

Senior Journalists Tour of Projects Sites in Mutoko District

In order to showcase the Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development project, the ILO Country Office for Zimbabwe hosted a breakfast meeting and field visit for 45 senior journalists from the largest media houses in Zimbabwe on the 5th of March 2014. Other participants included Mr. Erik Broegger Rasmussen, Ambassador of Denmark, Mr. Mathius Tongofa, the Deputy Minister of Youth, Indigenization and Economic Empowerment, , Mr. Tinashe Masvaure, Director Employment, Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Mr. John Mufukare, Chief Executive Officer Employers' Confederation of Zimbabwe (EMCOZ), Mr. Elijah Mutemeri, Vice President Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), Mr. Alphonse Tabi-abodo, ILO Country Director, Mr. Ashwani Aggarwal, Senior Skills & Employment Specialist ILO Decent Work Team Pretoria, and UN colleagues including UN Resident Coordinator's Office, UNDP and UNWOMEN.



The ILO CD welcoming the participants to the event



The Danish Ambassador speaking at the breakfast meeting



The Director, Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare



The CTA making a presentation of the project before the field visit

The breakfast was an opportunity to brief the media and other stakeholders on the Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development Programme - a 5 year partnership between the ILO and the Government of Denmark. It is supporting tripartite-plus partners in Zimbabwe - government, trade unions, employers and civil society organizations - to address the challenges of youth employment and rural development. The development objective of the ILO Skills Programme is to strengthen skills development systems that improve employability, promote access to employment opportunities and increase incomes for inclusive and sustainable growth. The programme is being implemented in over 30 districts across the country and has so far reached out to more than 10,000 youth with training and post training support.

The ILO Country Director welcomed the participants to the event and thanked all stakeholders' involvement in the implementation of the DWCP and in particular, in the Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development Programme.



The ILO Country Director, The Deputy Minister of Youth, the Ambassador of Denmark, the ILO Senior Skills Specialist and the Director, Ministry of Labour at the breakfast meeting.

Mr. Manzoor Khaliq, the ILO Project's Chief Technical Adviser, presented the programme methodologies and took the participants through structure, implementation methodologies, progress and the impact to date.

The Danish Ambassador, in his speech, used the opportunity to reinforce the role of women in the programme and the importance of giving women a chance to participate in the economy. He thanked the ILO and its partners for organizing the event and highlighted the Danish Government's support to create, together with the ILO, employment opportunities for the young people of Zimbabwe.

In his remarks, the representative from Ministry of Public Service, Labour & Social Welfare underlined the importance of creating decent work for youth and thanked the ILO for the opportunity to go and see the projects.

After the breakfast the group travelled to rural Mutoko where they visited two different project sites.



DIC Chairperson, Chief of Mutoko District, visitors, Minister of State and Deputy Minister discussing with the project beneficiaries



The CTA explaining project methodologies to the Ambassador of Denmark together with the ILO Senior Skills Specialist Pretoria, The ILO Country Director and the Minister of State

Josephine Muchena, and Ernest Chamanga, are both beneficiaries of the project and have received training and input for horticultural production and are now in the first and third year of production. Before the project none of them were working and making an income.

Ernest Chimanga is married and has three children. He was unable to pursue academic education after attaining "O" levels as his parents could not afford it. He tried to make a living from subsistence farming but found it very difficult because of lack of farming knowledge and financial resources. In 2011, Ernest and 59 other young people got an opportunity to receive skills training through the ILO Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development programme. They received practical and theoretical training in horticulture (vegetables) production. The course also covered marketing, financial and business management. The horticulture production project includes both irrigation farming during the dry season and dry land farming during the rainy season. Ernest attended this course for three months and after training received input for the first cycle.



Ernest Chimana in one of his fields

Ernest grew a crop of carrots in 2013 on an area of about 0.5 hectares. From this he harvested 250 bags of carrots after three months, which he sold at \$50 a bag and earned a gross income of

\$5000. After deducting his overheads and other costs, he made a net profit of \$3500. He subsequently grew different types of crops including sweet potatoes, butternuts and maize which, over a few months yielded him an additional profit of about \$7000. On the strength of his high quality of produce and sound business practices and not the conventional collateral and pay slip, Ernest accessed microfinance. To date, Ernest has received three loans which he has successfully paid back. His agricultural land is so fully utilized that he is now renting unutilized pieces of agricultural land from his community to increase his crop production and yield.

From an unemployed school dropout, Earnest has risen to become an employer in his district. He permanently employs two people to help him in the fields and regularly contracts around 15 other community members whom he pays to assist during the planting, weeding and harvesting seasons. Last year, he purchased a two tons truck worth \$10,000 dollars which has enabled him to take his produce as well as that of other community members to the market on a daily basis. He now employs a driver who is transporting produce for local farmers to urban markets at a cost. Ernest underlined to the journalists, ministers and the Ambassador present on the occasion that there is a great need in the district to reach out to many unemployed youth and he hopes that other youth in his community get the same support as he did.

Josephine Muchena, mother of three children, was trained and given inputs in 2013. She harvested her first crop in November 2013 and the second in December 2013. Since then, she has been hiring 7 people to help with the harvesting. From a one roomed house, Josephine and husband now boast a five-roomed house, have built pit latrines and have through the successful sales, been able to send their children to school with no arrears in school fees.

Josephine took the delegation around her two fields where they grow butternut, sweet potatoes and peanuts through a crop rotation system she learnt from the 3 month training she went through.



Josephine Muchena and her groundnuts



Deputy Minister of Youth, Indigenization and Economic Empowerment speaking at the lunch

The visit ended at the local village centre where all visitors, beneficiaries and villagers shared a lunch under the trees. Closing speeches were made by the District Implementation Committee Chairperson, the Member of Parliament for Mutoko, ILO Country Director, Danish Ambassador, Deputy Minister of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment, the Minister of State for Mashonaland East and a disabled beneficiary as well as the Chairperson of Mutoko Rural District Council.

Others present on the occasion included the traditional Chief of Mutoko, Councillors, Village Headmen, Members of the Project's Provincial and District Implementation Committees representing various government ministries. All highlighted the importance of the programme to the community and called for increased financial and technical support to expand it to other parts of the district as



well as other districts nation-wide.

After the event there was time for journalists to interview the beneficiaries and dignitaries as well as interact with the community in general.

The Media Tour was a success with a high level of participation and most importantly it raised awareness about the SKILLS programme and its contribution to create employment for unemployed young women and men. There have since been several media references to the tour in print, electronic and radio.

A few of them can be seen here:

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201403100894.html>

<http://www.herald.co.zw/employment-for-rural-communities/>

<http://www.financialgazette.co.zw/hope-for-jobless-rural-youth/>