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United Nations Development Programme

Zimbabwe

Japan Supplementary Budget (JSB)

Building Resilience and Enhancing Food Security of Drought-Affected Smallholder Farmers

3rd Quarter Report (July –September 2025)

Implementing Agency:	**United Nations Development Programme**
Country/Region or Area:	Zimbabwe
Project Title and ID:	01004007
Project Duration:	**March 2025 – March 2026**
Reporting Period:	July 2025- September 2025
Contact Person/s:	Challa Getachew
Funded by:	The Government of Japan

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Project Status Information

Project title	Building Resilience and Enhancing Food Security of Drought-Affected Smallholder Farmers
Project ID	01004007
Project start Date / end Date	March 2025- March 2026
Implementing Modality	NIM- NGO Supported
Implementing Partner(s)	Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development (MLAFWRD)
Donors	Government of Japan

Project Objective/impact	Enhance the resilience and food security of smallholder farmers by promoting climate-smart agricultural practices that reduce crop losses, improve productivity and nutrition, and leverage innovative technologies such as drones to address climate-related challenges.
UNDP CPD outcome	Outcome 2: By 2026, all people in Zimbabwe, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised, benefit from greater environmental stability and robust food systems in support of healthy lives and equitable, sustainable and resilient livelihoods.
UNDP CPD Outputs	OUTPUT 2.1. Enhanced resilience and livelihoods of vulnerable people, communities, and regions. OUTPUT 2. Tools and mechanisms applied to enable evidence-based, risk-informed planning, prevention and preparedness to climate hazards by smallholder farmers and supporting institutions. OUTPUT 2.3. Solutions scaled up for sustainable management of natural resources, ecosystem services, chemicals and waste management

Project Budget (US$)	Total Project expenses (US$)	Annual Budget (US$)	Delivery Rate (% of total budget)
1.500.000	15 000	1.500.000	1%

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Executive Summary

The *Building Resilience and Enhancing Food Security of Drought-Affected Smallholder Farmers Project (JSB)*, funded by the Government of Japan and implemented by UNDP Zimbabwe in partnership with the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development (MLAFWRD), has made significant progress over the Q3. The project aims to improve the resilience and food security of smallholder farmers in Chivi and Mwenezi through climate-smart agriculture, innovative pest management, and inclusive livelihood support.

During this period, the project transitioned from inception into early implementation. Key milestones included the signing of the Responsible Party Agreement (RPA) with CARE International Zimbabwe, appointment of Government focal points to the project, and endorsement of implementation arrangements by MLAFWRD. Planning meetings clarified activity sequencing, reporting lines, and monitoring mechanisms, while focal points were appointed at national and district levels to strengthen oversight and coordination.

Operational foundations were further strengthened through the launch of a Call for Proposals to identify an implementing partner that would undertake field-based activities under outputs 1 and 3. For Output 2, a recommended potential partner, Pegara Japan, submitted its draft Annual Work Plan and stakeholder mapping, outlining plans for drone technology deployment and community information dissemination. As part of the technical validation process, a field mission was conducted in Middle Sabi to test the drone technology. This exercise was led by Pegara Japan and accompanied by UNDP and two key government stakeholders: ZimParks and the MLAFWRD Pest and Control Unit. While the mission confirmed the potential of drone-based quelea bird control, government representatives highlighted the need for further refinement to ensure broader adoption by both government and communities. The MLAFWRD also recommended that drone innovation be integrated with traditional pest-control practices and aligned with community realities to enhance acceptance and sustainability. Output 2 focuses on three strategic pillars: drone deployment, early warning systems, and community knowledge-sharing. In support of this, a joint engagement with the Embassy of Japan reaffirmed alignment around these pillars and underscored the importance of Pegara Japan's role in delivering them effectively to ensure the success of the project.

Lessons Learnt

Early engagement with communities, traditional leaders, and youth emerged as critical for sustainability and ownership of innovations. The importance of sequencing administrative and technical processes was evident in avoiding delays and maintaining delivery momentum. Grounding technological solutions in local realities will be key to stakeholder buy-in and long-term impact.

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Budget Summary

The total project budget is USD 1.5 million, fully financed by the Government of Japan. Expenditure remained low during the reporting as RP (Care International) was on board in September, more so the project faced recruitment challenges for the Project Coordinator which further delayed implementation. Major disbursements are expected in Q4 as field-level implementation and equipment procurement commence which will improve project delivery .We anticipate the on boarding of Pegara Japan in the same quarter to implement output 2 of the project which amounts to 27% of the budget delivery.

Situation Background

Zimbabwe continues to face recurrent climate-induced droughts and erratic rainfall patterns, which have weakened agricultural productivity, depleted water resources, and heightened food insecurity in rural areas. National assessments indicate that over half of the rural population is at risk of cereal insecurity during the peak hunger period. Smallholder farmers, who rely heavily on rain-fed agriculture, remain particularly vulnerable to these climatic shocks, compounded by pest infestations such as Quelea birds, which can destroy up to 40% of small-grain harvests annually.

The *Building Resilience and Enhancing Food Security of Drought-Affected Smallholder Farmers Project*, funded through the Japan Supplementary Budget (JSB), directly supports Zimbabwe's climate-resilience and food-security agenda as outlined in the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1), the National Climate Change Response Strategy (NCCRS), and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2022–2026). Anchored under UNDP CPD Outcome 2, the project aims to ensure that vulnerable populations benefit from greater environmental stability and robust food systems supporting healthy, equitable, and resilient livelihoods.

Operating in a fragile agricultural landscape, the project promotes climate-smart agriculture, soil-moisture retention technologies such as hydrogels, and environmentally friendly drone systems for Quelea bird control. The drone component also supports early-warning systems and community information-sharing mechanisms to improve preparedness and response. These innovations are complemented by capacity-building for extension officers, youth, and women farmers, improved post-harvest management, livelihood diversification, and communication strategies to promote sustainable pest-management practices. Chivi District falls predominantly within Agro-Ecological Region IV, which is semi-extensive and suitable for drought-tolerant crops and livestock production. Mwenezi District spans Regions IV and V, with the southern parts classified under Region V, a dry, low-rainfall zone prone to severe droughts and limited agricultural potential. These classifications reinforce the need for targeted, climate-resilient interventions tailored to local agro-ecological realities.

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During the reporting period, the signing of the Responsible Party Agreement with CARE International and the project held preliminary discussions with Pegara Japan regarding potential collaboration on drone-based pest management technologies during the reporting period. While no formal partnership was established, the engagement helped identify shared interests and opened the door for future technical cooperation, pending alignment with project priorities.

Progress towards Development Results

Section 1: Overall progress against the CPD outcome *(which the project falls under)*

CPD Outcome 2: By 2026, all people in Zimbabwe, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized, benefit from greater environmental stability and robust food systems in support of healthy lives and equitable, sustainable and resilient livelihoods.

CPD Outcome Indicator	**Actual Value of the Indicator as of the time of Reporting**	**Status** *On-track, Off-track, Achieved, Partially Achieved, Not Achieved*
2.1.1 Number of vulnerable people benefiting from diversified climate-resilient livelihood options (agro-based)	No direct beneficiaries were recorded during Q3, as field-level implementation had not yet begun.	Off Track
2.1.2 Number of people whose resilience has been improved as a result of resilience-building support	No direct beneficiaries were reached during this period, only foundational actions have positioned the project to begin field-level implementation in the fourth quarter, targeting 10,000 smallholder farmers in Chivi and Mwenezi districts through climate-smart agriculture, pest management, and livelihood diversification interventions.	Off Track

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2.1.3 Land area under active sustainable natural resources management	No land area was brought under active sustainable management during Q3, as field-level implementation had not yet commenced.	Off track
Overall		**Off track**

Section 2: Progress against CPD Outputs

CPD Output Indicator 2022-2026	**Actual Value of the Indicator as of the time of Reporting**	**Status** *On-track, Off-track, Achieved, Partially Achieved, Not Achieved*
2.1 Enhanced resilience and livelihoods of vulnerable people, communities and regions	Direct support to beneficiaries had not yet commenced by the time of reporting.	Off Track
2.2 Tools and mechanisms applied to enable evidence-based, risk-informed planning, prevention and preparedness to climate hazards by smallholder farmers and supporting institutions	2 Coordination meetings between UNDP, CARE International, MLAFWRD, and Pegara Japan reviewed planning and reporting tools to ensure alignment with project objectives.	On track
2.3 Solutions scaled up for sustainable management of natural resources, ecosystem services, chemicals and waste management	During the reporting period, the project advanced efforts to scale up environmentally sustainable pest-management solutions. Collaboration with Pegara Japan focused on aligning drone-based technologies with environmental and operational standards. A joint field mission to Middle Sabi wheat fields in Chipinge, conducted by UNDP, MLAFWRD, ZimParks, and Pegara Japan, tested the drone system's feasibility for controlling migratory	Off track

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	pests. Recommendations were given by government which Pegara is still working on.	
	Overall status	**Off track**

Section 3: Progress against Project Outputs

Project Output Indicator	**Actual Value of the Indicator as of the time of Reporting**	**Status** *On-track, Off-track, Achieved, Partially Achieved, Not Achieved*
1. Increased production of drought-tolerant crop varieties for improved yields and nutrition	No crop production activities were undertaken during Q3, as the project remained in its preparatory phase.	Off track
2. Enhanced application of innovative automatic drone technology to reduce crop damage caused by quelea birds	During Q3, the project-initiated field-level testing of drone-based pest management systems designed to reduce crop damage caused by quelea birds. A joint demonstration in the Middle Sabi wheat fields (Chipinge), conducted by Pegara Japan in the presents of UNDP, MLAFWRD and ZimParks, assessed the operational viability of the technology. While the system was technically functional, it did not effectively deter quelea birds in the field. Key recommendations included integrating authentic hawk sounds, reconfiguring detection cameras, and improving battery capacity. These findings will inform system modifications ahead of a follow-up trial in Q4.	Off track
3.Enhanced capacities and skills for on-farm and off-farm activities, ensuring increased income generation opportunities for women and youth	No Enhanced capacities and skills for on-farm and off-farm activities, ensuring increased income generation opportunities for women and youth was done during the reporting period.	Off track
	Overall status	**On track**

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Description

Output 1: Increased production of drought-tolerant crop varieties for improved yields and nutrition *(Target: 10,000 people)*
Output Indicator 1.1: Area under production with traditional grains and other drought-tolerant crops

- Baseline: 0
- Target (by March 2026): 600 hectares under production
- Actual (Q3): No movement from baseline; crop production activities not yet initiated

Output Indicator 1.2: Average yield per hectare (by crop type)

- Baseline: 0.3 t/ha
- Target (by March 2026): 0.5 t/ha
- Actual (Q3): No movement from baseline; yield data unavailable as planting has not commenced

Output Indicator 1.3: Uptake rates and application of innovative technologies

- Baseline: 0%
- Target (by March 2026): 70% uptake of innovative technologies (including drought-tolerant varieties and hydrogels)
- Actual(Q3) 0% adoption; no crop production activities yet

During Q3, no crop production or field-based activities were undertaken, as the project remained in its preparatory phase. However, foundational steps were completed to enable rollout in Q4 and onwards. Joint UNDP–MLAFWRD planning missions to Masvingo Province, (Chivi and Mwenezi districts) facilitated project introductions, tentative ward selections, and sensitization of provincial and district officers on implementation modalities. UNDP supported these efforts through technical coordination and inception planning meetings, which defined geographic and institutional parameters for upcoming demonstrations and farmer training exercises. These activities lay the groundwork for promoting drought-tolerant traditional grains such as sorghum and millet, supported by hydrogels and other soil-enhancing technologies, to improve yields, nutrition, and climate resilience among targeted smallholder farmers.

Output 2: Enhanced application of innovative automatic drone technology to reduce crop damage caused by quelea birds

Output Indicator 2.1: Hectarage of field crops covered by drone technology

- Baseline: 0
- Target (by March 2026): 200 hectares
- Actual (Q3): No movement was recorded during the reporting period, drone deployment scheduled for next quarter.

Output Indicator 2.2: Number of early warning systems introduced to the Ministry of Agriculture

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- Baseline: 0
- Target (by March 2026): 1 system
- Actual (Q3): No movement was recorded during reporting period, hoping with the on boarding of Pegara in Q3 this activity will start moving.

Output Indicator 2.3: Percentage of farmers and extension workers actively using digital technologies

- Baseline: 0%
- Target (by March 2026): 70%

A joint field mission was conducted in the Middle Sabi wheat fields (Chipinge) by UNDP, MLAFWRD, ZimParks, and Pegara Japan to test the drone-based pest-management system in Q3. While the technology demonstrated operational stability and effective integration with mission control workflows, it did not successfully deter quelea birds in the field. Key recommendations included enhancing deterrence through authentic hawk sounds, improving coverage by mounting the detection camera directly onto the drone, and extending battery life to increase flight duration. ZimParks also highlighted the importance of aligning technology with traditional net-based bird control practices to ensure community acceptance and minimise disruption to local livelihoods. The assessment also highlighted significant cost and technical constraints, with system costs ranging from USD 125,122 to USD 185,122 depending on vehicle inclusion. These costs were considered unsustainable for local communities and deemed by the government to be unsuitable for adoption in rural areas. A joint report is being prepared to guide next-phase adjustments and inform additional field tests scheduled for the second half. These efforts contribute to the project's goal of scaling up environmentally sustainable pest-control solutions and reducing reliance on harmful chemical methods.

Output 3: Enhanced capacities and skills for on-farm and off-farm activities ensuring increased income generation opportunities for women and youth.

Output Indicator 3.1: Number of farmers trained on climate-smart agriculture and related practices

- Baseline: 0
- Target (by March 2026): 10,000 farmers
- Actual (Q3): No movement from baseline; training needs assessment completed, sessions planned for Q3.

Output Indicator 3.2: Number of farmers engaged in profitable on-farm and off-farm initiatives

- Baseline: 0
- Target (by March 2026): 200 farmers
- Actual (Q3): No movement from baseline; identification of potential initiatives underway

Reasons for no movement & mitigation actions:

- Reason: Initial focus on planning and governance delayed rollout of training and income-generation activities.
- Mitigation: Training curriculum finalised; first farmer training sessions scheduled for Q3; partnerships with local cooperatives being established to support income-generating activities.

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No capacity-building activities were implemented during the reporting period, as CARE International's contracting and inception planning were still being finalised. However, key coordination milestones were achieved to ensure implementation readiness. These included the appointment of JSB focal points by MLAFWRD to strengthen project coordination, a joint planning meeting between CARE, UNDP, and MLAFWRD to align work plans and rollout timelines, and the drafting and approval of introductory letters to provincial and district authorities to facilitate smooth field engagements. UNDP's contribution focused on convening partners, finalising coordination frameworks, and ensuring institutional preparedness for the delivery of farmer training and livelihood support activities in Q4 of the project implementation. These efforts lay the foundation for inclusive capacity-building interventions targeting women and youth, as outlined in the project's strategic objectives.

Cross Cutting Issues

Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment, and Social Inclusion

Gender results	Evidence
Gender mainstreaming was embedded throughout project design and operational planning during the reporting period. The JSB project prioritizes women and youth as core beneficiaries, with gender-responsive targets of 50% women and 30% youth participation across all three outputs, particularly in climate-smart agriculture training, hydrogel application, and post-harvest value addition. Preparatory work in Q3 included the development of beneficiary-targeting criteria and Terms of Reference for the implementing partner, both of which emphasized gender-balanced participation, as reflected in the Project Implementation Plan (PIP), Annual Work Plan (AWP), and Call for Proposals. In addition, site consultations in Chivi and Mwenezi involved the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development and district officers to ensure early integration of gender perspectives in intervention planning. The Responsible Party Agreement with CARE International formalised these commitments. Furthermore, the drone demonstration in Middle Sabi included both male and female extension officers and farmers, with discussions underscoring the need for inclusive training on technology use to ensure equitable access to innovation.	These results are supported by CARE–UNDP planning meeting minutes, the UNDP–MLAFWRD–ZimParks field mission report (Middle Sabi), and ward consultation notes from Chivi and Mwenezi.

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Capacity Development and Sustainability

During Q3, capacity development focused on institutional and technical readiness for Output 2, which relates to drone deployment—a key area flagged for potential biodiversity disturbance and health and safety risks in the SESP. Activities such as the joint field mission to Middle Sabi allowed stakeholders to assess operational protocols, ecological sensitivity, and safety measures proposed during project design. While full implementation has not yet commenced, these preparatory steps reinforced awareness of environmental safeguards and risk mitigation strategies, including selective drone use, operator training, and compliance with civil aviation guidelines. As the project remains in its inception phase, no significant environmental impacts have occurred, and risk management measures will be fully operationalized during Q4 field activities.

South-South and Triangular Cooperation

While no new South–South or triangular cooperation activities were undertaken during the Q3 of implementation, the project continues to align with regional best practices under the Japan Supplementary Budget (JSB) portfolio. The planned deployment of drone technology for migratory pest control builds on Japan's agricultural innovation models and is being adapted to Zimbabwe's context through collaboration between UNDP, MLAFWRD, and Pegara Japan which is a private sector company in Japan and have presents in Zimbabwe as well. These efforts reflect the project's commitment to environmentally sustainable solutions and knowledge exchange. The Middle Sabi field demonstration provided a practical learning platform for local stakeholders and highlighted opportunities for future regional knowledge-sharing within SADC, once operational results are recorded. The project's design also supports SSC/TrC through its emphasis on scalable technologies, inclusive training, and institutional strengthening, creating a foundation for cross-country learning and replication.

Country	Type of cooperation
1. Japan	Technical knowledge transfer and adaptive technology testing for migratory pest management
2. Zimbabwe	Transfer and localisation of advanced agricultural technologies and practices, particularly in environmentally sustainable pest management, will strengthen national capacity, improve crop protection, and enhance resilience among smallholder farmers-laying the foundation for scalable

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	innovation and future regional knowledge exchange.

Partnerships

The third quarter saw strengthened collaboration among UNDP, CARE International, and the MLAFWRD, laying the groundwork for coordinated implementation in Chivi and Mwenezi. The signing of the Responsible Party Agreement (RPA) formalised CARE's role in delivering Outputs 1 and 3, focused on climate-smart agriculture and livelihood support. UNDP ensures internal alignment between its Nature, Climate & Energy (NCE) and Programme Management Support units to fast-track operational and financial processes. Partner capacities were reviewed during the RPA and FACE Form validation, identifying areas for administrative strengthening and improved reporting efficiency.

These efforts reflect the project's commitment to inclusive, accountable, and well-coordinated delivery, as outlined in the JSB Project document. In parallel, preparatory and follow up engagements with Pegara continued, following drone trials conducted in Middle Sabi in September. While the system was technically functional, it did not effectively deter quelea birds in the field. Key recommendations were made by the government which included integrating authentic hawk sounds, reconfiguring detection cameras, and improving battery capacity. Pegara committed to reviewing the recommendations so as to proceed with its support in the implementation of the JSB project.

Environmental Considerations

Environmental and Social Standards (ESS) remained central to planning during Q3. The project was screened using UNDP's SESP procedure, and identified risks—such as biodiversity disturbance from drone operations and soil degradation from expanded cultivation—are aligned with initial assessments. As the project is still in its early implementation phase, these risks have not yet materialized, and mitigation measures proposed at design stage remain applicable. CARE is committed to embedding environmental safeguards across all livelihood activities in line with UNDP SES, and field missions reinforced compliance with EMA requirements. Key considerations, including soil conservation, pesticide management, and sustainable land use, will be integrated into Q4 interventions, with additional risks monitored and addressed as activities scale up.

Digitalization

Digitalization efforts were advanced under Output 2 through the planning and testing of drone technology designed to support automated quelea bird control. The system integrates artificial intelligence for bird detection and sound configuration, offering a scalable solution for pest management. A joint field mission to the Middle Sabi wheat fields in September

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assessed the drone's functionality and identified areas for improvement, including sound effectiveness, battery life, and flight stability. These insights are guiding ongoing refinements to ensure the technology meets operational needs. In parallel, discussions with CARE International progressed on the use of digital data-collection systems to support gender-disaggregated beneficiary monitoring during field implementation. These digital tools are aligned with the JSB project commitment to innovation, data-driven decision-making, and inclusive monitoring frameworks.

Communications and Visibility

During the third quarter, communication efforts focused on promoting transparency, stakeholder engagement, and alignment with UNDP's communications protocols. Key project updates were shared internally and with partners through coordination meetings, briefing notes, and technical exchanges, ensuring consistent messaging and visibility across all levels of implementation. These efforts supported informed decision-making and reinforced the project's commitment to inclusive and accountable delivery.

Looking ahead to Q4, CARE International and UNDP will jointly deploy branded visibility materials at project sites to enhance public awareness and stakeholder recognition. Field updates will be disseminated through UNDP Zimbabwe's digital platforms and social media channels, in line with the JSB project's emphasis on strategic communications and community outreach. These actions aim to strengthen stakeholder confidence and promote the project's impact across target districts.

Strengthening National Capacity

Results achieved	Institution	National capacity strengthened
1) Appointment of JSB focal points (three officers from MLAFWRD (These include representatives from the Department of Business Development, Markets and Trade, covering both agricultural economics and project coordination functions, and the Department of Plant Protection and Pest Control. The appointments reflect a strategic move to embed JSB oversight within existing government structures, ensuring technical alignment, policy coherence, and sustained engagement throughout the project lifecycle.	MLAFWRD	Enhanced national coordination and project ownership through designated institutional leads for implementation supervision.

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2)	Joint field mission conducted to assess the drone-based quelea control system, involving technical staff from MLAFWRD, ZimParks, and district officers.	MLAFWRD / ZimParks / District Agriculture Offices	Strengthened technical understanding of drone operations, data capture, and pest-management applications in both communal and irrigation settings.

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Monitoring and Evaluation

Key M&E activities conducted during Q3

Key M&E activity (monitoring visit, evaluation, review exercise)	Key outcomes/ observation	Recommendation	Action taken
Coordination and Planning Meetings	Delays in RPA and FACE form finalization affected field rollout timelines for Care.	Strengthen administrative coordination and streamline approval processes.	Acceleration plan was initiated; intensified coordination and follow-ups with Care HQ.
Field Monitoring Drone Trials (Middle Sabi)	Limited sound effectiveness, short battery life, and high operational costs observed.	Refine technical specifications before scale-up; conduct further testing.	PEGARA committed to reviewing system design; further trials planned by 31 October 2025
Ward Selection Validation (Chivi & Mwenezi)	Tentative selection required further alignment with district priorities.	Conduct joint planning with district stakeholders to ensure equitable targeting.	Additional consultations held with provincial and district teams was done by 15 September 2025
Environmental Safeguards Review	Need to ensure compliance with EMA and UNDP SES standards.	Integrate soil protection, pesticide management, and screening into field activities.	CARE committed to applying SES in all livelihood interventions.
Gender and Inclusion Monitoring	Gender-disaggregated data systems not yet deployed.	Prepare digital tools for inclusive beneficiary tracking.	CARE initiated planning for digital M&E systems aligned with JSB project.

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Monitoring and evaluation activities in Q3 primarily focused on project readiness and coordination, ensuring that implementation structures were firmly established ahead of field rollout. Joint site introduction visits in Chivi and Mwenezi provided early insights into district priorities, local dynamics, and field realities, helping to inform targeting and planning. These visits also served as an opportunity to validate preliminary ward selections and engage local stakeholders in the preparatory process.

In addition, M&E efforts addressed HACT-related capacity areas by confirming that CARE International's financial and operational systems meet UNDP's risk management standards. This was a critical step in ensuring fiduciary compliance and readiness for disbursement. Looking ahead to Q4 planned M&E actions include baseline data collection, final validation of ward selections, and the integration of gender-disaggregated reporting tools within CARE's monitoring framework. These activities will support inclusive tracking of project beneficiaries and ensure alignment with UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards (SES)

Risk Management

Risks	Mitigation Measures
Administrative and contractual delays in the finalization of the Responsible Party Agreement (RPA) with CARE International – The back-and-forth review process between UNDP, CARE International, and their headquarters extended timelines for signature completion, delaying the start of field implementation.	UNDP maintained regular coordination meetings with CARE and the Ministry to fast-track final reviews and address pending contractual sections. The RPA was finalized and signed in late September 2025, paving the way for inception rollout in second half.
Operational delays due to pending approval of CARE International's FACE form – Approval was delayed due to multiple internal reviews between CARE HQ and UNDP's finance team.	Continued follow-ups with the CARE finance team and UNDP operations were undertaken. The FACE form is expected to be finalized and approved in second half to enable financial disbursement and implementation commencement.
Limited field-level readiness due to pending ward selection validation – Tentative wards were identified during the joint field visit but not yet confirmed for implementation.	Coordination with MLAFWRD and district authorities continues to ensure validation of wards in early second half. CARE's inception meetings will consolidate these selections for final approval.
Potential delays in drone-related output implementation (Output 2) – Due to limited	Continued technical follow-up through UNDP's NCE team and the Ministry to

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updates from the drone technology provider (Pegara), alignment with JSB timelines remains uncertain.	confirm field testing results and ensure synchronization with CARE's implementation schedule.
Financial and compliance risks with new technology partners.	UNDP reviewed Pegara's ethics and compliance documents and initiated a detailed risk assessment before contracting to ensure adherence to UNDP standards.
Limited local technical capacity for drone operation and maintenance.	Planned targeted training for extension officers and district staff to build basic drone operation, troubleshooting, and data management skills.
Technical and operational challenges with drone technology — Field testing showed limited sound effectiveness, short battery life, and high maintenance costs.	Pegara Japan tasked to reconfigure the system by integrating predator sounds, extending battery life, and conducting additional tests before scaling up.

Challenges and mitigation measures

The third quarter of the project was characterized by several operational and technical challenges. A key issue was the delay in recruiting the Project Manager, which affected overall coordination and timely decision-making. To mitigate this, UNDP NCE Team Leader and technical specialists-maintained oversight and ensure continuity until the Project Manager will be onboarded.

Further delays arose from the operationalization of the Responsible Party Agreement (RPA) and the approval of CARE International's FACE form, which postponed the start of field implementation. Mitigation measures included regular coordination meetings with CARE and MLAFWRD to accelerate reviews, resulting in the RPA being signed in late September. Continuous follow-up with Care HQ and UNDP finance teams is ongoing, with FACE form approval expected in Q4 to enable financial disbursements and activity rollout.

Technical challenges also emerged during drone technology trials in Middle Sabi. Field tests revealed limitations in sound effectiveness, short battery life, and high operational costs, indicating the need for refinement before large-scale deployment under Output 2. To address these issues, Pegara has been tasked to reconfigure the system by integrating predator sounds, extending battery life, and reducing operational costs. Additional tests will be conducted prior to scaling up, and targeted training for extension officers and district staff is scheduled for Q4 to strengthen operational readiness.

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Additionally, the ward-selection process in Chivi and Mwenezi required further validation to ensure alignment with district priorities and equitable targeting of vulnerable households. Coordination across national, provincial, and district levels highlighted the need for more time to strengthen joint planning and improve information sharing. In response to these delays, an acceleration plan was initiated to fast-track operational processes and field readiness. This included intensified coordination meetings, targeted technical reviews, and streamlined administrative procedures to recover lost time and maintain project momentum. Despite the challenges, progress was sustained through collaborative efforts involving MLAFWRD, CARE International, ZimParks. Sustainability considerations were integrated early.

Lessons Learned

- **Administrative Preparedness Is Critical**
  Delays in finalizing contractual and financial processes, such as the RPA and FACE form, highlighted the importance of early coordination and streamlined approvals. Future projects should prioritize pre-contractual alignment to avoid implementation setbacks.
- **Technology Piloting Requires Iterative Testing**
  The drone trials in Middle Sabi underscored the need for thorough field testing before scaling. Limitations in sound effectiveness, battery life, and operational costs revealed that innovation must be matched with practical usability and cost-efficiency.
- **Inclusive Planning Strengthens Targeting**
  The ward-selection process in Chivi and Mwenezi demonstrated that equitable targeting requires deeper engagement with district-level stakeholders. Joint planning across national, provincial, and district levels is essential to ensure local priorities are reflected.
- **Acceleration Measures Can Recover Lost Time**
  The implementation of an acceleration plan proved effective in regaining momentum. Regular coordination meetings, technical reviews, and administrative streamlining helped mitigate earlier delays and reinforced the value of adaptive management.

Programme Technical Meetings

During the reporting period, key technical and coordination meetings were held between UNDP, CARE International, and the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development (MLAFWRD) to harmonize implementation arrangements across national, provincial, and district levels. These sessions focused on the ward selection process, field facilitation strategies, and communication protocols to ensure the smooth rollout of activities.

Additionally, joint inception missions were agreed upon to validate selected sites and finalize operational plans. Technical consultations also reviewed drone field-testing results, leading to recommendations for sound system reconfiguration, improved flight duration, and cost

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optimization, endorsed as operational adjustments to strengthen Output 2 without requiring formal programmatic changes.

Financial Summary

Outputs / Activity Result		Current Annual Budget (US$) (Jan – Dec)	Expenditure (Reporting Period)	Cumulative Expenditures	% Expenditure (Cumulative)
		A	B	D	D/A*100
Output 1: Increased production of drought-tolerant crop varieties for improved yields and nutrition					
Activity Result 1: Establishment of demonstration plots and farmer training will result in 600 hectares under production with drought-tolerant crops by March 2026.	By March 2026, 600 hectares will be under production with traditional grains and other drought-tolerant crops, contributing to improved food security and resilience in targeted communities.	**1 500 000**	**March-June 2025**	**7500**	**0.5%**
Output 1 Sub-total		**1 500 000**		**7500**	**0.5%**
Output 3: Enhanced capacities and skills for on farm and off farm activities ensuring increased income generation opportunities for women and youth.					
Activity Result 1: Delivery of structured training programs will equip 10,000 farmers with skills in climate-smart agriculture, nutrition-sensitive practices, and post-harvest handling.	By March 2026, 10,000 farmers will be trained on climate-smart agriculture, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, good agricultural practices, and post-harvest	**1 500 000**	**March-June 2025**	**7500**	**0.5%**

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	handling and processing to improve productivity and resilience.				
Output 2 Sub-total		**1 500 000**		**7500**	**0.5%**
Grand total		**1 500 000**		**15 000**	**1%**

During Q3, project spending was primarily focused on preparatory activities, including partner contracting, coordination missions, and initial technical assessments. Disbursement to CARE International was delayed due to pending internal reviews, but budget realignment was approved to support drone procurement under Output 2. Overall, financial execution remained low, with acceleration measures in place to support timely expenditure in Q4.

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