

Realising homegrown solutions

Maurice Hikapulwe was among the founders of the **CHANYANYA IRRIGATION PROJECT** which pioneered irrigating smallholders' land in Zambia's Kafue District.

"Where we are situated, farmers are vulnerable to droughts and floods. We have depended on handouts from government for a long time."

In 2006, Maurice joined a group of farmers determined to seek a solution. "We went to the agricultural extension officers at district level to talk about the possibility of irrigation. They helped us put together a proposal to secure finance. It took time and there were many challenges, but we contacted InfraCo Africa and a feasibility study was undertaken which led to the pilot project."

The pilot saw Chanyanya's smallholders pool their land, enabling the creation of an 148ha commercial farm and the development of 15ha of productive market gardens, "our cooperative has 126 members, 30% of whom are women. You join by virtue of owning land in the area."

He says, "I am the Treasurer of the Chanyanya Smallholders Cooperative Society. I was elected because people have confidence in me. People have trust in me because I am the father of this project!"

Maurice talks about the changes wrought by irrigation access in Chanyanya, touching on the impact that being able to grow vegetables year-round has had on household incomes and local nutrition levels.

Standing in the shade of a storage building built when the project first began, he concludes, "My vision of the future is that we will be highly developed. Our children have learned how to run a modern irrigation scheme. When we pass away, they will be proud of us. They won't experience the difficulties we have gone through."