

# COMMUNITY GRANT PROJECTS



*Munhu* takes a comprehensive approach to helping orphaned children: we are not only supporting their education and their life as heads of household, but we also try to improve the living conditions in the communities in which these children live.

**Below are some of the goals of the program:**

- To provide capital for villagers in poor communities
- To establish sustainable income to villagers taking care of orphans
- To assist villagers to move from poverty and dependency to self-reliance and independence
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# Lameck's Garden

## Inspirational Garden on the Banks of the Murove River

*Story by Martha Mutomba*



In the rural area of Buhera in the Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe, a young man named Lameck is generating a lot of buzz with the market garden he created on the banks of the Murove River. This garden has become an inspiration to the people of his community. I had the opportunity to visit Lameck's garden when I went home to be with my family over the Christmas holidays in 2015.

“Madam, I was a dunderhead in school,” Lameck said to me after we had been introduced. Pointing to the Munhu coordinator who was accompanying me, Lameck said, “My teacher here did his best to help me improve my grades when I was a student in his class not very long ago. I tried the best I could but nothing stuck in my head. My biggest embarrassment was that I would cry each time I failed to do simple things that the other children could easily do. I felt ashamed. In the end, I left school because I just could not cope with the daily disappointments.” Tears welled in his eyes as he recounted his difficult days in school.



I was touched by his candor as I watched him speak. At well over six feet tall, with a muscular build, the tears in his eyes and the softness in his voice seemed a little out of place, I thought to myself. Then suddenly, his face brightened into a wide grin as he said, “My world changed when I discovered that gardening was my gift.” Sweeping his hands in a grand gesture, he exclaimed, “Look around and see what

your organization has helped me to achieve already!” I looked at the abundance of dark green foliage around me. To one side were neat beds of market-ready green vegetables and to the other were rows of tomato plants. At the back, I saw towering corn stalks with ripening mealie cobs. Water hoses snaked along the cultivated plants and sprinklers slowly puffed sprays of water, irrigating the crops.



“I thank you and those who donate the money to help people like me,” Lameck said, “because your help has indeed changed my life. I now have dreams. I now plan for the future. I tell you, I never had that before.”

A year earlier, Lameck had applied for and received a \$300-grant from Munhu’s Community Grant Program where we use a part of the donations we receive to give grants to villagers who start income generating projects. Beneficiaries are asked to pay back the money once they start generating profits from their projects, and the repaid money is recycled to other members of the community to start new projects. Lameck had used the \$300-grant he received to buy irrigation equipment to maximize the crop yields of his garden that is located along the banks of the Murove River, a major waterway in that rural community. Prior to acquiring the water pump, Lameck carried buckets of water on his head from the river to irrigate his crops.

“Madam, this garden was shown to me in a dream,” he continued. “I started by growing a few beds of vegetables that I could water by hand.” Then my teacher here told me about your organization’s grant program. When I received the money, I immediately bought the hoses and the sprinklers that you see. And I bought the water pump that is pulling the water from the river.” Gesturing with his hands he said, “You should come and see the pump.” He led us down a steep embankment to the bottom of the river valley, where the water pump rumbled gently as it drew water through a hose submerged in a shallow pool in the middle of sandy river bed.

On returning to the garden, Lameck proceeded to describe his dream for expanding his project. He said he was currently selling his produce at the local business centers and surrounding schools, but had plans to market to the nearby towns. He said his project was already generating profits for him and he had paid back \$120 of the grant money he had received. He was very proud that he could now buy food and clothes for his family.

“I want my boy to have food to eat before he goes to school. That way he can concentrate on his studies. I think he will do better than me in school.” Lameck’s six-year old son Martin stood by watching his father. I was glad to hear that Lameck could now feed his family. I was glad that Martin his son, a Munhu student who was starting Grade 1, would not go to school hungry. And I shared his father’s sentiment. I hoped that Martin would do well in school.

Lameck then led us to a parcel of open land, about three or so acres, traversed by gullies and earth mounds. He said the gullies were waterways to feed the fruit trees that he was intending to plant as the next expansion phase of his project. He said he had a clear vision of his orchard in his head, and he described it in detail. He grew excited as he spoke of how he wanted to change the barren land that spread out in front of us into a bustling vegetable and fruit operation. I got inspired watching him as he revealed his plans.



As we were leaving, Lameck handed me a bucket full of red vine-ripened tomatoes to share with my family. I thanked him and told him how impressed I was at what he had achieved with very little money. I also told him I was inspired by his plans for expansion. “You have to come back and see it Madam. You have to come back and see it,” he stressed. “Right now I am the only one who can see the orchard in my head, but soon many people will see it too.”

I promised to return to his garden for another visit. As we walked away from Lameck’s garden, I glanced back at the empty land we had just surveyed. To my surprise, I could see images of fruit-laden trees in the fields as if they had already come to be. A slow smile broke on my face. It seemed Lameck’s enthusiasm was contagious. I was happy to help him hold on to his vision until the day it became a reality and everyone could see it, as he had said. I was certain that his vision would become a reality.

## Amajongosi Yimali Pen-Feeding



The members of Sizo Zimbabwe Trust received a grant of \$1,500 from Munhu in January, 2016 to fund their Amajongosi Yimali (Steers for Money) project. \$1000 of that was money that had been paid back from another project funded by Munhu and \$500 was a gift from donors. The members had initially planned to buy 5 steers at \$300 each and to start a 3-month pen-feeding program to fatten the steers for market, with an anticipated market price of \$600 for each of the beasts. However, some areas around Bulawayo were hit by “foot and mouth” disease, which affected cattle sales. As a result, Sizo suspended the pen-feeding project and came up with a different business model of raising heifers for sale. They bought 5 heifers at \$300 each, and they are grazing the heifers to mature into cows that will be sold to cattle breeders. The cows can be sold at any stage after about 1 to 2 years of feeding, with each cow fetching between \$600 and \$800.

In the future, when economic conditions improve, Sizo plans to incorporate the pen-feeding program into their business model, to expand and diversify operations. But for now, the “Steers for Sale” project is a “Cows for Sale” project, all for a good cause.



Munhu funded this project because Sizo Zimbabwe raises money to pay schools fees for disadvantaged children in communities in the Matebeland Province of Zimbabwe, a goal that is well aligned with Munhu's education program. Sizo Zimbabwe also runs a number of other excellent programs including sponsoring students to rewrite O'Level Maths and English so they qualify to attend college, running school-based motivational programs to encourage academic excellence, and assisting rural-based teachers with soft loans to pursue degree courses to enhance their qualifications. In addition, two members of Sizo Zimbabwe Pastor and Mrs Msimango are Munhu coordinators who volunteer their time to work on various tasks including: identifying students who qualify to receive assistance from Munhu, paying school fees for the students, buying school uniforms and supplies for the students, collecting receipts and returning them to Munhu, and providing reports on students' progress. The Pastor and Mrs Msimanga are part of the army of Munhu's coordinators who ensure that your gifts that you give to Munhu reach the intended students and villagers in the impoverished rural areas of Zimbabwe.

We wish Sizo Zimbabwe success in their Amajongosi Yimali project because that will mean more students in rural areas of Zimbabwe will receive support and get an opportunity to pursue their educational goals. And we thank you, our donors and supporters, for continuing to give your gifts that we at Munhu pass along to those who need help the most.

*Keep it up! Zvirambe zvakadaro (Shona)! Akuhlale kunjalo (Ndebele)!*

## Tashinga 2 Group



**Tashinga 2** was one of the first groups to pay back the \$1200 seed money they received as part of Munhu's community grant program. This enabled the money to be recycled into funding other groups in the community.

A group of 4 men formed Tashinga 2 and received \$1200 from the community grant program in September of 2010 to start a poultry project. The members used the money to buy bricks, cement, and wire and they built a chicken run. They also bought day old chicks, feeders, and water troughs and had their chicken business up and running within 3 weeks of receiving the funds. Their business model was very simple. With 8 weeks of feeding, the chicks turned into chicken, ready for market. The members sold the chicken to locals in their community and to restaurants at a nearby township. They took the capital and profits and bought a second batch of chicks, raised and sold the chicken; and bought yet another batch of chicks and continued the cycle.

In March 2011, Tashinga 2 became the first group to pay back a portion of the \$1200 seed money they received. The group repaid \$800 within 6 months of receiving the funds! They paid back the whole amount by 2013. Their chicken business has been going well despite some challenges with shortage of starter chicks and also the recurrent drought years in Zimbabwe, which makes chicken feed more expensive.



In an effort to diversify operations, the group initiated a peanut butter production business in 2013. According to the members, the peanut butter business is as lucrative as the chicken business and they get handsome returns. Members grow the peanuts on their own small plots of land and also buy additional supplies from their neighbors to process into peanut butter. They sell the peanut butter in nearby townships, hospitals and boarding schools. Not only are the group members providing a needed market for the locally grown peanuts, they also provide peanut butter for the local market.

Profits from the businesses are used to buy groceries and clothes for families and to pay school tuition. Each of these members is married with 3 to 5 children of their own as well as one or more orphans they took in as part of their families. These orphans are children of either their relatives or neighbors who died of HIV/AIDS. In rural communities, people do what they can to take care of each other and each other's children.



## Takavimbika Group



The two members of **Takavimbika** received \$400 from the community grant program to boost their cross-boarder trading business. They travel to neighboring South Africa, Botswana, and Zambia to import goods for resale in Zimbabwe. The group has paid back the \$400 seed money in full.

Two widowed women who were separately running cross-border trading businesses combined forces to form Takavimbika. They received \$400 in December 2011 as a capital injection for their combined business of importing goods from neighboring countries—South Africa, Botswana, and Zambia—for resale in village communities in Zimbabwe.

Reenergized with the additional capital for their business, the women have been busy travelling back and forth selling their merchandise. Because of low overhead costs, the women sell their goods at lower prices than shops in big towns and therefore can quickly turnover their inventory, allowing them to make several buying trips per year. The goods they sell include clothes, blankets, kitchen utensils, cell phones, and radios. Both women credit the success of their business to increased operating capital, past experience, and the support and encouragement they provide to each other. With hard work and good business sense, these two women see their lives and the lives of their families improving.

According to the women, the main challenge to their trade business is that sometimes their customers are slow to pay for the goods, especially toward the rainy season as most people need to buy seed and fertilizers for the fields. Despite the challenge, the women continue to operate their business. They paid back the \$400 in December 2012 and the money was recycled to fund new projects.

## Mangondo Group



**Mangodo** started a chicken business with \$900 from Munhu's community grant program and has now diversified into buying and selling maize (corn) to supply the local market. The group has already paid back the \$900 seed money.

Mangondo was formed by a group of 4 entrepreneurial villagers who saw an opportunity to improve the lives of their families through the Munhu community grant program. The group received \$900 in October 2010. A local agricultural extension officer trained the group members in good practices for raising chicken. Armed with the funds and the knowledge, the members started their chicken business.

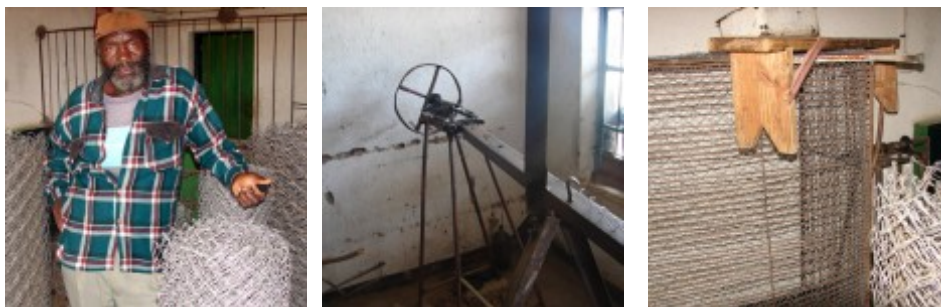
Mangondo has successfully raised and sold several chicken batches and the business continues to grow. With a keen eye for diversifying their business, the group also started buying and selling maize. The maize side business is a lucrative venture that fills a community need and also compliments the chicken business.



The area in which these women live received poor rains this year, resulting in poor harvests for most of the surrounding communities, with most families needing to buy maize to feed their families until the next harvest. Mangondo buys maize from other districts and sells it to villagers in the surrounding communities. Maize is used to make the main staple food called *sadza*, and is also used to make chicken feed to supply local small business owners whose livelihoods depend on raising and selling chickens.

The members of Mangondo are very appreciative of the seed money they received to start the project. One of the members said, “We noted that it helped us in several ways and it has since become our sole source of income.” They can now afford to feed and clothe their families and send their children to school. Mangondo paid off the money in February 2013.

## Kushinga Fencing Group



**Kushinga Fencing Group** is composed of 4 men with prior experience working in wire making factories. They received \$1590 in seed money from the community grant program in June of 2010 and have paid back \$750 to date.

The men of Kushinga Fencing Group are utilizing previous experience gained in wire making factories to provide a needed commodity and also to earn income to support their families. The men had been unemployed for many years because most factories across Zimbabwe closed as a result of the country's distressed economy.



One of the men noticed that villagers were travelling long distances to the nearest town to buy fencing wire for projects such as building chicken pens, fencing newly allocated housing lots at the local township, or fencing schools and hospitals to keep out the animals. He convinced his former coworkers to utilize their experience from the factories and form a wire making business venture. The men submitted a business proposal and received \$1590 from the community grant program in June of 2010. Next they collected orders from local customers to ensure the sale of their first batch of wire, and then went into business.

The group members used the capital to rent a wire fabricating machine, buy 400 kilograms of raw wire and tools, and pay rent on a storage room. They made their first batch of wire, sold it and bought their own wire fabricating machine, and continued to make and sell their product to locals. The main challenge they have identified is lack of reliable transportation to go and order the raw wire and bring it to their worksite. They often have to board three buses each way and this is time consuming and expensive. Despite the challenges, the members report that the

project is doing well and they have waiting orders from small customers such as families fencing their home sites and starting market gardens, and big customers such as local schools and hospitals.



Kushinga Fencing Group has paid back \$750 of the seed money and has asked for an extension period to pay back the rest as they would like to buy more wire fabricating machines and expand the business. The seed money enabled Kushinga members to build a profitable business venture. Proceeds are used to support their families and the orphans left in their care.

## **Kupfuma Ishungu Group**



**Kupfuma Ishungu** is a cooperative group formed by four widows who went from being penniless to becoming livestock owners and a source of inspiration to other villagers in a matter of a few months. The widows named their group “Kupfuma Ishungu”, which loosely translates to “getting rich is a matter of determination”. They received \$662 from Munhu’s community grant program in January 2010 and they have now paid the money back in full.

Kupfuma Ishungu was the first group to receive funding from Munhu. The four women joined forces in January 2010 with the purpose of turning their lives and

fates around. At that time, each of these women was jobless and penniless, with no major prospects for earning income to support their family. Each of these women was the head of a household, with the responsibility for supporting either their own children or grandchildren left in their care following the deaths of the children's parents due to HIV/AIDS. Their livelihoods depended on subsistence farming, which had become increasingly unreliable given the many years of low rainfall and subsequent droughts. These women knew that they were ready for a new start; and they had faith on their side. Along came Munhu with the community grant program.



Among the four of them, they elected a chair, a treasurer, a secretary and a committee member. They crafted a business plan asking for \$662 as seed money to start the venture. According to the business plan, members of Kupfuma Ishungu would buy day old chicks, feed the chicks over a period of eight weeks until they became chicken, and then sell the chicken to local eateries in townships close to their village. Munhu financed their venture and within six months these women had successfully raised and sold the chicken and made a handsome profit. The women then decided to diversify into goat rearing. Now each one of them is a proud owner of a number of goats, which, in the rural areas of Zimbabwe, is a sign of wealth. This is what the secretary of the group had to say, "In our group, we fed three different groups of broilers and sold them. In the third group, we shared the money and bought goats and food for our children."

The goats supply milk for everyday use and meat for special occasions. More importantly, the goats represent a source of income for these women. The sale of one goat means these women have money to buy groceries for their families, pay tuition and buy school uniforms for their children and grandchildren, and still have a little extra for a rainy day.

## Kumboedza Group



**Kumboedza** was formed when one man, an experienced but unemployed tailor, gathered a group of his family members and started a clothes making business. The group asked for \$1000 seed money and received this amount in November 2010. Immediately they bought a sewing machine and materials and set to work making uniforms for primary and secondary schools in the area. The group has paid back the \$1000.



To date Kumboedza is one of the most successful groups financed through the community grant program. The members recognized and filled a niche market for locally made school uniforms. Because of low overhead costs, the group can price their merchandise competitively, coming in cheaper than the bigger retail stores located in the towns. There is division of labor, with some of the members doing the cutting and sewing, some the finishing work, and others the sales and marketing. Munhu is one of Kumboedza's customers as we buy school uniforms for our students from this group.

The working conditions are also very flexible and accommodating. In the morning, group members go to work in their fields, growing staples of maize (corn), peanuts, and vegetables. In the afternoon, as the sun starts getting too hot to work in the fields,

the members come together under the cool shade of the verandah and get to work sewing buttons, making hems, and pressing collars. Even better, the women bring their babies to work.



Not only are the members making a profit that is used to support their families and the orphans left in their care by relatives who died of HIV/AIDS, they are also providing needed products at competitive prices. With time, the group plans to expand and start creating employment for other villagers.

## **Afrikansa Kiriyo Group**

**Members of Afrikansa Kiriyo** received \$500 from the community grant program and established a business buying and selling dried kapenta fish. The group has paid back the \$500.

Afrikansa Kiriyo members formed their group in 2011 and received \$500 to start their business. The members travel to Kariba Dam in the northern part of Zimbabwe to buy dried kapenta fish for resale to local grocery stores and to villagers. Dried kapenta fish—locally known as “*matemba*”—is a cheap and convenient protein source that does not require refrigeration, making it ideal for rural communities. Kapenta is eaten as an accompaniment to the local *sadza* staple. For most families, kapenta is a delicacy and a welcome variety in their diet. Business picked up very quickly for Afrikansa Kiriyo because of the high demand for kapenta and the members look to expand their market to include customers in local towns.