

External End of Project Evaluation of the Food Security Project Supported by the Japanese Government and Implemented by IFRC & ZRCS.



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The views expressed in this report, however, are those of the consultants, and do not necessarily represent the views of the Japanese Government, IFRC or ZRCS.

A list of all the consulted informants is provided at the end of this report as an annex.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AEMA	Agricultural and Environmental Management Africa
AEOs	Agricultural Extension Officers
AEWs	Agricultural Extension Workers
AGRITEX	Department of Agricultural, Technical and Extension Services
AIDS	Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome
ART	Anti Retro Viral Therapy
CA	Conservation Agriculture
CBFs	Community Based Facilitators
CBM	Community Based Management
CHBC	Community Home Based Care
CIMMYT	International Centre for Improvement in Maize and Wheat
DA	District Administrator
DACC	District Aids Coordinating Committee
DDF	District Development Fund
EHT	Environmental Health Technician
EU	European Union
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
HH	Household
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IGAs	Income Generating Activities
IPs	Implementing Partners
KII	Key Informant Interviews
MBIAMs	Market Based Input Assistance Mechanisms
MOHCW	Ministry of Health and Child Welfare
MSC	Most Significant Change
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
OVCs	Orphaned and Vulnerable Children
PHAST	Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation
PHHE	Participatory Health and Hygiene Education
PLWHA	People Living with HIV and AIDS
RDC	Rural District Council
SLA	Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
SOW	Scope of Work
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TORs	Terms of Reference
WACC	Ward Aids Coordinating Committee
WATSAN	Water and Sanitation
ZIM-VAC	Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee

Executive Summary

Introduction

- The food security situation remains a critical challenge as the country is affected by droughts, pro-longed dry spells, limited access to inputs, as well as urban poverty.
- Other assessments have also shown that access to clean and safe water remains limited, while most schools have a lower number of toilets compared to the minimum standard.
- In an effort to alleviate and address the challenges facing rural and urban households the ZRCS with technical support from the IFRC and financial support from the Japanese government implemented a food security project.
- The project was designed to address urban food insecurity through food voucher distribution, rural food insecurity through capacity building and inputs support as well as increasing water and sanitation coverage through borehole rehabilitations in communities and latrine construction targeting schools.
- The project reached 7,000 rural households, 4,960 urban households and supported a number of institutions and communities in 13 districts across 5 provinces in Zimbabwe.
- This end-of-project evaluation seeks to assess the performance of the project based on five key evaluation criteria viz: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

Methodology

- The Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) framework was used to assess the contribution that project activities made to sustaining livelihoods.
- The end-of-project evaluation adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods of enquiry to facilitate both technical and socio-economic analysis.
- Specific data collection tools included a background literature review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, a household survey, case studies and direct observation.
- All in all, 611 households were interviewed for the end-of-project evaluation.
- In addition, a total of 41 KIIs and 35 FGDs were conducted in the selected eight districts.

Food Voucher Programme

Relevance

- The design of the food voucher and food hamper component was relevant as it met the immediate basic needs of the vulnerable groups which included child headed and orphaned households, elderly people, chronically ill people and people with disabilities.
- The programme's monthly voucher value of \$20 is in line with government figures on the harmonised cash transfer programme.
- There has been a surge in urban poverty over the years and not much is being done by the humanitarian community and government with regards to the urban poor. By targeting urban areas the project met a felt need and covered an important gap.
- The emerging trend now is supporting the poor with unconditional cash transfers instead of conditional support like food vouchers. The chances of success are high in urban areas where markets work better, and guarantees availability of commodities and services that recipients might want.
- The project duration of three months was too short and left many people still in need of support after the three months. It would have been more appropriate to spread support over six months which coincided with a period just prior to harvest.

Effectiveness

- Almost 100% of target was achieved in terms of number of people reached with food support for the period of three months, and as a result almost 100% of them had improved food consumption in terms of food amounts and diversity for the duration of the distributions.
- The adopted OK card system was effective in ensuring that beneficiaries don't abuse the system but would buy the basic commodities that they were entitled to. Thus it aided in ensuring that food is available to households by minimising risk of misuse through buying ineligible commodities on the basket.
- The project was effective in supporting the local economy as the local branches of OK recorded significant increase in sales during the months they were serving the project clients.
- The effectiveness of the project could have been enhanced if it had been integrated with relevant livelihood support such as income generating activities for the able bodied.

Efficiency

- The electronic voucher system was designed to be efficient and indeed it was efficient in comparison to the paper vouchers or the direct distribution by passing reducing transaction costs and through elimination of transportation costs as was the case with the food hamper.
- Since voucher redemption happened at several OK Branches, the efficiency of the system is partially depended on the people manning the various branches. While on average it took most of the branches two days to serve their entire clientele one outlet would take up to a week or slightly more to serve its case load.

Impact

- The food voucher programme improved household food security.
- The average number of meals improved from 1.51 to 2.01 meals per day.
- The programme also improved households' food diversity, nutritional status, as well as facilitating medication taking by PLWHA thereby improving health and members' immunity levels.
- Improved household food security facilitated school attendance and participation in class and sporting activities by children from vulnerable households.
- The programme also enabled vulnerable households to channel whatever income they generated on other key necessities such as water and electricity.
- In some areas, the average number of persons approaching the Department of Social Welfare for assistance declined from 15 – 20 per week to between 0 – 2 persons per week.
- The food voucher programme also ultimately improved the visibility of the IFRC and the ZRCS.

Sustainability

- By design food assistance initiatives are only immediate short-term stop-gap measures.
- Thus, the sustainability of the food voucher programme remains questionable.
- Feeding also creates a dependency syndrome in beneficiaries.
- There are reports in some areas that since the end of the programme the number of bedridden chronically ill people has increased and cases of default on medication taking has also increased.
- The food voucher programme design is also such that there is scope for the sustained use of the food purchase system beyond the lifespan of the project, however, currently OK reports very little activity outside the food voucher programme window.

Best Practices and Lessons Learnt

- The use of vouchers and the electronic cash transfer system was convenient for beneficiaries, non-discriminatory, much faster, more efficient and more cost effective.
- The system reduces the burden on project officers and volunteers and is therefore easier to manage, flexible, reduces opportunism and scope for system abuse, reduces incidences of stock theft, political focus and interference.
- The mechanism also revitalizes local micro-economies, with multiplier-effects through the macro-economy.

Recommendations

- Funds permitting, the programme should be sustained over a much longer period while the number of beneficiaries in future programmes should be increased.
- There is need to expand the programme to rural communities because the nature of vulnerability in rural areas is the same as the vulnerability in urban areas.
- There is a need to diversify and intensify support including assistance with school fees, school uniforms, stationery and primary health for those under long-term medication.
- Short-term interventions can also include disaster responses such as the provision of tents to Masvingo and Matabeleland South flood victims, food relief and the distribution of agricultural inputs to aid recovery in the long-term.
- To improve the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of future programmes, there is also need for improving the engagement and involvement of stakeholders at different levels.
- There is also need to graduate food voucher intervention programmes from an emergency mode to recovery programmes which are more long-term e.g. moving away from stand-alone food voucher programmes to IGAs.
- What is key is to provide start-up capital, sensitize community leaders, ensure greater programme awareness and the active participation by all groups within target communities.

Agriculture and Nutrition Gardening

Relevance

- By distributing inputs the project met an identified need and gap that most smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe are facing as a result of the liquidity problem in the economy as well as the challenges of high cost of agricultural inputs. This is also part of the national programme whereby during this last season the government and the entire humanitarian community was targeting support to 80 000 households nationally with subsidized inputs and therefore the project contributed about 8% to the national target of households.
- Agricultural input support to smallholder farmers helps protect the modest asset base for the poor and vulnerable as it prevents them from selling off their assets so as to buy inputs for the season.
- By directly distributing small grains and OPV maize the programme has maintained some control in influencing what the farmers grow although some farmers expressed less preference for OPV maize over hybrid maize regardless of the fact that they are aware of the benefit of guaranteed seed supply for the following season. This is so mainly for the higher potential areas.
- Direct distributions have become less appropriate under the prevailing macro economic conditions and the emerging thinking and practices of supporting economic recovery process. Markets based input assistance mechanisms have become much more appropriate while at the same time giving farmers options to select and prioritise the input type that is most constraining in their own production.
- The project established new gardens and provided training and other support that enabled beneficiaries to produce high value crops for consumption as well as access markets in areas surrounding the project area for income generation.

- Gardens are contributing to dietary diversity at household level and towards nutrition improvement. Most of the households grow vegetables primarily for household consumption though not exclusively for that purpose.
- Gardens are more empowering to women as they mostly are the ones responsible for ensuring that families have something to consume on a daily basis.

Effectiveness

- 100% of the target number of beneficiaries to receive seed and fertiliser input support was reached and the same received agriculture related trainings. The training was made possible through the use of Agritex and volunteers who were trained as Trainers by Agritex. However the package was reduced as the project could not procure groundnuts for all beneficiaries due to price increases.
- The beneficiaries benefited from both previous ZRCS trainings that were offered through other programmes and the current trainings. The trainings were highly effective as more than 86% of those that received the trainings from before, confirmed having adopted the practices on their current crops.
- The project was effective in introducing dietary diversity in the lives of the beneficiaries and increasing household incomes beneficiaries.
- The issue of seasonal water sources for some gardens reduces the effectiveness of such good investments as some gardens have seasonal water sources and that disrupted production during peak dry months of October and November in 3 out of 5 gardens in Mashonaland west.

Efficiency

- Agricultural inputs for the field crops were distributed in time for the rain season, which means farmers did not lose out as they planted crops by the optimal planting time. Distributing inputs on time increase resource use efficiency by beneficiaries.
- The farmer trainings happened before inputs were distributed which is very ideal in promoting efficient utilisation of inputs.
- The garden fencing materials and tools and set up of garden were done on time and within budget to allow even two cropping cycles by the time of evaluation to have been completed. This reflected efficient project mobilisation and good community participation.
- Some efficiency losses were lost by the thin spread of the programme activities across the country. This entailed thin coverage of beneficiaries on the ground but significant distances travelled to reach those many project sites.

Impact

- There project has no much impact on household ownership of livestock since there is no significant changes in the mean number of livestock and others productive assets holdings between the baseline and end of project. This stems from the fact that beneficiaries have not yet realised significant income from the field crop support since the crops are still in the fields as well as from gardens because they are not yet accessing external markets.
- There is likelihood of greater impact from gardens even after the project has ended as the people now have knowledge and can continue applying the knowledge they acquired from the project
- Crop sales remained an important income source for many households (over 50%) between baseline and evaluation while gardens and livestock emerge as important sources of income to many households at over 40% and 30% of households, respectively.
- While there has been a general increase in the levels of cash incomes for projects beneficiaries from year 2011 to 2012, statistical tests of the difference between the two means however, indicate that the change in the cash income for Hurungwe farmers is

the only one that has significantly increased between the baseline and the evaluation. The rest has not changed significantly.

- Almost 40% of household expenditure is going towards food, followed by education of children at about 22% of expenditure before investment in agriculture come in at third level below 18% on average. The households' expenditure patterns still points to the same fact that the project impact is yet to be felt on the ground due to shortness of time among other factors.
- Only about 57 % of the households, estimate that they will have food that will last them at least 6 months from own production and when combined with other means and sources they will range between 5.3 and 7.3 months of sufficient food from own means. The highest proportion of them is from the two Mashonaland west districts while as expected in the drier Matabeleland South districts less than 50% estimate that they will produce food that will last at least 6 months.
- The greatest changes observed by household were observed in increased food production, household income and knowledge in gardening activities. The greatest benefactor is Zvimba District which is topping in all the three indicators of change followed by Hurungwe district.

Sustainability

- By working with and through existing institutions, particularly government structures and volunteers created opportunities for sustainability of interventions. The project is highly commended for engaging with opportunities that were created as a result of a changing political, economic, and institutional and policy context. The government departments of Agritex, the RDC and volunteers are likely to continue with the same interventions and support they were giving to farmers and communities including training of farmers.
- The project distributed open pollinated maize and sorghum varieties that farmers can continue multiplying and sharing within the community thus alleviating the access to quality seed constraint. Thus farmers will for some few years to come be accessing easily good OPV maize and sorghum seed within their communities.
- By providing fencing to gardens it means for some years to come the farmers' investments in the gardens will be secure while at the same promoting environmental sustainability.
- Sustainability will be further enhanced if such projects also tackle software issues such as leadership trainings for community gardens and issues of access to markets.

Best Practices and Lessons Learnt

- The success, effectiveness and sustainability of community garden intervention is highly depended on the type of leadership selected and active stakeholder participation.

Recommendations

- The garden and inputs interventions are thinly spread across districts. Therefore it is recommended that future programmes with similar scale, in order to increase effective and efficiency, consider going deeper and being more intensive concentrating on smaller geographical area.
- The effectiveness of certain gardens in increasing household income and contribution to food availability was affected by seasonal water sources. It is recommended that follow on investment in order to provide perennial water sources be made to all gardens that require such so as to protect the investment already made while at the same time enhancing impact of previous investments and future investments.
- Future programmes are recommended to allocate resources and time to train community garden beneficiaries and communities on leadership and management issues to enhance sustainability and market linkages.

- A comprehensive higher value input pack is recommended per beneficiary of agricultural inputs as they have some labour available to effectively utilise a higher pack. Livestock related support should also be considered since it is clearly demonstrated that livestock especially small livestock contribute significantly to household income particularly in the drier southern districts. The government recommended minimum agro-voucher value is \$160 per beneficiary for crop inputs and \$200 for livestock support with beneficiaries contributing at least 10% of the value.
- It is highly recommended to consider continuation of input and garden support rather than terminate it at this particular point in time as half the sampled population is projecting food deficits for the coming consumption year in excess of 6 months. In order to avoid coming in with support when the situation is already bad, it is recommended that food security and livelihood support come in early so that there is sufficient implementation time that ensures all processes and activities are done on time.

Water and Sanitation

Relevance

- Matobo District is a very dry and marginal region, with most rivers dried up and with no sand water abstraction opportunities for the greater part of the year.
- The majority of water points in the district are dysfunctional, giving an average ratio of 1,000 people per borehole instead of an ideal ratio of 200 - 250 people per water point.
- In some cases, water sources are as far as 20km.
- Sanitation coverage in schools in the target district of Gwanda had sanitation coverage of as low as 41.3%.
- Communities been hard hit by macro-economic challenges and recurrent droughts making it difficult for them to support latrine construction initiatives at schools.
- Poor sanitation leads to outbreaks of diarrhoea diseases, cholera, typhoid and environmental pollution.

Effectiveness

- The water and sanitation component was an overall success.
- The rate of achievement is 83.3% for borehole rehabilitations and water point committee establishment, 96.0% for latrine construction and 264.0% for PHHE training.
- Those initiatives that were not complete are almost complete and were in the process of being completed during the time of the end-of-project evaluation.
- Completion dates were estimated at 2 weeks from the dates of the evaluation team visits.
- However, according to FGDs, there are still wide gaps between community needs and what was provided for by the project.

Efficiency

- Most project activities were implemented within the planned time framework.
- Challenges included minor delays due to logistical distribution challenges in some areas, which resulted in some of the scheduled work being completed in December, a month after completion of the project.
- Project efficiency was also enhanced through the adoption of innovative strategies where appropriate and where an enabling environment made this possible e.g. working through local stakeholders.

Impact

- Borehole repairs and rehabilitations improved access by both target beneficiaries and those outside the project areas access to safe and clean drinking water.

- This intervention also reduced the travelling distance between homesteads and water sources, improved livestock's access to water sources, and reduced livestock mortality.
- Where conducive and where water yields are higher, water point rehabilitations have facilitated vegetable and nutrition gardening thereby improving and diversifying diets and increasing household incomes.
- However, the number of repaired and/or rehabilitated water points was too small to achieve an ideal water point to people ratio.
- On the other hand, sanitation interventions reduced the pressure on already existing sanitation facilities and disease outbreaks at beneficiary schools.
- However, in some areas it was too early to determine impact given that some of the latrines had just been completed and not yet in use.

Sustainability

- The water and sanitation component has great scope for sustainability.
- Due to the participation and capacity building of communities, beneficiaries can fix, repair and maintain their local water points beyond the lifespan of the project.
- Sustainability is also ensured through an exit strategy (including working through DDF and MOHCW) put in place by the Food Security project.
- Despite challenges, the willingness to pay for water point repair and maintenance costs exists within communities.
- Experiences from elsewhere have shown that once an appropriate technology is introduced communities adopt it thus there are long-term expectations of latrine construction at schools and homesteads, although there is still no evidence of this phenomenon on the ground.

Best Practices and Lessons Learnt

- Good coordination and the active participation of local stakeholders is key for success.
- The total involvement of communities in all processes (including planning, training and capacity building, programme implementation and M&E) is also key.
- Capacity building of communities improves effectiveness and efficiency, while the establishment and good management of a reserve fund facilitates timely repairs and other maintenance works.

Recommendations

- Expanding the water and sanitation programme onto adjacent wards which did not benefit from the project to reduce the pressure on rehabilitated water points and sustain the lifespan of already rehabilitated boreholes.
- Drilling of new and additional boreholes in densely populated areas, flushing of existing boreholes as a strategy of improving water yields, and upgrading existing sanitation facilities.
- Facilitating access to safe and clean water to schools who benefitted from institutional sanitation facilities under the Food Security Project.
- Promoting improved hygienic practices within communities by constructing latrines at a few targeted vulnerable households that would serve as models for the wider community.

Management, Coordination and Monitoring

Management and Coordination

- The project engaged and coordinated with its external stakeholders very well thereby creating good rapport with all stakeholders which has enhanced scope for sustainability.

- On the other hand, the project mobilisation phase was longer than ideal entailing that most field level activities were hurried thereby compromising the integrity of an otherwise good system.
- The monthly disbursement of funds, while ideal for some interventions, proved not to be ideal for a short emergency programme, with a lot of implementation time that was unnecessarily lost between waiting for new funds and frequent preparation of reports to enable the next disbursement.
- There were also limited opportunities for collective review and reflection on progress, challenges and sharing of lessons, which constrained efficiency and effectiveness in project delivery.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

- An appropriate M&E system is critical for providing key benchmark information, noting project achievements, documenting lessons learnt, identifying areas requiring attention, determining appropriate design changes and identifying areas for improvement.
- This Food Security Project was preceded by a baseline, fortified by continuous monitoring and was wrapped up by an external end-of-project evaluation.
- Such periodic reviews have proved to be critical for assessing progress achieved against the set targets, keeping track of issues, constraining factors and establishing the techno-socio-economic factors behind such phenomena.

Conclusion

- Significant impact of the project on household physical and financial assets is yet to be realised since some of the interventions' results are yet to be realised such as from the field crops. It can be concluded that there is likelihood of greater impact being realised after the project has ended.
- Based on the projection of beneficiaries, taking into account production potential for 2012/13 season and their normal food consumption pattern, below 60% of households will have sufficient food to last them more than 6 months for the coming consumption year.
- The food voucher programme was an appropriate and relevant intervention for the urban poor and vulnerable households. It helped meet households' immediate basic and food needs and it improved households' food security.
- The project positively impacted household's food security, food diversity, nutritional status of beneficiaries and facilitated proper adherence to drug regimes for PLWHA thereby contributing to health status of beneficiaries.
- The FV project effectively met its set targets by reaching 99% of targeted number of beneficiaries with food and basic commodities over three months and the same time it contributed positively to supporting the local economy in the areas it was implemented.
- The agriculture input and nutrition garden support was relevant and appropriate for the disadvantaged smallholder farmers. The OPV varieties distributed will ensure continued seed supply for a couple of seasons to come after the project has ended as well as vegetable production in the gardens.
- Direct distribution of agricultural inputs have become inappropriate mechanism for giving similar support to farmers especially considering that socio-economic, political and market conditions in the country have shifted and emerging good practice is support through market based mechanisms.
- Water and sanitation interventions were quite relevant and appropriate for the dry and marginal Matabeleland South region that has majority of its water points dysfunctional and some of lowest sanitation coverage rate in the country of as low as 41% in one of the districts.
- WASH interventions were effectively delivered at high rate of result achievement of 83% on water point rehabilitation and 96% on latrine construction. Adoption of innovative

strategies and the enabling environment helped increase project efficiency despite challenges experienced.

- There is high likelihood of continued flow of benefits from the interventions as sufficient sustainability measures were built into the process through working with local stakeholders such as DDF and the MoHCW and the total involvement of communities in all key processes.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The food security situation remains a critical challenge as the country is affected by droughts, pro-longed dry spells as well as limited access to inputs. This has resulted in a significant proportion of rural households remaining food insecure and the ZIMVAC report for 2012 estimated that a total of 1.6 million rural people will be food insecure in the 2012 to 2013 consumption year. The poor performance is attributed to limited access to cash for inputs, implements as well as erratic rainfall patterns. Access to markets is also a significant factor accounting for limited cash in the rural economy.

According to the ZIMVAC 2011¹ the country has achieved a considerable level of stabilisation in supply of goods and services, capacity utilisation as well as a notable positive GDP growth of 8.1% in 2010 up from 5.7% in 2009. The same assessments noted that on average 31% of all urban households host an orphan whilst 9% had chronically ill members. Challenges that are being faced by communities are that of access to financial resources due to limited economic activities that are available. The UNDP estimates that half of the nation's population lives below the poverty datum line. This has made it difficult to access basic commodities, send children to school as well as access inputs for agricultural activities. The nation's infrastructure is in a general state of disarray as most roads, dams, markets, dip tanks needs to be rehabilitated and resuscitated. The country has low sanitation coverage with most boreholes requiring rehabilitation. Assessments have also shown that most schools have a lower number of toilets compared to the minimum standards (see Sphere Standards Handbook). The country recorded outbreaks of Typhoid and the disease is still to be contained despite widespread.

Overview of the Food Security Project

In an effort to alleviate and address the challenges facing rural and urban households the ZRCS with technical support from the IFRC and financial support from the Japanese Government implemented a food security project aimed at addressing urban food insecurity through food voucher distribution, rural food insecurity through capacity building and inputs support as well as increasing water and sanitation coverage through borehole rehabilitations in communities and latrine construction targeting schools. This is the context which informed the project design and setting of project goals and activities.

1.2 Project Rationale, Aims and Objectives

The Overall project objective is to ensure household food availability, improved incomes and quality of life through provision of safe water and access to sanitation facilities.

(a) Agriculture and vegetable inputs

- To increase household food security and income through increased agricultural output and income. The activities that will lead to the achievement of this outcome is farmer trainings in nutrition gardening, post harvest technologies complemented by inputs support.
- Beneficiaries were also be supported with ammonium nitrate fertilizer, maize, sorghum, groundnuts and vegetable seeds for consumption and income.

¹ ZIMVAC Urban Assessment Report October 2011

(b) Food Voucher

- The activity was implemented in urban areas to support vulnerable households access food commodities for consumption through food distribution through a voucher/electronic cash transfer.
- Targeted beneficiaries were supported with a monthly food voucher worth \$20 per month for 3 months redeemable at selected retail outlets.

(c) Water, Sanitation and Hygiene promotion

- To improve access to safe and clean water for household consumption through rehabilitation of 60 water points. This was going to be achieved through water troughs construction or rehabilitation for livestock consumption.
- Latrines were also constructed at institution to increase sanitation facilities coverage in the targeted district.

The project was implemented in five provinces and 13 districts. Below is a table reflecting the interventions and targets across the 13 districts.

Table 1: Distribution of Interventions across districts and their targets

Province	Districts	Garden Establishment, Tools & Trainings	Agricultural inputs beneficiaries	Food voucher	WATSAN
				Beneficiaries	
Matebeleland South	Gwanda Urban			1,000	
	Gwanda		1,000		150 latrines
	Matobo		1,000		60 boreholes
Mashonaland Central	Mount Darwin		1,000		
	Bindura			1,000	
Mashonaland West	Zvimba	3 gardens and tools	600		
	Hurungwe	2 gardens and tools	400		
	Kadoma			1,000	
Manicaland	Chimanimani urban			960	
	Mutare rural		450		
	Buhera		550		
Masvingo	Mwenezi	X	1,000		
	Chivi	X	1,000		
	Masvingo Urban			1,000	
TOTAL			7000	4960	

1.3 Evaluation Purpose and Objectives

The end of project evaluation seeks to assess the performance of the project including the extent to which interventions on food vouchers/hampers; agricultural recovery, water and sanitation as well as technical support have translated to sustainable livelihoods of the target community and how it has contributed to IFRC/ZRCS Food security programme goals alongside Red Cross national and international goals and objectives.

The following are the **five** key evaluation criteria used by this evaluation:

- Assessment of the **relevance** of the programme. The relevance should be understood as pertinent to the programme with regard to the overall strategies for responding to food insecurity of the ZRCS and the IFRC.
- Evaluate the **effectiveness** of the programme. The effectiveness meaning the degree to which the programme has been able to achieve the objectives, the outputs as outlines in the programme document.
- Consider the **efficiency** of the programme. The efficiency of the programme relates to the degree to which available inputs have been utilized with the highest possible effect, - the quality of programme management.
- Appraise the **sustainability** of the programme. The sustainability of the programme does NOT refer to the programme's capacity to continue operations.
- Critically investigate the contributions of relief activities during the food insecurity period and the impact/likelihood of impact and sustainability of various interventions with special focus on Conservation Agriculture, Inputs support, trainings carried out.
- Evaluate the efficiency of the programme in terms of management, coordination and technical support in order to inform the future development of food security and livelihood programmes.
- Make recommendations for future improvements and documenting best practises.
- Relevant cross cutting issues such as gender, environment or HIV and AIDS and issues of collaboration with other partners like government, WFP and other NGO's were also analysed.

2. Methodology

2.1 Evaluation Approach

The Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) framework (DFID, 2004) was used to assess the contribution that project activities made to sustaining livelihoods. In this assessment, livelihood strategies were defined as those activities undertaken by households and the communities to provide a means of living and ensure household food security.

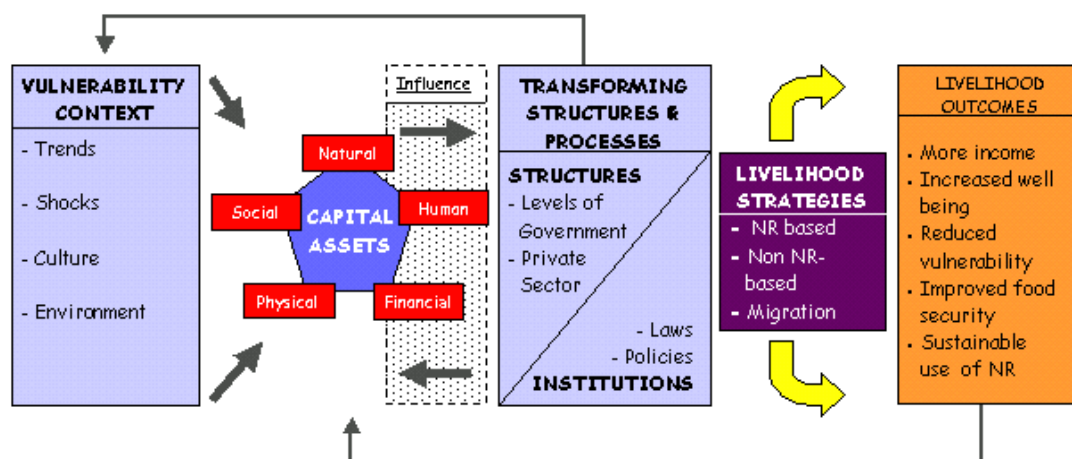


Figure 1: The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach Model (SLA)

The SLA framework (figure 1) places households at the centre of a web of inter-related influences that affect how these households create a livelihood for themselves. Closest to the household at the centre of the framework are the five livelihood assets that they have access to and use i.e. human, financial, physical, social and natural assets. The end-of-project evaluation identified indicators for each of these assets and compared these with the baseline indicators to assess for any significant changes. The extent of their access to these assets is strongly influenced by their vulnerability context. Access is also influenced by the prevailing social, institutional and political environment, which affects the ways in which these households combine and use their assets to achieve their livelihood strategies.

2.2 Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

The end-of-project evaluation adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods of enquiry to facilitate both technical and socio-economic analysis, and was carried out in different but integrated phases.

Phase 1: Preparatory meetings, Background Literature Review and Inception Report.

To establish common ground and harmonise expectations, planning-cum-inception meetings was held with key stakeholders *viz*: IFRC and ZRCS technical personnel. One major outcome of the meeting was the sharing of project documents such as the approved project concept note, project monitoring documents, disbursement reports, progress reports, action plans, and other documents relevant to the evaluation. The background documents and the subsequent literature review became the basis in the development of data collection tools. The inception meetings also mapped a way forward including an agreed methodology, time frames for key processes/events, and personal involved as well as key logistics for the exercise.

Phase 2: Development of Study Tools and Data Collection from Project Sites

Field data collection was at national, provincial and district levels. Consultations focused on project objectives, implementation modalities, achievements and/or shortcomings as well as factors explaining the various outcomes, efficiency analysis, project impact, the sustainability of both project initiatives and benefit streams, best practices, lessons learnt, success stories, challenges encountered and how the project can be improved, up-scaled and sustained beyond its lifespan.

Key Informant Interviews - Key informants comprised the knowledgeable persons within the project area. Such key informants included technical staff from the local authority, health workers at provincial and district level, agricultural extension staff, shop owners/merchants and other local economic elites, village heads/councillors, teachers, water and sanitation committees, DDF, ward development committee members and other development workers at district level. A key informant interview guide was developed for this purpose.

Focus Group Interviews – FGDs were held at field level with project beneficiaries and ZRCS staff and volunteers. In some districts and wards, FGDs also involved both beneficiary and non-beneficiary households. This, however, demanded reliance on a good technique, which encompassed the use of informal interviews as they tend to arouse unintended expectations among non-beneficiaries or even bring out local beneficiary selection politics which would be difficult to validate within the evaluation period. An FGD guide was developed for this purpose. The guide probed related issues by focusing on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the various project elements in the context of relevance, lessons learnt and best practices.

Household Interviews – A comprehensive standard questionnaire was developed to collect data pertaining to the objectives of the evaluation as outlined above. A draft of the formal household questionnaire was developed and shared with IFRC and ZRCS for input before revision and duplication of the field instrument. A live pilot test was also undertaken in the two start-up districts viz: Hurungwe in Mashonaland West Province and Matobo in Matabeleland South Province to fine tune the questionnaire prior to the main data collection exercise. The targeted sample was 700 households, representing 10% of the 7,000 beneficiary households. This evaluation exercise, however, managed to interview xx households. See Table 2.

Table 2: Targeted versus actual interviewed households.

Province	District	Target Household Survey Numbers	Actual Sampled Households	Percentage of Target (%)
Mashonaland Central	Bindura	70	75	107.1
Mashonaland West	Hurungwe	100	111	111.0
	Zvimba	100	69	69.0
	Kadoma	70	57	81.4
Manicaland	Chimanimani	70	65	92.9
Masvingo	Masvingo	70	66	94.3
Matabeleland	Matobo	100	78	78.0
	Gwanda	120	90	75.0
Total		700	611	87.3

Case Studies. – This were conducted with selected project beneficiaries at ward level to study project impact at household level. In depth interviews were used to understand household dynamics and family/personal stories of selected households within the project site to present case studies of success stories.

Direct Observation – This tool was used by consultants to see interventions on the ground for assessment of sustainability, impact, efficiency and effectiveness interventions. This included agricultural projects, water and sanitation structures.

Phase 3- Data analysis and Report Writing

Main activities under this were data entry, cleaning and analysis of survey questionnaires. The Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) was used for quantitative data analysis. Qualitative data from interviews was analysed by In Vivo and Excel. Data collected from the questionnaires was then triangulated with other data from the qualitative methods to help in producing the final report.

Phase 4 – Dissemination

This was devoted to writing of draft reports with preliminary findings which will be presented to IFRC, ZRCS and other stakeholders. Comments from these meetings will be incorporated into a final report which will be presented to IFRC and ZRCS.

2.3 Site Selection and Sampling

The evaluation time frame was limiting to visit all the sites, hence a sampling framework was designed for the end-of-project evaluation. Ideally an end of term evaluation involves measuring project indicators against their baseline status. Thus it is prudent to use similar sites for the end-of-project evaluation as those selected for the baseline to compare the baseline benchmarks against the end line. Special attention was given to statistical significance, agro-ecological representation, IFRC/ZRCS experience in the project sites and gender issues. The team also trained ZRCS volunteers as enumerators thereby capacitating and adding value to the organization.

Table 3: Sampled provinces, districts, intervention components and household numbers.

Province	District	Intervention Components	Sampled HHs for Food Vouchers	Sampled HHs for Agriculture & WATSAN
Mashonaland Central	Bindura	FV	75	0
Mashonaland West	Hurungwe	AG	0	111
	Zvimba	AG	0	69
	Kadoma	FV	57	0
Manicaland	Chimanimani	FV	65	0
Masvingo	Masvingo	FV	66	0
Matabeleland	Matobo	AG and WS	0	78
	Gwanda	FV, AG and WS	48	42
Total			311	300

Key:-

FV – Food Voucher

AG – Agricultural Inputs and Nutrition Gardens

WS – Water and Sanitation

All in all, 311 households were interviewed for the food voucher component, while 300 households were interviewed for the agricultural inputs and nutrition gardens, and the water and sanitation components. In addition, a total of 41 KIIs and 35 FGDs were conducted in the selected eight districts.

2.4 Methodological Challenges

Encountered methodological challenges included:-

- (i) While the reliance on ZRCS care facilitators/volunteers as enumerators facilitated greater reach due to their knowledge of the areas and beneficiaries which at the same time worked in capacity building of the organization, this could have introduced a level of bias in collected data. However, it should also be noted that training ensures objectivity while the suspected bias is insignificant.
- (ii) Not all targeted key informants could be interviewed due to concurrent commitments but where feasible repeated calls were made to ensure greater coverage and depth in both stakeholder consultation and data triangulation.
- (iii) Adoption of the individual household visit in conducting the household surveys in some districts, as opposed to the use of the foci group approach, made it difficult to achieve the intended sampling targets.

3. Food Voucher Programme

3.1 Relevance and Appropriateness

The design of the social protection through social transfers (food voucher and food hamper) was relevant as it met the immediate needs of the vulnerable groups which included child headed households, elderly people, chronically ill people and people with disabilities. The target group was quite relevant and appropriate for such an intervention. The transfers were done at a time when product availability had improved on the market and vulnerable households could access basic products on the market. Thus a voucher through a retail outlet was very appropriate. The months on which the transfers were made are appropriate. Most of the urban poor do practice urban agriculture and their vulnerability to food insecurity follows the strong rural-urban linkage pattern. This means they follow the same hunger season as the rural people. The only challenge with the project was the short period (3 months) in which people received food as compared to their hunger season which stretches to February and March of the following year. This basically means the food support came during the months that they were planting their fields, thus it helped them to put maximum effort on their plots by avoiding offering labour to others in exchange for food. The subsequent months when they had to work on their fields were affected as they did not have enough food and energy, so they would spend more time hunting for work from others for food instead of working their fields.

In response to poor market conditions in Chimanimani, the programme appropriately responded through a giving out food hamper with the same value as the food voucher. The response ensured that project beneficiaries receive the same basket of commodities as they should have through the food voucher while at the same time addressing the supply side challenges encountered.

Most NGOs and government interventions normally target rural areas so by targeting urban communities the programme is meeting a very important need. By targeting the chronically ill, the programme also was relevant in ensuring that the chronically ill and poor people take drugs as regularly as is required. Several FGDs confirmed this view of increased adherence to drugs. Figure 2 below shows that more than 60 % of the sampled household heads reported their health status as regularly sick as compared to less than 30% across towns whose health status was good. There is a significant 10% of them in Chimanimani and Kadoma that reported as bedridden. This only attests to the relevance of the intervention in the urban areas chosen. Figure 2 below shows the proportion of heads of households and their health status.

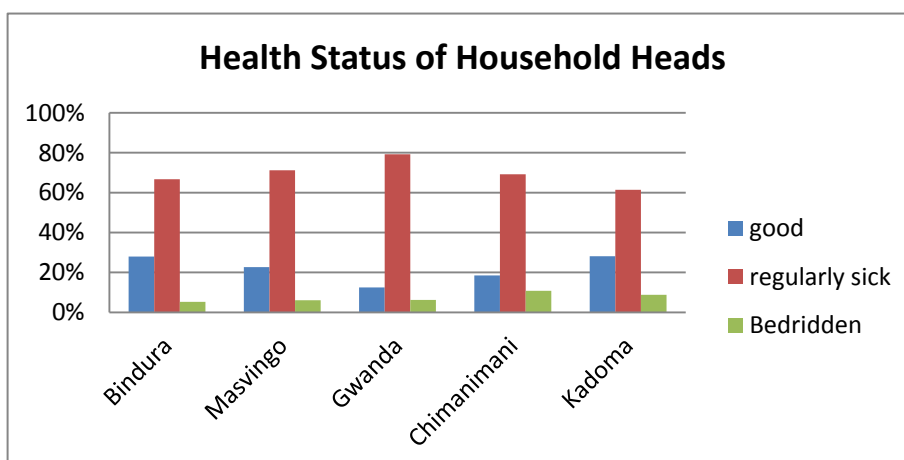


Figure 2: Percentage HHd heads by health status.

Alignment with policy frameworks

The government now has a social protection framework in place and the urban programme intervention was slightly misaligned to this framework in one aspect. The government has rolled out its programme to support the urban poor and vulnerable although it has already launched the programme in 10 pilot rural districts through unconditional cash transfers to such target groups as targeted by the project. Instead of food handouts the government policy is to give unconditional cash transfer on a bimonthly basis for longer periods in excess of 12 months. The longer duration help make the support predictable thus allowing households to plan and invest their cash wisely based on their needs and development aspirations. The programme's monthly voucher value of \$20 is however in line with government stipulated figures on the harmonised cash transfer programme. The Department of Social Services (DSS) played a key role in facilitating selection of clients for social transfers (food voucher and food hamper) across the programme sites. The FGD's with beneficiaries showed that they preferred unconditional cash transfers or a mix with partly cash and partly food as it gave them more flexibility on purchases but in Chimanimani there was an expressed preference for food over cash by the majority of the beneficiaries. This is mostly a reflection of the poor market conditions in the area.

Targeting

The targeting process was appropriate in that it involved key stakeholders who are relevant in the process. There has been a surge in urban poverty over the years and not much is being done by the humanitarian community. However the timeframe allocated for beneficiary selection process meant that it was rushed and proper engagement of some stakeholders was missed somehow. The verification process could not be thoroughly done resulting in some avoidable challenges that were encountered. This also is reflected in the exclusion errors that occurred although much of it is accounted for by lack of resources to take on a higher case load of deserving beneficiaries. The cited key drivers of exclusion errors were the insufficient resources to cover all in need of support, time duration allocated to ensure due process of selection and verification of beneficiaries, absenteeism of potential beneficiaries during selection process either due to poor information flow or having travelled out of location and the lack of requisite identity documents by individuals. It was quite evident that in the mining and farming towns like Chimanimani there is a high percentage of people without proper identification documents.

Overall the relevance of such an intervention would have been enhanced by integrating it with other livelihood interventions. This would ensure that the beneficiaries have a chance of graduating out of food insecurity within a short time frame than with food only support. There remains a gap in livelihoods and food security support for the urban poor and vulnerable households after the project has ended.

3.2 Effectiveness

Below is a table of progress made against the result indicators as agreed in the logframe. See table 4.

Table 4: Urban Food Vouchers Component Result Progress

Objective 2: To Improve access to food markets through provision of food vouchers in urban Districts				
Indicator	Progress to date	Project Target	% Progress Project Target	Comments
Output 1 : 5.000 households receive \$20 vouchers monthly valued at \$100,000 per month.				
Indicator 1: No of people who receive FV	4960	5000	99	Chimanimani, beneficiaries reduced to 960 to accommodate transportation costs
Indicator 2: average annual rate of change in number of OVC enrolled and attending school	53.1 % of Hhds with children attending school	--	--	This is % of hhds with children attending school. Increased by 30% from 23.7% at baseline to 53.1% of vulnerable hhds by end of project evaluation
Output 2: Improved food and nutrition security of beneficiaries.				
Indicator 3: % of households with improved food consumption (quantity and diversity)	4960	5000	99	The hhds increased the amount of food consumed during the months of food support

99% of target was achieved in terms of number of people reached with food support for the period of three months, and as a result almost all of them had improved food consumption in terms of food amounts and diversity for the duration of the distributions. There was an increase in the number of households with children attending school at evaluation as compared to the baseline by 30%. FGDs pointed to the fact that during the months of food distribution more children will go to school because they won't be hungry. By specifying the types of basic commodities, the system was effective in ensuring that beneficiaries don't abuse the system but would buy the basic commodities that they were entitled to. Thus it aided in ensuring that food is available to households by minimising risk of misuse through buying ineligible commodities such as liquor at the expense of food for the family. Below is a picture showing the shopping processes at the retail outlet.



Pictures 1 and 2: Official Launch and Process of voucher redemption at the OK Kadoma branch

The system was also relevant and appropriate in supporting the local economy by increasing sales for the retail outlets. One branch reported that their monthly sales rose by about 8% (monthly sales averaging between US\$400-500 000) for the months they were serving their project clients and this is very significant in any business. So the project was effective in supporting the local economy as well.

3.3 Efficiency

The electronic voucher system was designed to be efficient and indeed it was efficient in comparison to the paper vouchers or the direct distribution. The efficiency comes in through elimination of transportation costs by passing them on to the retailer and quick service to beneficiaries. With good organisation and management about 1000 beneficiaries were served over a period of two days. In addition the efficiency is built through less time for reconciliation of transactions as this was centrally done at OK Head office. It practically meant that redemption of vouchers could literally be centrally monitored via a computer at OK Head office. Such a system allows for elimination of redemption challenges if there is close monitoring. However, because voucher redemption happened at several OK Branches, the efficiency of the system is partially depended on the people manning the various branches. While on average it took most of the branches two days to serve their entire clientele one outlet would take up to a week or more.

A Learning point for future programming: At one of the outlets people were not even allowed into the shop floor but were served through one till operator at the back of the shop. Clients would queue up as early as 0400 hrs and get served as late as 7pm. The clients did not enjoy the freedom to exercise their right to choose on the few cents left as change. At FGDs in that location most beneficiaries suggested the need for more than one outlet to avoid such complacency because the retailer has cash already locked in while the client has no alternative. The lesson is there is scope for engagement with multiple retail outlets in future programming as a strategy for improving efficiency and empowering beneficiaries through a wider choice of options.

3.4 Impact

The food voucher programme played a very pivotal role given that the majority of the vulnerable households benefitting from the programme had neither alternative food nor income sources². The food voucher programme transformed the livelihoods and welfare of children under the care of the elderly, PLWHA, female-headed and other vulnerable households primarily by improving household food security. See Figure 3.

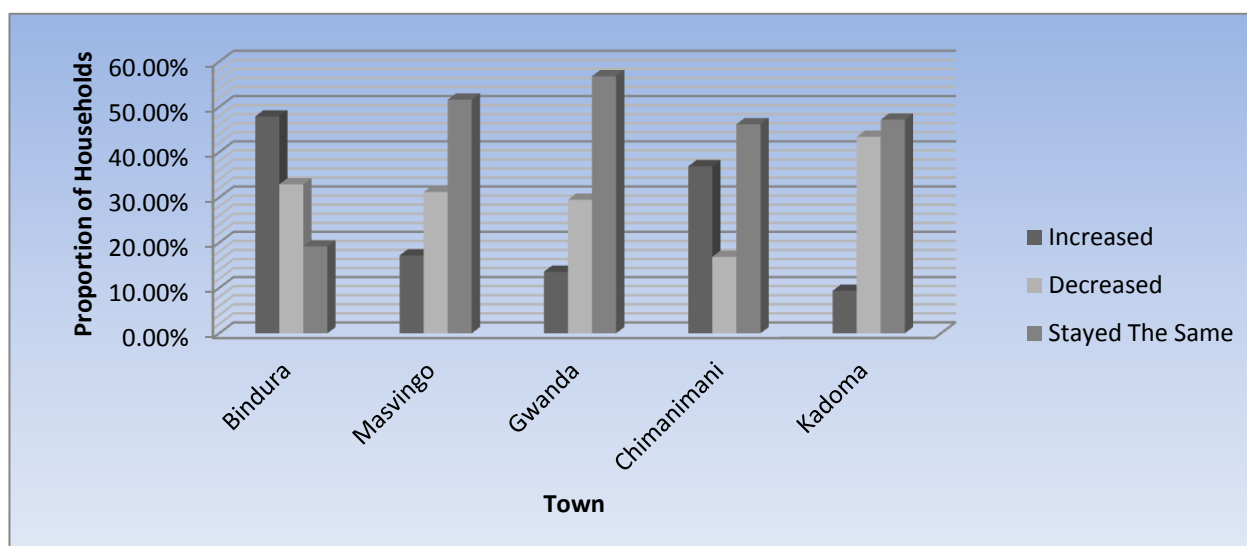


Figure 3: Increase in household food sources.

² The majority have no formal employment, while the few relying on vending, cross-border trade and other informal income generation initiatives are harassed by municipal police and receive meagre incomes.

School attendance by children from vulnerable households is also fostered by the food voucher programmes, except in cases where teachers use their own resources to provide food to OVCs which then acted as incentives for them to attend school. According to information from FGDs, before the programme, children of school going age from vulnerable households rarely went to school. It had become routine for parents and children from vulnerable households to wake up and either go begging from motorists and passers-by in the streets or looking for food. The food voucher programme had a direct impact on livelihoods given that improved household food security facilitated school attendance and participation in class and sporting activities by children from vulnerable households. According to the interviewed school heads, the food voucher programme positively complemented government programmes e.g. some OVCs were benefitting from the government initiated Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) programme but were failing to attend school due to hunger. Thus the food voucher programme facilitated school attendance by OVCs. Food assistance also resulted in cost savings, with money saved from food purchases used for payment of school fees and meeting urgent medical bills. The programme also enabled vulnerable households to channel whatever income they generated on other key necessities such as water, electricity and education thereby safeguarding livelihoods and drastically reducing the number of school dropouts. See Figure 4.

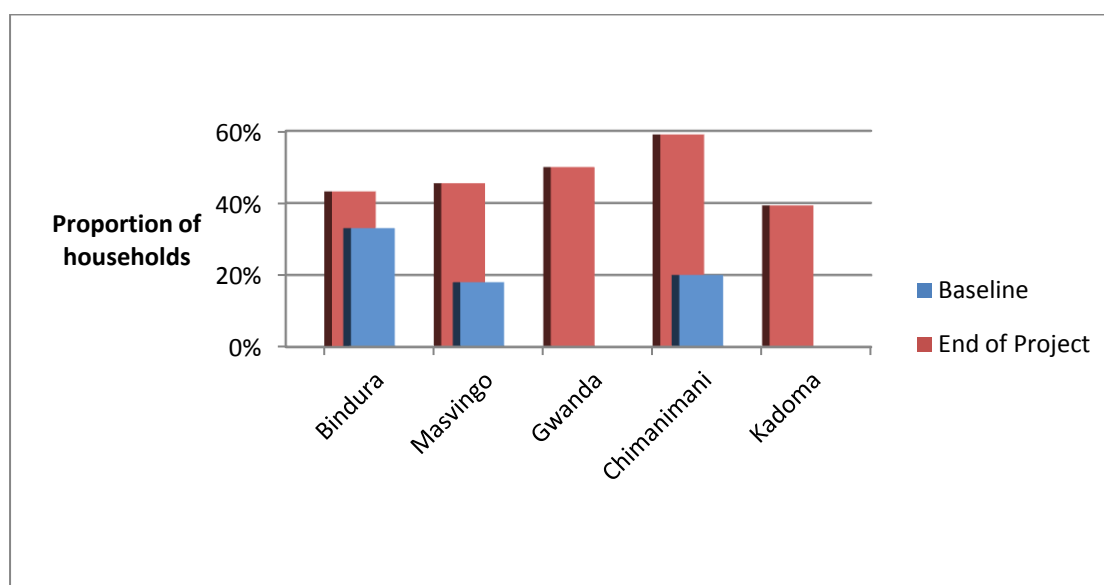


Figure 4: Proportion of households with children of school going age attending school before and during the food voucher programme.

Before the food voucher programme a number of parents from vulnerable households were so ravaged by hunger so much they could not engage in any income generating activities such as petty trade or gold panning which are common in some urban areas. This was subsequently restored by the food voucher programme. Before the food voucher programme households had on average 1.51 meals per day, which improved to an average of up to 2.01 meals per day. See Figure 5. The food voucher programme not only increased beneficiary households' purchasing power but also improved households' food diversity, nutritional status as well as health and immunity levels. Some People Living with HIV and Aids who were bedridden and could not take medication resulting in high levels of default significantly recovered and are now up and about. The food voucher programme

also lessened the psychological burden on women. Gender disaggregated analysis show that women are traditionally responsible for food provision in the home. Women who are chronically ill became settled that their families were getting by (ensured of food security) even though they were not in a position to fend for their families. In other words, the food voucher programme reduced the stress burden placed on women and PLWHA by providing an alternative food source for their households.

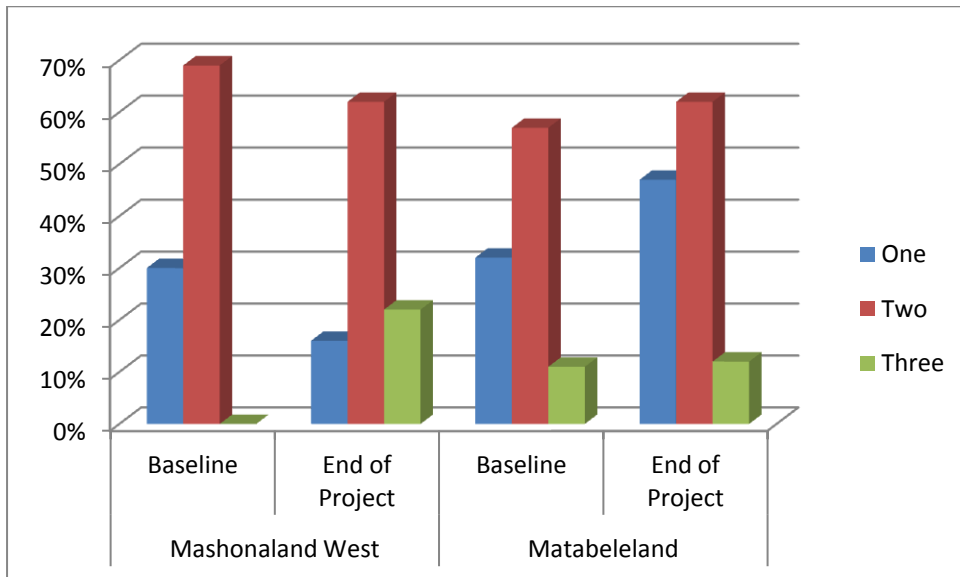


Figure 5: Number of meals per day during the baseline and end-of-project evaluation periods.

A number of quantifiable changes as a result of participation in the Food Voucher programme were also evident from analysis of the household survey results. See Figure 6.

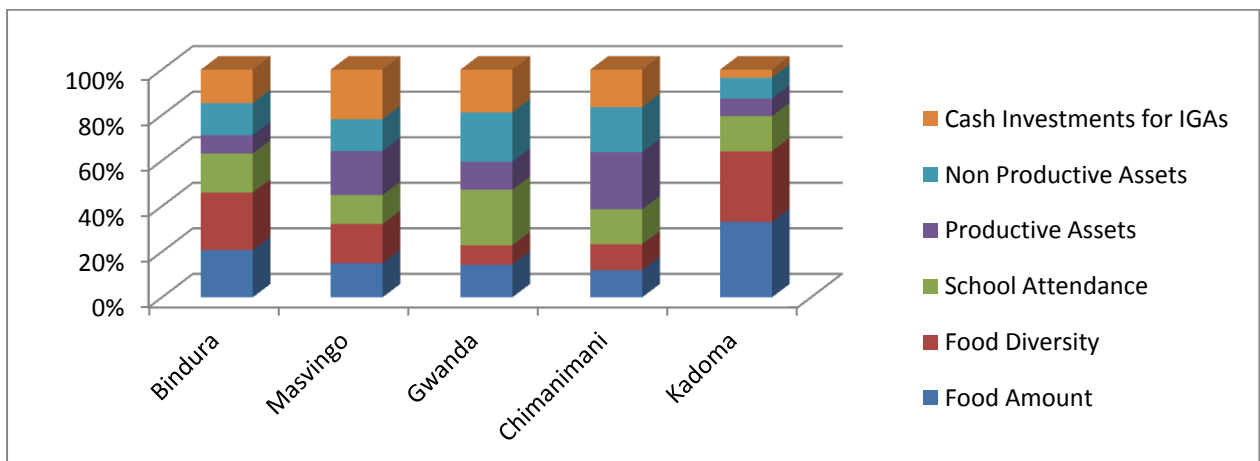


Figure 6: Quantifiable changes as a result of participation in the Food Voucher Programme.

Evidence of impact of the food voucher initiative is also available from the programme's government partners, notably the significant reduction in the number of clients approaching the Department of Social Welfare seeking food assistance. According to sources at the Department of Social Welfare, an average of 15 – 20 persons approaches the department

weekly in search of assistance. This average declined to between 0 – 2 persons per week when the IFRC/ZRCS food voucher programme was operational. The food voucher programme also restored dignity in beneficiary households since, according to them, vulnerable households “could also shop in up-market supermarkets and access basics they could not afford before”, improved equity within intervention areas, and contributed to a more peaceful family environment since food insecurity often breeds instability within the home and gender-based violence. The food voucher programme also ultimately improved the visibility of the IFRC and the ZRCS.

3.5 Sustainability

There is little likelihood that the food voucher programme activities and benefits will continue to accrue to beneficiaries beyond the lifespan of the project making sustainability questionable. The food voucher programme has never been designed as a sustainable initiative. This is because by design such food assistance initiatives are only immediate short-term stop-gap measures. Food vouchers are food based items unlike assets which can continue to bring benefits over a longer period of time. Feeding also creates a dependency syndrome in beneficiaries. There are reports in some areas, based on FGDs with care facilitators, that since the end of the programme the number of bedridden chronically ill people has increased and cases of default on medication taking has also increased. There are also fears of starvation given that most urban centres are in drought prone areas rendering urban agriculture ineffective, while other members of vulnerable households could also end up involved in risky behavior as part of their coping strategies such as theft and prostitution. Longer-term initiatives such as the promotion and facilitation of income generation activities are the kind of schemes that ensure that beneficiaries are not perpetual receivers of food.

The food voucher programme design is also such that there is scope for the sustained use of the food purchase system beyond the lifespan of the project. Records of cards and the details of the beneficiaries remain in the OK Shop Easy card system. Thus beneficiaries can continue to use the cards for their shopping since the system is designed in such a way that the facility remains open so that as long as the customer has the card they can use the card, although currently OK reports very little activity outside the food voucher programme window.

3.6 Best Practices and Lessons Learnt

The use of vouchers and the electronic cash transfer system was convenient for beneficiaries, non-discriminatory (everyone receives the same basket of basic necessities), much faster, more efficient and more cost effective. The system reduces the burden on project officers and volunteers and is therefore easier to manage, flexible in terms of redemption time and day, reduces opportunism and scope for system abuse, reduces incidences of stock theft and the need for 24-hour security, reduces political focus and interference, facilitates the revival of local micro-economies and multiplier-effects through the macro-economy, and improves organizational visibility. The food voucher programme was also the first to be implemented by the ZRCS as such there was no under-scoping or over-scoping. However, efficiency of the system depends on personalities manning the various retail outlets. Thus close monitoring will still be needed to ensure good client service throughout the branches.

3.7 Recommendations

While the food voucher initiative is very commendable, the programme was very short³, and according to local stakeholders, was abruptly cut. Funds permitting, the programme should be sustained over a much longer period while the number of beneficiaries in future programmes should be trebled or multiplied by tenfold⁴. In addition to extending prolonging the food voucher programme, there is need to expand the programme to rural communities because the nature of vulnerability in rural areas is the same as the vulnerability in urban areas. The level of vulnerability is generally very high owing to a number of factors e.g. recurrent droughts during the 2012/13 agricultural season, which are part of the climate change phenomena, and the fact that the success of smallholder farmers is increasingly diminishing year after year, and hence the need for assistance. Thus, restricting the number of beneficiaries to only a 1,000 households within urban centres also limits programme outreach and impact since the number of vulnerable households is much higher, and hence the need for programme expansion. Some food voucher programme beneficiaries are tenants. So logistically, there should be ways of keeping track of tenants who move. Short-term interventions can also include disaster responses such as the provision of tents to Masvingo and Matabeleland South flood victims, food relief and the distribution of agricultural inputs to aid recovery in the long-term.

To improve the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of future programmes, there is also need for improving the engagement and involvement of stakeholders at different levels. One alternative strategy is taking advantage of ZRCS visibility within the communities and the rapport already established with local authorities. As an example, target beneficiaries can be assisted by the IFRC/ZRCS food voucher programme for 3 months, with local authorities taking over after the initial 3 months by supporting the target vulnerable households with short-term casual employment for another 3 months. Such short-term casual employment can include tasks like grass slashing whose payments may be deposited directly into the beneficiaries' OK Shop Easy card systems for the use by beneficiaries beyond the lifespan of the Food Security Project.

A number of schools have a lot of needy students who fail to get assistance from the Department of Social Welfare or independent donors. Thus, for OVCs there is a need to diversify and intensify support including assistance with school fees⁵, school uniforms, stationery and primary health for those under long-term medication. Food voucher programmes can also be replaced and/or complemented by school-based food allocations and supplementary feeding for all students at the school. Supplementary feeding ensures that all pupils benefit while school attendance is guaranteed. This is because some pupils might not be OVCs but not necessarily better off in terms of food security than those classified as OVCs. It might also be critical to provide assistance to students during the initial post-education period when support is critical in setting them up in life. There could also be a cadetship scheme for the supported students so that they appreciate that they have to work to enjoy the benefits and reduce fostering a donor-dependency syndrome in young people.

There is also need to graduate food voucher intervention programmes from an emergency mode to recovery programmes which are more long-term. This entails moving away from

³ The food voucher programme was implemented for only three (3) months.

⁴ The food voucher programme had a very low coverage, in terms of scope and the number of target beneficiaries, compared to the ZRCS's conventional CHBC programme.

⁵ According to school authorities, the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) is currently assisting less than 10% of the pupils in need.

short-term stand-alone food voucher programmes to long-term initiatives such as distribution of agricultural inputs through Market-Based Input Assistance Mechanisms, training and capacity building, various disaster reduction initiatives⁶ and assisting vulnerable households in embarking on Income Generation Activities (IGAs). Agricultural inputs are key but erratic rainfall in most target areas fail the beneficiary households thus there is also a need to diversify interventions into micro-irrigation schemes. These can be established in areas with small dams. Future programmes can also focus on rehabilitating small dams in both peri-urban and rural areas for purposes of supporting micro-irrigation schemes. The Japanese Government, IFRC and the ZRCS can also complement the efforts of government, other donors and NGOs in mitigating the impact of recurrent droughts micro-irrigation scheme support and development. This will also reduce the problem of donor dependency syndrome in beneficiary communities.

IGAs can include car washing, tyre mending, brick moulding, candle making, soap production, the production and marketing of cobra and petroleum jelly, embroidery, jersey knitting, uniform and dress making. Agricultural-based urban and peri-urban IGAs can include specific or a combination of interventions such as rabbit production and pass-on-schemes⁷, nutrition/market gardening, poultry (broiler and egg) production, goat and goat milk production, as well as peanut butter processing and marketing. Communities could be assisted with the initial start-up capital and once they start they can generate own capital through various IGAs. If well mobilized communities are always willing to participate in initiatives that assist them. What is key is to provide start-up capital, sensitize community leaders, ensure greater programme awareness and the active participation by all groups within target communities. Income generation activities can be combined with training and capacity building, while involvement in IGAs greatly enhances the sustainability of the interventions, and can also improve beneficiaries' engagement with retailers e.g. money from IGAs can be "banked" with the OK Easy Shop card system for a more sustained utilization of the Shop Easy system.

⁶ Large parts of Matabeleland South and Masvingo provinces were hit by floods, making it one area requiring post-intervention support.

⁷ Rabbits have a very short reproduction cycle entailing that a rabbit production and pass-on-scheme can potentially benefit multitudes of urban beneficiaries.

4. Agriculture and Nutrition Gardening

4.1 Relevance and Appropriateness

Inputs Distribution

The project distributed agriculture inputs as direct distributions in 9 districts across the five provinces as direct distributions to about 7000 farming households. The project targeted the poor and vulnerable households some with limited access to draught power and labour. By distributing inputs the project met an identified need and gap that most smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe are facing as a result of the liquidity problem in the economy as well as the challenges of high cost of agricultural inputs. This is also part of the national programme whereby during this last season the government and the entire humanitarian community was targeting support to 80 000 households nationally with subsidized inputs and therefore the project contributed about 8% to the national target of households. Input distributions help protect the modest asset base for the poor and vulnerable as it prevents them from selling off their assets so as to buy inputs for the season.

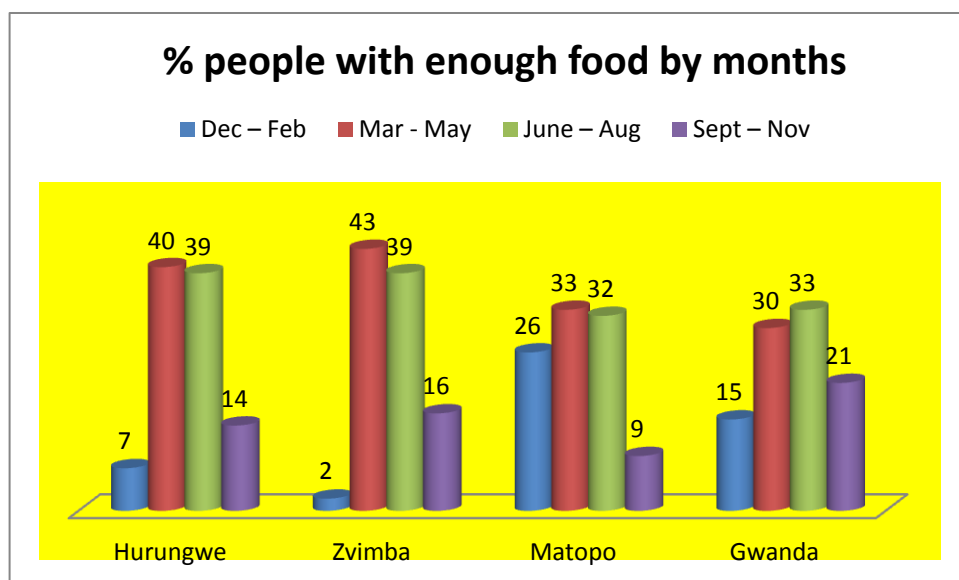


Figure 7: Proportion of people with enough food in different months

Figure 7 above shows the proportion of people who reported having enough food for the different months of the year. It is clear that the people targeted normally will be struggling to have enough food through their own means particularly for the hunger season of September to November and December to February. Less than 50% of the respondents indicated having enough food even just after harvest months of March-May and June to August. This means in terms of targeting the project targeted people who are food poor and deserving of such support.

By directly distributing small grains and OPV maize the programme has maintained some control in influencing what the farmers grow. However the farmers expressed less preference for OPV maize over hybrid maize regardless of the fact that they are aware of the benefit of guaranteed seed supply for the following season through OPV maize. Two reasons were proffered for their lack of preference for OPV maize, the first being that for OPV maize to perform well they needed optimal levels of fertilizer input which they could not

afford and secondly, they intimated that for the same level of nutrient/fertilizer support, hybrid maize tend to give a better return than OPV maize. This only reflects the rationality of a farmer which if understood before a programme is designed will help meet their needs better. This implies that providing farmers with a choice for selecting inputs of their own choice for example through input fairs would have ensured that farmers select inputs of their choice which may increase the chances of them utilizing the inputs.

The most common input assistance mechanisms employed by humanitarian organizations have been free direct input distributions over the past years. These mechanisms were considered to be appropriate in previous years, characterized by economic decline, relatively high levels of food insecurity and unavailability of agricultural inputs through formal marketing channels. However, given the changing environment, brought about by improved macro-economic and food security conditions, more market based input assistance methods to support smallholder farmers, are considered to be more appropriate. Therefore the programmes for the 2012/13 agriculture season was meant to focus more on supporting farmers through utilizing input and output markets. Thus the framework proposed that farmers should not receive inputs for free, but contribute towards the inputs through the use of subsidized vouchers and/or contract farming arrangements. This implies that while it is appropriate for the project to offer agriculture input and extension support, the mechanisms for delivering that support need to be in line with national guidelines and should support the market recovery rather than undermine the market recovery that will ensure continued availability of inputs closer to the farmers after the project has ended. Thus direct distribution becomes inappropriate under the prevailing conditions and the emerging donor thinking of giving farmers a choice to select and prioritise the input type that is most constraining in their production.

Alignment with Policy - While the group is considered a vulnerable group the fact remains that on average each household has 3 people providing agricultural labour hence most of them could have benefited from a bigger input pack size. There is labour available for most of these rural vulnerable and poor households. The national guidelines framework further stipulates minimum voucher value should be \$160 so as to meaningfully contribute to household food security and reduce perennial need for external aid by farming households. This means the voucher value of close to US\$40 per farmer (10kg maize seed and 25 kg AN) fell below the minimum support recommended for attainment of such a goal. The same was echoed by the beneficiaries themselves who lamented the smaller input pack sizes especially AN fertiliser. To compound the situation was the heavy rains that fell the period just prior to the evaluation that caused heavy leaching mostly in the sandy soils.

Nutrition Gardening

The project established new gardens and provided training and other support that will enable them to produce high value crops for consumption and formal as well as informal markets in areas surrounding the project area. The project distributed 5 types of garden seeds. The thrust was to train farmers on seedbed establishment, transplanting, fertility management, pest and disease management, post harvest handling and storage and marketing. Each farmer has between 130m² and 160m² of land available for irrigated production throughout the year in the gardens. Almost 100% of the farmers trained acknowledged that the garden related training was relevant to them including all the components/topics covered during the trainings. The training was offered in collaboration with Agritex who are in the community and mandated to train by government that is making use of the locally available resources. It means the project met a knowledge gap that was there in the farmers by offering appropriate training. Table 5 below shows the % of people who received the training and rated it as relevant to them and went on to adopt the practices they learnt.

Table 5: % farmers who received garden training and relevance of training

	Trained (%)	Relevance of training (%)	Adoption rate (%)
Received nutritional gardens training	68.7	100	98.3
Improved nutrition (benefits of vegetable consumption)	49.8	99.2	100
Vegetable processing and preservation	49.6	93.8	94.8
Marketing + agribusiness	27	100	100

Gardens are contributing to dietary diversity at household level and towards nutrition improvement. Most of the households grow vegetables primarily for household consumption though not exclusively for that purpose. It basically means that their primary aim with gardening is to supplement household consumption requirements, with surpluses being for sale. Gardens empower women as well through giving them direct access to cash income which they control. It is a general view of these communities that gardens are for women who are responsible for their kitchens. Thus women feel more in control and decide on use of their money and it helps them prioritise and meet household's needs such as buying school uniforms for their children, contribute towards school fees and children's clothing and buying their kitchen utensils. A good number particularly in Zvimba reported during FGDs having been able to purchase school uniforms as well as paying for school fees through income from selling vegetables. Therefore gardens as an intervention are very relevant and appropriate for these areas and the combined effect of providing fencing for the gardens meant the project also mainstreamed the environment in its design. However issue of seasonal water sources reduces the relevance of such good investments as some gardens have seasonal water sources and that disrupted production during peak dry months of October and November in 3 out of 5 gardens in Mashonaland west province.

4.2 Effectiveness

Effectiveness is a multi-faceted concept that measures the extent to which planned activities achieve their purpose, or whether this can be expected to happen on the basis of the results. Effectiveness also assesses the physical progress to date and the real differences made in practice by the activities funded and how far the intended beneficiaries really benefited from the earmarked products or rendered services.

Inputs Distribution

An input package of maize or sorghum seed at 10kg and 5kg respectively and 25kg of top dressing Ammonium Nitrate fertiliser was given per beneficiary. The project had planned instead to give in addition 2kg groundnuts per beneficiary but could not achieve that set target due to price increases on the products between programme conception and implementation. The table below shows the level of progress against the indicators in the programme logframe for the agriculture input support component.

Table 6: Progress against result indicators under agriculture input component

AGRICULTURE OUTPUT/RESULT ACHIEVEMENT				
Objective 2: To Improve access to food markets through provision of food vouchers in urban Districts				
Indicator	Progress to date	Project Target	% Progress Project Target	Comments
Output 1 : 7.000 households receive agricultural input packs				
Indicator 1: No of people who receive agricultural inputs	7000	7000	100	Households received 25kg AN fert and maize and sorghum
Indicator 2: Average area under agricultural production	Maize= 2.2 Ha Mash.W Sorghum =1.3 Ha Mat S	0	#DIV/0!	The targeted 7000 households as follows 5000HH got 10kg sorghum and 5kg maize seed each whilst 2000HH received 10kg maize seed. Sorghum area is negligible in Mash.W while maize area is small in Mat.South
Output 2: 7,000 households receive training in production and CA methods				
Indicator 3: No of farmers trained	2000	2000	100	50 people trained under ToT and then cascaded to the 2000 beneficiaries at a ratio of 1 volunteer to 40 beneficiaries
Indicator 4: No of farmers who adopted farming and harvesting techniques	2000	2000	100	50 people trained under ToT and then cascaded to the 2000 beneficiaries at a ratio of 1 volunteer to 40 beneficiaries

The table reflects that 100% of the target number of beneficiaries to receive seed and fertiliser input support was reached and the same received agriculture related trainings. The training was made possible through the use of Agritex and volunteers who were trained as Trainers by Agritex. They then cascaded the training to the rest of the beneficiaries with 65% confirming having received training in Conservation Farming (CF) and varying proportions having received other components of the training. The beneficiaries mainly benefited from previous ZRCS trainings that were offered through other programmes. Of those that received the trainings from before, more than 86% confirmed having adopted these practices on their current crops. See table 7 below.

Table 7: Percentage of farmers who received training in improved farming techniques

	Trained (%)	Relevance to the farmer (%)	Adoption rate (%)
Conservation Farming (CF)	65.6	99.4	86.6
Agro-forestry	14	92.1	92.1
Crop rotation	70.5	98.4	98.4
Inter-cropping	39.7	99.1	95.4
Marketing + agribusiness	28.7	100	100

(Please note that relevance and adoption are %s of those trained)

The limiting factor to the effectiveness of the component to improving household food security is the low amount of fertiliser which doesn't match the amount of seed given. In a case of limiting resources, research has shown that the most limiting factor to smallholder farm productivity is fertiliser particularly nitrogen fertiliser. Thus the greatest impact of input support to food production at household level comes from nitrogen fertiliser support, and not necessarily from seed support. This implies that in such cases the programme may need to consider supporting farmers with higher amounts of AN even without seed support but at the same time contributing more to household food production.

Nutrition Gardening

Community gardens interventions and the desire to establish sustainable market linkages for the supported gardens reflect mixed results. The set target of establishing 8 gardens by the project was reached through establishing completely new gardens, providing them with fencing material, garden tools and inputs, and the relevant trainings. This reflects a 100% achievement on target which is highly commendable for the project. This was also made possible by the strong participation, commitment and dedication by communities and volunteers. However, no effective market linkages were established except that garden produce was mostly sold to buyers within the community and less with the external market. This was due to lack of time and resources to ensure that this effectively happens. See Table 8 below.

Table 8: Progress against result indicators under garden component

Output 3: 10 nutrition gardens established				
Indicator 6: No of functional community gardens established	8	8	100	The target number of gardens established and there is crop production in the gardens
Indicator 7: No of farmers trained in nutrition promotion and garden management	50	50	100	50 people trained under ToT and then cascaded to the 2000 beneficiaries at a ratio of 1 volunteer to 40 beneficiaries
Indicator 8: No of households who received training in nutrition promotion and garden management through cascading	3000	3000		3000 beneficiaries reached through cascading done by trained volunteers
Indicator 9: % increase in household income from market linkages	Garden Income for 2012 Zvimba = \$269 Hurungwe = \$100			Actual % increase cannot be established due to lack of baseline information. However most households indicated that they had realised income from sales of vegetable.

The training of trainers happened across all the gardens but the cascading of training could not happen across all districts. In one of the districts cascading of garden training did not happen due to unavailability of training materials/aids or resource support that were supposed to be made available to trainers. This is evidenced by the fact the highest percentage that received garden training was about 68% (see table 8 above). However of those that received the training almost 100% of them went on to adopt the practices they had learnt during the trainings. This reflects the effectiveness of the training that was provided by experienced Agritex officials. The only notable downside of the training was the lack of standardisation of the training. The training course was very much dependent on the trainers and what the district trainers would have decided. The project lost an opportunity of ensuring minimum standards in terms of content and quality through developing standard manuals and/or syllabi in collaboration with its partners, which all districts could have followed so as to ensure minimum content and quality of training. The variable proportion of the people who reported having received other training sub topics (improved nutrition - 49%, vegetable processing - 49% and marketing and agribusiness - 27%) reflects the fact that some had forgotten or simply the topics were not emphasized enough during the trainings. All these topics were reportedly covered during the trainings. The trainings were over 2 days instead of the normal 4-5 days according to Agritex. The main argument for the longer duration of training is the need for more practical demonstrations and hands on approach thus covering content slowly to ensure that all adults are kept on board and that the training is more effective.

By providing a diversity of seed packs to garden beneficiaries the project was attempting to promote dietary diversity. Below is a collage of pictures that reflect the status of those gardens during the time of the evaluation.

The pictures below reflect the diversity that is found in the gardens now unlike when they did not have the gardens. They testified some of the beneficiaries to the fact they had never been used to eating green mealies in December or January but it's now happening as a result of the project. The presence of carrots, okra and pumpkins also reflect the introduction of the different colours of vegetables to their diet and more so available for longer durations than before and that qualifies a garden to be named a nutritional garden. Thus the project was effective in introducing dietary diversity in the lives of the beneficiaries.

There are two main elements that were highlighted that limits the effectiveness of the gardens. First it's the issue of water supply to the gardens. Only two out of the five gardens in Mashonaland west province have perennial water sources. This implies that production was and is disrupted during the peak dry months of October and November thus reducing the times they access fresh vegetables from their gardens. Secondly the issue of distance to gardens from some beneficiary homes. This emanates from the fact that these are new gardens that were established and certain criterion was used to select beneficiaries at ward level. Thus some have to travel distances as long as 5-6 kilometres to get to their gardens thereby limiting their effective utilisation of portions allocated to them in those gardens. The more gardens there are the more this problem may be solved since no one vulnerable household will surrender their space in gardens due to distance. This in a way undermines the good mainstreaming of gender and OVCs, as it's often the case that women are the ones who work in these gardens. There is always the common problem of not prioritising gardening activities by farmers that is affecting gardening activities during the rain season. There is clear evidence of it as shown by the picture above (bottom right) of one of the gardens in Hurungwe. This is a common problem country wide and requires a special attention when establishing gardens. However it doesn't reflect irrational behaviour on the part of the farmers but it is something that will need a bit more time working with farmers to

help them manage risk of field crop failure by also attending to gardens during the rainy season.



Picture 3 – 6: Top and bottom left - Zvimba ward 28 garden Bottom right - Hurungwe ward 13.

Other indicators were difficult to track and measure during implementation and could neither be done during the evaluation due to limitation of time such as the percent of people above survival threshold.

4.3 Efficiency

The project had a team in the provinces which meant that the team was close to project beneficiaries and stakeholders. This helped project achieve most of its targets on time. Agricultural inputs for the field crops were distributed in time for the rain season, which means farmers did not lose out as they planted crops by the optimal planting time. Distributing inputs on time increase resource use efficiency by beneficiaries. Farmers have a tendency to plant on their best plots first and they manage those well throughout the season. If inputs are distributed late there is risk of abuse through either selling or exchanging for something else or consumption or planting on the worst portions of their fields. The same can happen when less preferred inputs are given to farmers. There is an issue of low preference for OPV maize over hybrid maize particularly in Mashonaland provinces by beneficiaries. The farmer trainings happened before inputs were distributed which is very ideal in promoting efficient use of inputs. The garden fencing materials and inputs were also supplied well in time and *within budget* to allow even two cropping cycles by the time of

evaluation to have been completed. This is highly commendable for a project operating on tight timeline. The only challenge as highlighted by garden beneficiaries was the issue of certain type of garden inputs that were delivered out of ideal season of planting such as onions. The ideal time for garden inputs distribution is February to March so that they raise their seedlings and plan their cropping well on time for the garden season. This increases chances of efficient utilisation of inputs unlike what will happen if they have to keep seeds for the next season.

Overall cost-effectiveness either of gardens or inputs programmes was, in addition to other factors, also curtailed by the issue of thin spread of interventions. See table 10 below.

Table 10: Number of Beneficiaries per ward - Efficiency indicators.

District	No. of Wards	Total Ben	No. Input Ben/ward	No. of Gardens	Total Ben	No. of Ben/Garden
Mt Darwin	6	1000	166			
Buhera	5	550	100/150*			
Mutare	4	450	100/150*			
Matobo	5	1000	200			
Gwanda	5	1000	200			
Hurungwe	1	400	400	2	58	28/30
Zvimba	3	600	200	3	85	30/25*
Chivi	16	1000	63			
Mwenezi	3	1000	333			

*Only one ward/garden had that number of beneficiaries

The above table shows that there are many wards covered but not covering a significant number of beneficiaries per ward with an outlier of one big ward in Hurungwe with 400 beneficiaries. When coupled with the small input pack, it means that efficiency and effectiveness was somehow lost in trying to cover all these areas at the same time by one officer who resided at a provincial head office location. A reduction in number of districts would have allowed more people being covered per district and ward while at the same efficiently utilising time and minimising on dead mileage. This also gives time for enough stakeholder consultations because the same processes that an officer has to go through in one district in order to cover one ward will be exactly the same when they move to the next.

4.4 Impact

The project was implemented for a period of less than one year and the impact from some of development interventions promoted by the project would ordinarily not be quickly realised over such a short period. However, due to the integration of interventions the combined effect of it is such that the project has started to make impact on rural poverty and will realise continued benefits after project has ended.

Livestock and Asset Ownership

This project has no much impact on household ownership of livestock. Figure 8 below shows that there is no significant changes in the mean number of livestock and others productive assets holdings between the baseline and end of project. This stems from the fact that beneficiaries have not yet realised any income from the field crop support since the crops are still in the fields. The garden beneficiaries will also benefit much more once they start accessing external market but at the moment they are still benefiting from increased food consumption mainly. However there is a significant decrease in mean number of cattle owned per household in Matobo district from about 6 to about 3 per farmer. This negative change is attributable mainly to the recurrent drought in the southern districts of the country which has resulted in distress sales or disposal of animals or deaths. The drought has been so severe that high rates of livestock mortality have been reported during the course of the project period. There is however hope for greater impact from gardens even after the project has ended as the people now have knowledge and can continue applying the knowledge they acquired from the project.

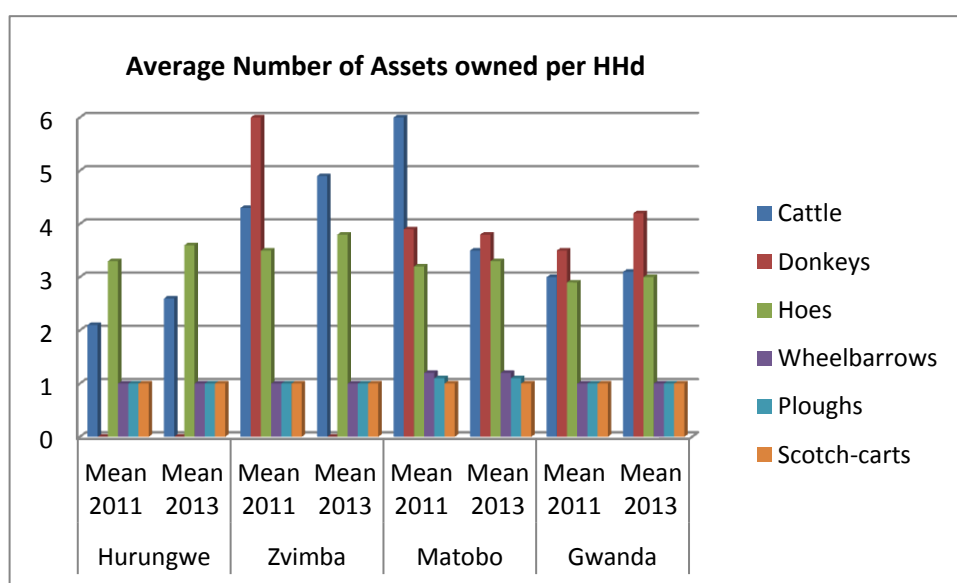


Figure 8: Changes in Livestock and other productive assets ownership

Changes in Income and Income Sources

In order to determine changes respondents were asked to rank their sources of cash income according to their order of importance and to quantify income between the base year and the evaluation year. Figure 9 below shows the various important cash income sources and percentage of households ranked the sources as important to them over the last 12 months.

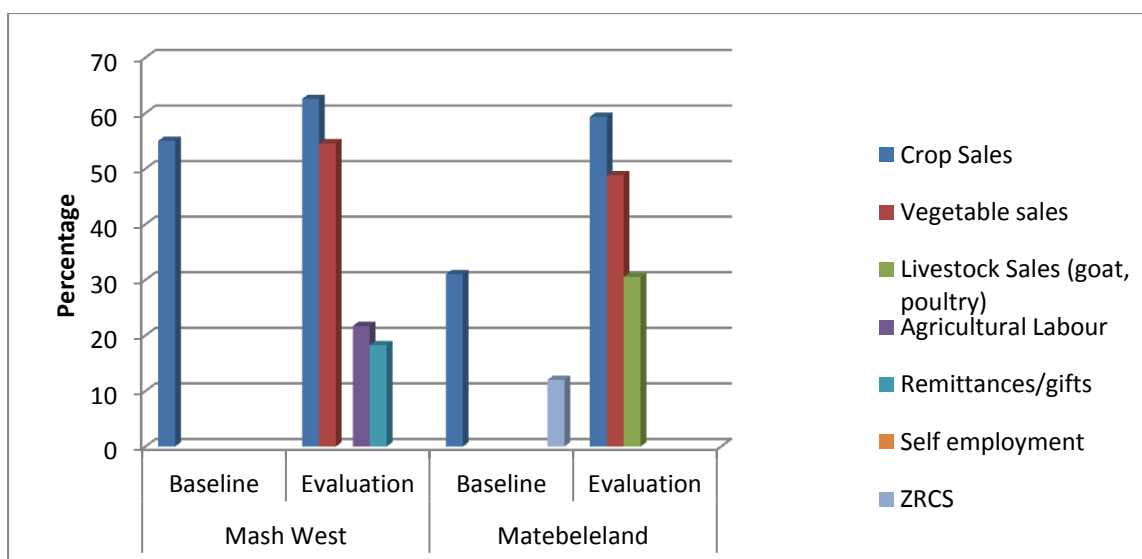


Figure 9: Changes in income sources by HHs

Due to data limitations not many sources can be compared against the baseline year. However the three most important sources of cash income are the crop sales, vegetable sales and the livestock sales especially in Matabeleland. Mashonaland west has remittances and offering agriculture labour as additional sources of cash income. Crop sales remained an important income source for many households between baseline and evaluation. Thus continued support to crop production, livestock and gardens will be targeting the right livelihood interventions for these areas. However it may be important to consider targeting support by geographical area as it is clear that livestock is an important source of cash income in Matabeleland. The importance of vegetable sales across all areas also reflects the impact from previous phases of the programme.

Table 11: Comparisons of cash income for 2011 and 2012 (measurement of impact on agric & veg inputs scheme).

	Hurungwe	Zvimba	Matobo	Gwanda
Income 2011 (USD)	415.17	315	281.56	477.39
Income 2012 (USD)	592.82	321.38	381.33	402.83
significance of diff btwn means	0.006	0.627	0.267	0.317
Conclusion (95% confidence)	significant	not significant	not significant	not significant

The table above shows that there has been an increase generally in the levels of cash incomes for projects beneficiaries from year 2011 to 2012. Statistical tests of the difference between the two means however, indicate that the change in the cash income for Hurungwe farmers is the only one that has significantly increased between the baseline and the evaluation. The changes in the other three districts, while showing positive changes in the levels of cash income are however not significant enough to conclude that there has been a significant change in mean income levels per household. The average annual income for the baseline survey was US\$372 while that carried out for this evaluation was US\$435, showing a 17% increase in income earnings, as shown in table below: Hurungwe income increase is mostly likely coming from their cash crop enterprises such as cotton and tobacco which seems to be grown quite widely by the people in the area.

Table 12: Comparisons of overall cash income for baseline, 2011 and 2012

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Average Baseline annual income (USD)	372	-
Average annual income 2012 (USD)	435	675

Income from gardens

Table 13: Income from gardens for 2012

Average realized income for 2012[US\$]		
Garden crop	Hurungwe	Zvimba
Rape/covo	24.48	48.89
Cabbage	17.00	
Tomato	26.68	51.66
Onion	10.54	28.96
Sugar beans	3.00	4.50
Tsungu	8.69	24.59
Spinach		3.20
Broccoli	5.00	
Okra		15.00
Carrots	5.48	15.37
Butternuts		60.00
Other crop		17.50
Total	100.87	269.67

The table shows that gardens contributed significantly to household income. Zvimba district have recorded the highest contribution to household income at \$269 per household while Hurungwe garden income was at \$100. Zvimba has better access to markets than Hurungwe hence a greater contribution to cash income and also explains the different status of the gardens between the two districts. Tomatoes, rape/covo and butternuts were their higher income earners

Household Expenditure Patterns

The households' expenditure patterns still points to the same fact that the project impact is yet to be felt on the ground due to shortness of time. Almost 40% of their expenditure is going towards food, followed by education of children at about 22% of expenditure before investment in agriculture come in at third level below 18% on average. This pattern is not so much different from the rest of the low income groups in the rural communities. This reflects the low income levels of the households and the fact that the project has not had that much impact on household income as shown above. See Figure 10 below.

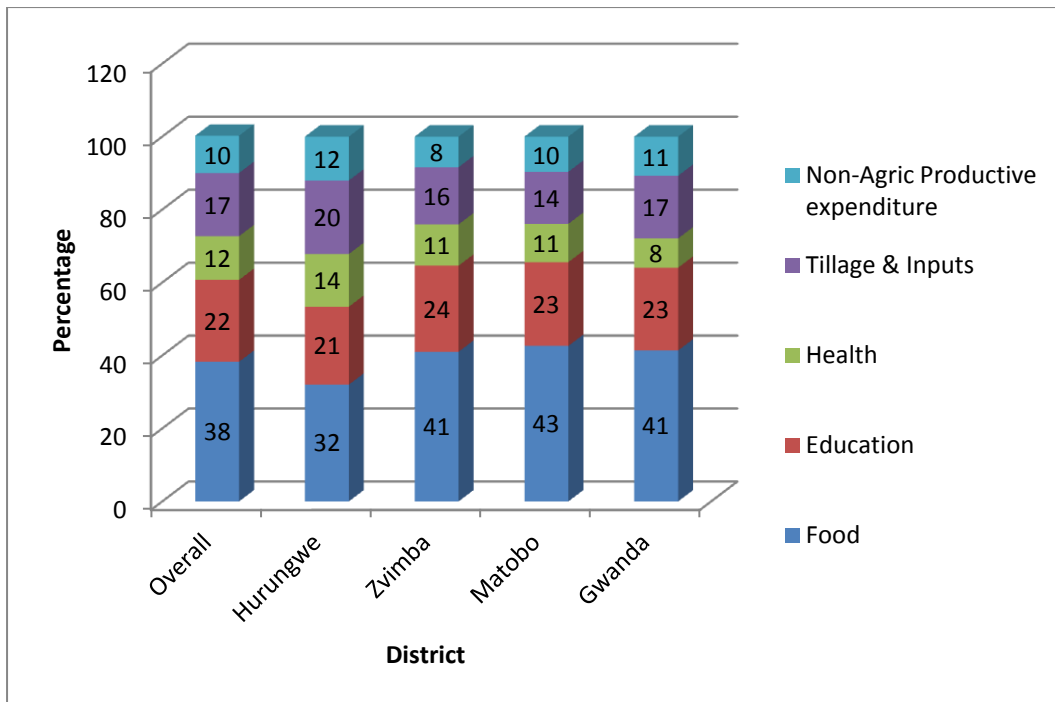


Figure 10: Top household expenditure items

The balance in shift means the sum total of it reflect no much change as yet in vulnerability of households to hazards and shocks that may threaten their livelihoods. They still spent well over 60% of their money on basics and less on productive investments.

Changes in Sources of Food

In responding to the question on the household’s important sources of food for 2012 household the emerging pattern point to a decline in the number of important sources between the baseline and the evaluation from about 5 important sources to two. See Figure 11 below.

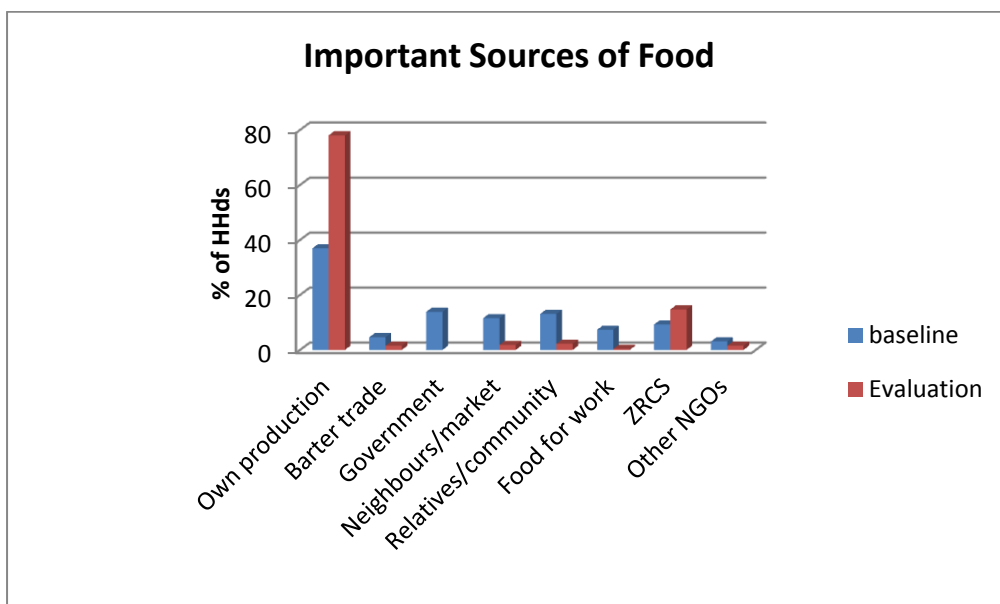


Figure 11: Important sources of food for households between baseline and evaluation

The two important sources at evaluation are household's own production and from ZCRS. This reflects the importance of the interventions by IFRC and ZRCS. Whilst over 80% of households indicated on production as an important source the amount of food from that source may not be that huge compared to household food requirements. This implies that although only about 10% cited ZCRS as an important source of food whatever amount contributed and food that came from the gardens supported by the project contributed significantly to household food needs over the last 12 months. Figure 12 below shows the proportion of people whose food from estimated own production for the 2012/13 production season will last them over 6 months.

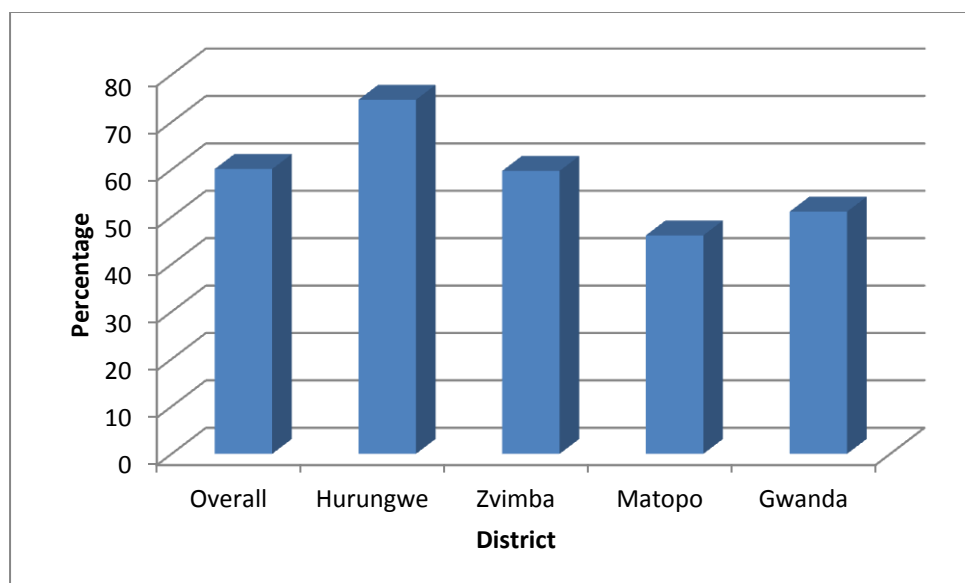


Figure 12: % HHds whose own food production will last at least 6 months.

Only about 57 % of the households overall estimate that they will have food that will last them at least 6 months from own production and when combined with other means and sources they will range between 5.3 and 7.3 months of sufficient food from own means. The highest proportion of them is from the two Mashonaland west districts while as expected in the drier Matabeleland South districts less than 50% estimate that they will produce food that will last at least 6 months. Table 14 below shows the mean number of months each household is projecting to have sufficient food by own means.

Table 14: Mean months of sufficient food from own means

	Hurungwe	Zvimba	Matopo	Gwanda
Mean months of food sufficiency from own production	6.6	6.1	4.7	5.5
Mean months of access to food including purchases	7.3	7.5	5.3	6.8

Whilst it is positive that more people are relying on own production for food, the above scenarios on the other hand points to the high level of vulnerability of these sampled households to weather and crop failure. All other support they were getting like from government, neighbors and relatives seems to have disappeared. The reasons don't seem to be clear for this down turn of once important sources. This points to the need for continued external support especially livelihoods type support so that they diversify their food

source base and increase number of months they can get food from own means. It is apparent that according to their forecast there will be a food gap in the upcoming consumption year.

Changes observed by households

Households were asked to describe the change that has happened at the household level as a result of their participation on the project. The responses are presented in Figure 13 below.

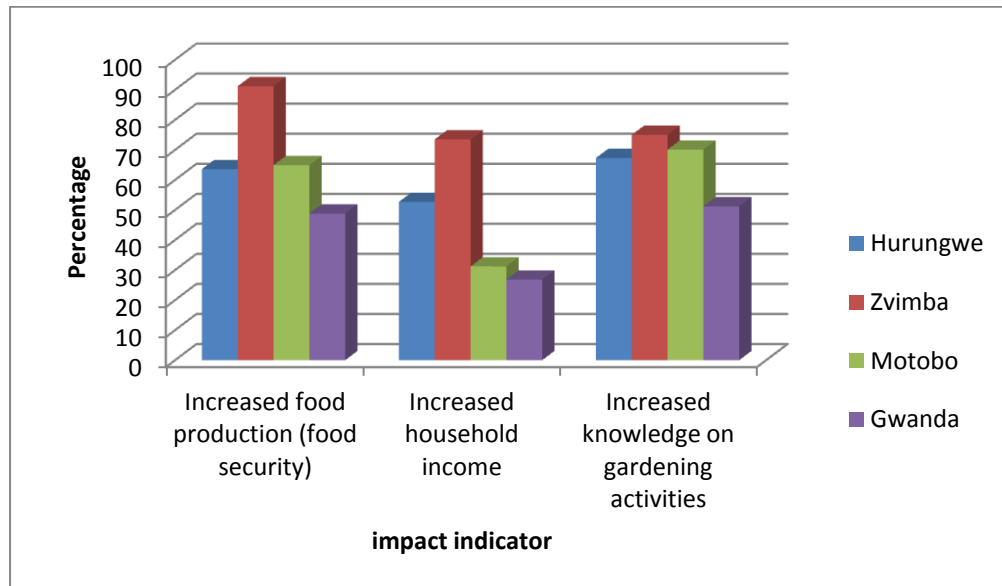


Figure 13: Changes observed at household level due to participation on project.

The responses show that there has been a change in the three areas above but most respondents observed changes in food production and knowledge in gardening activities. The graph shows that the greatest benefactor is Zvimba, which is topping in all the three indicators of change. Hurungwe also is showing strongly in food security and increased knowledge on garden activities. Both Matopo and Gwanda are showing weak indications in household income improvements while the other two indicators are strong.

4.5 Sustainability

By working with and through existing institutions, particularly government structures and volunteers created sustainability. The project is highly commended for engaging with opportunities that were created as a result of a changing political, economic, and institutional and policy context. The government departments of Agritex, the RDC and volunteers are likely to continue with the same interventions and support they were giving to farmers and communities including training of farmers. The project distributed open pollinated maize varieties that farmers can continue multiplying and sharing within the community thus alleviating the access to quality seed constraint. Thus farmers will for some few years to come be accessing easily good OPV maize seed within their communities. By providing fencing to gardens it means for some years to come the farmers' investments in the gardens will be secure while at the same promoting environmental sustainability. However for future interventions greater attention is needed on improving access to markets, both the finance market and commodity markets, in terms of providing market information, helping groups to be more organised and access organized and more developed markets and even options for value addition to what they produce so that they realise more from their garden produce.

Figure 14 highlights some the challenges that they still face with regards marketing of their garden commodities.

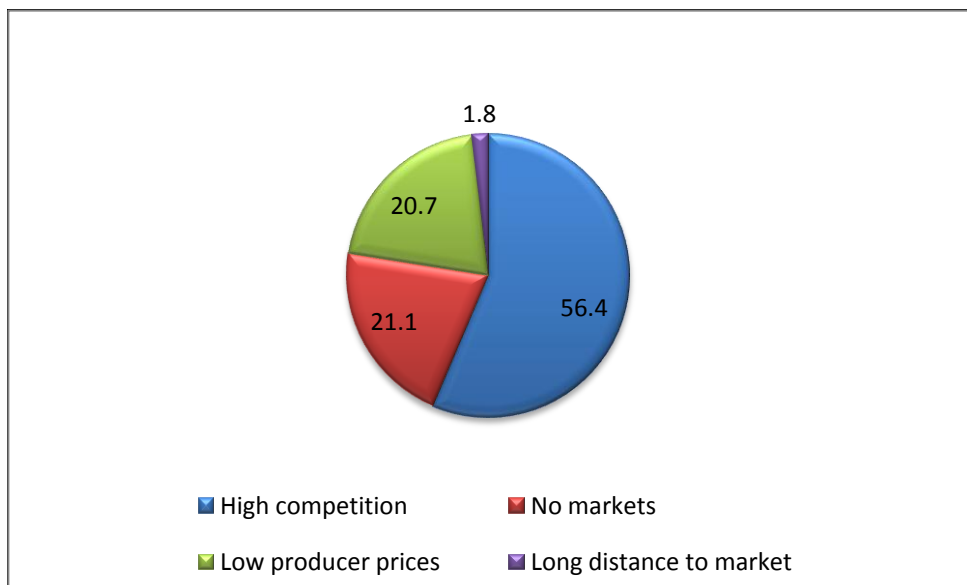


Figure 14: Challenges faced by farmers in accessing markets

About 56% of the farmers cited that there is high competition on the market for the commodities that they produce or would want to sell, while an additional 21% and 20% cite the issue of no markets and low producer prices, respectively as the key marketing challenges they face. A significant proportion cited completion as a key challenge they face mainly because of the fact that they produce the same commodities as the rest of the other farmers and end up supplying the same product at the same time. The advent of these market challenges and lack of viable market linkages established by the project threatens sustainability of the gardening activities. On the other hand a clearly well articulated exit strategy at the project design stage will ensure enough measures are put in place to increase sustainability.

4.6 Best Practices and Lessons Learnt

Below are some of the lessons learnt;

- The success, effectiveness and sustainability of community garden interventions is highly depended on the type of leadership selected and active stakeholder participation.
- Training and capacity building is key in ensuring success and sustainability of initiatives.

4.7 Recommendations

- The garden and inputs interventions are thinly spread across districts. Therefore it is recommended that future programmes with similar scale, in order to increase effective and efficiency, consider going deeper and being more intensive concentrating on smaller geographical area. This allows sufficient time for all process to be done on time while reaching out to more deserving cases in a location.
- The effectiveness of certain gardens in increasing household income and contribution to food availability was affected by seasonal water sources. It is recommended that follow on investment in order to provide perennial water sources be made to all gardens that require such so as to protect the investment already made while at the same time enhancing impact of previous investments and future investments.

- Future programmes are recommended to allocate resources and time to train community garden beneficiaries and communities on leadership and management issues to enhance sustainability. The software issues of such nature are as equally important as the investment in infrastructure itself in ensuring continuity of activities after the programme has ended.
- Programme beneficiaries alluded to the high prevalence of marketing challenges that hinder growth of cash income from their gardens. It is therefore recommended that new and old beneficiaries from previous IFRC/ZRCS programmes be trained in market linkages and be linked directly to external markets to enhance returns to their labour and inputs.
- A comprehensive higher value input pack is recommended per beneficiary of agricultural inputs. This will align such programmes to government guidelines and objectives for input support since on average the target beneficiaries have labour available for agricultural activities and can benefit more from a comprehensive higher value input pack. This should also consider livestock related support since it is clearly demonstrated that livestock especially small livestock contribute significantly to household income particularly in the drier southern districts.
- It is recommended that in order to align more closely with evolving development thinking and good practice, the programme consider distributing inputs through market friendly approaches like agro-voucher support through local retail outlets. This follows exactly the same principle and logic that was used in the food voucher programmes. The added benefit to it is that beneficiaries will decide rationally what to buy while considering what is most constraining in their agricultural production at household level that may be outside of fertiliser and seeds.
- There has been demonstration over the years of benefits of conservation agriculture and such training has been widely spread across the country. It is therefore recommended that future investments that support field crops have a modest budget that support such trainings even as refresher trainings to increase resource use efficiency and mitigate against climate change related risks of crop failure.
- A clearly articulated and written exit strategy is highly recommended for similar programmes. This ensures that although under emergency type support minimal sustainability elements to the project are built in from start and are clearly implemented and monitored throughout the project.
- It is highly recommended to consider continuation of such support rather than terminate it at this particular point in time. About half the sampled population is projecting food deficits for the coming consumption year in excess of 6 months. In order to avoid coming in with support when the situation is already bad, it is recommended that support come in early so that there is sufficient implementation time that ensures all processes and activities are done.

5. Water and Sanitation

5.1 Relevance and Appropriateness

The project's water and sanitation intervention activities comprised the rehabilitation and repairs to 60 boreholes in Matobo District and the construction of 150 latrines at schools in Gwanda District. See illustrations below.



Picture 7: Rehabilitated water point in Matobo District.



Picture 8: Rehabilitated water point in Matobo District.



Picture 9: Old latrine block at Bethel Primary School.



Picture 10: New latrines at Bethel Primary School.

Matobo District is a very dry and marginal region. According to local stakeholders, water storage facilities in the district barely hold water for more than five months. Most rivers are dried up and there are no sand water abstraction opportunities in the district for the greater part of the year. The majority of water points in the district are dysfunctional, with an average of three functional water points in a ward i.e. 1,000 people per borehole instead of the recommended ideal ratio of 200 - 250 people per water point. FGDs also revealed that before the IFRC/ZRCS intervention there were only 2 boreholes serving up to 5 villages. Some of the boreholes were established well before or immediately after the country's independence in 1980. As such, some pipes were worn out, rusty and leaking. In some

cases, household members had to travel as much 20 kilometers in search of water from the nearest dam.

Borehole rehabilitations provide water points with a new lease of life by extending a water point's lifespan by another 4 – 5 years, notably where the concept of Community Based Management (CBM) has been adopted. Boreholes are an appropriate and ideal technology given that once established or rehabilitated, they are inexpensive to operate and maintain. In other words, boreholes are a fairly cheap technology which, with basic repairs and maintenance⁸, can be sustained over a long period of time. While bush pumps are the most cost effective means to ensure access to safe and clean drinking water for multitudes of rural households, the technology is not necessarily appropriate for some segments of vulnerable groups for which the benefits are intended e.g. orphaned and vulnerable children, the elderly, the disabled and the chronically ill.

Sanitation coverage in most rural districts is very low and Gwanda District was no exception. Schools in the district had sanitation coverage of as low as 41.3%⁹. This is due to a number of reasons. Local authorities, notably rural district councils, cannot afford to provide communities and households within their jurisdiction with appropriate sanitation facilities or funds to construct such facilities. Households and communities have been hard hit for a long time by economic decline, macro-economic challenges and more recently by recurrent droughts making it difficult for households and communities to support latrine construction initiatives at schools. In some areas institutional latrines had collapsed as a result of poor construction, storms and the failure to adapt construction requirements to the specific soil types. Poor sanitation leads to outbreaks of diarrhea diseases, cholera, typhoid and environmental pollution. The design of the constructed latrines ensured that they are user-friendly and was made compatible with all groups of beneficiaries including the pre-schoolers¹⁰, girls and the disabled. This makes the IFRC/ZRCS intervention timely, relevant and appropriate.

5.2 Effectiveness

The water and sanitation component was an overall success, with a rate of achievement of 83.3% for borehole rehabilitations and water point committee establishment, 96.0% for latrine construction and 264.0% for PHHE training. Of the planned 60 borehole rehabilitations and repairs the project managed to effect 17 rehabilitations and 33 borehole repairs bringing the total of boreholes attended to by the project to 50. Similarly, out of the targeted 150 latrines that were to be constructed by the project, in reality 142 latrines were constructed, with an additional two squat holes added to already existing sanitation facilities thus entailing a total of 144 latrines that were either freshly constructed or improved upon. See Table 15.

⁸ This involves the replacement of fast moving parts such as bolts, nuts and leather cups.

⁹ Sanitation coverage is determined by the level of access to appropriate sanitation facilities, an indicator based on the number of latrines or squat holes available for a specified population at any given time. The ideal standard for institutions is an access ratio of 20 pupils per squat hole.

¹⁰ Early Child Development (ECD) class students.

Table 15: WATSAN physical progress tracking chart.

Indicator	Progress to Date	Project Target	% Progress	Comments
Output 1 : Improved access to sanitation through latrine construction				
Indicator 1: No of latrines constructed	144	150	96.0	The balance of toilets was still to be completed at project closure. However the institutions confirmed they would complete the constructions
Indicator 2: No of people who received PHHE training	132	50	264.0	People trained in WPC were also the primary recipients of PHHE training
Output 2: Improved access to safe and clean water				
Indicator 3: No of boreholes rehabilitated	50	60	83.3	The spares procured could only rehabilitate 50 boreholes. This was due to variances in actual costs versus budget
Indicator 4: Number of households with access to safe and clean water	500	600	83.3	Based on Sphere standards of 500 people per hand pump i.e. 50 HH/water point
Indicator 5: No of established water point committees	50	60	83.3	50 water points established in line with the water points rehabilitated, a total of 132 people were trained.
Indicator 6: No of functional water point committees	50	60	83.3	Water points were only formed during rehabilitations hence only 50 WPCs equivalent to rehabilitated boreholes

Those initiatives that were not complete are almost complete and were in the process of being completed during the time of the end-of-project evaluation. Completion dates were estimated at 2 weeks from the dates of the evaluation team visits. See Illustrations below.

All the rehabilitated water points are still functional. This is despite sporadic reports of breakdowns in some areas e.g. the borehole serving Lingo Village. Also because of the leadership, Community-Based Management (CBM), village pump minder and PHHE training and capacity building from the Food Security Project, all established water point committees remain functional. What has been a challenge for established water point committees in some areas have been the failure to mobilize cash for repairs from community members since there is neither mechanism nor instruments for securing funding from community members.

However, according to the interviewed groups of project beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, there are still wide gaps between community needs and what was provided for by the project, with some wards and villages still encountering acute water shortages. For some communities the distance to the repaired or rehabilitated boreholes remain large (up to 3 – 5km)¹¹, while some rehabilitated boreholes have remained seasonal.

Most schools where latrines were constructed now have a 100% sanitation coverage. A number of factors contributed to this success, chief among them being community participation given that communities were a part of the cause by providing locally available resources and construction materials such as labour for digging the latrine pits, bricks, water,

¹¹ Water points that are still 3-5km away present serious challenges particularly for OVCs, the elderly, the disabled, PLWHA and for household members caring for the chronically ill.

river sand and pit sand. In some areas, communities also mobilized funds to pay the constructors while IFRC and ZRCS provided cement.

5.3 Efficiency

The strategy for borehole repairs was purposively modified to include both borehole repairs and rehabilitations¹². While these design changes reduced the number of water points that were rehabilitated, the strategy improved intervention effectiveness, impact and efficiency. Borehole rehabilitations and repairs, the training of pump minders and water point committees, Participatory Health and Hygiene Education (PHHE) training, and the training of latrine builders and construction of latrines were all completed within the planned time framework despite minor delays due to logistical distribution challenges in some areas. This resulted in some of the scheduled work being completed in December, a month after completion of the project. This was still commendable given that most project material was sourced and distributed during the terminal end of the project lifespan¹³.

Project efficiency was also enhanced through the adoption of innovative strategies where appropriate and where an enabling environment made this possible. This ensured that the project accomplished results and created benefits for target beneficiaries in time and at lower costs. In order for the project to be completed within the timeframe, the project worked through local stakeholders e.g. identification of non-functional boreholes, the provision of qualified pump mechanics and the training of village pump minders, as well as latrine construction inspections and PHHE training by Environmental Health Technicians (EHTs). Other examples include the identification of water points where basic rehabilitations (e.g. flushings) were required and the deepening of some shallow boreholes as a strategy for improving the reliability of supply and water yield of the boreholes. Likewise, additional squat holes were appended to already existing latrines in addition to the construction of new ones. While additional squat holes were added to existing infrastructure, basic borehole rehabilitations were limited under the current project.

¹² Borehole repairs entail replacing only specific parts within the borehole, whereas borehole rehabilitations comprise the removal of all borehole components and replacing them with new components.

¹³ As an example, most schools in Gwanda District received cement a month before the project came to an end.

5.4 Impact

Borehole repairs and rehabilitations by the IFRC/ZRCS Food Security Project supported by the Japanese Government had a positive impact on communities by improving access by both target beneficiaries and those outside the project areas access to safe and clean drinking water. See Figure 15.

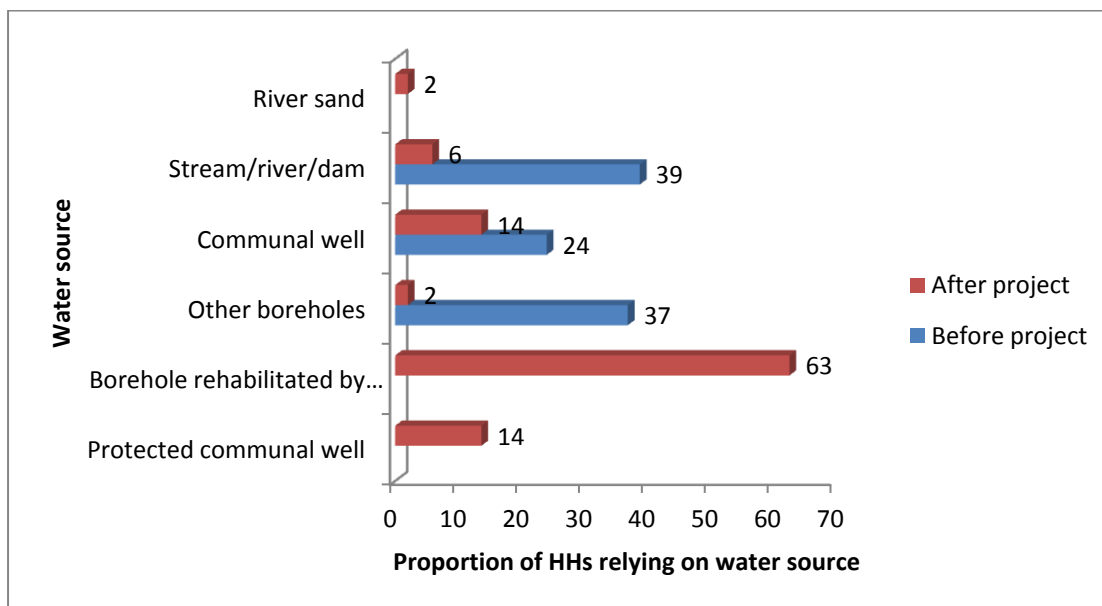


Figure 15: Source of water before and after project intervention.

This intervention also worked in reducing the travelling distance between homesteads and water sources, improved livestock's access to water sources, and reduced livestock mortality given that communities were now losing livestock at dams and rivers when they go there in search of water. Where conducive and where water yields are higher, water point rehabilitations have facilitated vegetable and nutrition gardening thereby improving and diversifying diets and increasing household incomes. See Figure 16. From a gender perspective, the rehabilitation and repairs of water points also increased social interaction given that water point sources have traditionally been used as a social meeting point, notably for women.

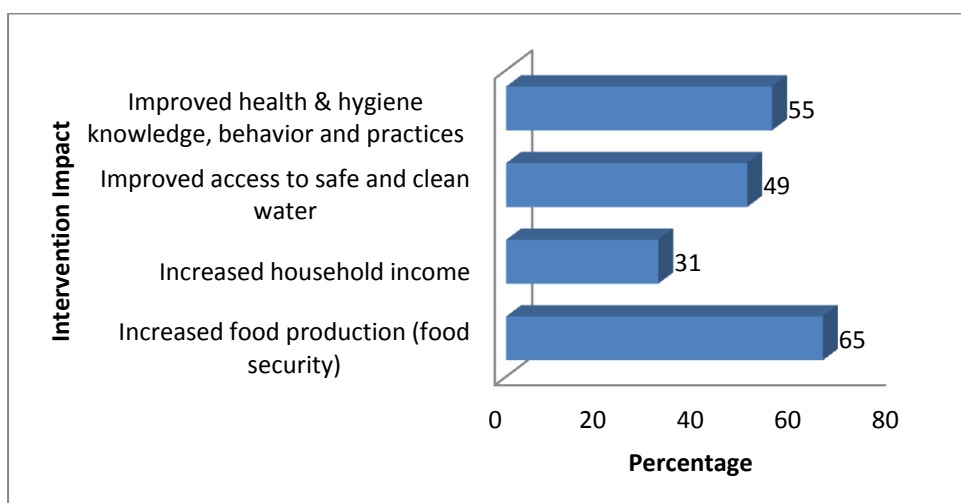


Figure 16: Impact of water point repairs and rehabilitation.

PHHE training has also improved health and hygiene practices within the communities. See Figure 17.

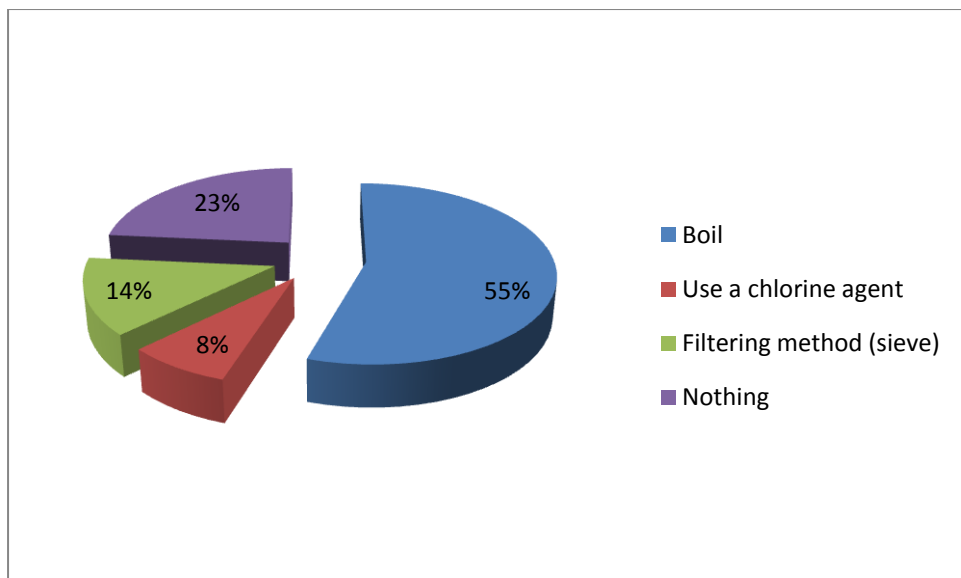


Figure 17: Measures implemented by community members to ensure water safety.

However, the number of repaired and/or rehabilitated water points was too small to achieve an ideal water point to people ratio. As an illustrational example, where repairs and/or rehabilitations managed to reduce the ratio from 1,000 people per borehole to 400 – 500 people per water point this has resulted in cases of generally oversubscription, overcrowding during peak periods, drying up of the water source during parts of the day¹⁴, and a very short life span for the rehabilitated water points.

On the other hand, the sanitation intervention that witnessed the construction of latrines at educational institutions had the impact of reducing the pressure on already existing sanitation facilities and disease outbreaks at beneficiary schools. However, in some areas it was too early to determine impact given that some of the latrines had just been completed and not yet in use. Interventions are, however, expected to generate positive impact for a long time in the future. See Figure 18.

¹⁴ In some communities, local leaders have imposed restrictions in water access such as limiting amounts of water than can be drawn at any one time to 20 litres, putting a cap on the number of times a household can draw water (usually twice) or imposing a water collection curfew (e.g. no water withdrawals after 5pm).

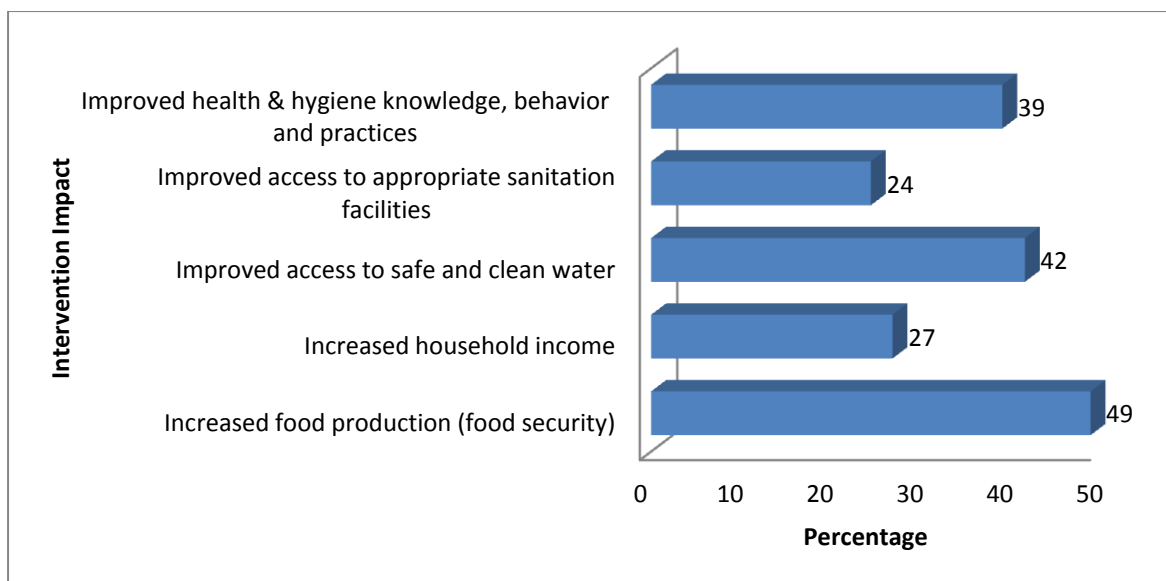


Figure 18: Impact of improved sanitation facilities.

5.5 Sustainability

The water and sanitation component has great scope and potential for sustainability. Because of the participation, training and capacity building of communities, members of the communities can fix, repair and maintain their local water points beyond the lifespan of the IFRC/ZRCS intervention project. Sustainability is also ensured through an exit strategy put in place by the Food Security project. Elements of the exit strategy included working through local public institutions such as the District Development Fund (DDF) whose mandate is the establishment and maintenance of boreholes, as well as the establishment and capacity building of community-based water point committees.

Despite challenges, the willingness to pay for water point repair and maintenance costs exists within communities. The government has also put caps of the fees pump minders can charge for specific tasks. There are, however, fears that although communities were trained and equipped with the skills to repair and maintain their water points, some might fail to do so due to a lack of resources. This might be aggravated by limited resources within DDF and other local public support institutions. The high number of dysfunctional water points within the communities and the pressure on the few repaired or rehabilitated water points also has a negative bearing *vis à vis* the durability of rehabilitated water points thus putting to question the sustainability of accrual of benefits to target communities. Experiences from elsewhere have shown that once an appropriate technology is introduced communities adopt it thus there are long-term expectations of latrine construction at schools and homesteads, although there is still no evidence of this phenomenon on the ground.

5.6 Best Practices and Lessons Learnt

Good coordination and the active participation of local stakeholders/implementing partners is key for successful, effective and efficient project implementation. This also improves the sustainability of project initiatives and the accrual of benefits to communities long after the termination of the project. The total involvement of communities in all processes (including planning, training and capacity building, programme implementation and M&E) is also key. On the other hand, observations from the ground indicate that with CBM training and capacity building communities can effectively and efficiently manage their own resources,

while the establishment and good management of a reserve fund facilitates timely repairs and other maintenance works.

5.7 Recommendations

The following are recommendations for the water and sanitation component:-

- (i) Expanding the water and sanitation programme. Specifics can include moving on to adjacent wards which did not benefit from the project to reduce the pressure on rehabilitated/repared water points and sustain the lifespan of already rehabilitated and repaired boreholes. This can also include the drilling of new and additional boreholes in densely populated areas, flushing of existing boreholes as a strategy of improving water yields, and upgrading existing sanitation facilities.
- (ii) Facilitating access to safe and clean water to schools who benefitted from institutional sanitation facilities under the Food Security Project. Most of these institutions currently rely on raw and untreated water from nearby rivers. This will not only provide a reliable and safe water source for the schools but also built upon already established hygienic practices.
- (iii) There is need for comprehensive training of pump minders, the training of more pump minders to lessen the burden on the limited trained personnel, and equipping those already trained with repairs/rehabilitation toolkits. This can be complemented by facilitating access to borehole repair parts e.g. stocking by local businesses.
- (iv) Promoting improved hygienic practices within communities by constructing latrines at a few targeted vulnerable households that would serve as models for the wider community.
- (v) CBM, PHHE and water point training and capacity building was targeted at water point committee leadership, with the rest of the water point committee members and the community at large expected to benefit from cascaded training which never took root. There is thus a need for a more comprehensive CBM, PHHE and water point training as part of the strategy to ensure the sustainability of the initiative.

6. Management, Coordination and Monitoring

6.1 Management and Coordination

The project coordinated with its external stakeholders very well. The project is well known and engaged its key stakeholders in key processes and critical stages of the project. This has resulted in good working relationships being developed even with local authorities and received good support. This has created a good platform for activities to continue even after the project has ended with the support from Institutions as Agritex, EHTs, DAs' office and local councils.

On the other hand, the project mobilisation phase (from project approval to beginning of activities on the ground) was longer than ideal basing in the fact that most of the field level activities, although completed, they were done under a lot of time pressure towards the end. The implication of it was felt when it comes to coordination with stakeholders and dealing with challenging activities such as beneficiary identification. There is general view that as an example, beneficiary selection in urban areas is a process that required a bit longer time than was allocated. The process would have ideally taken more than double the time it was allocated and hurriedly produced registers. In other areas OK card were produced in batches because the beneficiary registers were not complete and other beneficiaries in their first redemption had no cards. This ultimately compromises the integrity of an otherwise good system.

The funding arrangement was such that funds were distributed on a monthly basis from the technical partner to the implementing partner. While the system is justified under certain conditions, this disbursement arrangement proved not to be ideal for a short emergency programme. There was a lot of implementation time that was unnecessarily lost between waiting for new funds and frequent preparation of reports to enable the next disbursement. The implication on the ground was that certain activities, particularly those that required spending money on the day and the bringing together of stakeholders, were difficult to arrange before funds show in the account of a provincial office because once organised, rescheduling would present lots of challenges including reputational risk of the organisation.

Within the project team at national level there was reportedly a single start up/inception workshop for all team members and no other opportunity for collective review and reflection on progress, challenges and sharing of lessons. Regular reviews and planning sessions internally have proved effective in anticipating and dealing with internal and external constraints and challenges to project implementation and success. This is good practice that the project could have adopted and increased efficiency and effectiveness in project delivery.

6.2 Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

An appropriate Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system is critical for providing key benchmark information, noting project achievements, documenting lessons learnt, identifying areas requiring attention, determining appropriate design changes and identifying areas whose improvements are prerequisites for ensuring an effective and efficient intervention with tangible benefits and impact for the target beneficiaries and wider communities. This Food Security Project was preceded by a baseline, fortified by continuous monitoring through implementing partners, stakeholders and beneficiary communities on the ground, and was wrapped up by an external end-of-project evaluation. Such periodic reviews have proved to be critical for assessing progress achieved against

the set targets, keeping track of issues such as improvements in performance, constraining factors and establishing the techno-socio-economic factors behind such phenomena.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Food Voucher Programme

The food voucher programme was an appropriate and relevant intervention for the urban poor and vulnerable households. It helped meet households' immediate basic and food needs and it improved households' food security. The project effectively met its set targets by reaching 99% of targeted number of beneficiaries with food and basic commodities over three months. For that period household food consumption improved in terms of quantum and dietary diversity. The electronic vouchers system (OK card system) was efficient and effective at the same time in ensuring that project goals were met through an efficient, reliable and fast service to customers and by reducing the risks of system abuse through purchase of ineligible commodities by beneficiaries. The project positively impacted household's food security, food diversity, nutritional status of beneficiaries and facilitated proper adherence to drug regimes for PLWHA thereby contributing to health status of beneficiaries. The project contributed positively to supporting the local economy in the areas it was implemented. However the project duration of food support was rather too short considering the fact that the people's food situation quickly deteriorated back to what it was before just a few months after the project intervention had ceased. The project did not build in sufficiently elements in its design that could have enhanced sustainability of the food voucher support.

7.2 Agriculture and Nutrition Gardening

The agriculture input and nutrition garden support was relevant and appropriate for the disadvantaged smallholder farmers. The OPV varieties distributed will ensure continued seed supply for a couple of seasons to come after the project has ended as well as vegetable production in the gardens. Garden and input distribution target numbers of beneficiaries were all met despite the reduction of the seed pack due to price increases. The inputs and garden materials were delivered in time to allow for efficient utilisation of those resources. Direct distribution of agricultural inputs have become inappropriate mechanism for giving similar support to farmers especially considering that socio-economic, political and market conditions in the country have shifted and emerging good practice is support through market based mechanisms. Significant impact of the project on household physical and financial assets is yet to be realised since some of the interventions' results are yet to be realised such as from the field crops. The only significant income increase was observed in Hurungwe district. Gardens have shown greater potential and if maintained will contribute significantly to household income. It can be concluded that there is likelihood of greater impact being realised after the project has ended. Gardens have significantly to household food consumption at household level. Based on the projection of beneficiaries, taking into account production potential for 2012/13 season and their normal food consumption pattern, below 60% of households will have sufficient food to last them more than 6 months for the coming consumption year. The project component built in some sustainability elements which guarantees continued stream of benefits to the beneficiaries and their communities through increased seed security and continued production from the gardens.

7.3 Water and Sanitation

Water and sanitation interventions were quite relevant and appropriate for the dry and marginal Matabeleland South region that has majority of its water points dysfunctional and some of lowest sanitation coverage rate in the country of as low as 41% in one of the districts. WASH interventions were effectively delivered at high rate of result achievement of 83% on water point rehabilitation and 96% on latrine construction. Adoption of innovative strategies and the enabling environment helped increase project efficiency despite

challenges experienced. Water points rehabilitations improved access to safe and clean water by both target beneficiaries and those outside the target areas. Sanitation interventions at institutions helped reduce pressure at already existing and old facilities, thereby reducing chances of disease outbreaks particularly at schools. There is high likelihood of continued flow of benefits from the interventions as sufficient sustainability measures were built into the process through working with local stakeholders such as DDF and the MOHCW and the total involvement of communities in all key processes.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference (TORs).

Appendix 2a: Household Survey Questionnaire (Food Voucher Programme).

Appendix 2b: Household Survey Questionnaire (Agriculture, Water and Sanitation).

Appendix 3a: KII & FGD Checklist (Food Voucher Programme).

Appendix 3b: KII & FGD Checklist (Agriculture, Water and Sanitation).

Appendix 4: List of Consulted Stakeholders.