



Mustard Seed Communities Ireland

- Strategic Plan 2025–2028

Building Food Security and Reducing Poverty in Zimbabwe

1. Organisational Overview

Mustard Seed Communities (MSC) exists to uplift the most vulnerable in society, focusing on disabled and abandoned children, as well as marginalized communities across Jamaica, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Zimbabwe and Malawi. Each country's unique socio-economic needs and MSC's strong relationships with local partners guide its work, allowing us to implement targeted, impactful programmes that address immediate needs and promote long-term community resilience.

MSC's approach to outreach revolves around building capacity within vulnerable populations, emphasizing children, individuals with disabilities, and marginalized communities. We implement a holistic model that addresses nutritional needs, promotes education and supports sustainable agriculture. Our goal is to foster local leadership, create income-generating opportunities, and address food security challenges to build resilience within these communities.

Mustard Seed Communities Ireland (MSC Ireland) is part of the global Mustard Seed Communities network (MSC) which is dedicated to supporting vulnerable children, families, and communities through compassionate care, capacity building, and sustainable development.

In Zimbabwe, where MSC is deeply committed to sustainable development, our projects focus on community empowerment, nutrition, education, and sustainable agriculture. The need for these initiatives in Zimbabwe, particularly in underserved areas like Bulawayo, is driven by high levels of poverty, food insecurity, and limited access to essential services.

MSC currently feeds 1,200 children a hot meal every day across 5 locations in the Bulawayo region; Woodville, Cabatsha, Pumula, Ngozi Mine, and Magobho. MSC also educates 100 children every year through its Little Angels pre-school programmes in the communities of Woodville and Cabatsha and plans to open its third education centre in the community of Magobho in 2026.

In collaboration with Mustard Seed Communities Zimbabwe, local NGOs, and community leaders, MSC Ireland works to strengthen livelihoods and resilience through community-driven initiatives.

Building on the success of earlier projects in the communities of Cabatsha and Magobho, this Strategic Plan outlines MSC Ireland's 2025 - 2028 roadmap to enhance food security, nutrition, and economic independence through sustainable gardening and community empowerment. The initiative begins with a one-year foundation phase in 2025, designed to establish home and community gardens in communities where MSC is already providing emergency nutrition, as a model for long-term, scalable development in the region.

2. Vision

Empowered, self-reliant communities, where every household has access to nutritious food, sustainable livelihoods, and the knowledge to thrive independently.

3. Mission

To eliminate poverty and hunger by equipping families and communities with the skills, resources, and support needed to grow their own food and generate income through sustainable home and community gardening.

4. Strategic Objectives

Objective 1: Strengthen Household Food Security

- Establish and support home gardens for at least 200 households in Cabatsha and Magobho.
- Provide training in organic gardening, composting, and climate-smart, water-efficient farming methods.
- Facilitate access to seeds, tools, water infrastructure and irrigation systems through community support mechanisms.

Objective 2: Develop Sustainable Community Gardens

- Create two model community gardens (one in each community) managed by elected local committees.
- Promote peer learning and mentorship through the “Garden Champions” leadership model.
- Strengthen local governance and ownership to ensure continuity and accountability.

Objective 3: Reduce Reliance on Feeding Programmes

- Support vulnerable families to transition from dependence on food aid to self-reliant food production.
- Conduct nutrition and meal planning workshops to improve household dietary diversity.
- Measure and track reductions in external food aid dependency, aiming for a 50% reduction by 2028.

Objective 4: Build Local Capacity and Resilience

- Train community leaders, women, and youth as “Garden Champions” to drive gender-inclusive leadership.
- Partner with agricultural extension officers, local NGOs, and government agencies for technical support and alignment with national strategies.
- Support the formation of small cooperatives to manage surplus produce and strengthen economic resilience.

5. Implementation Framework

Phase	Timeline	Key Activities
Phase 1 - Foundation, Planning & Research	2025	Comprehensive planning, research and preparatory groundwork to ensure the project is strategically positioned for effective delivery.

Key activities will include:

Technical surveys to:-

- Evaluate community garden sites for project suitability
- Identify optimal drilling points for solarized boreholes to ensure access,
- Ensure Quantity of Water is adequate to meet daily community domestic needs together with irrigation needs for home and demonstration community garden needs.
- Ensure Quality of water meets the standards required for both consumption and irrigation needs
- Identifying, and selecting collaborative partners with the appropriate technical and community development expertise

to support project delivery.

- Identifying and pre-qualifying key suppliers, (drilling, solar companies, seed and tool suppliers etc for the delivery of the project).

Establishing frameworks for project funding, project coordination, resource mobilisation, and logistical planning to ensure readiness for implementation in mid-2026.

Phase 2 - Implementation 2026 - 2027
& Capacity Building

Launch of project activities and establishment of infrastructure to support sustainable operations.

Key activities will include:

- Installation of water, and community garden infrastructures.
- Distribution of tools, seeds, and other essential inputs to participating

households.

- Delivery of hands-on training and mentoring programmes in conjunction with local government departments.
- Establishment of demonstration plots to model best practices in organic production and water-efficient cultivation.
- Ongoing technical support, monitoring, and community engagement to strengthen capacity and ensure successful adoption of project practices.

Phase 3 - Local
Ownership, Sustainability
& Evaluation

2027–2028

Community Ownership
and Local Leadership:

- Local leaders will foster community buy-in, empowering families to take collective ownership

of the project's
success.

- After Year 1 the demonstration gardens will remain in place and act as a training/production hub. Surplus produce will be sold locally, and income reinvested into garden expansion, equipment maintenance, and community-led enterprise development. This ensures the project generates sustainable local revenue while remaining fully managed by the community with mentoring support from MSC.

Impact Evaluation: The project will be monitored through a participatory, community-centered approach to ensure accurate tracking of

progress toward intended outcomes. Mustard Seed will lead the monitoring, collaborating closely with community leaders and trained local staff to gather reliable, valid data on key indicators.

6. Key Focus Areas

- Gender Equality: Women will comprise at least 60% of participants and leadership roles.
- Climate Resilience: Training will promote organic methods, drought-tolerant crops, and efficient water use.
- Youth Empowerment: Youth groups will be engaged in garden management and enterprise development.
- Environmental Stewardship: Composting, soil regeneration, and seed-saving initiatives will promote sustainability.

7. Expected Outcomes

- Over 200 functioning household gardens providing diverse vegetables year-round.
- Two thriving community gardens serving as centres for training, cooperation, and local enterprise.
- A 50% reduction in reliance on external feeding programmes in Cabatsha and Magobho.
- Improved nutrition and dietary diversity across participating households.
- Enhanced household incomes through sales of surplus produce.
- Stronger local leadership and community collaboration in sustainable development.

8. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

MSC Ireland will implement a participatory framework to ensure accountability, transparency, and learning across all phases of implementation.

Key tools and methods include:

- Baseline and endline surveys to measure food security and household income levels.
- Quarterly progress reports from community coordinators.
- Annual review meetings with community leaders, partners, and beneficiaries.

Key indicators:

- Number of operational home and community gardens.
- Household food production and dietary diversity.
- Reduction in food aid dependency.
- Increase in income from surplus produce.

9. Sustainability and Exit Strategy

- Local Ownership: Community committees and Garden Champions will manage and sustain gardens beyond the project cycle.
- Economic Sustainability: Income generated from surplus sales will be reinvested into garden maintenance, savings groups, and seed banks.
- Institutional Partnerships: Ongoing collaboration with Mustard Seed Zimbabwe, local NGOs, and agricultural extension officers.
- Knowledge Sustainability: A Train the Trainers approach will guarantee intergenerational skills transfer and long-term resilience.

10. Budget and Resource Framework

A detailed budget supports this strategic plan, outlining resource requirements for:

- Capacity building and training
- Seeds, tools, water infrastructure and irrigation materials
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Coordination and partnership development

11. Conclusion

This Strategic Plan 2025 -2028 represents a bold and practical commitment to building lasting change through empowerment, partnership, and resilience.

By strengthening food security, nurturing local leadership, and fostering sustainable livelihoods, MSC Ireland seeks not only to alleviate hunger but to transform cycles of dependency into opportunities for growth and dignity.

Guided by the values of compassion, inclusion, and shared responsibility, this plan lays the groundwork for thriving, self-reliant communities in Cabatsha, Magobho, and beyond. Together with our partners, supporters, and the communities we serve we will sow the seeds of hope and harvest a future where every family has the tools and confidence to flourish independently.