

# From Waste to Wealth: Renia's Story of Transformation in the Dande Valley

Chisecha Village, Ward 2 — Mount Darwin, Zimbabwe



*No smallholder should suffer the indignity of poverty*



In the parched lands of Chisecha, where dry winds blow through fields of sesame and cowpeas, Renia Charamba's story is one of resilience. A single mother of two, she once faced the harsh reality of empty granaries and empty plates. Farming in Mount Darwin was not just tough; it was dangerous. Landmines from Zimbabwe's liberation war still scarred the fields until 2021, when The HALO Trust finally cleared the land beneath her feet. But even with the threat removed, survival remained a challenge.

In 2015, determined to create a better future, Renia formed the Simukai Group with ten other farmers. Through their Internal Saving and Lending Scheme (ISAL), they pooled resources, offering each other small loans. Yet the fields remained stubborn, the harvests meagre. Like many in the Dande Valley, Renia believed the soil held enough strength to grow food without fertiliser.

Then in 2023, hope arrived. The Agricultural Partnerships Trust (APT), alongside the Agricultural Research Trust (ART) and the Government of Zimbabwe, introduced a simple yet revolutionary concept: fermented organic fertiliser. Using chicken litter, goat manure, wood ash, sorghum chaff, and a small amount of inorganic fertiliser, farmers could ferment these materials to create a powerful, nutrient-rich blend. Waste, once discarded, became the key to rejuvenating the soil.

Sceptical but curious, Renia joined her fellow Simukai members to learn the technique at their agroecology demonstration site. Unlike heavy manure, which required a scotch cart to transport, the fermented fertiliser was lightweight and easy to apply. With her own hands, Renia prepared two bags and spread them across her 0.6-hectare sesame field.

The results were nothing short of remarkable.

Her crops, once frail and withered, now stood tall and green, heavy with pods. The land had answered Renia's efforts with abundance. Inspired by their success, the farmers affectionately named their creation Dande Fertiliser, a tribute to their beloved valley.



**"We don't throw anything away anymore," she says with a triumphant smile. "What was once waste is now treasure, helping our crops thrive, and our soil stays healthy for our children."**

Today, the ripple effect of Renia's success is evident across the village. Inspired by her story, more farmers are turning to organic fertilisers. The Simukai Group's demonstration plot stands as proof of what is possible. Healthier soil, richer harvests, and renewed confidence in their land are transforming lives.

In Chisecha, waste is no longer rubbish — it's the foundation of a brighter, more resilient future.

**APT is empowering communities like Chisecha, turning local knowledge into lasting solutions. Together, they're building a future where no resource is wasted, and no family is left behind.**

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