safely store grains, the youth will have these staples to last them through until the next planting season.



Some of the first-year youth with the maize seeds and fertilizer provided by Zoe Empowers

Health & Hygiene

Prior to recruitment, the children report that they were usually sick. Zoe program facilitators noted that illnesses were usually related to malnutrition and lack of proper environmental and personal hygiene. To address this issue, all households were trained on environmental and personal hygiene by the local village health workers in July 2022. Other trainings were conducted with assistance from local nurses and environmental health technicians and covered topics of disease prevention (especially Covid-19, cholera, and malaria), proper waste disposal, hand washing, and gender specific health issues.

To improve the health of the most vulnerable, 150 households were selected to receive health packs which consisted of blankets, dishware, and buckets for storing clean water. Zoe Empowers also directly paid the costs for six youths to get necessary medications. (Each group now has a fund to provide such assistance).

Following trainings, households were expected to make improvements such as constructing dish drying racks, digging rubbish pits, and clearing debris from the surroundings of their homes; 85% of the youth have done so with the help of their groupmates. Other improvements included the construction or repair of 38 pit latrines and the construction of 10 protected wells for safe drinking water. (All youth in the program now understand the importance of drinking sanitized water.)

Child Rights

Prior to recruitment, the children had no understanding of their rights, nor how to report abuse. Many did not have proper government identification. In June 2022, Zoe Empowers program facilitators trained households on child rights and responsibilities. Other trainings done were on the effects of child marriages and drug abuse.

So far program has assisted 27 children to acquire birth certificates and national identity cards and helped five families reclaim their parents' land which had been taken from them by relatives.

The Zoe youth have become the voice for other vulnerable children in their communities. Through sports and team building activities, they socialize with others and pass on what they have learned.

Housing

“It’s funny that when it rains too much the first place we run to for shelter is our house, only to get in the house and sleep on wet floors and get cold because the house had a leaking roof and you cannot fix it. I came to hate the rainy season because of that, we would always catch a cold because we slept on a wet floor. Now because of Zoe, I sleep peacefully even when it’s raining because I fixed our leaking roof,” said Gaily (19) from Ngaakudzwe Group who was expressing her joy after making house repairs.

Prior to Zoe, about 80% of households lacked adequate housing. Their homes had cracked walls, leaking roofs, dirt floors, and lacked windows and doors. Due to lack of security, people would steal from them and people, even relatives, would not visit. The youth were encouraged to assist each other with labor while Zoe Empowers provided building materials to 16 households and another 51 families used their own resources for house repairs and construction.

Education

According to the initial survey, about 87% of the siblings had dropped out of school due to a lack of school fees, materials, and uniforms. Zoe Empowers assisted 49 children (21 primary and 28 secondary) with school fees and 10 with uniforms and stationery. The heads of households were urged to set aside a portion of their profits to pay school expenses for their siblings.

Spiritual Strengthening

Before Zoe Empowers, some youths believed that God would one day change their situations, but most had lost all hope. They did not feel God’s love as they were constantly suffering from hunger and they did not go to church because they were stigmatized by their poverty. Shortly after joining the program, each group received a bible and they were taught the importance of prayer and devotions. They began to understand God’s love and grow in faith. Now, 72% of the families attend church regularly. Each group chose a group pastor from among their members and they open and close meetings with prayer.

Peace Empowerment Group, Mutasa District, Zimbabwe



26 households and a total of 83 children. Pictured are the heads of household.

Catherine (f) 15

Masha (f) 10

Zvikomborero (m) 16

Ropafadzo (m) 12

Tavimba (f) 7

Brenda (f) 15

Sonia (f) 8

Monalisa (f) 19

Melanin (f) 1

Nokutenda (f) 3

Prosper (m) 9

Malvin (m) 18

Kupakwashe (m) 10

Terry (m) 15

Nicholas (m) 17

Sean (m) 10

Olinda (f) 15

Manatsa (f) 8

Malon (m) 3

Vannesa (f) 16

Velan (m) 13

Sebastian (m) 7

Kimberly (f) 4

Keila (f) 2

Deon (f) 19

Donald (m) 14

Devine (m) 8

Denis (m) 6

Tatenda (m) 16

Tanaka (m) 14

Shantel (f) 13

Shammer (f) 8

Trish (f) 15

Phineas (m) 15

Enerst (m) 18

Edith (f) 8

Vildah (f) 9

Modesta (m) 12

Thomas (m) 17

Kingsley (m) 3

Nickson (m) 10

Mukudzei (m) 4

Enia (f) 8

Emilia (f) 11

Cathrine (f) 18

Mercy (f) 14

Kelly (f) 7

Tatenda (f) 12

Tafadzwa (m) 7

Junior (f) 1

Daniel (m) 19

Knowledge (m) 16

Nestaline (f) 12

Searchmore (m) 10

Climacote (f) 2

Cliasanta (f) 6

Beatrice (f) 15

Rejoyce (f) 12

Anita (f) 8

Makomborero (m) 15

Tawananyasha (m) 11

Kelly (f) 9

Linnet (f) 17

Lion (m) 14

Lincon (m) 16

Anesu (m) 2

Kudakwashe (m) 17

Tafadzwa (m) 12

Takudzwa (m) 5

Omega (m) 17

Yolanda (f) 11

Philmony (m) 14

Abel (m) 16

Gibson (m) 17

Natasha (f) 16

Nokutenda (f) 13

Luckstone (m) 19

Mutsa (f) 15

Anesu (m) 7

Joseph (m) 19

Lisabelle (f) 15

Leeroy (m) 11

Stalone (m) 10