

This case study is one of several produced by the **CLARA** network to coincide with the publication of the IPCC Special Report on Land. We're showcasing **CLARA** member climate solutions which demonstrate the **rights-based, low-emission development pathways** needed for reducing emissions while **promoting livelihoods** and **ecosystem integrity**.

# Custodians of biodiversity

Supporting smallholder farmers to increase their agro-biodiversity, as a strategy to adapt to climate change

## Organisations and individuals involved

Community Technology Development Trust Zimbabwe

Oxfam

Andrew Mushita  
andrew@ctdt.co.zw

## Location

Zimbabwe (and also Laos, Nepal, Zambia, Uganda, Peru and Guatemala)



SHEPHERD TOZVIREVA/OXFAM NOVIB

**AS CLIMATE CHANGE** takes hold in Zimbabwe, with small-scale farmers struggling to maintain their yields in the face of longer and more severe dry spells, many are buying commercial maize seeds which require large amounts of water and fertilizer and must be purchased anew each year. SD=HS partners Community Technology Development Trust (CTDT) and Oxfam advocate an alternative approach: making it easier for farmers to share seeds and knowledge with each other, to benefit from their collective experience on which crop varieties are most drought-tolerant.

More than ever, smallholder farmers and indigenous communities require crop diversity. The programme ([www.sdhsprogram.org](http://www.sdhsprogram.org)) works with 250,000 smallscale farmers in Zimbabwe and across Africa, Asia and Latin America—empowering them to maintain and improve the diversity in their fields, thereby safeguarding their food and nutrition security. It brings together experiences into a global effort to put Farmers' Rights at the heart of national and global food policies.

For centuries, small-holder farmers—especially women—

have managed the crop diversity that forms the basis of global agriculture today. They have honed their practices within agro-ecological systems adapted to local conditions. Yet these farmers' seed systems are largely ignored by governments and the formal sector. The SD=HS programme connects scientific knowledge with farmers' knowledge, to introduce useful traits into farmers' seed systems.

In Zimbabwe, women have long been custodians of local seeds and plants (including neglected and forgotten crops) that bolster household food security. These are often seen as "women's crops". CTDT supports rural women to develop and distribute their own seeds in Zimbabwe through:

- a network of Farmer Field Schools (where traditional and scientific knowledge is combined);
- community seedbanks (set up in collaboration with local authorities and managed by the farming communities);
- They have also set up a farmer-owned cooperative seed company: *Champion Farmer Seeds*, with over 10,000 smallholder farmers as shareholders.

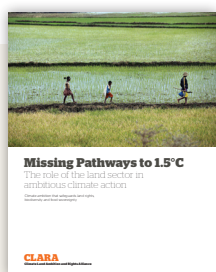
# Testimony

**Marjory Jeke (58) Zimbabwean smallholder farmer, and part of CTD’s Farmer Field Schools**

“Sometimes it pours with rain and other times it’s dry for weeks or even months. By exchanging seeds, we can sow more diversely. That way chances are higher for yields to succeed. Due to diversity no one needs to be hungry, it is our weapon against hunger. If you compare my situation to two years ago, it has changed tremendously. Just look at what is growing on my land. And look at me. I am much more confident.”

## ‘Missing Pathways’ to climate action

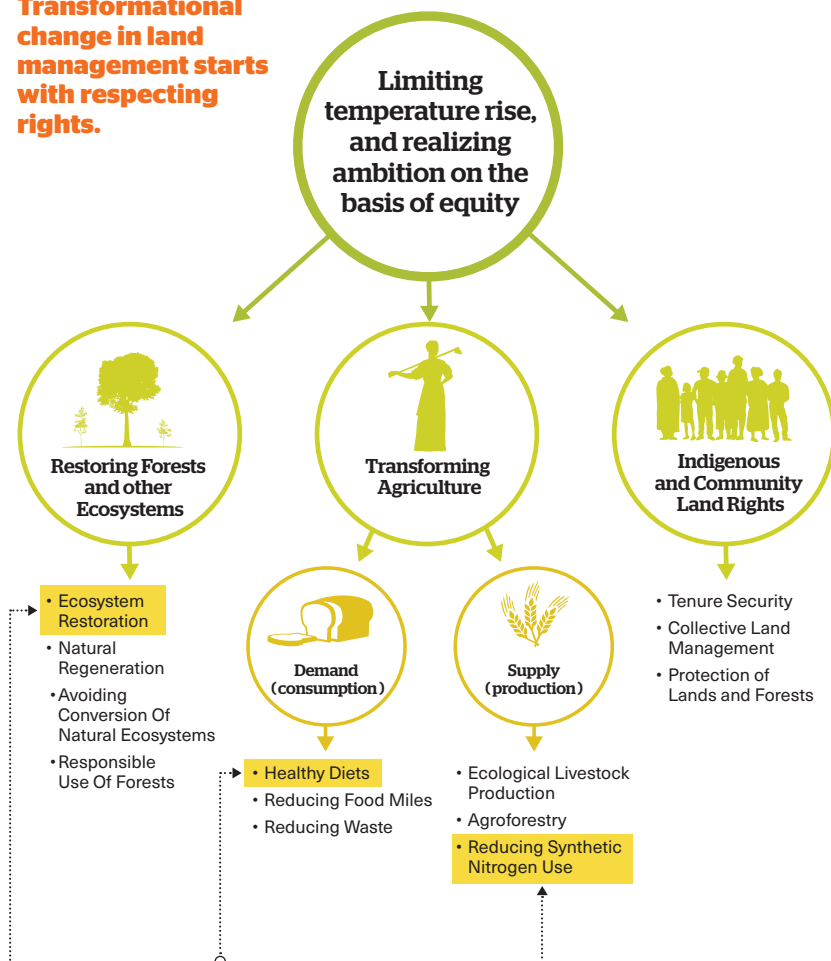
Last year, CLARA published the report ‘Missing Pathways’, identifying areas of global mitigation ambition rooted in land rights, restoration, agroecology, and food system change.



This example follows ‘Missing Pathways’ to climate action by...

supporting the rights of local and indigenous communities and farmers to continue to conserve and develop plant genetic resources—thus safeguarding biodiversity for food and agriculture which is gradually being shut out worldwide by large-scale monoculture farming. In Zimbabwe, the locally-adapted small grains that are alternatives to hybrid maize tend to be more nutritious, do not require expensive inputs (pesticides and fertilizers), and grow better in the face of climate change.

**Transformational change in land management starts with respecting rights.**



CTDT’s work supports local farming of diverse crops which ensures healthy diets, avoids synthetic nitrogen use, and contributes to ecosystem restoration.

**Contact CLARA**

**Media:** Don Lehr (CLARA) / dblehr@cs.com / +1 917 304 4058

**Network Coordination:**

Peter Riggs (Pivot Point) peteriggspivotpoint@gmail.com / +1 360 426 0959

**Twitter:** @CLARA\_Alliance