

# CARE ON CAPITOL HILL



## From Small Savings to Big Dreams

In rural Zimbabwe, economic hardship and unpredictable weather make it difficult for families to put food on the table, send their children to school, and save for the future. For **Philomina Rongedzai**, a mother of four, survival meant taking on tough, low-paying jobs like weeding neighbors' farms for a bucket of maize — worth about five U.S. dollars. Despite her hard work, making ends meet was a constant challenge, and when her son needed school exam fees, she had to ask relatives for help.

But **opportunity arrived through Takunda, a U.S. government-funded program designed to help families grow more food, increase incomes, and invest in their futures.** The program's name, Takunda, means "we have overcome" in Shona, reflecting its goal of

empowering people to build lasting solutions to poverty.

Through Takunda, **Philomina attended a community session where local families came together to discuss how they could plan for self-sufficiency.** These discussions led to community action plans, including forming village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) — small, community-run groups where members save money together and provide each other with small loans to start businesses and invest in their futures.

Her first round of sales was a success, earning \$130 — more than double her initial investment. Encouraged, she reinvested in more stock, and her business continued to grow.

# 86%

Percentage of women in Zimbabwe who depend on land for their livelihood and to feed their families. However, women face poor access to resources or decision-making.

With her growing earnings, Philomina made improvements to her home, adding an extra room and strengthening its foundation.

**Today, she is expanding into new ventures,** including poultry, dried fish, and a small shop, further securing her entire family's future.

**Altogether, Takunda has helped to increase the average household income of participants by 124%, reduce malnutrition in children, and expand participation of young people in life-skills training.**

The Takunda program is making a real difference in communities across Zimbabwe — helping families move from day-to-day survival to financial independence. By providing targeted support that allows people to help themselves, programs like Takunda reduce long-term reliance on aid and build stronger, more stable communities.

This approach isn't just good for families like Philomina's — **it's good for America.** U.S. international assistance is a small, strategic investment that increases the capacity of partner nations to care for their own citizens, **allowing countries to graduate from being aid recipients to potential U.S. allies.** By expanding economic opportunities for all and strengthening global stability, international assistance is proven to more than pay for itself, benefitting people around the world and here in the U.S.

**This is why U.S. international assistance is worth it — not just for the lives it changes today, but for the stronger, more self-sufficient communities it builds for tomorrow.**



**“I want my life to show progress like a graph, progressing from selling clothes [and] expanding my business to include poultry, piggery until I [can buy my own car.]”**

**– Philomena Rongedzai**

*Pictured above with her family*