

# WASH FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

C H I R E D Z I R U R A L D I S T R I C T C O U N C I L

Following severe drought in Chiredzi, ward 32 is one of the wards with a huge number of people who suffered various atrocities in 2008-09. Food insecurity, diseases and deaths became the order of the day. Given the situation, life was not easy and the only focus was to sustain the families through basic means. So many children left schools due to shortages of funds to pay their school fees.

Some left for South Africa and other neighbouring countries for greener pastures. Later in 2012-13, many villagers in ward 32 were affected by the powerful rains that swept away many buildings including shops, clinics and houses, with villagers being left in a state of shambles. Rural WASH Project also proved to be highly instrumental in the fight against hygiene related problems.

However Gladys Mavenge is a 56 year old crippled woman from Village 7 of ward 32 in Chiredzi who benefited from the non-food items (NFIs) distributed under the government's programme that is aimed at mitigating all sorts of atrocities emanated from the drought that had hard hit the place in the past years. She is the head of the family since her husband is gone. This programme is funded by UNICEF and it has Christian Care and other organisations as implementing partners. Gladys finds her life positively changed through the NFIs she got, that is 1 bucket with a tap, 1 jerry can, 6 bars of soap, Aqua tablets and information, education and communication materials (IECs).

For a crippled person like Gladys who is in her wrinkles, it is never a simple thing to be found carrying 20 litres of water from a well which is approximately 1.5 kilometres away from home. Having been occasioned by droughts, ground water levels in ward 32 have incredibly become more distant, a situation that has necessi-



tated the consumption of contaminated water from unprotected sources like reservoirs and uncovered wells. Gladys explains that she is so grateful since she got a system that has made it easier for her to access potable water while she is sitting on her mat doing her craftwork. She encourages her children to treat the water for the rest of the family and she points out that it is no longer a time when they used to treat their water with ashes, since the Aqua tablets were not easy to come by. She vividly perceives all the instructions on the use of Aqua tablets, provided she is literate.

***“I will always be thankful to the government for having launched a programme that have taken us to the next level. I wouldn't want my family to be drinking contaminated water, even for cooking I put a big No. I put two tablets to treat 25 litres of water stored in a bucket that I got”,*** said Gladys scratching her forehead.

It's a pity when she talks about the abdominal pains that she used to suffer before she got the Aqua tablets and a bucket for storing safe drinking water. There was a time when she never had a toilet and that fretted her most since she had to travel long distance for splendid isolation for bush toilet, life was hard. Meanwhile, Gladys advises her family to wash hands

frequently with the use soap.

***“Another change is that I have got some bars of soap and I urge my family to be practising hygiene just by using soap when washing hands, especially after having visited the toilet”,*** lamented Gladys with her eyes full of compassion.

With the IECs she got, Gladys wants her family to be regularly reading for a better understanding on hygiene. Since she is literate, she always reads for her mentally challenged brother whom she lives with.