Enhancing development partnerships for inclusive growth and sustainable development:

Dialogue on Post-2015 Development Agenda • A New Five Year UN Strategic Plan • Reinforcing Development Coordination • Programme Results on HIV and AIDS, Maternal Health, Community Asset Building, Women’s Empowerment...
Note from the UN Resident Coordinator, Bishow Parajuli

The second quarter of 2015 has witnessed a multipronged engagement of stakeholders in a national dialogue on localising the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, enhancing development partnership for accelerated implementation of national development priorities, as well as the signing of the United Nations’ new five year strategic engagement plan for 2016-2020 - the Zimbabwe UN Development Assistance Framework (ZUNDAF) and responding to the looming drought.

The national dialogue on Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals held at the end of May 2015 was spearheaded by the Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet. The high level Government leadership and the engagement of the UN and Development Partners, Civil Society and Non-Governmental organisations, Youth and Women organisations clearly demonstrated Zimbabwe’s commitment to the global development agenda.

Similarly, the Development Partners meeting held at the beginning of May 2015 on enhancing development cooperation and coordination will go a long way in effectively mobilising partnerships for accelerated implementation of national development priorities and international commitments.

Official Development Assistance will continue to play a critical role in Zimbabwe’s development in the coming years. As such, the high level Development Partners meeting-presided over by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development has set the foundation for joint efforts towards strengthened partnerships necessary to sustain gains made in the social sector and to address prevailing challenges, including poverty, food and nutrition insecurity, fiscal space, and the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals in general.

Following a series of consultations with Development Partners, Civil Society Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, the Private Sector and the media over several months, another big milestone was the just signed five year UN strategic framework –the 2016-2020 ZUNDAF.

The ZUNDAF, signed with the Government, brings together the capacity, mandates and expertise of a total of 25 UN entities which will contribute programme support in six national priority areas. The priority areas range from poverty reduction and value addition, food security, social services and protection, HIV and AIDS, gender equality to promoting human rights and good governance as well as support to national development priorities towards the achievement of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition, the ZUNDAF provides a common platform for the fulfilment of the collective vision and response of the UN System in Zimbabwe onto which all members of the UN family, Development and Implementing Partners can coherently support national development priorities, complementing national efforts at tackling major development issues and fulfilling international commitments.

Meanwhile, the UN has also facilitated a series of consultations with Government, Development Partners, and Non-Governmental Organizations to drive coordinated and timely action in response to the effects of drought. The Government has shown its commitment to address this issue in collaboration with Development Partners.

In light of the above mentioned major milestones set in the second quarter of 2015, this 12th edition of the UN in Zimbabwe Newsletter highlights partnerships and development programme results in the areas of HIV and AIDS, maternal health, food security, community asset building, and women economic empowerment initiatives. I wish you a nice read. We would like to hear back from you.

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First National Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Sustainable Development Goals

Completing the “unfinished business” of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and looking beyond 2015 took centre-stage at the first National Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which was held 27-28 May 2015 in Harare.

Opening the two day national dialogue, Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet, Dr Misheck Sibanda said, “Building on the MDGs, the position of the Government of Zimbabwe is to go beyond meeting basic human needs and promote dynamic, inclusive and sustainable development.” “As we discuss to articulate our national position in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, we should align the proposed 17 Goals to Zim Asset which aims to achieve transformative socio-economic development for all Zimbabweans”.

The National Dialogue updated stakeholders on regional and international processes linked to the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The dialogue also allowed the stakeholders to take stock of the successes and challenges in the implementation of the MDGs as well as to chart the way forward in localizing the SDGs.

Describing the Post-2015 Development Agenda as significantly different from the time MDGs came into effect nearly 15 years ago, the UN Resident Coordinator, Mr Bishow Parajuli said that new development challenges such as inequality and the threats of climate change have emerged since the adoption of MDGs. Delivery on the SDGs rests on a tri-partite global partnership among governments, the private sector and development partners. “But the fundamental responsibility for this global partnership lies with governments” explained Mr. Parajuli.

“We are prepared, with other Development Partners, to help assess the needs of Zimbabwe to enhance its capacity to collect, analyse and disseminate the data required to monitor the attainment of these SDGs over the next 15 years”, said Ambassador Philippe Van Damme, Head of the EU Delegation to Zimbabwe. “The EU is ambitious, the EU is ready to play a constructive role as bridge builder in order to come to common recommendations, quantitative and qualitative, timed where possible, but always mutually accountable Post-2015 Development Agenda”, said Ambassador Van Damme.

In his remarks, Secretary for Economic Planning and Investment Promotion, Dr. Desire Sibanda said the SDGs provide an appropriate platform for a holistic approach to development. “They cover all aspects that affect the well-being of our people. Therefore the SDGs provide us with the necessary barometer and compass in pursuing our own national development objectives”, adding that economic growth should be accompanied by improvements in the socio-economic indicators as spelt out in both the Zim Asset and Sustainable Development Goals.

The dialogue, which featured statements, panel and group discussions was attended by over 200 stakeholders drawn from the Government, UN, Development Partners, Civil Society Organisations including women and youth associations, the private sector, and the media.

The national dialogue noted that the implementation of the SDGs will be done through the Zim Asset clusters to ensure alignment with national development priorities.

Increasing Public Awareness on Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations in Zimbabwe reached over 3,000 people through on site briefing and publications on the emerging Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals during the 2015 Zimbabwe International Trade Fair held from 28 April to 3 May 2015 in Bulawayo. The UN outreach was held under the theme “UN@70: Strong UN Better World”. The Trade Fair, held under the theme “Stimulating trade: Seizing Opportunities to Accelerate Growth”, brought together dignitaries, the general public and over 400 national and international exhibitors.

Meanwhile, the UN engaged prominent Zimbabwean artists to popularize and advocate for the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals at the Harare International Festival of Artists which was held from 28 April to 3 May 2015. Some 150 artists were reached with messages on the SDGs during the six day arts festival which culminated with some artists expressing their commitment to promote the SDGs through songs and different other artistic media.

During the two day national dialogue on the SDGs, the stakeholders:

• Reviewed the SDGs for alignment to the Zim Asset;
• Expressed the need for inclusive economic growth;
• Recognized the strengthening of national statistical system for generating data for development;
• Stressed the need to enhance domestic resource mobilisation in addition to ODA;
• Agreed on the need for Zimbabwe’s voice to be heard in the regional and international conversation on SDGs;
• Examined strategies for resource mobilization and execution of the prioritized SDGs;
• Noted the need to align national development policies and plans to the national budget;
• Acknowledged the need for the active involvement of communities; and
• Emphasised the need for strategic information dissemination, advocacy and communication.

The ZUNDAF was signed by the Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet, Dr. Misheck Sibanda and the UN Resident Co-ordinator, Mr. Bishow Parajuli as well as by UN Heads of Agencies.

The development of the 2016-2020 ZUNDAF, launched in 2014, was jointly led by the Government and the UN Country Team with active participation of a wide range of stakeholders, ensuring national ownership, partnership and inclusiveness throughout the process.

The engagement of Development Partners, International Development Cooperation Agencies, Civil Society Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, and International Financial Institutions at all levels of the ZUNDAF process has immensely contributed to determining how best the UN System can work together to best support the Government to achieve its development priorities and to meet its international commitments.

“We must highlight the very generous engagement of the development co-operation community in Zimbabwe, where the 2012-2015 ZUNDAF saw an average delivery of approximately $400 million annually since 2012 to support the achievement of national development results,” said the UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. Bishow Parajuli.

The UN Resident Coordinator said that the 2016-2020 ZUNDAF which brings 25 UN entities together will support six national priority areas: food security and nutrition, gender equality and women’s empowerment, HIV and AIDS, poverty reduction and value addition, public administration and governance as well as social services and protection. Through the 2016-2020 ZUNDAF, the United Nations will seek mobilize up to $1.6 billion to support national development programmes as articulated under the Zim-Asset economic blueprint.

Noting the need to enhance effective coordination of the Zim Asset, Mr. Parajuli said, “The establishment and efficiency of a well-functioning development co-ordination architecture, anchored on the Zim Asset, is fundamental to the achievement of meaningful development results.”

In his address, Dr. Misheck Sibanda said, “I am pleased to observe that the crafting of the 2016-2020 ZUNDAF has been underpinned by the Zim Asset blueprint, entailing the alignment of the programming processes to Zim Asset priorities”. “It is against this background that I am confident that the new ZUNDAF cycle will further buttress the accelerated implementation of Zim Asset through the provision of technical and financial assistance to the various projects and programmes.”

Dr Sibanda said Government was committed to policy consistency and coherence. “Our commitment is to also sustain the gains made on the MDGs through policy consistency and coherence,” he said. “Quality service delivery underpinned by the Results Based Management system incorporating e-Government will constitute the hallmark of a citizen responsive Government.”

Dr Sibanda called for continuous dialogue between Zimbabwe, the UN and other Development Partners as Government moves ahead with implementation of its development agenda.
The Government of Zimbabwe, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), convened a high level Development Partners stakeholder meeting 6 May 2015 in Harare to reinforce development partnerships in Zimbabwe.

In his keynote address at the meeting, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Hon. Patrick Chinamasa said, “A well-coordinated and effectively managed external assistance framework is of vital importance in complementing Government efforts to realize Zim Asset objectives. We desire that all development grant flows are channelled towards supporting the achievement of our national development priorities, as articulated in the Zim Asset”.

On behalf of the UN System, the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Mr. Bishow Parajuli said, “Aid coordination is a critical component of development cooperation, which plays a crucial role in resource allocation to priority sectors and achieving better development outcomes”. “This is particularly important given the prevailing economic challenges such as limited fiscal space, liquidity crunch as well as the challenges in improving health, food and nutrition security, and creating jobs”.

Noting the elimination of poverty and achieving inclusive economic growth and development as national development priorities, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Dr. Willard Manungo said, “External assistance in the form of grants and loans is critical to help augment our own resources in [the fulfilment of] these development goals”.

The Development Partners’ stakeholder meeting appreciated the changing dynamics of the global economy, the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and noted the need to broaden development cooperation and partnerships for better development results.

During the high-level panel discussion, Ambassadors of the EU and Brazil, as well as the UNICEF and African Development Bank Representatives emphasized the need to prioritize support in addressing the challenges in the social sectors, high levels of poverty, job creation and enhancing the agricultural sector, in line with the Government’s development agenda -- Zim Asset. In order to sustain development cooperation and partnership between the Government and development partners, it was agreed to continue such engagement periodically to ensure mutual transparency and accountability.

According to the 2012 Official Development Assistance estimates, Zimbabwe received USD 1.2 billion in a form of development grants, of which 42% was channelled through the United Nations. Through the 2012-2015 Zimbabwe United Nations Assistance Framework (ZUNDAF), the United Nations, with support from Development Partners, has been delivering approximately USD 400 million annually, contributing to the reduction of maternal mortality by one third, doubling immunization to 69%, reducing HIV transmission from mother to child by more than half to under 9%, and maintaining of primary school enrolment at 97.6%.

Building on the success of and lessons from the 2012-2015 ZUNDAF, the Government, the UN and Development Partners have developed a 2016-2020 ZUNDAF with a projected budget of USD 1.6 billion to complement Zim Asset in contributing towards addressing food and nutrition security; poverty reduction and value addition; reduction of HIV and AIDS infections, gender equality and women’s empowerment; improved social services and protection; and efficient public administration and good governance.
Excellent Partnerships Impact on the Fight against AIDS, TB and Malaria in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe’s Minister of Health and Child Care, Hon. Dr. David Parirenyatwa has expressed gratitude to the United Nations and the donor community for supporting the country in its efforts to combat HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Welcoming top representatives of the Global Fund, United Nations, UK Department for International Development, European Commission and GAVI Vaccine Alliance, during their week-long official visit to Zimbabwe in March 2015, the Minister hailed the successful partnership that has turned the tide in the fight against the three killer diseases.

HIV prevalence which now stands at 14.3% in 2014, declined by nearly 50% of the adult population aged 15-49 since the late 1990s. In 2014, three quarter of a million people including 54,000 people living with HIV were accessing anti-retroviral therapy. In addition, the Malaria incidence has dropped by 47% from 2009 to 2013. About 10,000 patients diagnosed with Tuberculosis successfully completed treatment during the same period.

The achievements show that Zimbabwe has made giant strides in its response to HIV and AIDS. However, the fact that the epidemic is half the size it was at its peak in the late 1990s implies it continues to remain the biggest public health threat to the country. “We see the true meaning of partnership in Zimbabwe” stated Mr Linden Morrison, who heads the High Impact-Africa II department at the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. “Innovations such as the AIDS Levy are unique to the country and therefore Zimbabwe could be an example to the region and the world,” he explained.

“We are hugely inspired by how much progress Zimbabwe has made in the three diseases” related Acting Head of the Global Fund department at the United Kingdom Department for International Development, Ms Donal Brown. “The impressive results are testimony to how well the Ministry of Health and Child Care works with all the partners.”

Describing the European Commission as long-term partners to Zimbabwe, Ms Veronique Lorenzo, the EU representative, said the Ministry of Health’s strategic approach has made it possible for the different programmes to work coherently. “This [has] managed to convince Development Partners to respond to the country’s national priorities,” she said, stressing the need for increased coordination and efficiency.

Echoing the need for increased coordination and efficiency, UNAIDS Country Director Michael Bartos says the country can end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 by “fast tracking” the response: “From a UNAIDS point of view, 2015 is a crucial year in shifting the global AIDS response.”

National AIDS Council (NAC) chairperson Dr. Everisto Marowa says fast track is possible, “We just need to look at the success and challenges to date and where there are bottlenecks, and unplug them.”

While sustaining the reach and quality of the treatment effort is crucial, Dr Marowa sees prevention as the surest way of containing the epidemic. With concerted efforts, the NAC chairperson feels the ambitious 90-90-90 targets are achievable by 2020: 90% of those infected with HIV knowing their status, 90% of those who know that they are HIV positive being on treatment and 90% of those who are on treatment having it work fully in suppressing their viral load.

With strong partnership and cooperation, Zimbabwe has already met the MDG target of reversing the HIV and AIDS epidemic. The next challenge is to show that it is on the fast track to ending AIDS.
Sithembiso Ncube, a 30-year old mother of three from Mtshakabandana, lives in a remote village - 52 kilometres away from the nearest health facility in the district of Lupane, Matabeleland North.

Expecting her fourth child at Lupane’s St. Luke’s Mission Hospital, Sithembiso is smiling because she is delighted with the vast improvements made to the hospital’s Maternity Waiting Home courtesy of the partnership between the Ministry of Health and Child Care, UNFPA and the European Union.

UNFPA Representative, Mr. Cheikh Cisse said, “The Maternity Waiting Homes revitalisation project which has so far completed 105 waiting homes aims to improve maternal health and access to maternal and infant health services through the refurbishment of Maternity Waiting Homes across the country”.

Sithembiso describes the difference between her experiences at St. Luke’s Hospital now compared to her first visit in 2006 as “worlds apart”. “When I came here with my first pregnancy, the situation in the waiting homes was dreadful. We were overcrowded and some of the amenities that we have here today did not exist then.”

St. Luke’s Mission Hospital in Lupane district originally had a carrying capacity of 29 pregnant women against an average of 194 admissions in their waiting homes. Due to the high demand, the hospital was using mattresses instead of beds in the maternity waiting homes to create more space for the pregnant women. This had also resulted in some pregnant women sleeping in the open even during harsh weather conditions.

“During the rainy season the situation became dire,” recalled Sithembiso. However, with the Revitalizing Maternity Waiting Homes and Related Services Project, conditions in St. Luke’s Maternity Waiting Home have drastically improved.

The bed-carrying capacity has increased to 160 following the refurbishment and building of sleeping rooms, ablution blocks and renovations to the kitchen and washing facilities. The Maternity Waiting Home also receives nutritional support courtesy of a partnership with the UN World Food Programme (WFP).

“Today I’m here to deliver my fourth child and I am grateful that we have a waiting home which addresses challenges, like transport,” says Sithembiso.

One of the major causes of maternal deaths in Zimbabwe is the delay in reaching a health facility and the lack of skilled birth attendants. In remote parts of Zimbabwe, the situation is far pronounced because of the lack of transport but this is set to change soon following a donation of 63 ambulances by the Revitalising Maternity Waiting Homes and Related Services Project.

Since the refurbishments at St. Luke’s Hospital Maternity Waiting Home, the district of Lupane has recorded 1,864 deliveries, of which 1,609 were took place in health institutions. In the same period, the district recorded only three maternal deaths.
A Four Year Livelihoods and Food Security Programme Launched

USD 72 million worth livelihood programme targets at increasing agricultural productivity and incomes, improve food and nutrition security, as well as reduce poverty in rural Zimbabwe

Smallholder farmers play a critical role in food and nutrition security in Zimbabwe accounting for the bulk of the food that is produced in the country.

The challenges facing smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe include low smallholder agricultural productivity caused by, among others reliance on rain-fed systems, poor input/output markets, low soil fertility, lack of smallholder oriented credit support systems and weak agricultural extension service delivery systems.

To address these challenges, the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) launched a $72 million four-year programme in March 2015. The Programme aims to increase agricultural productivity and incomes, improve food and nutrition security, and reduce poverty in rural Zimbabwe.

Livelihoods and Food Security Programme will be managed jointly by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Gunn Rural Management (GRM), and International Coffey. The programme, which targets nearly 130,000 smallholder farm households, will improve the lives of smallholder farmers in eight rural districts across Zimbabwe.

In a speech made on his behalf during the launch in Harare in March 2015, Hon. Dr. Joseph Made, Minister for Agriculture, Mechanization and Irrigation Development said, “My Ministry leads the Food Security and Nutrition cluster of the Zimbabwe Agenda for Socio Economic Transformation (Zim Asset) and it is in this framework that I commend and welcome initiatives such as the livelihood and food security programme that offer an opportunity to a wide range of stakeholders to contribute to the attainment of household and national food security and nutrition goals”.

The programme will contribute to poverty reduction, and actively address the specific constraints that smallholder farmers, particularly women, face in raising the productivity of their farms and participating in markets.

The Head of DFID Zimbabwe, Annabel Gerry said, “DFID believes in ending aid dependency through job creation. This programme will enable rural communities to become self-sufficient, growing their own food, and providing an income. In partnership with FAO, GRM and Coffey, we believe the programme will make a huge difference for some of the poorest people in Zimbabwe”.

FAO Subregional Coordinator for Southern Africa and Representative for Zimbabwe, Chimimba David Phiri said: “FAO is excited to be a major partner in implementing this programme. It presents a unique opportunity to roll out innovative approaches that respond to the needs of the majority of Zimbabweans that depend on a productive agricultural sector to survive and thrive”.

Dr. Chimimba David Phiri, FAO Sub-Regional Coordinator for Southern Africa and Representative for Zimbabwe
In parts of rural Zimbabwe, the post-harvest period is traditionally associated with joy and merry-making as food is plentiful - but not so in 2015. Barren fields and shrivelled crops point to tough times ahead. It’s the end of the rainy season and rivers have long dried up. Nonetheless, desperate droves of cattle, goats and sheep are drawn to dry river beds in search of water. Drought has once again played havoc with the lives of humans and livestock.

Zimbabwe has suffered the predicament not only of receiving rains late but too much rain this season resulting in flooding in some areas. The floods have affected thousands of families, particularly in the south of the country, which has in recent years been getting less rainfall than the rest of the country.

The 2015 harvest is forecast at 950,000 metric tons of maize, the staple, far less than the 1.8 million metric tons Zimbabweans need. The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is embarking on a response programme meant to help farmers safeguard their remaining assets whilst strengthening their ability to withstand future shocks.

Janet Mungofa lives in the Mazvihwa area of Zvishavane, a rural outpost, nearly some 400 km south of Zimbabwe’s capital, Harare. She farms the land she inherited from her late husband and looks after seven orphaned grandchildren. She is one of many who will need to rely on support channelled through WFP for assistance.

“We did everything right,” says Janet “But the skies just would not open up.”

To safeguard the livelihoods of the most vulnerable families, WFP and Development Partners initiated the 2015 Productive Asset Creation cycle aimed at meeting the immediate needs of the most vulnerable who are already bearing the brunt of failed harvests, whilst providing them with the means to work their way out of food insecurity and build a future free from hunger. Under this programme, community members are given either food or cash while they work on projects such as irrigation and water harvesting schemes that will support agricultural activities in the next season, help them earn an income and allow them to better withstand recurrent shocks.

Since 2012, under the 2012-2015 Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance Framework (ZUNDAF), WFP has helped create nearly a thousand community assets in more than 25 rural districts.

To mitigate the challenges of food and nutrition insecurity this year, contributions from the Governments of the United States, Japan and Canada together with multilateral allocations from WFP Headquarters have ensured a timely start to the 2015 Productive Asset Creation activities.

For Janet and many others in rural Zimbabwe, the Productive Asset Creation programme may just be the start of a journey to self-sufficiency.
Transforming Rural Livelihoods through Cash Transfers

Mary Taruvinga struggled to make ends meet when her husband died in 2010. Following the death of her husband, she was faced with the daunting responsibility of providing for her four children, without any external support.

She was not alone. In her village, others such as Mbuya Matajwa Mwanza, had struggled for a decade, after assuming the responsibility of her two grandchildren following the death of their parents from AIDS. Mbuya Mwanza had to take care of Mike, age 16 and Chipo 11.

She was forced to work on other people’s land in order to earn meagre money for medicines and other basic necessities. It was never enough.

A few years later, much has changed. Their lives have taken a turn for the better and they are happy to share their stories with the Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Honourable Prisca Mupfumira.

During a recent visit to Murombedzi District, about 120 km northwest of Harare, Hon. Mupfumira saw first-hand the impact of the UNICEF managed multi-donor Harmonized Social Cash Transfers programme in rural Zimbabwe.

Mbuya Matajwa Mwanza told Hon. Mupfumira, who was accompanied by the UNICEF Representative in Zimbabwe, Mr. Reza Hossaini, how enrolling in the programme had changed her family’s life.

“I had nothing. Now I eat better and I am able to buy seed and fertilizer for a small plot of land where I grow maize and groundnuts. One of my grandchildren, Chipo is now back in school and I can even pay school fees for her,” she said.

Mbuya Mwanza has also used the small bi-monthly allowance to buy groceries, uniforms and stationery for Chipo and medicine. She says the extra cash means she no longer has to ask Mike to work on other families’ land and can devote more of their time to farming their own land.

Under the programme, labour constrained households receive a bi-monthly cash transfer of US$50. This small cash transfer has been transformational.

“Thanks to the Harmonised Social Cash Transfer programme, families are able to invest in children and adolescent’s development. People are employing one another. They are empowering one another,” said Hon Mupfumira. The Minister said she was happy that some beneficiaries have used the money for businesses and are now having more than one meal per day.

The Harmonised Social Cash Transfer programme seeks to ease the harsh impact of poverty, reduce malnutrition and improve school enrolment by delivering regular and reliable cash transfers to very poor households that are also labour constrained. The programme is currently reaching over 55,000 extremely poor and labour-constrained households who have over 154,000 children.

The programme was introduced under the second phase of the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable implemented by the Government of Zimbabwe through the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare with financial and technical support from UNICEF.
Closing the Gender Skills Gap for Job Creation and Poverty Reduction

With the support of UN Women, Zubo Trust, a non-profit organisation created to empower women and girls, broke new ground by enabling rural women in Binga to venture into a male-dominated space – kapenta fishing.

A joint mission conducted by UN Women, ILO and the Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development in April 2015 observed first-hand that through the project, rural women in Binga have gained the knowledge and skills to manage their kapenta rig and increase their income.

UN Women Deputy Representative, Ms. Revai Makanje Aalbaek said that it was impressive to witness that the women’s average monthly income has significantly increased to USD80 per month per individual compared to what they used to get at Siachilaba Fish Market where the monthly average profit was USD10-15. “At the end of February 2015 alone the members realised a whopping profit of USD2,600”, noted Ms. Makanje Aalbaek.

The women have not only created viable livelihoods for themselves but have also managed to send their children to school and create jobs for fellow rural women as well as men. The Director for Community Development at the Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development, Ms. T Madziwa, who was part of the mission noted that “…the construction of fish ponds by the women directly contributes to the Zim Asset cluster on infrastructure development”. She expressed satisfaction at the transformative work that the women, with the support from UN Women, had managed to achieve and encouraged them to keep expanding the fishpond infrastructure development project.

The UN Women Fund for Gender Equality project’s overall aim is to turn the harbour into a fishing industry for the rural women from Siachilaba and Simatelele Wards in Binga Districts. The women came together and registered as Bindawuko Banakazi Kapenta Fishing Cooperative Society Limited - a registered Cooperative under the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprise and Cooperative Development. Prior to this project, the women fishers used to sell dried fish by the road side at Siachilaba Fish Market.

Similarly, another UN Women-supported project - a Baobab Muyaaya Project has started augmenting incomes of poor households. This innovative approach has developed underutilized indigenous plant species (baobab tree) to improve food, income and nutrition security of the poor and vulnerable women headed households in Binga District.

Originally, the baobab fruit was processed in order to prepare traditional thick porridge for subsistence consumption. The Binga rural women Cooperatives commonly known as Tulisumpule Group have now commercialized the production of baobab muyaaya in Zimbabwe. “Baobab muyaaya is not only nutritious but also good for our pockets” said the chairperson of the group.

In addition, to cater for social protection and economic empowerment of the rural women, a village saving and lending scheme was established under this project. The savings enabled the communities to care for the sick such as those living with HIV, supporting orphans and needy children with stationery at both Primary and Secondary Schools - a classical example of a whole community coming together.

Under the 2012-2015 Zimbabwe United Nations Assistance Framework (ZUNDAAF), the United Nations gender programme support covers areas of finance for women, broad-based women empowerment networks as well as women in health, skills and trade programmes.
Supporting Young Technopreneurs to Unlock Innovation for Development

At only 24 years old, Ms Liliosa Mushonga came up with an innovative prediction system targeting one of the biggest challenges faced by the country- access to energy.

As part of her Bachelor of Technology Honors Degree in Computer Science with the Harare Institute of Technology (HIT), she designed a mobile-based Electrical Energy Demand Prediction System prototype built upon neural networks. If adopted by energy management bodies, such a system can be employed to accurately predict daily as well as hourly peak demand levels. More importantly, it can contribute to assisting the country in efficiently manage the meagre energy available and guarantee equal access to energy for all, especially for underserved communities.

Despite the high potential of such a prototype, turning her Degree’s final project into a commercially viable product, the journey has not been easy for Liliosa. Indeed, the lack of market oriented skills, start-up capital, or requisite partnerships for market linkages and productive technologies, young Zimbabwean graduates are grappling with significant issues.

Recognizing the challenges pertaining to a young generation highly qualified and tech-savvy, HIT, UNDP and Sandown Corporate launched an Entrepreneurship Acceleration Programme in the form of a Business Incubation Pilot Lab. Liliosa was selected as one of the ten young ‘Techies’ from HIT with highly promising prototypes.

In the first phase of the Pilot Lab which kicked off end of 2014, the Techies’ prototypes were validated by key stakeholders (in industry, policy and consumers) through a preliminary market survey and user engagement process. UNDP supported the official Launch of the Business Incubation Programme in February 2015.

UNDP Country Director, Ms. Verity Nyagah says with the added support of Microsoft 4 Afrika, phase II of the Programme supported by UNDP will seek to incubate the 10 prototypes in a design-oriented business and social innovation process to further refine them, pilot their implementation with the end user and facilitate their deployment.

For Liliosa, this means that during the next six months, she will undergo a product refinement and market readiness exercise, towards the development of her prototype. Pending final product iterations, her prototype will be ready for investment.

Liliosa is one of 10 technopreneurs who are currently under consideration for investment and scale-up of their innovations.