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Irrigation scheme transforms lives in Binga

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Saba Green Valley Irrigation Scheme members at work

Sukulwenkosi Dube-Matutu

EACH day the community of Mlibizi in Binga District meticulously works on their



The community has been relying on rain-fed agriculture and Saba Green Valley Irrigation Scheme is the first irrigation project in their area. The irrigation scheme which is of great value to the community is set to enhance food security in the area.

A total of 64 households have benefited from the project and the farmers have all come on board to ensure they record a bumper harvest for their first crop.

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The scheme has 15 hectares under centre pivot and five under drip irrigation while 7,5 have been put under sugar beans and 6,5 under wheat. Harvesting of sugar beans is underway.

The farmers are also targeting to plant cabbage and butternut. Water is drawn from Mlibizi River.

The irrigation scheme was established under the agriculture component of the Climate Adaptation Water and Energy Programme (CAWEP).

The programme is being implemented through a partnership between the Zimbabwe Government and United Kingdom. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the implementing partner.

Four one-hectare nutrition gardens have also been established in Ward 9 and 13 in Binga.

The CAWEP Project is a three-year project whose aim is to support the Government in attaining its climate change goals.

The project will support vulnerable communities and institutions' adaptation and resilience capacity to climate shocks.

It seeks to support the development of climate resilient, multiple water use and renewable energy infrastructure in vulnerable communities of Zimbabwe. It also aims to improve access to clean and affordable energy that supports economic activities and brings about a more sustainable livelihood outcome to the communities.



four districts namely Binga, Insiza, Chipinge and Chivi.

Chairperson of the irrigation scheme, Ms Molinah Mudimba said the irrigation is a dream come true for the community.

“This is the first time for us to have an irrigation scheme and this is like a dream come true for us. This is also our first crop. Green pivots are something that we used to see in

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books but now we have one in this irrigation scheme. Hunger and poverty will now be a thing of the past. This is the start of a great empowerment milestone for us and we will ensure that this project remains viable,” she said.

Ms Mudimba said the entire community including the youths were excited about the project.

Ms Maina Mumpande who is a member of the irrigation scheme said they will be able to sustain their families once they start selling their produce. She said there is now an improvement in their farming practice.

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“We only did our farming during the summer season but now we have an irrigation scheme which means this place will be green all year round. This place is our gold mine,” she said.

Chief Saba said his area has water in abundance but people have not been benefiting from it. He said the community of Binga has been left behind in development but it is a relief that efforts were now underway to develop the area.

“This project is what we have been waiting for a very long time. The water has been there



the past years because of climate change but we hope that this will now be a thing of the past.

“The people from this area will now be able to work so that they can feed their families. This project won’t only support this community but the entire district will benefit. I would like to thank our Government, United Kingdom and UNDP for coming through for us. I’m glad that Binga isn’t being left behind in development,” he said.

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Chief Saba said he will continue working with the community and authorities to ensure that the irrigation scheme significantly contributes to the country’s food and nutrition security.

Binga District Agritex officer Mr Pedias Ndlovu said they have capacitated farmers with knowledge so that they can run their project as a business.

He said the Government’s partnership with development partners has significantly helped to address the issue of food and nutrition security within communities.

Mr Ndlovu said the irrigation scheme would see a variety of crops being produced in the area as villagers were mainly producing traditional grains due to low rainfall received in the area.

“This project is in line with Government’s thrust where we say we want farmers to practice climate-smart agriculture. We see here a farming method which conserves water and soil. This irrigation scheme uses a centre pivot and drip irrigation that conserves water. Climate-smart agriculture is a great strategy for adaptation to the prevailing harsh weather conditions caused by climate change. We look forward to seeing this irrigation scheme becoming one of the major contributors to the GMB,” he said.

UNDP communications officer for CAWEP, Mr Paul Sixpence said the purpose of the programme is to climate-proof communities and ensure food security. He said Binga is one of the districts that have been hard hit by climate change.

“As part of efforts to enhance climate-smart agriculture, UNDP through its funding partner which is the United Kingdom government has ensured that communities in Mlibizi area in Binga have access to new agricultural methods that enhance adaption to



has been connected and it's powered by solar energy. Four solar-powered gardens have also been established under the programme.

“In addition to enhancing food security, this irrigation scheme is run on a business model. Farmers are running their irrigation scheme as a business and they will sell their produce so that they can sustain or maintain this project,” he said.

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Saba Green Valley irrigation scheme will run as a business unit managed by Arda under the V30 accelerator model. Under the model, irrigation schemes are being transformed from subsistence agriculture into commercial agriculture in line with the thrust of the Rural Development 8.0 model.

This is being done under the Vision 2030 accelerator model which seeks to catalyse rural industrialisation and rural development for accelerated attainment of Vision 2030.

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