

# Empowered



***" Empowered !! committed to safeguarding and protecting, helping young people claim and defend their rights."***

Every young person deserves a future defined by rights, action, inclusion, safeguarding, and empowerment. Implemented by Caritas Zambia, in collaboration with the ZCCB Education Department, and supported by key partners like Lifeline/Childline, REPSSI, with the financial support of UNFPA, Empowered is focused on tackling the challenges facing our adolescents and youth, such as teenage pregnancies, child marriages, HIV, and Gender-Based Violence. In partnership with Catholic schools, parishes, and established Church structures across the local communities, we strengthen the capacity of young people themselves, alongside the guidance of traditional and religious leaders.

We are empowering adolescents with information on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, period poverty, and ensuring adolescent girls and young women have the resources and knowledge for proper Menstrual Hygiene Management. Empowered is bringing men and young boys into the conversation to break the stigma and create a truly supportive environment.

We are focused on economic empowerment by establishing Income-Generating Activities within the school environment and boosting the income and economic status of our youth, long after they are out of school.

## LIGHTS

**LIVELIHOODS, INCLUSION, GROWTH, HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION, AND TRANSFORMATION WITH SISTERS**



Zambia stands at a critical crossroads, facing a dual crisis that threatens both its people and its land. A young population remains deeply vulnerable to violence and exploitation, while a fragile rural landscape is increasingly disrupted by the harsh realities of climate change. In direct response to these compounding challenges, the LIGHTS Project emerged as a comprehensive, three-year initiative designed to protect the vulnerable and empower the marginalized. Spearheaded by Caritas Zambia in close partnership with Religious Sisters, and made possible through the generous support of the Conrad Hilton Foundation, this project is dedicated to building resilient communities. Its overarching goal is to enhance child protection, climate resilience, and sustainable livelihoods among vulnerable populations across the Mongu, Monze, and Kasama dioceses. The project achieves this by strengthening local community structures, empowering Religious Congregation Sisters to become foundational leaders, and promoting both economic and environmental sustainability.

To realize this vision, the initiative drives forward on three main objectives: strengthening the protection and rights of children and young people so they can access social protection services; uplifting the livelihoods of vulnerable families by equipping them with the skills and opportunities needed to improve their economic status; and building the project and financial management capacities of religious congregations, turning these Sisters into captivating champions and defenders of human rights.

The first critical pillar of the project addresses Child Protection and Rights, confronting a reality where 43% of girls aged 13 to 17 experience violence and 1.7 million child brides live nationwide. Compounding this urgency is the widespread challenge of "period poverty," which forces many young girls to miss school simply due to a lack of proper menstrual hygiene management. To shatter these barriers, the LIGHTS Project deploys targeted strategic interventions. It strengthens community protection structures by establishing Community Child Protection Committees and school-based Child Rights Clubs to improve case reporting and management. For children in immediate danger, the project maps and supports safe homes and religious congregations to provide reliable sanctuary.

To combat period poverty directly, sewing machines are procured for the production of reusable sanitary pads, alongside the distribution of hygiene kits and the promotion of healthy hygiene practices among both boys and girls. Furthermore, the initiative builds the psychosocial support capacities of Religious Sisters and local stakeholders, ensuring survivors of abuse receive therapeutic care, while simultaneously engaging traditional leaders in rigorous advocacy to dismantle harmful cultural norms like child labor and early marriage.

Paralleling these protection efforts is the second pillar, focused on Climate Change and Livelihoods. Here, unpredictable weather patterns, severe droughts, and devastating floods have triggered widespread food insecurity. Traditional farming is faltering as soil fertility declines from heavy chemical use, and worsening water scarcity forces women and girls to walk long distances to fetch water, a chore that dramatically escalates their risk of encountering abuse. The project counters this environmental degradation through robust agroecology training, teaching farmers to utilize composting, crop diversification, intercropping, and climate-tolerant seeds to secure food supplies without relying on chemicals.

Water security is being systematically transformed through the drilling of solar-powered boreholes that bring water directly into communities, the provision of treadle pumps for year-round irrigation, and the construction of livestock water troughs. To ensure long-term economic independence, the project facilitates the formation of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA), allowing households to save, borrow, and invest in their futures. This financial cushion is paired with an innovative "passing on" model, where families receive female small livestock and eventually pass on the female offspring to neighboring households. Finally, to combat rapid deforestation, the project champions environmental conservation by promoting fuel-efficient cookstoves and fostering community-led tree-planting initiatives, ensuring that both the community and the ecosystems they depend on can thrive for generations to come.

## VOICES OF ACCOUNTABILITY

**"ACCOUNTABILITY IS HOW WE TURN OUR COMMITMENTS INTO REAL CHANGE."**



The Voices of Accountability project is a targeted initiative designed to enhance the capacities of civil society actors, specifically including children themselves, to claim important civic space and hold duty-bearers accountable for the equitable fulfillment of children's rights. At its core, the initiative seeks to strengthen the overall protection of children's rights by establishing a robust oversight framework. This is achieved by actively monitoring the delivery of essential social services, tracking government budgets and expenditures earmarked for child rights, assessing the real-world implementation of government projects, and thoroughly reviewing the enforcement of existing national policies and laws concerning children.

To bring these goals to fruition on the ground, the project is implemented directly in two key dioceses: the Archdiocese of Kasama in Zambia's northern province and the Kabwe Diocese in central province. The operational footprint spans four specific districts: Kasama, Luwingu, Kabwe, and Kapiri-Mposhi. Orchestrated by Caritas Zambia, the local execution of the project relies on the grassroots network and expertise of Caritas Kasama and Caritas Kabwe, ensuring that local communities are fully equipped to champion the rights and welfare of their children.

The project has three thematic focus areas, which include: Promotion, protection, and respect for children's rights through Monitoring - Child Rights Commitments, responding to violations of children's rights, and influence – supporting children to participate in decision-making platforms. The project is expected to reach at least 3000 children (1500 girls and 1500 boys), establish and strengthen at least 11 child-led structures (Child Rights Clubs) from targeted schools

## Making Mining Money Work (3MW)



The Making Mining Money Work (3MW) – Follow the Money Project. Is implemented by Caritas Zambia in close collaboration with the Ndola and Chipata Dioceses of Zambia and was born from a pressing necessity: the need to ensure that the immense wealth extracted from the earth actually reaches the doorsteps of the people living

above it. In districts like Lufwanyama, Nyimba, and Lusangazi, the presence of large-scale mining operations is a daily reality, yet the economic benefits often remain a distant promise. The project identifies a critical gap in the current system, a lack of transparency regarding local levies and a significant deficiency in mining company compliance. This "Follow the Money" approach is designed to illuminate the dark corners of resource management, turning what is often an opaque administrative process into a transparent, community-driven dialogue.

The driving force behind 3MW is the belief that development gold isn't just the ore pulled from the ground, but the improved service delivery that its revenue should provide. To turn this vision into reality, the project focuses on dual pillars of empowerment and advocacy. On one hand, it seeks to ignite a movement within host communities, equipping residents with the knowledge and confidence to demand accountability for how mining revenues are utilized. On the other hand, Caritas Zambia and the implementing dioceses are sharpening their own advocacy tools, building the professional competence required to challenge systemic irregularities and lobby for the transparent use of funds. By broadening participation and bridging the gap between local councils, mining entities, and citizens, the 3MW project is ensuring that for the people of Lufwanyama, Nyimba, and Lusangazi, the prosperity of the mines finally translates into the prosperity of the people.

## THE IMPROVED FOOD SECURITY AND INCOME PROJECT



For the people of Hambelele and the surrounding communities under Chief Mapanza in Zambia's Southern Province, agriculture is more than just an occupation; it is a lifeline. However, as climate change brings erratic weather patterns and environmental threats to the region, that lifeline has been stretched thin, leaving families vulnerable. In response to these challenges, a new spirit of resilience is taking root through the Improved Food Security and Income Project (IFOSIP), an initiative by Caritas Zambia that is proving that financial empowerment and environmental adaptation go hand in hand.

At the center of this transformation is the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA), a model that is rewriting the economic narrative for both women and men in the village. For years, traditional banking remained out of reach for many, barred by the need for collateral or the burden of high interest rates. Now, through the VSLA, members are encouraged to save their modest earnings within established groups, creating a communal pool of capital. This system allows individuals to borrow at low interest rates without the fear of losing their assets, providing the vital "seed money" needed to start small businesses or cover urgent household needs. By removing these financial barriers, the project is fostering a culture of independence and long-term planning.

Yet, financial literacy is only one piece of the puzzle in the fight against a changing climate. Recognizing that money alone cannot solve the problem of food insecurity, the project integrates sustainable organic farming practices and crop diversification. Farmers in Hambelele are moving away from traditional methods that are vulnerable to drought, instead embracing techniques that improve soil health and resilience. This holistic approach ensures that while savings accounts grow, the land remains productive, allowing families to adapt to shifting weather patterns and secure their food supply for the future.

The success of this initiative is a testament to the power of strategic partnership. Supported by the United Nations Development Programme - UNDP GEF Small Grants Programme and in collaboration with the Zambia Association of Sisterhoods, Caritas Zambia works through its diocesan partner, Caritas Monze, to ensure these tools reach the people who need them most. From Chikandamaulu to Malindi, the impact is visible not just in the ledger books of the savings groups, but in the confidence of the people. As women and men share the responsibility of financial management and sustainable farming, they are doing more than just increasing their household income; they are building a foundation of strength that will shield their community from the uncertainties of tomorrow.

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**CARITAS ZAMBIA KEEPS ITS PROMISE TO THE VULNERABLE! AS IT RESPONDS TO THE DROUGHT**



The fields of Southern Zambia should have been vibrant and full of crops, a time for a wonderful harvest. Instead, the land is dry and desolate, a parched earth that mirrors the deep anxiety felt by the communities. This season that was meant to be an abundance has turned into a time of scarcity. Yet, even where scarcity has settled, the unwavering dedication of Caritas Zambia, supported by the generosity of partners like the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF), and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has provided a critical lifeline. For us, the mission is not merely about delivering aid; Caritas Zambia is the active witnessing and practical embodiment of Christ's call to serve the most vulnerable among us.

In the hardest-hit Sesheke District of the Western Province, Caritas Zambia, through our diocesan partner, Caritas Livingston, has sustained a pulse of hope through tireless hard work. Working through Caritas Livingstone and Caritas Monze, Caritas has moved beyond routine action to become an extension of the community's own resilience. Day in and day out, our teams have navigated countless logistical challenges to ensure that our commitment translates into real, immediate relief. This effort culminated in the distribution of Emergency Relief Funds through Multi-Purpose Cash Transfers (MPCT) to over 2,800 vulnerable households, closing in on our target of supporting 2,850 families who are bearing the effects of the drought.

Aligning with the guiding vision of human dignity that drives all of Caritas' work, the MPCT helps alleviate the intense challenges affected families face, all without presuming to know every family's specific struggle. Instead, we provide them the power of choice. By placing the cash directly into the hands of the household leaders, we acknowledge their inherent capacity to know their most pressing needs, be it a bag of maize for food, essential medication for a sick child, or school fees to keep a future alive. The MPCT is not just a transfer of money; it is a transfer of dignity, autonomy, and self-determination during a time when every single decision feels monumental. Every transaction represents a moment where fear gives way, even slightly, to the ability to plan for tomorrow. This sustained intervention, which has now been ongoing for over five months, proves that Caritas Zambia is not a temporary visitor in times of crisis, but a committed partner walking alongside our brothers and sisters. Our dedication remains fixed on transforming the immediate struggles into a foundation for recovery, reinforcing the belief that no one will be left behind in the face of adversity.

# ENHANCING LIVELIHOODS AND WELLBEING OF VULNERABLE FAMILIES (ELWVF)



## 1. MENSTRUAL HEALTH INTERVENTION: KEEPING GIRLS IN SCHOOL

For many girls in Zambia, menstruation still brings anxiety, shame, and silence. A lack of access to sanitary products, inadequate facilities, and harmful cultural taboos too often force girls to miss school, affecting not only their education but also their confidence and future. At Caritas Zambia, we're working tirelessly to change that reality through focused action and strong alliances.

Our work is significantly strengthened by our dedicated collaboration with the Zambia Association of Sisterhoods (ZAS). This partnership is an important asset that brings deep community trust and committed presence of the sisters directly to the girls who need support. Through this combined effort, we've been able to reach over 500 girls with comprehensive menstrual hygiene kits. These kits are designed not just for immediate relief but for long-term empowerment. Each kit contains essential reusable sanitary pads, alongside sewing machines and embroidery kits, complemented by educational materials on menstrual health. Caritas Zambia, with its diocesan partners Caritas Monze and Mongu, is actively training local women and girls not just to use these resources, but to make their own sanitary pads. This skill-building ensures a sustainable solution for maintaining menstrual dignity long after our direct intervention ends.

This impactful initiative is a key component of the larger Enhancing Livelihoods and Wellbeing of Vulnerable Families project, made possible by the generous support of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and implemented on the ground by our dedicated diocesan partners, Caritas MONZE and Caritas Mongu.

By tackling the challenges of menstruation head-on, we are fundamentally ensuring that a biological process does not become a barrier to a girl's right to stay in school, learn, and build a brighter future.

Our intervention is effective because it rests on a local partnership. Working hand-in-hand with the Zambia Association of Sisterhoods (ZAS) allows us to embed our support deep within communities. ZAS members bring trust and proximity to the families, households, and communities we serve, ensuring our efforts are targeted and culturally sensitive. This collaboration has directly reached over 500 girls with comprehensive menstrual hygiene kits in the respective target areas.

However, the true transformation lies in what comes after the initial distribution. We are not just providing temporary supplies; we are investing in self-sufficiency. Through hands-on training, we are equipping local women and girls with the practical skills to make their own reusable sanitary pads using the provided sewing machine kits. This multi-faceted approach yields several profound positive impacts.

With reliable, affordable, and dignified menstrual products now accessible within the home, girls no longer face the agonizing choice between attending school and managing their periods. This not only translates to improved classroom attendance but also results in improved academic performance and higher completion rates.

We are glad that by training and involving mothers and community leaders, the initiative normalizes the conversation around menstruation, demystifies harmful cultural taboos through open dialogue and practical demonstration, creating a more supportive environment for the next generation of girls.

This project, implemented with generous financial support of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and implemented with dedication by our diocesan partners, Caritas MONZE and Caritas Mongu, demonstrates that solving the challenge of menstrual health is one of the most direct routes to unlocking educational equality and securing a brighter future for Zambia's young women and girls.



## **2. CARITAS ZAMBIA ENDS WATER SCARCITY NIGHTMARE IN SICHUUNDA AND MUNYONA, SOUTHERN PROVINCE**

A profound moment of transformation and hope for the people of Southern Province as Director of Caritas Zambia, Fr. Dr. Gabriel Mapulanga, officially commissioned water points in Chivuna and Gwembe, in Monze, bringing safe, clean water to communities that have long endured the hardship of scarcity. For many, the simple act of drawing clean water has been a daily struggle, impacting health, education, and livelihoods. Families have walked long distances under the scorching sun, with children missing school. The long struggle to fetch water over long distances is now a thing of the past for residents of Sichuunda Village in Chivuna and Munyona community in Pemba/Gwembe District.

Community representative Stainless Mweene highlighted the difficulties villagers previously faced, explaining that they had to walk long distances to access water. He described the situation as a major challenge that affected daily life in the area. Caritas Zambia, through its diocesan partner, Caritas Monze, has transformed the lives of the communities by handing over newly installed solar-powered boreholes. This is more than just water. This is life, this is justice for communities long burdened by inequality.

This initiative is part of a larger project being implemented under Caritas Zambia, in collaboration with the Zambia Association of Sisterhoods, with the support of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, implemented through Caritas MONZE and Caritas Mongu, aimed at enhancing the livelihoods and well-being of vulnerable families in Southern and Western Provinces of Zambia. At Caritas, we remain committed to advocating for social justice and responding to human suffering with compassion and solidarity, through practical interventions like access to clean water, food security, sustainable livelihoods, education, and emergency relief.