



Bethany Project Newsletter

Volume 4





DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As we conclude the fourth quarter of our journey, I am delighted to share this edition of the Bethany Project newsletter. Over the past months, we have continued to make remarkable progress in our mission to foster safer, healthier, and more empowered children and youths in Zvishavane and Mberengwa districts. Our unwavering focus on key pillars—Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), Community Capacity Building, Institutional Strengthening, Food Security, and Social and Economic Empowerment—has driven transformative change and empowered countless lives. The impact of our Food Security initiatives has been profound, enabling families to achieve food sovereignty and access improved nutrition, even in the face of challenging circumstances. Similarly, our Social and Economic Empowerment efforts have continued to break barriers of poverty by providing essential skills training and entrepreneurship support. These initiatives have equipped individuals with the tools they need to realize their full potential and build sustainable futures for themselves and their families. As we look to the new year, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our supporters, partners, and stakeholders. Your steadfast dedication and collaboration remain the cornerstone of our achievements. Thank you for being an integral part of this incredible journey. Stay connected for more stories of hope and transformation in the coming year!

INSIDE THE ISSUE

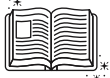
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BETHANY PROJECT MISSION

To mobilize communities to participate in identifying and promoting the well-being of female and male children and youths living with HIV, orphaned, with disabilities and vulnerable through resource mobilization, training, networking, advocacy and effective monitoring as well as raising awareness on HIV and AIDS prevention to all young people and the management of chronic diseases in the Southern Semi-Arid Region of Zimbabwe

PURPOSE

Until every child and youth has equal access to resources



Mthulisi Nyoni's Change Story: From Rowdy Teen to SRHR Champion

My name is Mthulisi Nyoni, and I'm 16 years old. Before joining the Humwe mentorship program, I had little understanding of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and often engaged in reckless behaviour with my friends, thinking it was harmless fun.

Everything changed when I started attending SRHR sessions facilitated by Humwe mentors. At first, I was sceptical, but the discussions on topics like HIV/AIDS, sexual violence, drug abuse, and teenage pregnancy opened my eyes. I learned the importance of respecting my body and the bodies of others and realized that I have the power to make better choices for my future.

The program completely transformed my perspective. I stopped engaging in dangerous activities and began valuing my health and well-being. Now, I've taken on a new role in my community as an SRHR champion. I share what I've learned with my peers, helping them make informed decisions and understand the value of respecting themselves and others.

Thanks to the Humwe mentorship program, I've become a positive influence in my community. This program is creating a ripple effect, with more young people becoming aware of SRHR and building a brighter future for all of us. I'm proud to be part of this positive change and grateful for the opportunity to make a difference.



Mthulisi Nyoni participating in a mentor training session on ISALs: Photo credit S Zhou

Amanda Hlaura – A Journey of Resilience and Determination

Amanda Hlaura, a dedicated learner at Utongani High School, has overcome significant challenges to pursue her dreams. A survivor of child marriage, Amanda's journey is one of hope and determination.

In 2024, she was selected as one of ten learners supported at Utongani High School, receiving a bursary from Bethany that covered her school fees starting from the second term. This financial relief allowed Amanda to focus entirely on her studies. Additionally, she received a bicycle for her commute, a dignity kit for menstrual hygiene, and a new school uniform, boosting her confidence and ensuring uninterrupted attendance.

Beyond academics, Amanda was empowered through business management training, enabling her to start a poultry project that provides her with income and financial independence. Her hard work paid off in her 2024 end-of-year exams, where she earned 12 points, achieving 3 Bs in her subjects: History, Geography, and Family and Religious Studies.

Amanda aspires to become a lawyer to advocate for girls who have faced injustice. "I want to help other girls like me," she says, driven by a clear sense of purpose and unwavering determination.

Amanda's story is a powerful reminder of what can be achieved with resilience and the right support. Bethany is proud to stand beside young individuals like Amanda and looks forward to seeing her achieve her dreams.



"To promote comprehensive and sustainable community based care and support for male and female children and youths affected by HIV and AIDS, living with disabilities and vulnerable"

Provincial Commemoration of 16 Days of Activism: A Triumph in Unity Against GBV

The provincial commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) was hosted by the Bethany Project in partnership with the Ministry of Women Affairs, held at Ngomeyebani Ward. This significant event brought together diverse stakeholders, including the Honourable Minister of Provincial State, Owen Ncube, the Ministry of Education, local authorities, civil society groups. The gathering underscored the province's united front in addressing GBV under the theme "UNITE to End Violence Against Women and Girls."

Over 1000 community members, including local leaders, youths, and women's groups, attended the event, which combined powerful discussions, debates, and artistic performances to highlight the realities of GBV. The Honourable Minister's keynote address was a pivotal moment, offering inspiring and educational words that reinforced the importance of collective responsibility and action. The speech also emphasized that the fight against GBV has the support of all levels of leadership, including the president, which deeply resonated with attendees.

The event achieved remarkable results, including increased awareness, as participants gained a deeper understanding of GBV issues and their role in addressing them. Community engagement was vibrant, with attendees sharing experiences and perspectives, fostering a sense of unity and shared responsibility. Partnerships were strengthened among government agencies, local organizations, and community groups, laying the groundwork for future collaborative efforts. Additionally, local media coverage amplified the event's impact, ensuring the message reached audiences far beyond the venue. By hosting this provincial commemoration, the Bethany Project and its partners not only succeeded in creating a platform for advocacy and dialogue but also inspired a renewed commitment to ending GBV. This milestone event stands as a beacon of hope and a call to action for all stakeholders to work together in building safer communities for women and girls.



Bethany Project Director Mrs. Gumbo handing over a gift to the Guest of Honour, Minister of State for Midlands Province, Hon. Owen Ncube at Ngomeyebani ward during the event: Photo credit S Zhou



Participants from the community during the 16 days of activism against GBV: Photo credit S Zhou

"Strengthening Community Resilience: A Collaborative Approach to Disaster Risk Reduction in Zvishavane District"

The Zvishavane District in Zimbabwe has taken a bold and progressive step in strengthening disaster preparedness and resilience by hosting a high-impact two-day Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) workshop at Runde Lodge. Spearheaded by the Bethany Project with financial support from Oxfam, this landmark event brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including government departments, local authorities, civil society organizations, and community representatives. The workshop served as a critical platform for updating the district's DRR plan, focusing on the identification of risks, addressing vulnerabilities, and equipping participants with actionable skills to mitigate disasters. By tackling pressing local hazards such as droughts, veld fires, and disease outbreaks, alongside emerging threats like climate change and human-wildlife conflicts, the workshop highlighted the district's proactive approach to safeguarding its communities.

Participants engaged in collaborative group exercises to assess vulnerabilities, leverage local strengths, and identify opportunities for sustainable solutions. Among the key revelations was the alarming destruction of 12 schools due to poor construction materials and inadequate maintenance, underscoring the urgent need for resilient infrastructure. The workshop culminated in a comprehensive update to the DRR plan, featuring innovative measures such as early warning systems, community-based preparedness programs, and tailored support for vulnerable groups, including women, children, and the elderly. The District Development Coordinator lauded the initiative, emphasizing its global relevance:

"We deeply appreciate the Bethany Project for their unwavering commitment and support in updating our District Disaster Risk Reduction Plan. Your dedication has not only strengthened our capacity to respond to disasters but also empowered our community to build a safer, more resilient Zvishavane."

By fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration and aligning local action with international disaster resilience frameworks, Zvishavane's efforts exemplify how grassroots innovation and global best practices can merge to build more resilient, adaptive, and prepared communities. This initiative positions Zvishavane as a regional leader in disaster risk management, offering a compelling blueprint for international agencies and governments striving to strengthen disaster resilience in vulnerable regions worldwide.



Building Stronger Bonds: Bethany Project Team Retreat

The Bethany Project staff recently embarked on a transformative retreat to Jabulani Safaris in Shangani, aimed at strengthening team bonds and providing a well-deserved opportunity to unwind. The retreat was carefully planned to include activities that blended fun, relaxation, and professional growth. Staff members participated in team-building exercises that fostered collaboration, problem-solving, and communication, enabling them to reconnect as a cohesive unit. Highlights of the retreat included thrilling game drives, where participants marveled at the beauty of wildlife, informative nature talks that deepened their appreciation for the environment, and adventurous abseiling sessions that challenged and inspired courage. A shared lunch provided a relaxed setting for laughter and meaningful conversations, solidifying connections among the team.

The retreat left a lasting impact on the team. Participants reported improved teamwork and communication, which have translated into greater collaboration in their work. The experience also rekindled their commitment to professional growth, motivating them to approach their roles with renewed energy and focus. Beyond professional benefits, the retreat allowed staff to recharge mentally and physically, returning to their duties refreshed and reinvigorated. This successful event demonstrated the value of creating moments for reflection, connection, and growth, paving the way for enhanced performance and a stronger organizational culture.



Bethany Project staff members during a team building activity. 06/12/2024
Photo credit. T Ruvenko

Shumirai Murewi: From Struggle to Empowerment Through the Pamumvuri Project

My name is Shumirai Murewi, a 23-year-old mother of two from Ingome cluster in Dayataya ward. For a long time, my life was filled with uncertainty, and every day felt like a battle. I had no steady income, making it nearly impossible to provide for my family. The weight of financial struggle loomed over me, but I refused to give up hope. Everything changed when I joined the Pamumvuri Project in 2023.

The Pamumvuri Project became the lifeline I desperately needed, offering me opportunities I had never imagined. Through this initiative, I gained access to resources and participated in weekly sessions focused on women's economic empowerment, disaster management, gender equality, and gender-based violence. Our group received \$250 in startup capital, and we collectively contributed \$50 to launch a poultry project. This group effort not only fostered camaraderie among us but also provided me with the foundation to start my own poultry business.

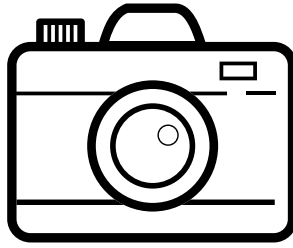
Now, my poultry project is thriving, and I earn a profit of at least \$50 each month, allowing me to buy food and provide for my family. The financial burdens that once weighed me down have been lifted, and I can finally envision a brighter future for myself and my children. My living conditions have significantly improved, and I feel a deep sense of purpose and independence.

My journey from hardship to success is a testament to resilience and determination. I hope my story inspires others facing challenges to never give up on their dreams.



“To promote comprehensive and sustainable community based care and support for male and female children and youths affected by HIV and AIDS, living with disabilities and vulnerable”

Gallery



Distribution of groundnut seed and gypsum fertilizer to model farmers in Mapirimira, Zvishavane District : Photo credit T Ruvengo 12/11/2024



Drug and substance abuse camapaigh in Mberengwa district Vutika Secondary School . photo credit: T Ruvengo 07/11/2024



Proceedings during updating of the disaster Risk Reduction plan in Zvishavane district. photo credit : Tinashe Ruvengo 13/12/2024



Training of mother groups on sewing resusable pads. at Bethany Project Centre Photo credit: T ruvengo 26/11/2024