



James (right) and Tembani (left) outside their home near Chirezdi, Zimbabwe. © Cynthia Matonhodze

## WHY IT MATTERS: JAMES AND TEMBANI'S STORY

**Tembani and her husband James live in rural south-east Zimbabwe. They raised five children together whilst tending to their land and working in agriculture businesses across the region, with James eventually retiring in 2015.**

Four years ago, James started to notice his eyesight deteriorating and by late 2019 he had lost much of his vision. It was a difficult time for the whole family, as Tembani recalls:

*“With his vision gone, **James lost much of his independence**, and was unable to help at all around the house and farm. I spent much of my time looking after him, and was scared to leave him alone for too long - as I'd come back and he would be in the same spot I'd left him in, even if it was no longer in the shade, and he hadn't been able to find his lunch. **We lost a lot of our crops to the birds as I couldn't work the farm and look after him at the same time.** It was really tough.”*



James tends to his chickens after having his sight restored, Chirezdi, Zimbabwe. © Cynthia Matonhodze

Vision loss does not just impact an individual's wellbeing and productivity, it also impacts their wider family and community. But in many cases, people like James are invisible to health services and are at risk of being left behind.

Fortunately James benefited from the CBM-Peek programme which was launched near his village in 2020, in partnership with Zimbabwe Council for the Blind. He attended an outreach clinic where he was screened using Peek's smartphone-based tools and informed he had cataracts in both eyes - something which a simple operation could fix. He was referred on and received a successful cataract operation in late 2021.

Throughout his journey to care, local eye health workers were able to monitor his progress using Peek software, minimising the chance of him falling out of the system and being left behind. Following treatment, James is helping around the homestead and Tembani has returned to working on the farm. As James told us:

*"When they removed the bandage I could see immediately - it felt like a whole new world. All the mopani trees I'd planted had grown as if by magic, **I could read again - I could even thread a needle!** And all the chores I had suspended I was able to return to. My chicken coop, which was falling apart, is now as good as new. **I feel very lucky to have my sight restored. Every day since it has happened has felt like Christmas Day.**"*

Thanks to our partners and donors, thousands of people like James are being screened and connected to care each year in eye health programmes powered by Peek.

Our ambition is to expand our reach so our partners can connect millions more people like James to care. With the support of our partners and funders, we won't stop until we bring better vision and eye health to everyone.