

A Feeling of Assured Life

by Chilufya Katwalabo

My name is Chilufya Katwalabo. I am a founding member of the Abomfwana Tabacula farming group in the Mwense District of Zambia. I am forty-five years old and a father of five children.

I have spent a greater part of my life working part-time in other people's fields, plowing, planting, cultivating and harvesting. I have done this so that I might be provided enough seeds to plant my own small family garden. Because I have always been so busy working in other people's gardens, mine was always the last to be planted and the last to be harvested. This often became a serious problem for my family, as our food reserve would run out before the harvest was completed.

This situation, however, has changed after many years. People within my village are now working together as a cooperative group. We assist each other with our family gardens. As a result of this collective effort, group members have even found time to plant a community garden.

These changes are a result of the guidance provided by our friend, Mwila and the organization he represents, Outreach International.



Mwila helped our group realize that the capability to create change often lies within us. We had to be the ones to discover that opportunities often exist to help us get started. As an organized group, we requested "start-up input funds" from Outreach International, which were approved. With the funding, we were able to purchase improved seeds, protective clothing, a small irrigation pump and garden tools. We were very thankful, indeed. The cooperative provided me with overalls and a pair of rubber boots to protect my body while at work. I now have access to the group's garden tools and even the irrigation pump. As a result of the assistance, we have already been able to extend the farmland from one to two-and-one-half acres.

In our first year, we cultivated two-and-a-quarter acres of peanuts and one-half acre of cassava from the group garden. I secured, as a grant from the cooperative, a full share of peanuts for my family, which I harvested from my section of the group peanut field.

Story

When I needed to thatch the roof of my house recently, I had free use of the cooperative group's sickle to cut tall grass. In fact, I was able to cut extra grass to sell. The additional funds paid for my youngest child's school fees and uniform. Members of the group actually helped me accomplish the work. I will repay them by offering my assistance when it comes time to replace their roofs.

Now I am as anxious as every member of my cooperative to witness the change in the life of my family that is expected from the increase in food production as the result of an "ox-plow program" that was recently introduced. This is a new experience; the first working animals to be seen in the Luapula Valley. The livestock will pull a large plow that will allow our community to plant more crops.

Already, I am sensing a feeling of assured life from all that is happening in my community as a result of the support of our friends from Outreach International.

