SCRALA PROJECT NEWSLETTER

2024

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SCRALA Project Overview

Through a Green Climate Fund (GCF) grant, the SCRALA project is implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture with support from its responsible parties, including the Zambia Meteorological Department (ZMD), the Water Resource Management Agency (WARMA), World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food Agriculture Organization (FAO), with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as the Accredited Entity.
The project is implemented in the country's Agro-Ecological Regions I and II in 16 districts.

Strengthening capacity of farmers to plan for climate risks.

Strengthening resilient agricultural production and diversification practices (for both food security and income generation).

Strengthening farmers' access to markets and commercialization of introduced resilient agricultural commodities.

Achievements in Numbers

Ongoing support to WARMA for the construction of the water laboratory to inform water management planning.

8,463

Supported 8,463 (57% women) farmers with inputs for goat rearing.

129,414

Trained 129,414 (48% women) farmers in conservation agriculture.

Ongoing support to ZMD with the 2024/2025 weather forecast dissemination to smallholder farmers.

Supported 2,836 (42% women) farmers with inputs for bee keeping.

FAO set up 249 Farmer Field School (FFS) and enhanced adaptation of climate change for 8,728 farmers (54% women).

WFP trained 143,808 (49% women) farmers in post-harvest loss management.

Tackling Water Scarcity With Innovative Irrigation Solutions ...

"Planting crops such as maize, groundnuts, and soya beans has been a nightmare here in Chirundu district due to prolonged drought periods that we have been facing. Our crops were all affected by the 2023/24 drought, and with the small amount of maize that I harvested, it is clear that it will not be enough to sustain my family throughout the year."
These are the words of Rosemary, a 60-year-old mother of seven who is a smallholder farmer in Chirundu, a district located in Zambia's Agro- Ecological Region I, characterized by extremely high temperatures.

She is among the six million farmers in Zambia whose lives and farming practices have been disrupted by the 2023/24 drought caused by El Niño–Southern Oscillation. I met her during the recent launch of the irrigation scheme in Chirundu district under the Strengthening of Climate Resilience of Agricultural Livelihoods in Agro- Ecological Regions I and II in Zambia (SCRALA) project, where firsthand accounts revealed the profound impact of climate change on people's lives.

Journeying through the fields where climate change meets innovation, I witnessed how the SCRALA project is turning the tide with groundbreaking irrigation systems among farmers - Theresa Kinkese, SCRALA Project Manager

Another small-holder farmer, Benson, from the district, explained that he could no longer harvest crops such as maize and groundnuts due to insufficient rainfall in the region. This shortage has led to reduced meals for his family, posing serious issues of malnutrition for his children.
In Zambia, most rural populations rely on rain-fed agriculture.

However, unpredictable weather patterns, including dry spells and prolonged droughts, frequently result in crop damage and livestock losses. Food security remains a serious challenge in the country, with around 40% of children under 5 being stunted and 60% of the population live below the poverty line according to ZAMSTATS.

In my interactions with such smallholder farmers, it is evident that Zambia has not escaped the ravages of climate change. These effects have disrupted the livelihoods of millions, who struggle to grow enough food or sell surplus produce due to erratic rainfall as well as prolonged and frequent drought.

This underscores the urgent need to assist farmers in adapting to the widespread effects of climate change by enhancing their capacities to adjust to evolving climate conditions. In Zambia, adapting to these impacts has become essential.

In response to the challenges posed by climate change, the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) with technical support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and funding from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) is collaborating on implementing the SCRALA project, an intervention that is enhancing water access for small-holder farmers.

The SCRALA project constructed a 20-hectare solar-powered drip irrigation scheme in Tauya village, Chirundu district. This community-driven initiative was officially handed over to the local community on 7 June 2024 by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Mtolo Phiri, in order to address the challenges farmers are facing. For the beneficiary community, this day marked the beginning of a transformative journey towards improved food production and household incomes.

Speaking at this occasion, the Chairperson for the Tauya Cooperative said “with this irrigation scheme, we are assured of several sources of income and enough food for our children in our homes and since we have been trained on its management as a cooperative, we will ensure it is put to good use.”

The initiative is set to be a model for replication across the 16 districts where the project is implemented to promote a shock-responsive, risk-informed, and inclusive society, aligning with Zambia's Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP), and Sustainable Development Goals on Zero Hunger, No Poverty and Climate Action while leaving no one behind.

The project demonstrates how critical climate resilience and adaptation is, towards resilient social protection by reducing vulnerabilities and risks, and by promoting gender and youth inclusive socio-economic development.
Because of the SCRALA project, Rosemary along with other farmers in the Siangwemu agriculture camp now have hope for improved livelihoods from this mechanism that will revolutionise their food security and income streams.

Through this Green Climate Fund (GCF) financed climate resilient agriculture project, the government with cooperating partners have come together to propel Zambia’s economy while protecting people and the environment from climate shocks, reducing food shortages, promoting alternative livelihoods as well as contributing to the aspirations of the Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement.

The SCRALA project receives additional technical support from the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), Water Resource Management Authority (WARMA) and Zambia Metrological Department (ZMD).

ZMD Launches 2024/2025 Seasonal Forecast with Support from SCRALA

The Zambia Meteorological Department (ZMD) officially launched its seasonal forecast for the 2024/2025 rainfall season with support from the Strengthening Climate Resilience of Agricultural Livelihoods in Agro-ecological Regions I and II (SCRALA) project.

The Minister of Green Economy and Environment, Mr. Mike Mposha, shared an optimistic outlook, predicting adequate rainfall that is vital for revitalizing the agricultural sector and improving food security after the severe drought of the previous year, which affected over six million Zambians.

Mr. Mposha indicated that rainfall is expected to commence by late November 2024, with some regions likely to experience showers as early as October. He urged farmers to stay informed through regular updates from the Meteorological Department and to implement proactive agricultural practices to mitigate the potential impacts of dry spells and erratic weather conditions.

This collaborative effort is crucial for supporting Zambia's agricultural recovery and ensuring the overall stability of the economy-NAIS.

FROM DUST TO PLENTY:

THE POWER OF CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE

After a journey of over 300 kilometers, we finally arrived at Brilliant Chivunga's home in Namwala District. Chivunga is a participant in the Strengthening Climate Resilience of Agricultural Livelihoods in Agro- Ecological Regions I and II (SCRALA) project, an initiative focused on strengthening climate resilience among smallholder farmers in Zambia. Her homestead mirrored the conditions of other sites we visited during the project's monitoring visit—a landscape marked by dry grey-brown soil and withered grass, with only a few resilient trees surviving amidst the harsh climate challenges.

The terrain, though visually striking against the clear blue- grey sky, told a different story. The drought has severely impacted the once-fertile soil, rendering it incapable of producing enough food to sustain most families. With the rain absent, hunger has become a constant threat.
Before being selected as a beneficiary of the SCRALA project, Chivunga faced significant challenges with her crop yields, which jeopardized her food security.

The impacts of climate change, particularly droughts and floods, had severely damaged most of her crops in previous years. This year, the situation across the country was exacerbated by a prolonged drought that devastated agricultural lands, destroying 982,765 hectares out of an estimated 2,272,931 hectares of maize planted, leading to widespread crop failure.
However, 2019 marked a turning point for Chivunga. After being selected as a beneficiary of the SCRALA project, she received training in Conservation Agriculture, which greatly enhanced her understanding of sustainable farming practices. Additionally, she gained valuable knowledge from a local company, further supporting her efforts to adapt and thrive in the face of these ongoing climate challenges.

"The training from the project provided us with important information and knowledge which changed our approach to farming and led to remarkable crop yields," she said.

Starting with plant basins on one hectare, she quickly saw improved harvests compared to traditional ploughing methods.
Conservation agriculture methods are pivotal in maintaining soil moisture, ensuring that her plants have water even during periods of dry spells. These practices enhance soil structure, safeguarding it from erosion and nutrient depletion, thereby improving crop yields even in drought conditions and promoting a better ecosystem.

She later adopted a method called 'ripping' on one hectare of her farmland using essential farming tools provided by the project, including a ripper, sprayer, and herbicides.
The ripped areas effectively absorb fertilizer, and applying base fertilizer before planting helps maintain soil quality for future seasons. Using rip lines also simplifies lime application, neutralizing soil acidity and fostering deep-rooted maize that stands strong even in adverse conditions.

"After we adopted these farming practices, the results were really good. We harvested 75 bags of maize, each weighing 50 kg, from one hectare during the 2023/2024 farming season"– surpassing the Ministry of Agriculture's estimated 3.5 tonnes per hectare.

"I do not worry about what my children will eat because we have enough food such as maize throughout the year in additionto other crops that I grow such as groundnuts and cowpeas. This year, I had more than enough maize crop that I shared with my extended family members whose yields were greatly impacted by this drought crisis," she said.

The maize that she grows is both for home consumption and sale, with each 50kg bag sold at K600 (USD 23), creating extra income for her household.

As a lead farmer, her household has trained 14 follower farmers who have also experienced better harvests compared to traditional farming methods.

"I am also very passionate about empowering other women in my community, and I have taken it upon myself to train them in these farming techniques," said the 32-year-old mother of five.
In addition to her family-shared field, Chivunga manages her own, where she harvested 30 bags of maize from one lima.
Funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) with co-financing from the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and technical support from the World Food Programme (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Zambia Meteorological Department (ZMD), and the Water Resource Management Authority (WARMA), the project supports the dissemination of these techniques through community radio stations and farmer field schools.

Conservation agriculture under the SCRALA project involves routine training conducted across all 16 targeted districts to encourage adoption and enhance food security. To date, 129,414 farmers—48% of whom are women—have been trained in these practices. This initiative equips farmers with essential climate information and weather forecasts, enabling them to make informed decisions about crop selection, optimal planting times, and effective marketing strategies, thereby supporting their efforts to improve agricultural productivity and resilience.

In Zambia's Makowa Village, SCRALA Project Helps Farmers Cope with Recurring Droughts

It has been a decade since substantial rain fell in Kazungula district where drought is a recuring issue, affecting farmers like Justin Sitali, 32, who resides in Makowa, a village nestled in the heart of the district. The absence of rainfall means no crop harvest for Sitali and other farmers in regions. drought-stricken.

The once-abundant harvests that sustained families are now a distant memory, leaving many families with the grim reality of food insecurity.

Sitali reminisced about a time he used to grow maize, groundnuts, and cowpeas when rainfall was reliable in previous years.

"Farming is very risky now because of the prolonged droughts and dried-up water sources, we mostly harvest so little, just enough for home consumption with nothing left for sale," said the father of three.

The 2023/2024 agricultural season is the driest period the country experienced in more than forty years. This has led to significant crop losses, increased livestock deaths, and worsened poverty, affecting over six million people in 84 out of 116 districts of Zambia.

Affected families with low incomes due to lack of income- earning opportunities, struggle to access highly priced nutritious foods for their children, worsening nutritional outcomes, and poor child development in the first 5 years of life in these communities.

Sitali's story is all too familiar for numerous small-scale farmers throughout rural Zambia, where inconsistent harvests from rain- dependent agriculture threaten food security for farming communities.
In 2018, the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), with grant financing from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and co-financed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), initiated a project called the 'Strengthening Climate Resilience of Agricultural Livelihoods in Agro- Ecological Regions I and II in Zambia' (SCRALA) project.

This project aims to assist farmers who are most vulnerable to climate risks to engage in alternative sources of livelihoods. It is a climate resilience-focused initiative that receives technical support from the World Food Programme (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Zambia Meteorological Department (ZMD), and the Water Resource Management Authority (WARMA).

The project aims to promote resilient agricultural livelihoods in Zambia's five provinces, in response to unpredictable rainfall, increasing droughts, and floods. It also encourages diversification practices to enhance food security and income generation, thereby raising income levels for farmers in 16 SCRALA districts.

Based on a vulnerability criterion, the SCRALA project supports a select group of farmers with five goats which they raise and later pass on to another farmer after a year when they have offspring–this is known as the Pass-on Mechanism.

For Sitali, 2019 marked the beginning of his climate resilience journey when he was selected as a beneficiary under the project. Armed with knowledge gained from the training in goat management, he expanded his goat herd to 15. He eventually passed on five goats to the next beneficiary.

"After selling some of my goats, I bought a boar goat from Kalomo district, an improved breed, for K2,500 (USD 96)," he said.

For Sitali and his family, the goats proved to be more than just livestock. In times of drought, selling one pure goat could yield up to K3,500 (USD 131.61)—enough to purchase a substantial amount of maize to sustain them for a year.
"Even when faced with drought, I can just sell one goat and buy 10x50kg of maize, which lasts my family for months," Sitali shared, highlighting the financial security and stability the goats provide.
The benefits of goat farming extend beyond financial stability. "Even nutrition has improved for my family," he noted proudly, emphasizing how the goats have enhanced their diet and helped fund his children's school needs.
To supplement his income further, Justin sells goat manure, a valuable resource for local farmers, at K100 (USD 4) per 50kg.

Through practices and support from the SCRALA project, he now owns 28 pure goats and has expanded his agricultural ventures to include 10 cows.

This success has not just improved his livelihood it has empowered him to provide clothing for his children and contribute to his community's economic growth.

Recently, Sitali installed a solar panel on his house to ensure access to reliable electricity while his plans for the future include further improving his goat structures, enhancing productivity, and continuing to inspire others with his journey of resilience and success.

In the face of the harsh realities of climate change, Sitali's success story echoes across Kazungula district, showcasing the project's dedication to enhancing climate resilience for smallholder farmers. With over 8,000 goat farmers benefiting from the project, more stories of resilience coupled with livelihood empowerment have been witnessed across the 16 districts, showing the importance of climate- resilient projects such as the SCRALA project.

A New Begining: How Josephine Tembo Overcame Climate Change Challenges

Josephine Tembo, a 60-year-old wife, mother of nine, and guardian of four dependents, lives in Nyampande camp in Rufunsa District. For years, she relied on farming as her main source of income to support her large family. However, climate change brought devastating consequences to her livelihood. Flash floods and prolonged droughts slashed her crop yields, leaving her struggling to provide food for her family and making it difficult to afford basic necessities. The financial pressure also made it impossible for her to consistently pay her children's school fees.

As her situation worsened, Josephine felt helpless, unsure of how to recover. Farming had always been her way of life, but with climate conditions changing, she was losing hope. She could no longer rely on the crops she once depended on, and the food shortages became a painful reality in her home.

Her turning point came when an agricultural camp officer informed her about the Strengthening Climate Resilience of Agricultural Livelihoods in Agro ecological Regions I and II (SCRALA) project, a joint effort by the Ministry of Agriculture, UNDP, and the Green Fund to help farmers like Josephine adapt to climate change.

The project was designed to strengthen the resilience of farmers in Rufunsa District, providing training and resources for alternative livelihood strategies. Eager to regain control of her life, Josephine took the opportunity to join the Twikatane Savings Group in her community.

This women-only group, made up of 30 members, was mentored by SCRALA-trained agricultural officers who taught them how to save, borrow, and invest wisely.

Josephine was excited to begin her journey of financial recovery. She embraced the concept of saving and borrowing from the group's pooled funds, participating in a one-year cycle of contributions. Her commitment and determination paid off as she was able to borrow money regularly, ensuring that all funds were carefully invested in ventures that would secure her family's future.

She also benefited from the mentorship provided by the agricultural officers, learning new strategies for managing her money and improving her farming practices.

By the end of the savings cycle, Josephine and the other group members had built up significant savings and earned interest from the money they had lent to one another.

With her share, Josephine made some critical investments that transformed her life. She purchased building materials and began construction on her new house, which is now nearing completion.

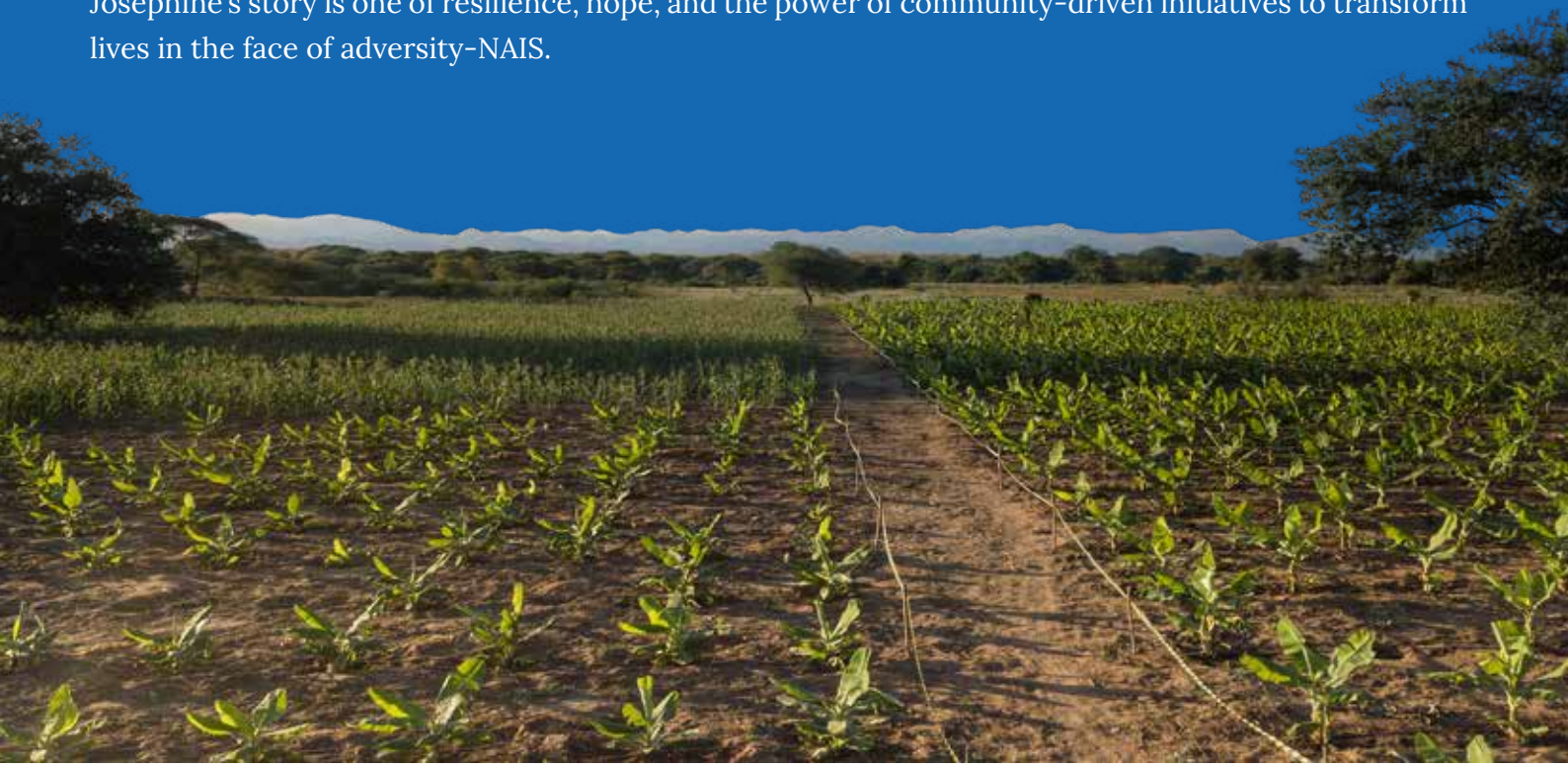
The group also empowered her to start a vegetable garden, where she grows a variety of crops for both her family's consumption and for sale in the local community. This garden not only provides nutritious food but also offers an additional stream of income.

But Josephine didn't stop there. With her savings, she ventured into pig farming, purchasing two pigs that soon multiplied into eight piglets. As of the time of this interview, three of the pigs were pregnant, promising even more growth for her farm. In addition, she expanded into poultry farming, raising village chickens and guinea fowls, which further diversified her income. These new ventures have helped her regain financial stability and ensure a steady source of food for her family.

Josephine proudly shared that she can now pay for her twin children's school fees with ease, something she struggled with before joining the savings group. She no longer worries about her daily expenses and feels a renewed sense of purpose and hope for the future. Reflecting on her journey, Josephine said, "My farm is flourishing with activities, thanks to the mentorship of the Ministry of Agriculture and the SCRALA project. If it wasn't for them, I would still be struggling as I had nowhere to turn in the midst of climate change."

Looking ahead, Josephine has big plans. She intends to finish building her house and expand her vegetable garden by purchasing irrigation equipment and drilling a borehole to improve her water supply, as the current shallow well is no longer sufficient for her growing needs. She is determined to ensure that her farm thrives despite the challenges posed by climate change.

Beyond her personal success, Josephine has become a strong advocate for savings groups in her community. She encourages other women facing similar struggles to join or form such groups, as they have proven to be a powerful tool for improving livelihoods in the face of unpredictable weather events. Josephine's story is one of resilience, hope, and the power of community-driven initiatives to transform lives in the face of adversity-NAIS.



Sesheke Heightens 2024/2025 Agric. Season Preparations

Mr. Nampaka said Seed Fairs have allowed farmers to showcase the different seeds from within their communities with an added incentive of interacting with Agro-dealers.
"Often, there is a gap between what farmers want and the seed that Agro-dealers stock. Therefore, the Seed Fairs are closing this gap," he said.

This year's Seed Fairs were held in 13 Agricultural Camps of Sesheke District.
"We were targeting 720 farmers across the 13 Camps, but we have had an overwhelming response such that we have reached close to 1000 farmers, which is very good ..." Mr. Nampaka said.

Meanwhile, farmers who attended the Seed Fairs were delighted with the lessons that they had learned-NAIS.

The Ministry of Agriculture in Sesheke has urged farmers to enhance their preparations for the upcoming agricultural season by ensuring they stock drought-tolerant and diversified seeds.

Speaking at the Ngweze Agricultural Camp Seed fair, District Extension Methodologist, Daniel Nampaka said that farmers should by now be getting ready with seed for the 2024/2025 agricultural season.

"In preparing for the upcoming season, farmers should not only target to plant hybrid seed but also landrace (local) seeds, which are in circulation within communities. These seeds are important because many of them are tolerant to drought," he said.

Social Media Buzz

UNDP Zambia @UNDPZambia · Jun 7

Tauya Irrigation comes at a crucial time as Zambia faces an emergency of drought, as declared by H.E. Pres @HHichilema.

This scheme will not only promote access to water 4 farming but will also equip farmers with climate-smart practices such as solar energy & drip irrigation.

UNDP Climate @UNDPClimate · Aug 22

Water scarcity in Zambia threatens the livelihoods of smallholder farmers and the nation's food supply.

Solar-powered irrigation systems are empowering farmers to cultivate more with less. Learn how: ow.ly/r5vB50SYZix #ClimateAction

1 9 28 1.5K

UNDP Zambia @UNDPZambia · Jun 18

Beekeeper, Delibeto Phiri, received 5 hives from the #SCRALA project & grew his swarm to 22 hives!

In Nyimba, small-holders farmers are staying resilient against the drought through alt livelihoods supported by @theGCF & MOA #SPW2024

Climate resilience is #SocialProtection

UNDP Zambia @UNDPZambia · Jun 19

Preemptive measures foster resilience against climate shocks like the ongoing drought, while enhancing #SocialProtection.

@theGCF supported #SCRALA project, works w/ @ZambiaWeather to provide crucial weather-agro advisories to farmers through the set up of Early Warning Systems.

UNDP Zambia @UNDPZambia · Mar 27

The #SCRALA project provides farmers like David with goats as an alternative source of income in case of crop failure due to drought.

David initially received 5 goats from the project and now has 50 goats which offer him a steady source of income.
#Climateresilience


22KW Solar
Mini Grid
for Tauya
Community
Irrigation
Scheme.





Photo Focus





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