**The snake in the river**



Have you heard the story about the big snake in the river? Zimbabwe folklore says that you must ask permission from the snake to use the water in the river otherwise it will destroy your garden.

There is no big snake in the year-long free flowing river next to the Mthombowesizwe Garden project in Insiza district, South West Zimbabwe, but there is evidence of much hard work.

The garden project started in 2011 with the help of ZimPro, a Christian Aid partner. There are thirty-one people in the project, all with different stories to tell. Of those thirty-one, twenty-two are women and nine men. They all work together but each have their own strips of land.

Originally, it was set up as a nutritional project but now the yields are such that they have food left over to sell at local markets, schools and mines. They grow a wide variety of crops including carrot, butternut squash, onion, beetroot, spinach, okra, choumoliar, and beans for their own consumption. Selling the surplus has enabled some of them to build up small goat herds. They are then able to sell, barter or pass on the offspring and use this money for essentials.

Medelina spoke of the problem of animals getting in before they had the garden. Working with ZimPro, they realised a fence would make all the difference, so they were helped to erect a wood fence.

“We get enough to pay for what we need and send our children to school because we can pay the school fees. We sell in local markets or we barter. Our lives have changed, even our children’s lives have changed and our houses too. Now we have plenty to eat and people are healthier.”

Medelina wants a bigger garden so they can do more. At present, each person has four strips but imagine what they could do if they had six or eight strips.

This garden relies on the stream running very close to the plot. This is where they take the portable solar pump, get water and pump it to a large tank in the garden. It then gets sent to four troughs dotted around the plot, where they use buckets to water the crops making life much easier.

All the group members were thankful for the help and support of ZimPro that has made such a difference to their lives.

Image: Medelina (with purple scarf) and another member of the project.

LMM June 2017