



## Drought and Hunger “Lord help us!”

This was the response from an elderly lady at Kamlaza who had lost her crops and didn't know how she was going to survive for the next 10 months. Sadly all 41 farmers in the Kamlaza assembly suffered a similar fate when rains stopped during March when the crops were maturing causing them to wilt and fail to produce seed.

The drought, blamed on El Niño, has affected 84 out of the 116 districts in Zambia resulting in widespread crop losses and forcing the president to announce a national state of emergency. UNICEF reported that over six million people from farming households are at risk of acute food shortages and malnutrition lasting from May until the next harvest in May 2025.

The drought has also affected the country's electricity supply. Zambia depends heavily on hydroelectric power, but low water levels in crucial dams have decreased power generation, leading to more frequent power

outages. Underground water tables are also low with many boreholes in rural areas running dry. The tragedy is that those most affected are the poorest in the land.

Dealing with poverty among our fellow believers is at the heart of SHAREAfrica's mission and although this current crisis is far beyond our capability, the existing infrastructure allows us to reach many of the most vulnerable. We already support children, farmers, widows and the vulnerable, as well as making a high-protein porridge specially formulated for the malnourished.

Anyone travelling through the country will be shocked at the gulf in living standards between the rich and poor, yet it is the poor rural farmers who supply much of the food that ends up on the rich man's plate. Fairness has lost its meaning, and the Golden Rule which most would agree is a solution, remains far from the thoughts of those who just want 'more'.

**Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.**

**Matthew 7:12**

The articles in this newsletter describe the conditions in the areas where SHAREAfrica Zambia (SAZ) works. Our resources are used to raise income to support our fellow believers and their children, as well as other assembly needs.

We are grateful for the generous and faithful support received in recent years, but in this difficult period, we will struggle to go that extra mile without additional help.

Our people will do everything in their power help their fellow believers.





# Kamlaza - Eastern Province

The assembly in Kamlaza began as an outreach from Chipata led by brother Isaac Chisala. When numbers grew the brethren at Chipata requested help from SHAREAfrica to build an assembly hall on land that was allocated by the Chief. The hall was completed in 2021 and when we visited in April this year, we were pleased to see over 50 believers meeting on Lord's Day.

However, it was a bittersweet experience; great to see the numbers but sad to hear about their plight with crop failure.

The region experienced almost a total crop loss due to the long spells of drought. We visited their fields and saw the maize, groundnuts, and soya crops withered with no hope of recovery. Some sunflower crops had survived but the yield would be less than 50%.

It is common for SAZ-Agri to give loans to help farmers prepare their fields and manage their crops. The loans are then partly recovered in exchange for grain at harvest time. This year SAZ-Agri will waive the loans and provide free seed for next season. We will also include the Kamlaza assembly in our food distribution programme (see article on page 4). Any additional help will depend on the resources available.



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## SAZ-Agri Seed Farms

The seed farms operate under the name of SAZ-Agri. The purpose is to develop new seeds from parent stock to produce varieties that are more suitable to the climate and soil conditions in the region. Thousands of farmers benefit from these new varieties. For the farmers on the SAZ-Agri programme the benefits are twofold, firstly, all 500 farmers are trained to be seed growers and because the value of seed is three times the value of grain the earnings of seed farmers are much higher. Secondly, the seed which is distributed or sold to other farmers has proved to be more resilient and productive than earlier varieties. Even this year most of our soya and sunflower seeds

will produce a reasonable crop, and one variety of groundnuts has also done well. However, our early maturing variety of groundnuts has completely failed, and almost all maize crops have failed.

The seed growers are professing Christians, about half being assembly believers. Having monitored the improvements in the living conditions of these families it is encouraging to see how they have changed. Children now attend school and some farmers have supported their children through further education.



SAZ-Agri also leases two large farms where maize, groundnuts, soya and sunflower were planted this year. Sadly, the outcome has been similar to other farms in that the maize and groundnuts have failed, but sunflower and soya have done reasonably well.

The seed-growing business allows us to sell seeds on the open market which generates income to pay wages and overheads. It also allows us to continue developing different varieties of seed from parent stock – it takes three years from parent stock till we have enough to distribute to seed growers.

This year we won't meet our targets but hope to complement the shortfall by buying seed from seed growers who are not on the SAZ-Agri programme – we can do this because SAZ-Agri is a registered seed company. It means we can continue to employ the many part-time workers who rely on seasonal work for much-needed income.

The seed business is an important part of the SAZ operation benefiting many hundreds of families and reinvesting earnings to develop new seed varieties, as well as supporting our fellow believers in their assembly work. New investment is needed to expand the operation with storage sheds, ploughs, boreholes, irrigation systems, and so on. Presently we are just a small operation working in the Eastern Province – in the Northern and Luapula Provinces, believers are asking us to do the same for them. We have a proven model, but we are still learning and it will take time.



Withered maize at Magawa farm



Groundnuts with no pods



Cobs with no corn

## Outgrowers Programme

Presently 51 believers are supported by UK sponsors at an average cost of £20 per month, with SAZ-Agri sponsoring a further 150. The support includes training, seed, fertiliser, transport, and marketing. These farmers are among the poorest so when drought destroys their crops their source of income and food dries up leaving them to survive until the next season.

When visiting one farmer it seemed as though the household was in mourning. Losing 7 months of hard labour with no food reserves to feed your family is devastating – a dog limped past; every rib visible, but the most humbling moment was when Levison (his name) wanted to give us one of his few remaining chickens - this is a customary gesture of thanks from village people when someone comes from a distance to visit.



Farmers from Malonga assembly



The £20 may be enough for them to buy food for a few months but others who are not sponsored are in a more serious situation. We will try to raise additional money for food, and we will supply seed and fertiliser for the next season, however, our options are limited, as are the options for the farmer. He cannot leave his farm because he has nowhere to go, the land and the few makeshift huts are all they have. The small assembly hall is their haven of rest where they meet to sing, pray, and share their problems with their fellow farmers.

There are ways to help but they are not the same for everyone. Some have boreholes so we may give them seed for one acre which they can water manually. Others we can give a small allowance to help them buy food – probably £10 a month would buy enough food to save them from starving. (The current price of a 25kg bag is about £10). For others, we may provide the CSB for their children since children are the most vulnerable. Right now, we will do what we can with the resources we have.

Seeing our fellow believers live like this is distressing but we cannot walk away - helping them is the very reason we created SAZ. Ultimately, we want to train these people to be seed farmers which is the quickest way to improve their income. Land of 10 to 15 acres is not big enough to grow grain crops to provide an income to sustain a family. Amalgamating farms is one recommendation, and in a recent meeting with a Chief, he seemed to agree – but this will take time.

NOTE: Most rural farmland is 'traditional land' which belongs to the Chief. It is a complex and often troublesome arrangement for a farmer, especially when land is handed down to the next generation with large and mixed families.



Matthew Zulu with his son



Meeting with Levison - far right



Levison's home

## Feeding Programmes



Currently, we are distributing food to widows and orphans in assemblies in Lusaka, and to Sunday Schools in assemblies in Chipata. It is a highly nutritious porridge formulated in line with the WFO's recommendation for combating malnutrition among children. We deliver to six different assemblies in Lusaka where local elders provide the names of people who need help. Although the feedback is encouraging, the supply is less than the demand which causes resentment when people are left out.

In Chipata, the food is given to the Sunday School, and the children are fed when at the assembly hall. Sunday School numbers are growing rapidly, which is to be expected, so additional food is being requested to meet the need, but with such large numbers of village children the growing demand is unsustainable.



The programme is administered locally by Sunday School teachers who say that the feedback from parents is positive because it relieves them of the responsibility of providing a healthy meal for their children.

Expanding the programme to reach those suffering from the current food shortage is possible but currently, we don't have the resources. The factory, where the food is made, can produce 20 tonnes per month, but that is to supply all outlets. We could increase the output by 10 tonnes with the addition of an automatic filling and bag stitching machine. - enquiries have been made into sourcing such a machine.

Although the porridge is produced at cost, buying the raw material for increased tonnage requires cash which the factory doesn't have. We are pushing for more commercial sales since this will generate income for the support work – this is our sustainability model.

Some have suggested we buy, or make, mealie meal instead of CSB, but having done this in the past it has caused squabbles since it is the staple food everyone wants. On the other hand, CSB is more nutritious than mealie meal with one cup being more nutritious than one meal of Nshima, and much better for children.

In summary, without support, we cannot meet the volume of food being asked for, nor would we want to. It has to be limited to children, widows and the most vulnerable.



Children at Magoma



Children and women at Soweto

## Orphan Programme

An outbreak of Cholera, that claimed the lives of 700 people, many of them children, was followed by rising food prices and a looming hunger situation. This has put many children at risk. The SAZ Orphan Programme has been a blessing to many during this time.

Presently 231 Children are sponsored by people in the UK. All children are being cared for by assembly believers. Despite the challenges, some have completed their education and gone on to further studies.

CSB is delivered to the children's homes allowing us to monitor their living conditions and converse with their guardians. Visiting the homes is a sobering and humbling experience; conditions are especially challenging for children studying at home. How some have made it through school with

good grades is quite remarkable.

We are proud of the success of this Programme, and it is understandable why more children want to join – but we lack sponsors.

Recently we included Bible lessons using the material published by the Bible Education Society. The lessons are delivered to the children's homes and collected at the next visit. We pray that the material will be understood by the children and their adopted families, and that it will be a blessing to all.



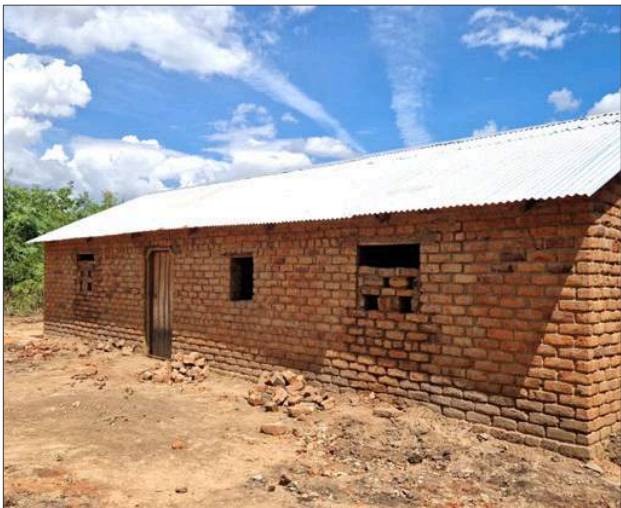
# Chambali

Chambali is a village in the farming region where SAZ-Agri operates. It is about 40 kilometres from Chipata, the main town in the Eastern Province. Four years ago there was an article about this assembly in our Newsletter and recently we received a small gift for the same assembly.

When we visited again this April, we found the hall had been rebuilt and roofed with iron sheets. The floor inside was partly covered with a thin layer of cement; there were no seats, the 70 believers who meet sit on the floor.

Paul, a young brother who is one of our lead farmers and has been active in the area for some time, said the numbers continue to grow. It is a poor area where most farmers, like Levison mentioned earlier, have been badly affected by the drought. The friendship they have with likeminded believers plays an important part in facing the challenges of everyday life.

The pictures show how the hall was and how it is now.



## Working through the Problems

In such difficult times, we cannot lose focus on the wider objectives. The challenges today are caused by things out of our control, whether climate change or other economic and geopolitical pressures, therefore our objective must remain on creating lasting solutions through investment in productivity. Poverty alleviation starts with people earning a living. The simple response may be to distribute aid, which in some situations is necessary, but it is not a lasting solution. Here is what we believe will deliver the best results:

- Boreholes and simple irrigation: If a farmer has access to water, he can grow vegetables and keep animals.
- Different varieties of seed: Sorghum, millet, and new varieties of sunflower are more drought resistant. These are in the early stages of development. We must also work with research laboratories on disease-resistant beans.
- Training grain farmers to be seed farmers. This will increase their earnings.
- Food production: Increasing capacity will expand the domestic market and allow us to produce more 'free food' for the needy.
- Spiritual needs: we cannot underestimate the value of a comfortable meeting place where worship and fellowship produce fruit of a different kind. Bibles and hymnbooks are essential to Christian worship and many saints have neither.

## Acknowledgment

We thank all who have contributed to our work. We are aware of the many crisis conditions in other countries, and it may be puzzling to know where the need is greatest. May the Lord bless your exercise, whatever it be.

*Proverbs 22:9*

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