



Partnership for Social Accountability Alliance

Newsletter 01

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*Strengthening
Social
Accountability In
Health And
Agriculture*

PSA PROJECT IMPACTS BINGA, MUTOKO POSITIVELY



Our Partners

National Lead

act:onaid

Health Lead



Knowledge for action: The power to make a difference!

Agriculture Lead



Zimbabwe Small Holder Organic
Farmers' Forum
(ZIMSOFF)

Implementing - Binga

BASILWIZI

Implementing - Mutoko



DEMT
SAVING LIVES

Media

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FOREWORD

Welcome to a transformative journey where accountability meets action! With unwavering support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Partnership for Social Accountability (PSA) Alliance has been at the forefront of enhancing governance and social accountability across Southern Africa since 2016. The mission gained momentum in 2019 with the inclusion of Zimbabwe, and we're thrilled to share the impactful stories and achievements from Binga and Mutoko districts in this edition. In this edition, we highlight the remarkable journeys of individuals and communities in Binga and Mutoko, where project efforts are bearing fruit. From community journalists embracing investigative journalism trainings to youths advocating for more accessible family planning resources, these stories showcase the power of social accountability and community engagement.

Local journalists have enthusiastically participated in the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe (VMCZ) training, empowering them with skills in investigative journalism, social accountability reporting and ethical conduct.

In Mutoko, youth-friendly corners are providing safe spaces for young people to discuss their SRH concerns openly. Our implementing partners, including ActionAid Zimbabwe, SAfAIDS Zimbabwe, Disaster and Environmental Management Trust (DEMT) and the Zimbabwe Smallholder Organic Farmers' Forum (ZIMSOFF), are working to ensure these spaces are accessible.

Agriculture is another focus area where youth are making a significant impact. The introduction of organic farming practices (agroecology) has enhanced food security and empowered young farmers. Climate-smart initiatives like keyhole gardening in Binga are helping communities mitigate the effects of drought and break the cycle of poverty and early marriage through sustainable agriculture. Despite challenges, the project beneficiaries demonstrate resilience and innovation, holding local authorities accountable and advocating for better services.

These stories are a testament to the transformative power of our project and the incredible efforts of our community members and partners. We are committed to fostering environments where accountability, gender-responsiveness and sustainable development are not just goals, but realities for all.

We hope these stories inspire you as much as they inspire us.

Happy reading!

Keyhole gardening rescue Binga youths from El Nino effects



I gave up make-up, luxuries to focus on income generation first!

Exodus Munkuli talks to journalists explaining how the PSA project has benefited her during a tour facilitated for by the Voluntary Media Council Of Zimbabwe.

The scenario used to be rife in Binga has significantly improved thanks to the intervention facilitated by the Partnership for Social Accountability Project (PSA).

The partners have been implementing a climate resilience project in Siameja Village, Siansundu in Binga which aims to tackle the increased frequency and severity of disaster due to climate change, which predominantly affect vulnerable groups and disrupt food security and livelihoods.

One of the methods the project is using in the district is keyhole garden. This climate-smart adaptation initiative where a nutrition gardening method ideal in areas like Binga is being implemented to ensure vulnerable villagers like the youth, pregnant/ lactating mothers are

food secure benefiting from a reliable source of nutrition.

A beneficiary, Exodus Munkuli (24) says the project has not just saved them from the biting drought but has also taught her to be focused and self-sustenance.

“As a young woman growing up in a community with many challenges, I had wishes and one of them may seem simple but you will agree with me that every young girl would want a fancy hairstyle and make up before we even talk of basics as sanitary pads.

“Such needs, or should I call them wants have seen many girls in my area getting into early marriages but surprisingly, remain in the same poverty after the marriages,” said Munkuli as she narrated how young girls in underde-

veloped communities are often exposed to early marriages.

Munkuli’s story isn’t one of solitary struggle. She’s part of a mentorship programme by Binga based Basilwizi Trust, focusing on Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR). The programme, in partnership with ActionAid Zimbabwe and other organisation integrates SRHR with agricultural initiatives to create a foundation for food security.

“The coming of the PSA project was a blessing to me and my other colleagues involved because it has taught us not only good forms of subsistence farming as keyhole gardening but has gone a step further to train us self-sustenance.

“After giving up the luxuries of my youth, I

can now enjoy the pleasures because I can now afford from my garden proceeds.

Besides, I am looking forward to also fund my education advancement from my garden and goat project so that I attain my dream career of being a teacher,” added Munkuli.

Determined to attain her goals, Munkuli endures seven kilometers cycling trip to get water from the nearest source.

“Binga has acute water shortages before we even talk of the changing climate. So, I cycle seven kilometers to the nearest water source and fetch water to water my plants.

“This is a challenge of cause but with the help and encouragement from my family, I am motivated to take the trip. The results of tangible harvest are also another key motivator because

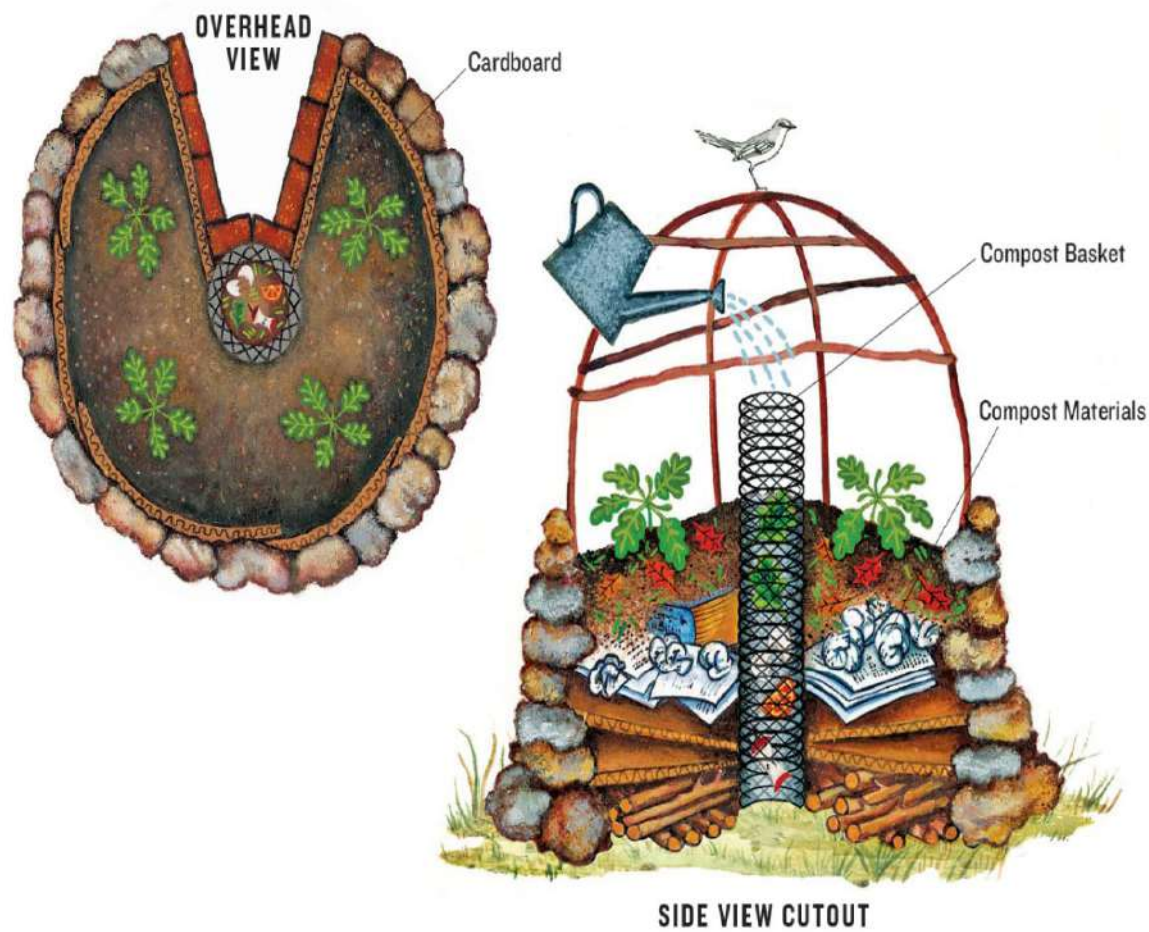


Diagram shows a pictorial model of a keyhole garden. A keyhole garden is a two-meter-wide circular raised garden with a keyhole-shaped indentation on one side. The garden uses a number of layers to retain moisture and nourish the soil, making it more productive than a conventional garden.

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since we engaged in these climate smart projects, we are getting produce compared to days we cultivated large pieces of land but getting nothing,” Munkuli further said.

Munkuli’s flourishing keyhole garden boasts of a mix of okra, paprika and tomatoes.

The innovative design, with its central reservoir for water retention is particularly apt given Binga’s scorching climate.

“**When drought hits, its effects go beyond malnutrition and might be imagined by many. Communities, especially rural are grappling with a surge in teenage pregnancies and theft cases, as young people desperate to escape the pangs of hunger turn to early marriages and risky survival strategies. With drought-induced starvation taking a devastating toll, young girls are increasingly resorting to early marriages as a means of seeking refuge from the biting hunger. Meanwhile, their male counterparts are engaging in unsafe migration and unorthodox ways of making money, all in an effort to escape the harsh realities of drought and starvation.**”

It is against this background that the climate-smart intervention seeks to build capacities of targeted communities and institutions to effectively prepare food for, withstand, respond to and recover from climate induced disasters and crises.

Youth a vital force in transforming, sustaining agriculture



Litini Moyo gets vegetables from her garden

Anchored around the concept that farming is a business on its own, Action Aid in partnership with the Disaster Environment Management Trust (DEMT) under the PSA project decision to invest in the youth demographics’ participation in agriculture is an endorsement of their important role in the process of transformation and the push to seamlessly assist the ageing crop of farmers with skill, knowledge and innovation.

Today, Mutoko’s agriculture is on an upswing with young people largely involved as the driving force through uptake of organic farming which was introduced to curb El-Nino drought related effects.

“The program has not only empowered the youth but have made us a relevant stakeholder in the community. Why do I say so?

“You will notice that the youth were of-

ten neglected in agricultural programs as Pfumvudza/ Intwasa and moreso agricultural input schemes but with involvement in this project, we have gained acceptance. Our contributions in decision making platforms as budgeting is now even being considered though many youths are still shunning such meetings,” a program beneficiary Talent Humanikwa (28) said.

Through the project, more than 800 farmers in Mutoko District have taken up organic farming.

While a World Food Programme (WFP) hunger map for 2023/24 published on 17 January 2024 showed that 4.1 million people face food insecurity, people in Mutoko Ward 4 are singing a different tune saying the farming methods taught under the PSA project has made them food secure.

Trained as a trainer through ZIMSOF’s

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agro-ecology initiative, Mutoko Ward 4 agricultural extension officer, Luckie Nyatoti says out of approximately 1 600 rural farmers in her catchment, averagely 700 to 800 have taken up organic farming.

“The project has helped achieve a great milestone. In Ward 4 for instance, we have about 1600 rural farmers and out of these, at least 700 to 800 farmers have adopted organic farming, planting small grains compared to the traditional maize plant.

“The other worth noting development

under this program is that it involved the youth more as they had been often left out of such initiatives. Women in agriculture were also not an exception,” Nyatoti said.

She also hopes that by the time the project reaches all 29 wards in Mutoko, the district will emerge the province’s breadbasket.

Grains adopted include pearl millet, sorghum and finger millet.

“These are even considered more healthier,” Nyatoti also said.

Meanwhile, in Zimbabwe the agriculture sector is considered strategic in terms of high employment opportunities, food security and import substitution amid climate change.

The agriculture sector is highly dynamic and the shift to climate smart production methods has increased the labour intensiveness of production, therefore young farmers have better chances of success in such an environment.



Charles Rukuni training journalists in Binga



Cris Chinaka training journalists in Harare

Empowering journalists for social accountability reporting: VMCZ leads the way

The Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe (VMCZ) recently capacitated journalists from Mutoko and Binga in a comprehensive training program, enhancing their skills in investigative journalism, social accountability reporting and ethical conduct in news gathering.

The initiative was made possible through the Partnership for Social Accountability Alliance (PSA) project, which aims to improve social accountability and gender responsiveness in public resource management in health and agricultural services delivery.

The training program brought together a diverse group of journalists from various media outlets, all sharing a common goal; to enhance their skills and contribute to more effective and responsible reporting.

The comprehensive program covered a range of topics, including investigative journalism techniques, social accountability reporting strategies, ethical conduct in news gathering and reporting, gender-responsive reporting practices, data journalism and fact-checking methods.

Senior journalists, Cris Chinaka and Charles Rukuni trained journalists from Mutoko and Binga respectively. The trainings were also supported by VMCZ staff who shared valuable insights on ethical conduct of a journalist.



Trainers; Chris Chinaka (left) and Charles Rukuni (right) interact with journalists during training programs held in Harare and Binga respectively.



Journalists follow proceedings during capacity building workshops held in Harare and Binga separately.

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The Partnership for Social Accountability Alliance Project, which supported this initiative, aims to promote transparency, accountability and gender equality in public resource management.

By empowering journalists with the skills and knowledge to report effectively on these issues, the project seeks to contribute to a more informed and engaged citizenry, holding duty bearers accountable for their actions.

The participants engaged in interactive sessions, group discussions and hands-on exercises, facilitated by experienced trainers and industry experts.

“I did not know that journalism may hold such power when it comes to social accountability. With what I have learnt today and the skill I already have, I look forward to producing impactful content that will help develop Binga,” said Njebele Chuma of Twasumpuka Community

Radio Station in Binga.

They also had the opportunity to share their own experiences and challenges, receiving feedback and guidance from their peers and trainers.

This training demonstrates project partners’ commitment to promoting responsible and informed reporting, empowering journalists to play a vital role in promoting social accountability and good governance in Zimbabwe.



“ I did not know that journalism may hold such power when it comes to social accountability. With what I have learnt today and the skill I already have, I look forward to producing impactful content that will help develop Binga. ”

Njebele Chuma
Twasumpuka Community Radio
Binga

Mutoko laments shortage of short-term family planning methods

...as Binga calls for construction of youth friendly corners



Picture shows a clinic in Binga, Siyanzundu emphasizing they offer free health care amid complaints from locals over shortage of medicines which often lads them to expensive pharacies run by private players and unavailability of facilities as youth friendly corners.

Through the capacitation and skills building learnt under the ActionAid Zimbabwe's Partnership for Social Accountability Project (PSA) which is being implemented through Disaster Environment Management Trust's (DEMT) on sexual reproductive health rights (SRHR) and health governance, young women have managed to hold the Mutoko rural district council to account to make sure that they provide family planning pills.

"As much as we are pushing council to make provision of accessible and affordable short term family planning pills, we have managed to purchase these from our garden proceeds.

"The push however comes because we want our garden proceeds to sustain our families and community livelihoods because the time we seek things as family planning pills from private players, it is more expensive as compared to getting such from government or municipal services," said one PSA project beneficiary, Talent Humanikwa.

"It has been one and half months now without subsidized contraception and as a result, we are at risk of unwanted pregnan-

cies and sexually transmitted diseases because men will not prefer taking contraception in a marriage," she added.

Regardless the challenge, Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council (ZNFPC) Chitekwe Youth friendly Center Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health (ASRH) officer Joyce Karidza commended that there has been a great improvement in contraceptive uptake among the youth.

"Challenges may image but I would like also to say that we are happy with the increase of youth taking contraceptive, a move we think will reduce teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

"We also encourage people to alternatively use long term contraception methods in times of such shortages as they equally help curb unplanned pregnancies," Karidza said.

Methods of family planning are classified into three broad categories namely short-term, long-term and permanent methods.

Under short-term methods are contraceptive pills, injectable, condoms and fertility awareness-based methods.

While Zimbabwe's contraceptive use is said to have risen and the unmet need for family planning reducing, young women in Mutoko are otherwise feeling the pinch appealing for short term contraceptive methods such as the control pills to use as they have endured more than one and half months without them.

Need for youth friendly corners amplified

The need for youth friendly corners in Mutoko and Binga has been amplified with youths saying absence of these has led to stigma every-time they seek family planning methods from public spaces.

PSA implementing partners, Basilwizi and DEMT have also in their project reports noted that uptake of family planning methods amongst the youth has increased though dedicated access has remained a challenge.

"Our main objective had been to encourage young girls and youths to use and access contraceptives, a goal we have to a larger extent achieved. Our major challenge at the moment besides parents who still see it odd to give access to a school going girl access to family planning methods is availability of youth friendly corners," said Basilwizwi programs officer, Danisa Mudimba.

Disaster and Environmental Management Trust (DEMT) programs director, Romeo Chingezi also outlined what these facilities are and why they are important.

"A Youth Friendly Centre (YFC) model is a high-impact practice that enhances Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) outcomes such as improved access to contraception, reduced teenage pregnancies, increased STI testing and treatment, HIV treatment and care services, better menstrual health management, enhanced knowledge and skills, reduced gender-based violence, improved mental health, well-being and increased participation in SRH decision-making.

While the only Youth Friendly Corner in Binga was blown by wind and never repaired, Mutoko has only one facility in Chitekwe which besides being far only provides for Sexual and reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) education.

Two dancefloors, one deejay: A case of how PSA project achieved parallel impact

“The project aims to improve accountability and gender responsiveness in public resource management, particularly in the areas of HIV/SRH services for adolescents and youth and agricultural services for smallholder farmers, contributing to the realisation of selected SADC regional commitments across the five target countries.

Hitting two birds with one stone is an idiom often deemed impossible just as one would imagine having two dancefloors under one roof and one deejay. This is how best one can describe how the Binga and Mutoko communities have been positively impacted by one project, the Partnership for Social Accountability (PSA) project.

The project being implemented in Mutoko under Disaster and Environmental Management Trust (DEMT) and Binga under Basilwizi Trust seeks to improve accountability and gender-responsiveness in public resource management, particularly in the areas of HIV/SRH services for adolescents and youth and agricultural services for smallholder farmers, contributing to the realisation of selected Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional commitments across the five target countries.

Self-Sustenance has been one key lesson participants are being taught under this project as implementing partners have argued that teen pregnancies are rampant in rural Zimbabwe as girls are vulnerable to food that has been in shortage since the El Nino induced drought hit Zimbabwe.

As a mitigation measure, the project has managed to train subsistence farming which in return gives them financial returns and as testified by participants, has helped them to gain independence in their chauvinistic locales.

“I am happy of what the project has done for me. I was taught farming under Zimbabwe

Small Holder Organic Farmers’ Forum - Zimsoff (ZIMSOFF) and Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) issues under DEMT and knowledge gained has changed my life towards sustainability,” said a Mutoko based young mother, Talent Humanikwa (27).

“Of late, I thought a woman should dependent on our male counterparts for everything. It is through this project that I began my small garden project which gives me averagely US\$10 per week.

“I am now able to cater for my personal staff as control pills and sanitary pads. I can also afford to buy some home staff without depending on anyone of which I am largely convinced that dependency had caused some Gender Based Violence issues I faced in life,” added Humanikwa.

She also says the way projects have kept her occupied helped her resist the pressures of drug and substance abuse.

Approximately 700 km away, the story of a teen mom based in Binga’s tinde village, Lithini Moyo (20) is testimony of how the project has impacted both communities positively.

She is a victim of an early, unintended pregnancy but has not given up.

“The father of my child is in Shurugwi, it never worked out, neither did I gave up! I came back to Binga where I enrolled for a nutritional garden programme and I am now part of a bigger group of youths aged between 10 and 24 who are empowered to do income generating projects,” Moyo said.

Proceeds from her project do not only benefit herself but others in her area.



Picture shows Binga’s Litini Moyo selling her garden produce to a local. She says the garden which she started under the support of the PSA project has helped her take care of her day to day needs.



Mutoko’s Marvelous Chimana took time to show this publication her garden. She also says the projects have helped her to take care of her needs including purchasing family planning pills which are sometimes in short supply in her area.

“We sell our vegetables and get money. We use the money for various things as we also support the needy in our community. We buy pens, books and school socks for school children in need.

“I also use the money for my baby’s upkeep. I buy diapers and porridge,” Moyo added.

Both beneficiaries urged their counterparts to work hard and fulfill their goals despite any setbacks

in life.

Under the PSA Alliance Consortium, efforts are being made to increase the participation of citizens’ particularly marginalized groups such as young people and women towards strengthening the ability of all stakeholders to collectively identify Public Resources Management (PRM) issues and act to address these.

PSA Project Pictures

Journalists in action during recent visit to Binga projects



A woman fetches water from an open well as climate change takes toll in Binga.



Mutoko farmers showcase their harvest



NO SWEAT, NO GAIN: Exodus cycles to fetch water for her keyhole garden



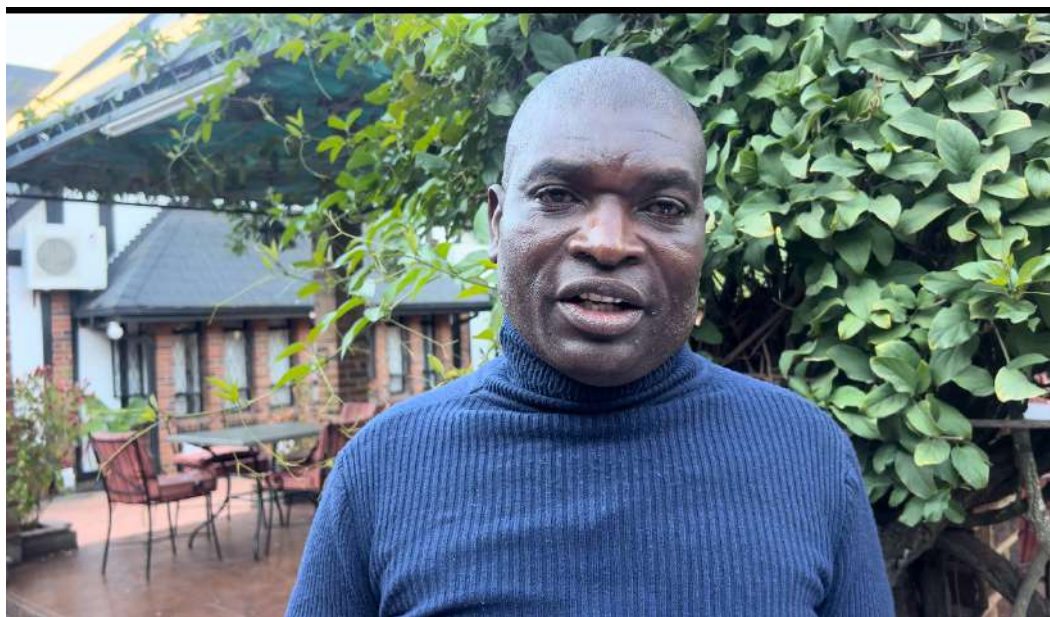
Marvelous Chimana shows visiting journalists in Mutko her rabbit project.



Danisa Mudimba presents score card findings to Tinde villagers in Binga.

Duty bearers commit towards sustainable development, accountability

“This workshop was an eye-opener. It has helped me understand the importance of citizen engagement in public service delivery. We recognize the importance of working together to achieve our goals.”



Cllr Tendai Mahara pose for a photo after the workshop.



Participants; among them, Chief Mutoko (third from left and wearing a Chief's badge) follow proceedings during the training program.

In a landmark show of commitment, duty bearers from various districts have pledged to work together towards achieving sustainable development and promoting transparency and accountability in all aspects of their work.

The pledge was made during a recent leadership training event in Bulawayo, where duty bearers from Mutoko and Binga districts gathered to discuss ways to enhance their collaboration with local communities.

The event, led by governance expert David Matumbike covered topics such as decentralization, devolution, service delivery, citizen engagement and the budget process.

Participants, drawn from government departments including the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Development and Vocational Training and the Ministry of Women Affairs, Small and Medium Enterprises, expressed that the meeting was an eye-opener to the operations of the Partnership for Social Accountability (PSA) Project in their areas.

“This workshop was an eye-opener,” said Councillor Tendai Mahara, a duty bearer from Mutoko district. “It has helped me understand the importance of citizen engagement in public service delivery. We recognize the importance of working together to achieve our goals.

“I have learnt a lot on food security. These are

real time aspects we should go back and implement in our respective districts. I will myself use district agricultural shows to promote farming of small grains while also taking time to talk to farmers about climate smart agriculture,” added Cllr Mahara.

By prioritizing transparency and accountability, the duty bearers aim to build trust with their communities and ensure that their development programs have a lasting impact. They committed to regular engagement with their communities, active listening to their needs and transparent decision-making processes.

Meanwhile, the government has introduced agro-ecological tailoring, which ensures that crops planted by farmers are suitable for their specific regions. In most drought-affected regions, this involves growing small grains such as sorghum, millet and sunflower.

The training aimed to equip local government and local authority officials with skills and knowledge on effective public service delivery within the framework of devolved governance systems.

The event was hailed as a success, with participants leaving with a renewed sense of purpose and a clear understanding of their roles in driving development and promoting accountability.

PSA Project - “Empowering communities to seek improved public service delivery in agriculture (food security), health (HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health and rights) and public resource management”