



Zimbabwe

Agriculture is the [backbone](#) of Zimbabwe's economy, providing livelihood opportunities for 70% of its [16.6 million](#) population and generating 40% of export earnings. However, many people face social inequity, underemployment, and climate risks. Over one million farmers depend on rain-fed crops, which increases their [vulnerability](#) to recurrent droughts, floods, and climate-induced pests. While inclusive land and decentralisation reforms advance, weak coordination and fragmented service delivery persist. The push to formalise micro-enterprises amid volatile monetary policy exposes small businesses to risk, deepening marginalisation for women and youth.

SNV has operated in Zimbabwe since 1983, leveraging trusted government and private sector partnerships to contribute to systemic, locally led, market-based solutions across the agri-food, water, and energy sectors —supporting over 6,600 young people into better employment opportunities since 2019.

Zimbabwe's intersecting challenges call for systems transformation by advancing climate-resilient approaches, developing resilient and equitable value chains, and strengthening local institutions to coordinate fragmented services and drive social inclusion. As the country pursues [Vision 2030](#) and [National Development Strategy 1 & 2](#) (NDS), SNV and its partners remain committed to building equitable, resilient systems by improving policies, scaling access to finance, and stimulating inclusive markets that empower local actors, promote climate-smart livelihoods, and enable communities to thrive in a more equitable economy.



Over 6.6K youth

gained access to better employment and entrepreneurship opportunities (2019-2024)



696 Village Saving and Lending groups

formed, with 20 transitioned into formal savings and credit cooperatives (2019-2024)



Five key national policies

in youth, energy, agriculture, and inclusion updated with SNV support (2019-2024)



13 solar off-grid clean energy models

piloted in rural areas, providing 99 kW to increase household access and productive use (2015-2019)



Responding to the climate crisis

Zimbabwe faces acute climate vulnerability. The 2024 [drought](#) devastated rain-fed agriculture, triggering a national disaster. The government has enhanced resilience by strengthening climate-smart agriculture and redefining agro-ecological zones. It has also raised national climate ambitions with a 40% [emissions reduction](#) target by 2030 under its updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), alongside developing a Low Emission Development Strategy, a National Adaptation Plan (NAP), and a Green Resilient Recovery Strategy. Coupled with devolution policies that empower local authorities, these initiatives drive climate action. However, implementation and finance gaps persist.

SNV supports Zimbabwe's climate ambitions by helping to close those gaps. Locally led, inclusive market-based solutions and equitable access to financial tools strengthen resilience and secure livelihoods; the promotion of sustainable technologies and equitable access to finance improves access to clean energy and decent employment; and the dissemination of user-friendly climate information builds social inclusion and participation.

Zambuko | Masvingo Province | 2020-24 | €1.8M

The drought-prone districts of Masvingo, Mwenezi, and Chiredzi are severely climate-vulnerable. To build resilience and secure livelihoods, the Zambuko programme connected 11,500 rural households to financial services that enable access to clean, sustainable energy technologies. Over 11,500 people were trained in financial education, and 631 Village Savings and Lending (VSL) groups comprising 8,056 members were established. Further, mature VSLs graduated into registered Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies. Through company partnerships, local entrepreneurs have sold over 1,500 solar lanterns and solar home systems, extending clean energy access to approximately 7,500 people.

By connecting households to financial tools and sustainable technologies, Zambuko reduced climate risk, boosted incomes, and demonstrated scalable climate adaptation pathways.

Partners: USAID, WFP, SNV, Tree of Life, CIMMYT, MDTC

Accelerating inclusivity in Zimbabwe's NDC and NAP | Nationwide | 2022-24 | €156K

Youth, women, and people with disabilities are often excluded from climate action planning in Zimbabwe. This lack of inclusivity undermines the effectiveness of the country's adaptation and mitigation strategies.

To ensure the representation and meaningful involvement of all groups in the implementation of the NDC, NAP, and Low Emission Development Strategy, the "Amplifying youth, women, persons with disabilities' role in implementing Zimbabwe's NDC and NAP" initiative engaged in awareness-raising campaigns, capacity-building programmes, and more inclusive policymaking, and formed knowledge-sharing platforms.

Today, sixteen community radio stations broadcast climate information to over 250,000 listeners, while nearly 150 climate champions (including 35 people with disabilities) received training on climate change, mitigation, and adaptation, and green opportunities. Access to information was expanded via a digital knowledge-sharing [platform](#) and a WhatsApp chatbot, and 16 community centres were equipped with user-friendly materials. By embedding inclusive communication and participation into local systems, this initiative contributed to creating a more equitable, community-owned climate response.

Partners: NDC Partnership Action Fund, Ministry of Environment, Climate and Wildlife (Zimbabwe), and SNV

Accelerating inclusive development

Zimbabwe grapples with structural barriers to inclusive development, which particularly affect marginalised groups. National efforts such as Vision 2030 and NDS1 promote decentralisation, land equity, and economic empowerment. Yet, implementation gaps hinder access and perpetuate marginalisation. For example, although the agricultural workforce is primarily women, only 12% have their names on [title deeds](#). And while 60% of the population is [under 35](#) years of age, approximately 22% of young people aged 15-24 are [unemployed](#), reflecting persistent labour-market exclusion of youth.

SNV supports government efforts to confront these systemic challenges by improving access to essential services, building inclusive value chains, and promoting equitable rights to land and workspace. Working alongside partners, it promotes the dissemination of accessible information, assists women and youth with land-use rights, and facilitates access to finance, technologies, and markets. These interventions foster community resilience and agency, contributing to inclusive development that links employment with climate action.

YEE | Rural and peri-urban areas | 2019-28 | €13M

Zimbabwe's youth, especially women and people with disabilities, face severe employment barriers. Around 58% [reside](#) in rural areas with less access to quality training, finance, and markets, and higher underemployment than in urban areas.

The Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship (YEE) programme stimulates inclusive youth access to markets, finance, training, and climate information, while driving systemic change through private sector, financial institutions, local authorities, and policymaker collaboration. Phase 1 supported 6,626 young people in securing employment or entrepreneurship opportunities, with youth-led enterprises generating over €37,850 in solar sales, reaching 4,000 off-grid customers, and catalysing 10 new solar businesses. Phase 2 targets 7,000 young people and 650 new green enterprises, with at least 70% adopting climate-smart technologies.

By linking employment with climate action, YEE positions young people as drivers of inclusive green growth, supporting Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 and climate goals.

Partners: SDC, SIDA, and SNV

RARP-CSF | Eight provinces | 2013-16 | €5.4M

Zimbabwe's smallholder farmers face systemic barriers: limited access to finance, weak market linkages, and the exclusion of women and youth.

The Rural Agriculture Revitalisation Programme-Commercialisation of Smallholder Farmers (RARP-CSF) advanced inclusive agricultural commercialisation for over 280,000 households across eight rural provinces.

RARP-CSF strengthened smallholders' access to finance, technology, and markets within dairy, oilseeds, and horticulture value chains. Through digital extension services and tailored financial mechanisms, farmers, particularly women and youth, gained critical production inputs, market information, and affordable credit. This enhanced productivity, reduced climate vulnerability, and stabilised incomes, leading to improved household food security and access to education.

By linking inclusive finance, technology, and private sector partnerships, RARP-CSF demonstrated how equitable agricultural commercialisation empowers rural households to transition from subsistence to sustainable, market-oriented production.

Partners: DANIDA and SNV

ENSURE | Masvingo and Manicaland provinces | 2013-19 | €18.7M

Six districts across Masvingo and Manicaland provinces face recurrent drought, chronic food insecurity, and limited livelihood opportunities, threatening the health, nutrition, and economic well-being of over 550,000 people.

The Enhancing Nutrition, Stepping Up Resilience and Enterprise (ENSURE) programme addressed these challenges by increasing access to finance and markets. The competitiveness of local value chains was improved through multi-stakeholder platforms and partnerships with agribusinesses and financial institutions. Over 200 groups, comprising farmers, agro-dealers, processors, and financial partners, entered formal market agreements, and over €1 million was disbursed in agricultural and rural loans, stimulating cumulative sales reaching nearly €4 million.

By stimulating more stable incomes and inclusive livelihood opportunities, ENSURE demonstrated that systemic improvements support communities in meeting their basic needs and transitioning toward sustainable growth.

Partners: USAID, SNV, World Vision, CARE, SAFIRE, and ICRISAT

"As a person living with a disability, exclusion was one of the major problems we experienced. We were sidelined from community programmes and made to feel incapable—now YEE has restored my confidence."

James Mutisi, aged 33

Strengthening governance and institutions

Zimbabwe's governance systems face challenges: weak institutional coordination, limited decentralisation, and gaps in policy implementation. These barriers slow national reforms and constrain equitable service delivery, restricting rural communities' access to agricultural, water, and energy services.

Yet, enabling opportunities are emerging. The national Devolution and Decentralisation Policy strengthens local planning and accountability, while NDS1 prioritises public sector modernisation, and updated public finance management systems improve transparency. Digital reforms have expanded e-governance platforms and strengthened data-protection procedures, promoting better data management, real-time reporting, and more accessible public services.

SNV supports these improvements by co-developing policies and enforcement mechanisms with stakeholders. It promotes investments in digital technologies for real-time monitoring and rights access, alongside cost-effective technologies, thereby strengthening institutional capacity to deliver equitable outcomes aligned with devolution reforms.

RWIMS | Nationwide | 2015 | €765K

Gaps in WASH governance hinder service delivery in rural Zimbabwe. The Rural WASH Information Management System (RWIMS) addressed these challenges by introducing a mobile and web-based WASH information system. The programme established a Village-Based Consultative Inventory process for real-time data collection on water points and sanitation facilities, strengthening the government's capacity to plan, manage, and monitor services.

RWIMS significantly improved the availability of complete, accurate, and timely data, which is critical for informed planning, budgeting, and resource allocation.

The system enhanced transparency around rural water supply coverage and functionality by guiding investments towards those who need them most.

By aligning with national WASH coordination frameworks, RWIMS supports Zimbabwe's digitalisation drive. It continues to inform the government's nationwide WASH management information system, ensuring lasting impact.

Partners: FCDO (formerly UK Aid), SDC, SNV, and UNICEF Zimbabwe

SE4RC | Gwanda District | 2015-19 | €1.4M

With fewer than 10% of households connected to the national grid, Gwanda faced severe energy poverty, with limited productivity and services.

The Sustainable Energy for Rural Communities (SE4RC) programme introduced an innovative off-grid solar energy model for inclusive local development. After establishing Zimbabwe's first 99 kW mini-grid in Mashaba, it set up 13 solar centres in other communities, providing clean electricity access to over 10,000 people.

SE4RC's approach promoted community ownership, transparent tariff-setting, and coordination with local authorities, the Zimbabwe Energy Regulatory Authority, and the Rural Electrification Fund—strengthening accountability, sustainability, and gender-balanced energy decision-making. By unlocking local economic potential through reliable clean energy for healthcare, education, and livelihoods, it demonstrated scalable rural electrification pathways, inspiring further investments in off-grid solar investments across Zimbabwe.

Partners: EU, GEF, EKN, SNV, Practical Action, and OFID

SNV is a global development partner deeply rooted in the African and Asian countries where we operate. With 60 years of experience and a team of approximately 1,600 people, we strengthen capacities and catalyse partnerships that transform agri-food, energy and water systems. Working on the core themes of gender equality and social inclusion, climate adaptation and mitigation, and strong institutions and effective governance, we tailor our approaches to different contexts to achieve large-scale impact and create sustainable and more equitable lives for all.

Contact SNV in Zimbabwe

Lucy Fulgence | Country Director | zimbabwe@snv.org

Visit the SNV website for an overview of our projects in Zimbabwe.

snv.org/country/Zimbabwe



Impact
that matters