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## FROM BUSH TO GARDEN: AFRICA AHEAD TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES THROUGH WATER INTERVENTIONS

by Maxine Kundishora © AfricaAHEAD<sup>2024</sup>

In 2021, a long-awaited breakthrough occurred at Emganwini high density suburb of Ward 26, western Bulawayo. Africa AHEAD in partnership with Action Contre la Faim established borehole '16,17,18', addressing the community's water needs and helping control diarrheal concerns related to water scarcity. Fortunately, this water initiative marked a new era, igniting a revolution in local gardening and bringing new hope to the residents of the suburb.

Through the generous funding from Sweden Sverige and lead partnership from Action Contre la Faim, Africa AHEAD implemented the Bulawayo Emergency WASH Response Project in collaboration with the City of Bulawayo council. Under the project, a manual borehole pump system of 80-meter-depth was established to provide the community with reliable access to clean and safe water.

The abundant water supply from the successful

project was further complemented by land allocated by the City of Bulawayo council near the borehole site, making gardening efforts a realized dream. Collaborative efforts by the community resulted in nearly 100 members being allocated planting beds of the rich soil, with each member getting 4 beds—measuring approximately 3 by 1 metres in size.

The empowered community earned their strides as they pioneered a new way of life which will be mirrored by generations to come. Thanks to Africa AHEAD and partners, through the water project, the community has managed to combat the ripple effects of the El Nino induced drought.

In spite of the year 2024 being a recordable dry spell due to the disturbed weather patterns, the Emganwini borehole beneficiaries are grateful for the abundant water supply.



Abigail Ngwenya (44), the water point committee chairperson said, “We are happily watering our well flourished garden in spite of the climatic changes we have no control over. Our community

garden now has vegetables like chomolia, carrots, onions, tomatoes, beetroot, tsunga, spinach, cauliflower and green paper. However, we hope to even expand to more crops.”



*Abigail Ngwenya proudly shows off her flourishing bed of carrots and onions, all thanks to the borehole established through collaboration of the project partners!*

Louise Gambira (45), (picture used as feature image of this story) showing off her bed of onions said “We didn’t have community gardens. We only manned backyard gardens in our household compounds, watering with the often rationed council water.” “Thank you Africa AHEAD and partners! The borehole changed everything for us. We now come together as a community, share ideas and learn from each other on gardening and other business related issues.” she added.

The borehole, initially a response to a diarrhoea outbreak, decongested demand on existing water sources. “Previously, people relied on rationed council water. Alternatively, they had to pay for water, access limited buckets from

neighboring areas, or buy water from other sources.” said Abigail.

Evidently, the borehole was well-engineered as it has survived the test of time. Fast forward three years from its establishment, the infrastructure remains fully functional, catering to both domestic use and vegetable production.

The community garden quickly became a hub for collaboration. The impact was profound as the constant interaction of people fostered a sense of community and togetherness. “The time we spend together in the gardens has been resourceful as we have formed Community Health Clubs, a methodology adopted from Africa AHEAD. We also formed

other collaborative business associations—selling cleaning detergents. These associations have gone beyond business as we have formed lasting social ties evidenced by the level of support we give each other at gatherings such as funerals.

Just from a mere water project by Africa AHEAD and partners, through working together at the garden, the spirit of showing humanity towards others ‘Ubuntu/ Hunhu’ goes without saying.



*A community member happily pumps water from the Emganwini borehole to nourish her thriving garden.*

Consequently, gardening in Emganwini suburb also created Intra-community work opportunities. “Those without jobs found ways to earn by offering services like digging, manning, weeding, watering and cultivating.” said Abigail.

“Through gardening, I have learnt the value of community oneness and gained so much from my fellow gardeners.” Louise reflected.

As a result of their achievements, the community has dreams of expansion. “We wish we could get support from other gardening or

nutrition institutions that can support us to get our garden efforts commercial. With the right backing, we could supply major vegetable markets” said Abigail.

“Funds permitting, the community would be happy to have a solar pump installed instead of the existing hand pump system, for easier access to water, especially for senior citizens who struggle to carry heavy buckets from the site to their respective garden beds.” said Louise, while her face showed compassion.

The ambition of the community does not stop at vegetable gardening. The community envisions expanding to small livestock farming such as poultry, thanks to the reliable water supply. “Sometimes we discuss amongst ourselves how the expansion of our agriculture initiative may help address broader community needs like supporting orphans with school fees and assisting senior citizens who come from the lower ends of life.”

On behalf of the community, Abigail concluded to say “We are so thankful for the project and the vigilant efforts by the partners. We are also grateful for our local councillor who pushed forward our request for land and City of Bulawayo council for giving us the green light to use the land for gardening.”

The transformation from a mere bush of land to a thriving garden remains unforgettable history for the people of Emganwini. Thankfully, the water project fostered a sense of community collaboration and togetherness, ‘Ubuntu/ Hunhu’. May the efforts of Africa AHEAD and partners continue to show off in all parts of Zimbabwe.

