



EBENEZER MATOBO

During March our Transformers team (those who deliver our classroom-based learning) had the privilege of participating in a 4-day Dialogue Education workshop in Bulawayo. David Bulger, from One Challenge Africa, came all the way from the USA to facilitate the course which is promoted by Global Learning Partners. We were also delighted the Ebenezer Kazungula team lead, Brilliant Khoza, was also able to join us. The workshop was packed with insights and practical exercises to help sharpen our workshop design and delivery skills, with the ultimate aim of ensuring that effective learning happens at Ebenezer! There were many “a-ha” moments for all involved and the principles and methods learnt are continuing to be used. Apprentices even commented on some of the differences they noticed in their lessons following the workshop.

You may remember our Imvuselelo Team from previous newsletters. This rotating group of 10 apprentices compete yearly in an exciting 3-day young adults camp hosted by Sethule Orphan Care Trust. This year 6 teams competed in music, drama, Bible knowledge, poetry and a tug-of-war. Congratulations to our team for bringing home 6 trophies and 4 individual awards! Second year, Abby, has now competed twice in this challenge and says, *“The program has been instrumental in helping me grow spiritually and just learn to have fun as a young person in the right way. Through its Bible-based activities and creative challenges, I’ve developed a deeper understanding of Scripture. The Bible quiz, in particular, has been a highlight, pushing me to enhance my knowledge and application of biblical principles.”*



CROPPING

Crops on the ground are looking good this month. We currently have under irrigation 4 hectares each of maize and beans, 3 hectares each of butternut and tomato, and 1 hectare each of watermelon and onion.

With these crops still maturing, not much was harvested in March, except 3,500kg of butternut and 100kg of green pepper. We also planted 1 hectare each of butternut, maize and sugar beans.

Thank you to seed company Avanos Seed, who have worked with us this month to repair some of our green houses as we partner together to grow pepper seed. It has been great to see our green houses being repaired and our pepper crop is looking good.

We also received positive feedback from Avanos regarding our spring butternut seed crop which we had grown for them under contract. We achieved a harvest of 156kg of butternut seed from half a hectare, which is a pleasing result for a first crop.

We have been impressed with the entrepreneurial spirit shown by second year apprentice, Arnold Thabete, who has been growing fruit trees from seed outside his bedroom! With mango, guava and many other seedlings now established, he is beginning to market his products.





LIVESTOCK

With lots of new birds recently placed across our layer houses, we have seen a pleasing rise in lay-rate as birds have settled in. In Layer House 3 we introduced lights to stimulate production and as a result saw our lay-rate increase from 15% to 68% by the end of the month! This month we also saw some big wins with low mortalities. In particular, Layer House 2 lost only 6 birds out of 9,283 throughout the whole of the month.

Our latest batch of broilers hit 4 weeks of age as we entered March. Mortality had been low but we were battling with some bacterial infections and reduced weights. With our team working hard to increase feed intake, we saw our birds improve considerably and by the time they went for slaughter in mid-March, the average weight was 2.3kg per bird. Combined with a very low mortality rate of 1.6%, this meant we achieved a fantastic profit of \$0.52 per bird.

Towards the end of March, we placed 4,024 teenage birds (4 weeks). They are healthy but underweight and so again we are pushing hard to increase feed intake and reach good weights.

Milk production has been low in our dairy this month, sitting between 9-11 litres per cow per day, as many of them reach a lactation period beyond 300 days. We have been doing well in silage making, with 10 ha of maize successfully turned into silage so far.





INTRODUCING...

My name is Kwazumdali Sibanda and I am a 20-year-old second year apprentice. I come from Bulawayo, but my family roots are in Lupane, about 150km from Bulawayo. Before applying to Ebenezer, I lived with my paternal grandmother. I completed my O levels in 2021 and worked as a till operator until I was accepted onto this transformative apprenticeship. My cousin shared with me about Ebenezer and I realised that becoming part of this community would not only deepen my spiritual connection with God but also enhance my knowledge of farming.

One of the things I have cherished most about my time at Ebenezer is the sense of community. We live as one big family, learning and growing together. This environment has taught me the importance of love and acceptance, as the Bible clearly states we should not discriminate but embrace one another.

Although my Ebenezer journey has been fulfilling, it has not been without its challenges. One significant hurdle has been suffering reduced tomato yields due to disease affecting my crop. This setback was disheartening, but it taught me resilience and the importance of seeking solutions.

Coming this far, I have changed in remarkable ways. I now engage in daily devotions without needing to be coerced. This newfound commitment to my spiritual life has enriched my overall experience at Ebenezer.

To any new apprentice, I would say, we are not defined by the challenges we face. Focus on finding solutions or seek guidance from someone who can help. Embrace the learning opportunities and support around you.

After my time at Ebenezer, I plan to continue with the projects I was involved in before I became an apprentice. My focus will be on goat farming, poultry, and cropping. I am excited about the future and the possibilities that lie ahead!

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