

Working in partnership to grow Zambia's future June 2019



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Almost 70% of the food consumed in the world is produced by smallholder and subsistence farmers across Asia and Africa.¹ Yet the effects of climate change on rainfall patterns are making such farming methods increasingly precarious. Without water, crops fail, food supplies dry up, and prospects for economic development suffer.

In 2006, a group of smallholders in Chanyanya, southern Zambia, decided that access to irrigation was essential if they were to safeguard their own food supplies and provide their families with year-round income. They sought support from InfraCo Africa. The company worked with Chanyanya's smallholders to develop an innovative cooperative irrigation scheme, transforming dry earth into fertile market gardens and a profitable commercial farm.

In August of this year, I was privileged to accompany a two-person film crew to capture the experience of those pioneering farmers, their neighbours and a number of the many stakeholders involved in the project since its inception. Our visit occurred at a pivotal point in the project's development with InfraCo Africa's private sector partners preparing to expand the Chanyanya pilot and to begin construction of the much larger Chiansi project.

Amidst the dancing and drumming of the official launch ceremony, the President of Zambia, His Excellency Dr Edgar Chagwa Lungu, remarked

that, "This project could not have come at a more appropriate time with regards to the threat of climate change...it is affecting livelihoods and the productivity of the agricultural sector. The impact of climate change is real and is a cause for decisive action."

This was a view echoed by those we spoke with in the following days. Smallholders blamed climate change for recent droughts and shifting seasons, even the strong winds that buffeted our microphone and camera as we filmed- were occurring a month later than usual.

The film shoot was not without its challenges! Power failed, drone batteries went flat and plans were shifted on an almost hourly basis, but with support from the project team on the ground, we captured some stunning footage and fascinating stories to share; and my overriding sense, when standing among fields of sweet potato leaves with Chanyanya's smallholders and with the community in dry Demu South, Chiansi, was one of self-determination and ambition for the future. There is a strong desire to educate and provide jobs for young people, and on several occasions we heard people say, "With water, anything is possible!"

Mary Robinson, former President of the Republic of Ireland and UN Special Envoy on Climate Change, wrote in her book, *Climate Justice*, "We need to create a "people-first" platform for those on the margins suffering the worst effects of climate change, and to amplify their voices to ensure them a seat at the table in any future climate change negotiations."²

I hope that this film helps to amplify some of those important voices. I also hope that it demonstrates how establishing partnerships between smallholders and commercial farmers, the local chiefdom, government, investors and the private sector can deliver positive development impact.

Relevant links:

¹Karla D. Maass Wolfenson, "Coping with the Food and Agriculture Challenge: Smallholders' Agenda," Natural Resources Management and Environment Department. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, prepared April 2013, revised July 2013, www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/nr/sustainability_pathways/docs/Coping_with_food_and_agriculture_challenge_Smallholder_s_agenda_Final.pdf

²Mary Robinson with Caitriona Palmer. *Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience and the Fight for a Sustainable Future*. 2018. Bloomsbury Publishing, London. www.cleancookingalliance.org