



Food Relief

In response to the hunger faced by our fellow believers who lost their crops due to the drought earlier this year, Share Africa Zambia (SAZ) is now distributing maize to those most affected. This distribution began in June 2024, reaching 162 households (over 1,000 people) who receive food monthly. Among those receiving aid are widows and single parents, such as Lumbiwe Banda, a widow from Mchacha Village caring for seven children, and Idah Moyo from Kamlaza, a single parent caring for six children.

These individuals are impoverished by any standard, and, unfortunately, it is the least privileged who suffer the most in times of crisis—a pattern seen not only in Zambia but in most underdeveloped countries. Rural farming communities are particularly vulnerable, as their food and income depend entirely on what they can produce in the fields. The ever-changing climate conditions make this a hand-to-mouth existence. Although these communities have survived severe conditions for decades, even centuries, this year has been particularly difficult. Heavy rains followed by weeks of drought during the middle of the rainy season caused crops to wilt and fail.



Kamlaza

Initially, our commitment was to deliver a 50kg bag of maize to each family every month for three months, amounting to 162 bags per month. The delivery is made to assembly buildings, but transporting a truck to these locations over poor

roads is a significant challenge. Nevertheless, seeing the need and the gratitude of the saints, the team at SAZ has responded with determination, happy to serve their own people (see picture gallery).

Share Africa UK has now funded an additional three months of supply, which will last until January. However, continuing beyond that will depend on available resources. The next harvest isn't until May, and with December through March being the peak period of hunger, the believers are pleading with us to support them through these months.



When asked what others in the community do when they have no food or cash, the answers vary. Some leave to stay with relatives who might share what little they have, while others survive on mangoes and leaves. Some have chickens, but they don't last long, as they are often killed by hungry predators. We are frequently asked about goats, but they are difficult to control and quickly destroy crops, so they are generally not accepted in farming communities.

In June, the Zambian government received aid from the World Bank, which was entrusted to the Ministry of Community Development to distribute food to the most vulnerable. However, the sheer number of people in need and the logistical challenges of such a program have made it difficult to reach everyone. So far, no relief has reached the communities where we operate, and we doubt it ever will.

When hunger strikes, it is the children who suffer most. Malnutrition in early childhood impairs development, affecting them for the rest of their lives. Their immune systems are also compromised, making them more susceptible to illnesses. It is heartbreaking to hear children cry out of hunger.

It is also difficult for farmers who must cultivate their fields and prepare for the next year's crops. Maize is a staple food that provides essential energy, and when it is not available, physical weakness further complicates their struggle. Those of us who have never farmed under such conditions may find it hard to comprehend the challenges—like those faced by Mrs. Tembo, as shown in the picture above.



Kaphwala

Our support for our fellow believers is just a drop in the ocean compared to the overwhelming number of appeals we've received from other areas. Although we do support some assemblies in Lusaka (see the article later), our priority is to support the farmers in our Farmer Support Programme. The need is not just about food; it is about preserving the future of rural farming, which so many depend on.



Mchacha

Developing, expanding, and securing the future of rural farming has always been at the heart of our mission. God has blessed many of these people spiritually, and we believe we have a responsibility to continue helping them both materially and spiritually. It is a blessing to see healthy, happy people giving thanks to God.



Chambala

We extend our deepest gratitude to those who have contributed to the food relief efforts. There is still a long way to go until the next harvest in June 2025. Some vegetable crops should be ready by April, but until then, please help us support these communities through this difficult time.

A special mention goes to Prince Mwanza of SAZ for coordinating and managing the distribution.

Irrigation Trials

Dependence on rain-fed crop production makes smallholder farmers vulnerable to climate variability, drastically affecting crop yields and food security. To address this issue, there is a pressing need for sustainable irrigation solutions that can enhance productivity, optimize land use, and provide greater resilience against unpredictable weather patterns. A clear cost-benefit justification needs to be established for this to be actualized.

A trial project is underway using a solar-powered drip irrigation system to cover two acres of arable land. Each farm will have a borehole, a solar-powered pump, solar panels, a tank stand, connecting pipes, a filter, and drip lines, depending on the availability of a reliable water source. One acre of land will be reserved to multiply a specific seed type developed by SAZ. This high-value crop will be grown under supervision, and we expect it to return a value over two years sufficient to justify the cost of irrigation.

A further acre will be irrigated for the farmer to use for winter crops during the dry season, guaranteeing an income regardless of the summer crop's success. Farmers typically have 10-25 acres of farmland. The irrigation system for seed growing only requires a small portion of their field. However, with a reliable water source, there is an opportunity to install cheaper sprinkler systems to safeguard the main crop, though this is not included in our initial costing.

The design of drip lines allows water to be released at specific points called emitters. The water is released using pressure from a tank raised 2 to 3 meters above the ground. The tank(s) are filled using a solar pump to draw water from a borehole or a shallow well.



Shallow Well

Shallow wells are the cheapest option, but finding water by digging a hole in the ground leaves much to chance. Divining sticks, like those used by Jacob, are often employed, but there is no equipment known to detect water at a precise depth. Drilling companies have equipment that can identify underground water tables, but they often have to drill 50 to 100 meters to find a plentiful source.

Cost

Drilling a borehole and installing a hand pump costs about £1100. This provides the farm with fresh drinking water and enough to manually irrigate a small vegetable plot. Adding the solar pump with solar panels and drip lines costs a further £1,5000 allowing irrigation for 2 acres as previously mentioned.

Plan

If the trials are successful, we will:

- Add drip-feed irrigation systems to the four farmers who have just got a borehole (see next article).
- Identify farmers who already have shallow wells and, if there is sufficient water available year-round, trial the same system using less expensive solar pumps.

It is an ambitious project, but if successful, it could improve farmer earnings, secure food for their families, and mitigate the risk of a barren year due to drought. There are 200 farmers on the support program, but only 10 have boreholes that could be used for irrigation. Other boreholes have been drilled over the years, but these serve the community or are at assembly sites, so they cannot be used for irrigation.



Drip Lines

It is a costly project which can only be rolled out gradually. If the trials are successful, we will offer it to other farmers using a loan scheme. The idea is to have a startup fund to provide irrigation to a few farmers. When the cost is recovered from one farmer, the money replenishes the fund to be used for another farmer.

Conclusion

Overall, the drought has been a wake-up call, highlighting the necessity of transitioning from rain-fed agriculture to a more diversified and sustainable system. By investing in solar-powered drip irrigation, we can secure a stable and more profitable future for smallholder farmers. We have much to learn, and we know the journey won't be easy.

New Seed Development

The development of new varieties of seed is critical to improving rural farming in the Chipata Province. For the past 5 years SAZ has been multiplying new varieties of soybeans, groundnuts, beans and sunflower.

The farmers who planted our early maturing variety of soya and late maturing variety of groundnuts had a reasonable harvest despite the drought – therefore we must produce more. If the irrigation plan is successful then we can grow seed crops twice a year.

We are excited about a new variety of maize which is high yielding and drought tolerant. We should have enough to give to a few farmers next season.

Boreholes

Following our last Newsletter, Share Africa received several donations for boreholes to help farmers combat the effects of drought in the coming season. These boreholes have now been drilled with hand pumps that give them a reliable source of fresh drinking water. Although the water can be hand-carried to water vegetable crops we have not at this stage installed any irrigation system.

As described in the previous article, we are running trials to know the best systems for different water sources and land terrain. Installing the appropriate system for these farmers will require additional funding, but if the trials are successful then it should be easy to justify.

Two boreholes were drilled in Chimwala area, one for Paul Nyirenda and the other for Levison Mwale. Another two were in Mchacha area, one for Elijah Banda and the other for Felistus Phiri. These farmers have been on the SAZ scheme for many years and have been successful in farming different kinds of crops.

Giving them a borehole is something they have dreamed of, and this has lifted their spirits following the devastation of crop failure earlier this year. They are now looking forward to the installation of an irrigation system which will greatly improve their income. We know these are hardworking people and we are sure they will put in every effort to get the potential return.

The four farmers are all assembly believers – two are in Chimwala and two are in Mchacha. The pictures with their families shows that rural farming is not an easy life.



Felistus Phiri with wife and son



Elijah Banda and family



Levison Meale and family



Drilling



Paul Nyrinda and family

Supporting our Orphans

Life is tough in the townships and poor urban areas where most of our orphans live. Many houses are no more than shacks and crowded together. Sanitation is not good as demonstrated by a serious outbreak of cholera in many areas. They have not been directly affected by the drought in the same way as the farming communities but the problems in the country affect everyone with the scarcity of food pushing up prices that they can barely afford.

As part of our support for the orphan families, ShareAfrica has been distributing corn soya blend produced by the factory to the orphan families. This has been a great help to them, but recently, even this has been difficult with shortages of raw materials and the difficulty of production due to power rationing.



We have now started to distribute maize meal to the children. We are also giving the families a special allowance in either food vouchers or cash to make up for earlier food gifts that were missed. The children receive other gifts. Recently, we have

been able to give blankets to them. The children are very grateful for these and many say how pleased they are because it means that they no longer have to share bedding with a brother or sister. Even little things like this can make a real difference to their lives. If they get a better sleep at night they can do better at school during the day.



We are particularly concerned for their spiritual welfare. Most of our children attend Sunday school at their local assembly and many of the older ones take an active part in their youth groups. It has been good to see some of them being baptised and going on for the Lord. ShareAfrica is providing materials from Bible Educational Services to help them to learn more about the Bible. These are distributed via Assembly Sunday Schools. The picture shows a group on the Orphan Programme at Chawama with their BES courses.

Thanksgiving

Giving thanks to God for food is an acknowledgement of our dependence on God who has placed us in a world with every provision needed to sustain life. The symbols of bread and water, wells and corn, rock and manna, milk and honey, are more than just physical items we take for granted; they are symbols of life-sustaining provisions that bring joy, energy, and well-being, without which we cannot live.

Many today do not thank God for food, but those who experience hunger certainly do. Knowing that families with food on their plates and fresh water to drink are giving thanks to God is something to delight in. It may well be that the thanksgiving that rises from rural villages are more than what rises densely populated cities.

As mentioned earlier, people cannot work in their fields if they have no energy, and neither can they serve God. Historically, the Gospel has spread in these communities by people walking and cycling many kilometres to neighbouring villages to 'tell the story of Jesus'. This is true grassroots mission work that locals do best.

If our small provision gives them strength to evangelise, then the Lord's work expands, and we too can give God thanks.

For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; (2Cor 9:12)

Nationwide Challenges

Zambia continues to wrestle with many challenges and there is no encouraging news that things will improve this year. High inflation, depreciating currency, high unemployment, increasing poverty, hunger caused by drought, an increase in cases of influenza and COVID, and the latest news that Mpox has spread to Zambia from DRC, just to mention a few.

The most serious for SAZ in Lusaka is the electricity supply. What is referred to as 'load shedding' means the factory only has 7 hours of power per day, and that is overnight. The people work during the night to produce the food for the Church Feeding Programme as well as food to sell to pay wages. Everything is being done to avoid laying people off, but we are on the edge. These people are loyal workers who depend on their small wage to keep their families - Eddie, our manager, said, "It would be like cutting off their right arm". We will continue to lobby the electricity company for a direct supply line but with similar conditions across the country we know this won't be easy. Please pray we will soon find a resolution.

Church Feeding Programme

From Chomba – programme administrator

SAZ Church feeding program distributed 150 x 5kg bags of CSB to Chibolya and Soweto Assemblies on 1st August 2024. The Elders and the beneficiaries are very grateful for the help. One of the women said, "We always look forward to your coming, the porridge you give us is nice and filling, thank you".

Chibolya Assembly



Chibolya Assembly is located in the most dangerous ghettos of Lusaka full of drug abusers, and bad conditions of living, but the brethren

there are so organised and dedicated to seeing the work of the Lord move forward.

Since SAZ helped to roof the hall membership has increased to over 350 people. They sent their message of gratitude to ShareAfrica UK for funding the project.

Virginia Milambo is a widow from Chibolya Assembly, she is 60 years old and head of a household of 8 comprising of 3 children, 3 grandchildren and 1 sister. Her source of income is charcoal pre-packs which she sells from her home. The packs are small and the earnings are very little but that's all she can do. Jobs are scarce and she doesn't have the capital to do other businesses. Despite the challenges, Ms Virginia has held on to God and been actively involved in assembly activities.

Blessings the grandson to the Chibolya Assembly caretaker. He has been fed the SAZ CSB since we began distributing food to Chibolya and today he looks so healthy and active. The parents are living in poverty, but the help received from Share Africa has enabled them to raise a healthy child.

Soweto Assembly



The Brethren at Soweto Assembly are joyful people, every time I visit it's a joyful festive filled with laughter and songs of praise unto the Lord

Special thank you, to ShareAfrica UK for continuously supporting the feeding program..

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