

FINAL REPORT

End of Project Evaluation

Project Name: Early Response to Food Insecurity



Implemented By: VIVA Network Zimbabwe

Submitted to VIVA Network Zimbabwe

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

DCA	DanChurchaid
DERF	Danish Emergency Relief Fund
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IGA	Income generating activity
KII	Key Informant Interviews
TOR	Terms of Reference
VNZ	VIVA Network Zimbabwe

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

VIVA Network Zimbabwe (VNZ) implemented a six-month project, "*Early Response to Food Insecurity*" in Epworth from March to August 2020. The project targeted food insecure children and vulnerable households with essential early action to mitigate anticipated food crises. VNZ commissioned an independent consultant to conduct an end of project evaluation at the end of August.

Evaluation methodology

Through a convergent mixed-methods approach, the evaluation reached a total of 69 households with structured household questionnaire interviews. Fourteen (14) key informant interviews were conducted with key project stakeholders. Three (3) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with committee members from the three garden sites. The consultant also made observations of gardening and poultry rearing activities by project beneficiaries. A desk review of the relevant project documents was conducted from the start of the evaluation exercise.

Key Evaluation Findings

Relevance of the project

The intervention was very relevant and timely as this was launched during the time Zimbabwe recorded its first case of COVID-19 that restricted movements of people. This adversely affected the livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable populations whose deteriorating food security situation was further exacerbated as a result of the lockdown. Project design was informed, at the national level by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) early warning and early action report on food security and agriculture for period January - March 2020. Studies by other organizations have also confirmed the critical food insecurity situation in Epworth where only 17% of households were considered food secure (Tawodzera and Chigumira, 2018).

Effectiveness

The project improved the food access of the targeted beneficiaries and the data shows that the project reach was surpassed by 4% as it initially had targeted to reach 2050 people but ended up reaching 2134 people. A total of 1364 children were reached representing 64% of the total population. The project reached out to the targeted groups as specified at project design stage. For the 160 households involved in community gardening, 53% were female headed while 34% had widowed household heads. Households with heads living with disability constituted 6% with 31% being headed by chronically sick members while 28% of the heads were above 50 years. A total of 250 households were targeted for the poultry project. Survey data shows that nearly two thirds (65%) of households in poultry were female headed, 32% widowed, 24% living with disabilities, 57% chronically sick and while 57% of the heads are above 50 years. Community based volunteers were effectively used in project implementation and monitoring as this ensured timely support and coaching for households facing challenges as well as timely reporting to VNZ and relevant stakeholders for external support.

Impact

Since this project was a short term, early action project, the project was not deliberately designed to achieve impact but to avert a crisis situation. However, the evaluation managed to identify isolated changes that can be attributed to the project. This included restoration of

confidence and dignity at household and individual levels especially for those households that were now able to have regular meals as well as generate additional income as a result of the project. Some households had even started some income generating activities while others had plans to expand their operations.

Sustainability

The approach of utilizing community volunteers in all phases of implementation was one of the project's key approaches that ensure that the intervention strategies will continue even after the end of regular project support through VNZ. Community volunteers have indicated that they will continue to mobilize participants for the project activities as well as provision of on-site mentoring services. The trainings on gardening and raising layers will continue to be a valuable asset as this knowledge will stick with the participants of the project long after the end of project support. Nearly all (96%) interviewed participants vowed to continue with gardening activities and the rearing of layer chickens.

Conclusion

The Early Response to Food Insecurity project was a very relevant and timely intervention that significantly mitigated impending food insecurity among the most vulnerable and disadvantage households of Epworth. The project is cost-effective and can serve as a launch-pad to initiating more longer-term livelihood interventions that will also enhance the resilience capacity of poor and vulnerable households to socio-economic shocks and stresses.

Recommendations

- Provision of adequate and reliable water sources for community gardening is critical. If the project is to be scaled up or implemented in other locations VNZ should ensure that before project implementation there is reliable water supply as it is one of the most single valuable commodities which leads to the success of the community gardens.
- There is need to exercise great caution when procuring layer chickens as some chickens would take long to start laying eggs. Such chickens will be costly to the vulnerable household as they consume feed for some time before starting to lay eggs. When they start laying eggs, the household may be too impoverished to start purchasing required stock-feed for the chickens to continue laying eggs and contribute to household food and income.
- When giving assistance to poor and vulnerable households, a mixed modality is recommended. Start with in-kind assistance while cash assistance should be given after participants have received some training on basic business and financial management.
- There is need to consider supporting community volunteers with transport assistance such as bicycles and leadership and group dynamics trainings.
- To enhance project monitoring and evaluation and ultimately measurable impact attributable to the project, there is need to invest more in project design that should articulate the project's theory of change and outline explicitly the project's outcome indicators. For improved impact measurement baseline collection of baseline data will be useful for correct attribution of change.

2 INTRODUCTION

This report details the findings of the End of Project Evaluation of the Early Response to Food Insecurity Project implemented by VIVA Network Zimbabwe from March to end of August 2020. The Evaluation was undertaken by an independent consultant over a period of two weeks ending mid-September 2020. The overall purpose of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness and impact of the project.

2.1 OVERVIEW OF THE EARLY RESPONSE TO FOOD SECURITY PROJECT

VIVA Network Zimbabwe (VNZ) is a network of Christian organizations with a membership of 56 organizations and 142 churches. Network members work to alleviate poverty among children and young people through child protection, strengthening families, providing access to education and health.

VNZ has been working with child-headed families and households with high dependency of orphans and vulnerable children as well as food insecurity households in Harare. The project aimed at providing these beneficiaries with capacity to mitigate challenges of the anticipated food crisis through growing fast maturing nutritious vegetable seeds and poultry rearing.

Project Goal and Specific Objective

The Overall Goal of the project is *“Food insecure children and families in Epworth, Zimbabwe are provided with essential early action to mitigate anticipated food crisis”*.

Specific Objective: 400 vulnerable households in Epworth, Zimbabwe become food secure through growing fast-maturing nutritious seeds and keeping poultry/ruminants.

Objectives and scope of the evaluation

The main objective of the evaluation is to assess the effectiveness and impact of the Early Response to Food Insecurity project. While the Terms of Reference (Annex 1) required the evaluation to answer a number of key questions framed within the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, it is important to note that the design and modality of the intervention does not specifically integrate aspects of sustainability. By design, early action and rapid response interventions are short term life-saving and do not place emphasis on long-term sustainable outcomes. Hence, reflections on sustainability at household level are drawn in relation to overall project impact on the livelihoods of targeted beneficiaries. Discussions at inception with VNZ and VIVA Denmark placed emphasis on assessing project effectiveness and impact with some reflections on relevance, efficiency and sustainability.

3 EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

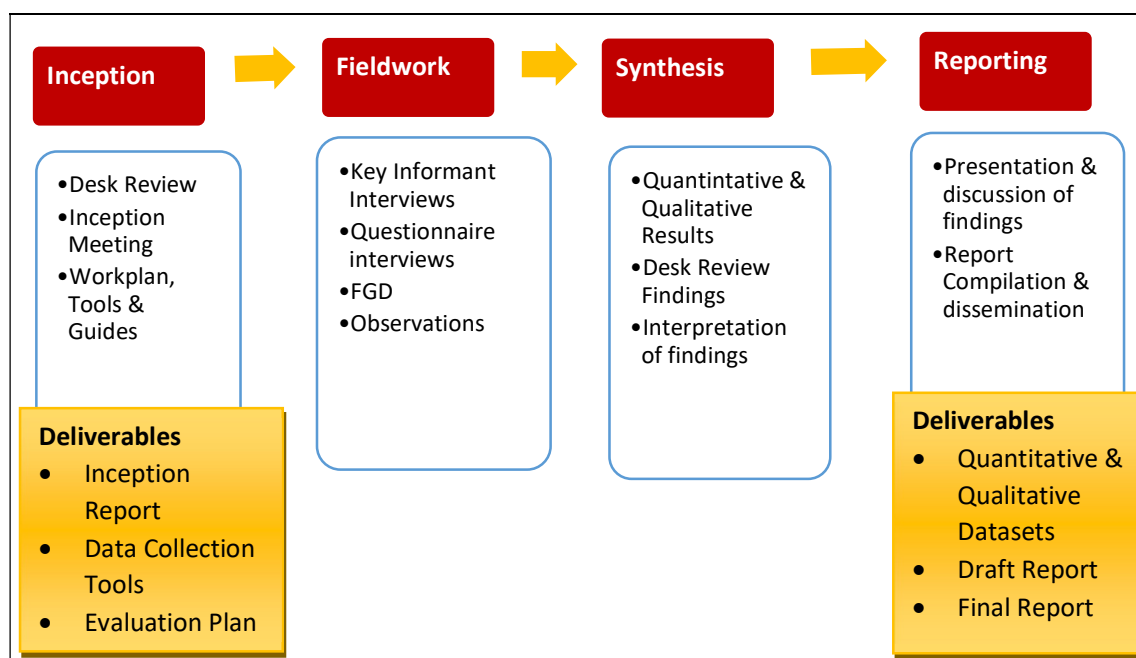
3.1 STUDY APPROACH

The evaluation was informed by best practice approaches in conducting development evaluations. The first step carried out by the consultant leading to the design of evaluation methodology was a review of project documents to understand project design, scope and nature of interventions. A review of the project proposal and logical framework shows that the project was primarily designed with a greater focus on outputs, activities and inputs as compared to a focus on higher level results at outcome and impact levels. Hence, the project logical framework does not show specific result statements and indicators at outcome and impact levels (Annex II). The consultant had to use standard food security and livelihood indicators to assess the project's contribution at outcome and impact levels.

The consultant had to further contend with the absence of baseline information or a counterfactual modality in assessing the project's contribution to the livelihoods and food security status of beneficiary households. As a mitigation measure, data collection tools sought to assess any changes in the livelihoods and food security status of households before and after the project.

To meet the obligations and expectations outlined in the TORs a participatory cross-sectional study design that employed mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative research techniques) was applied. The underlying aim for the methodology is to abide by the program evaluation standards to obtain relevant information from multiple sources (both primary and secondary) in a cost-effective and realistic way and to validate findings through triangulation to inform evaluation results. This methodology allows for a comparative analysis approach through analyzing the context before and after the project. Figure 1 shows the evaluation process and key deliverables from inception to final presentation of evaluation results.

Figure 1: Evaluation Process and Deliverables



3.2 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The consultant made use of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The main methodologies used include:

- Desk Review,
- Focus Group Discussions,
- Key informant interviews with stakeholders,
- Individual questionnaire interviews.
- Personal Observations

3.2.1 Desk Review

A desk review of the relevant project documents which include proposals, progress reports, agreements with school authorities, and documents on general food security and livelihoods issues in the urban setting including the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Early Warning and Early Action to Food Security and Agriculture (January to March 2020 Report), DERF Funding Guidelines, and research papers on urban food security among others.

3.2.2 Focus Group Discussions

Three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with committee members from Dombo, Mabvazuva and Muguta community gardens. The FGDs added some 'voice' from the perspective of the beneficiaries as a group, something that would not come out from the individual questionnaires.

3.2.3 Key Informant Interviews

A total of 14 Key informant interviews (KIIs) were held with various stakeholders that included VNZ, District Development Coordinator, Department of Social Services, School heads, Chairpersons of Gardens and Poultry interventions. Table 3 below shows the list of key informants interviewed.

Table 1: List of Key Informants

INSTITUTION/ GROUP	PARTICIPANTS	# SAMPLE SIZE
Implementing Organisation (VIVA Network- Zimbabwe)	Project Coordinator/ Project Officer	1
Funding Partner (VIVA Denmark)	Focal person	1
Central & Local Government Authorities	District Development Coordinator	1
	Department of Social Services	1
	Education- School heads (Dombo, Muguta)	2
	Ward Councilor	1
Project Implementation Structures (Committee Members & Group Representatives)	Poultry Chairpersons	2
	Garden Chairpersons (Muguta, Mabvazuva, Dombo Gardens)	3
Other Community Leaders	Religious, Case Care Workers	2
TOTAL		14

3.2.4 Personal Observations

The Consultant also observed gardening and poultry rearing activities by project beneficiaries to validate and confirm what was coming out from the interviews. All three community gardens were visited while a number of individual poultry runs as well as school-based poultry projects were observed.

3.2.5 Household Questionnaire Interviews

The quantitative data from the household questionnaire is useful for assessing changes that have been witnessed so far as a result of the intervention. The questionnaire was digitized in CommCare to enable mobile data collection. A total of 69 direct beneficiaries, (i.e. 32 households involved in Community Gardens across the three schools and 39 households involved in poultry production across 7 wards of Epworth) were randomly selected and interviewed.

Table 4 shows sex of respondents interviewed by intervention. Most (72%) of the respondents across the two interventions were female. Male respondents were higher in community gardens compared to poultry projects.

Table 2: Sex of Respondents

Sex of Respondents	Community Gardens		Individual Poultry Projects		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Male	11	34%	8	22%	19	28%
Female	21	66%	29	78%	50	72%
TOTAL	32	100%	37	100%	69	100%

4 EVALUATION FINDINGS

4.1 RELEVANCE

4.1.1 Introduction

This Section focuses on the extent at which the Project has been relevant to the prevailing situation on the ground. Special focus is given to the design of the project, how the work by VNZ complements the work of other actors on the ground and how the project intended to respond to the different target groups' needs. The section largely draws upon input from secondary data review, key informant interviews and focus group discussions held with project participants.

4.1.2 Relevance of Project Design

The Project was financially supported through the Danish Emergency Relief Fund (DERF). The objective of DERF is to provide flexible and rapid humanitarian funding for Danish civil society organisations within three months of the onset of an acute humanitarian crisis to initiate provision of emergency relief to affected populations to meet urgent needs and prevent further loss of life or escalation of suffering¹.

The DERF supports life-saving interventions through localised humanitarian response and assists vulnerable groups of people among populations at-risk of, and/or, affected by humanitarian crisis. This Project was supported under the Early Action funding modality of the DERF that seeks to mitigate the impact of anticipated food security crisis on particularly vulnerable people.

The DERF defines Early Action as actions taken in response to a trigger or threshold [an alert of heightened risks] and before an emergency fully materializes, with the intention to mitigate the impact of the crisis. This entails measures taken in advance of a crisis aimed at decreasing or eliminating its impact on society and environment.

The project was also guided by the FAO Early Warning and Early Action Report on Food Security and Agriculture (Jan-Mar 2020). The report highlighted ongoing macroeconomic challenges in Zimbabwe, increasing food prices and cash shortages adversely affect the most vulnerable in urban and rural areas, further increasing their food insecurity. The Report recommended the following Early Action for Zimbabwe:

- Distribution of fast-maturing nutritious vegetable seeds to the most food-insecure households for garden production in rural and (where feasible) urban areas.
- Distribution of poultry and small ruminants among the most food-insecure households in rural and (where feasible) urban areas.

Hence, the design of the project was very relevant to the requirements of DERF as well as prevailing needs on the ground as summed up by FAO. A review of documents on Early Action interventions did not show specific requirements for project baseline and endline evaluations. This also explains the limited focus of the Project on outcome and impact level results and indicators. Thus, strict application of OECD-DAC Evaluation criteria for such interventions may

¹ DERF Funding Guidelines, 2019 Version 2

not be recommended. Rather, the evaluation would need to focus on specific areas of interest by the implementing and/or supporting organization.

4.1.3 Relevance of Intervention to the needs of target group

The project “Early Response to Food Insecurity” which was implemented by VIVA Network in Epworth was very relevant as it addressed food insecurity challenges currently gripping a number of households in Epworth. A recent study conducted by Tawodzera and Chigumira, (2018) highlighted that only 17% of households in Epworth could be classified as food secure. Hence proving that Epworth is one of the most food insecure urban settlements in Zimbabwe. Household’s vulnerability to food security in Epworth is propped by a range of factors, chief among them: high levels of unemployment and poverty. Data from household survey has shown that of the 69 households that were interviewed 71% rely on informal trading. These figures give a picture of a community that relies mainly on hand to mouth. The informal sector was hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic as government banned all informal activities since March 2020 to curb the spread of the pandemic. Furthermore, it should be noted that only 5 respondents mentioned formal employment as one of their sources of income, further indicating the scarcity of viable income generating initiatives in the community.

The food insecurity in Epworth is also as a result of high dependency ratios. The average family has six members of which three of those are children. This further puts a strain on the little income the families have as these children are mostly of school going age. Putting food on the table and on one hand saving for school fees become a huge challenge. As a result, families tend to be left with only two options either to use money meant for fees for food or pay fees and starve. Sky rocketing of food prices is also a factor to note, with the majority of the population in Epworth not involved in meaningful economic activities, the little income they get cannot keep up with the rising prices of food. A study by the Spring of Life Zimbabwe suggests that the ratio of girls engaging in prostitution has increased by 150% in the second half of 2019 and that children are trading sex for amounts equivalent to food portions. The National AIDS Council has also reported that 70% of prostitution in Zimbabwe is now young girls due to the current food shortage. Faced with these figures, it becomes clear the relevance of this project. With Epworth highlighted as one of the most food insecure urban settlement, it is not immune to the prostitution issues. The project becomes very necessary to help households navigate the food challenges and steer clear of other criminal activities particularly prostitution. It is important to note that from the data collected only one respondent said that they have been involved in illegal activities. This bears testimony of the relevance of the project and how households involved in the project are trying to make an honesty living without resorting to criminal and risky activities.

The project has managed to respond to its targeted group’s needs. The project had two components; one was on poultry rearing whilst the other one was on community gardening. The poultry rearing project targeted the elderly those who are not able to tend the gardens. The one for the community gardens targeted those who are still a bit young who are able to go to water the gardens. This approach was very instrumental in the success of the project as it responded to the different needs of the targeted beneficiaries. Working with schools and community volunteers the project has been able to reach out to the vulnerable segments of its targeted beneficiaries. The data collected has shown a huge number of orphans and also the number of people who are chronically ill is quite high, showing that the project has been able to reach to the most vulnerable members of its targeted group.

4.1.4 Relevance of Transfer Modality

The Project was designed as a conditional social cash transfer intervention in which households were expected to use the funds to purchase gardening inputs, chickens and stock-feed in accordance with each household's chosen project. The emergence of the first case of COVID-19 in Zimbabwe and the subsequent movement restrictions rendered the direct cash assistance modality highly untenable and very risky. Had the funds been distributed at that time, the funds would have been easily misused or directed towards other household pressing needs that may not be aligned to the project's objective of enhancing household food security.

On being asked modality of preference, 88% of households were not in favour of in-kind assistance despite the demonstrated success and potential of the poultry and gardening interventions to contribute to household food security. Figure 2 shows that 43% of interviewed households preferred cash transfers while 45% preferred a mixed modality combining cash transfers and in-kind assistance.

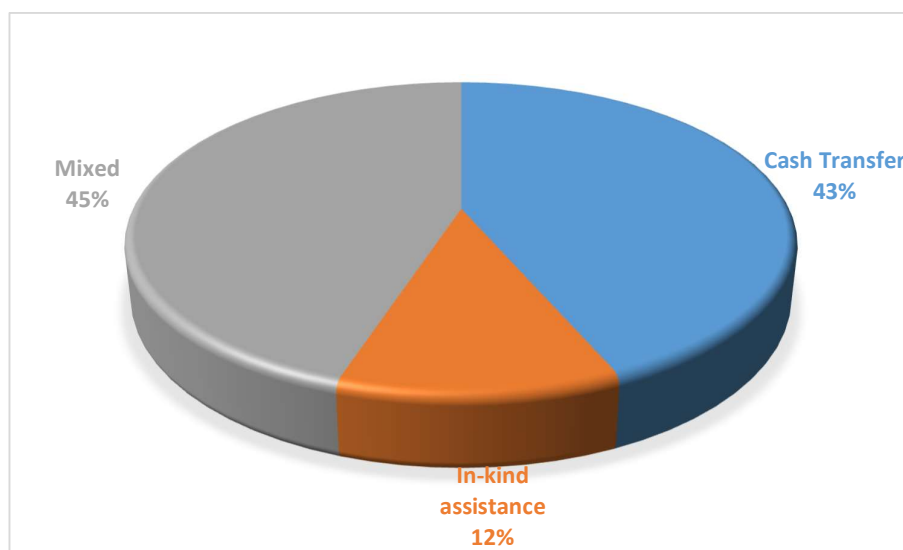


Figure 2: Preferred Social Assistance Modality

Given the results recorded with in-kind assistance, the consultant agrees with the approach adopted by VNZ given the prevailing environment. A mixed modality would be ideal for a longer-term project where the project would start with the in-kind assistance, then build the financial management capacity of the households and towards the end of project period provide financial capital for participants to grow their projects.

4.1.5 Project complementarity with other actors

The Project had a clear target group, households with high levels of child vulnerability including child headed households. The evaluation shows that 16% of the households interviewed had household heads with disability, 45% of the household heads were living with chronic illness, 16% of the households were elderly headed. All these vulnerabilities end affecting the welfare of children in one way or the other.

At Project launch, the Project aimed at reaching out to households that were not participating in any other social assistance project. Apart from the assistance that the beneficiaries have received from VIVA Network, only 3% of households interviewed indicated receiving assistance

from other NGO or Government social assistance interventions. DanChurchaid (DCA) is one NGO working in Epworth providing social cash transfers/in-kind assistance to vulnerable households in the area under the World Food Programme Social Cash Assistance Programme. Only one respondent indicated having been recently enrolled into the DCA programme effectively starting August 2020. Hence, during the Project's implementation period, the Project had undertaken measures that ensured there was no duplication of efforts among development partners.

4.2 EFFECTIVENESS

4.2.1 Introduction

In this section, the extent at which the Project achieved its planned outputs and targets is discussed. The number of people reached from the different target groups as well as key factors influencing overall project performance are presented. The TORs specifically require the evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the implementation approach, i.e. the effectiveness of working with and through community structures and the benefits derived from this approach in terms of organisational development and beneficiary reach. Secondary data review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, household questionnaire interviews and personal observations are the main sources of data for this section.

Summary of Project Performance Against Targets

Table 3: Planned Results and Achievement

	Results	Indicators/ Targets	Achievement
1.1	410 households identified & oriented on early response intervention.	410 Households identified and oriented (<i>Total of 2134 people – 767 adults & 1364 children</i>)	250 households received five (5) point of lay birds, a 50kg bag of feed, vaccines and a drinker. 160 households involved in 3 community gardens received seeds, fertiliser and pesticides
		410 Manuals printed	Manuals were distributed electronically via Whatsapp
1.2	410 households trained on relevant livelihoods project (vegetable gardens or poultry/ ruminant)	410 Households trained	All households received training in line with their chosen intervention
		410 Guidelines developed/produced	
1.3	3 irrigation systems installed in 3 community gardens	3 water irrigation systems installed	Water remains a key challenge across the three gardens. Muguta garden dependent on council water supplied once per week. Project borehole although with much water not functional due to a faulty pump. The water output from Domboramwari borehole was regarded as very low. Mabvazuva borehole was functional although participants regarded the water as not adequate due to the position of the solar panel.
1.4	410 households have received cash transfers for the initiation of nutrition gardens or keeping poultry/ruminants	410 Households received cash transfer	Modality was changed from conditional cash transfers to in-kind assistance as the project procured inputs and poultry for the participants due to COVID restrictions on movement. 250 households were supported with point of lay chickens while 160 households received inputs for community gardening.

4.2.2 Project Performance as Measured Against Planned Outputs and Targets

The project planned to reach out to 2050 people as shown in Table 4. Two thirds (66%) of the targeted population were children.

Table 4: Planned Target Population

Type of Activity	Female (by age)			Male (by age)			Total
	<18	18-50	>50	<18	18-50	>50	
410 HH receiving cash grant (5persons per HH)	762	266	111	591	225	95	2050

Project records show that the target was surpassed by 4% and reached out to 2134 people of which 1364 were children representing 64% of the total population.

Community Gardens

The project targeted 160 households for community gardening. The participants were comprised of child headed, low income and widowed households. Three community gardens were established with two gardens (Domboramwari & Muguta) having 53 members each while the third garden, Mabvazuva, had 54 households.

Survey data shows that slightly above half (53%) of households in community gardening are female headed, 34% are widowed, 6% of the heads are living with disability, 31% chronically sick and 28% of the heads above 50 years old. Compared to poultry, community gardening would require more physically active members who are able to provide labour for tillage and irrigation.

The project set out to establish 3 irrigation systems for the community gardens. These were established as planned. At the time of the endline evaluation, key informant interviews and FGDs highlighted challenges of unavailability of adequate water supplies across all the three gardens. The Muguta garden borehole was not functional due to a faulty pump. Participants were now dependent on Council water that was supplied once per week. VNZ has since made three attempts, post project period, to fix the borehole. However, while there is improvement, the problem is not yet fully addressed. At Domboramwari and Mabvazuva, both boreholes were functional, but water output was regarded as inadequate to meet the needs of the participants. At Mabvazuva participants supplemented borehole water with water from a deep well dug within the garden.

Despite the highlighted water challenges, KIIs, FGDs and personal observations confirmed high levels of interest and activity around the gardens with households actively producing vegetables to meet household consumption requirements. Interviews with garden participants indicated that actual vegetable production commenced in May across all three gardens. The drilling of boreholes, seedling and land preparation preceded actual vegetable production activities by the 160 participants. Most Mabvazuva garden participants interviewed indicated having started to harvest their vegetables in August while garden participants in Muguta and Domboramwari started harvesting during the months of June and July.

Mabvazuva experienced early challenges with the first borehole that the school had offered until a second borehole had to be drilled. The casing for the first borehole was broken and this made the borehole to malfunction. The participants also highlighted possible challenges with

the solar panel which they assumed was too small or not properly positioned to provide them with adequate water for their gardening activities.

Nevertheless, the gardens were indeed a timely intervention for the participants who vowed to continue with the activities even after the end of Project support. An assessment of the number of times households harvested vegetables from their gardens shows that half (50%) the participants were harvesting at least three times per week (Figure 3).

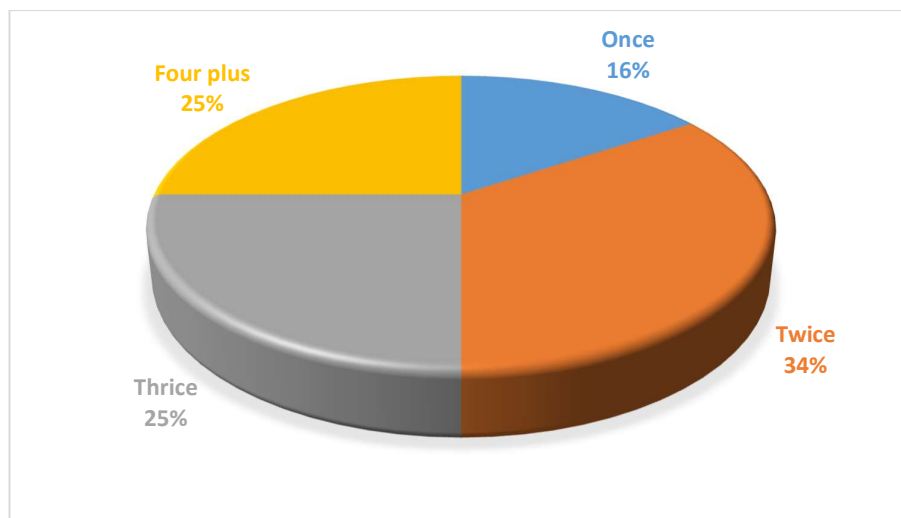


Figure 3: Number of times households harvested vegetables per week by proportion of households

This is significant and amply demonstrates the need of such an intervention for the targeted households. When all the gardens are at optimum production levels, both harvesting frequency and reliance on the gardens are expected to increase. About 38% of households also indicated selling part of their garden produce and realizing an average of ZWL 60.00 per month. This indicates that garden production was still very low to cater for both consumption and income requirements of the households. All respondents indicated using income from gardening to purchase other food commodities for the household.

Appropriate targeting is one reason underlying the success of the community gardens. Only a few participants (less than 5) in Mabvazuva were noted to be neglecting their vegetables. Upon probing some key informants indicated that those neglecting irrigating their vegetables had misplaced priorities or had wrong expectations when they enrolled into the Project. This had nothing to do with incapacity to provide required gardening labour.

A follow-up project on community gardening would need to ensure unlimited supply of adequate water. This is the only limitation that would affect expansion of the project reach. The project has amply demonstrated the potential contribution of gardening to household food security.

Poultry Project

A total of 250 households were targeted for the poultry project. Targeted participants were households with the elderly, disabled or the chronically sick. Survey data shows that nearly two thirds (65%) of households in poultry (layers) production are female headed, 32% are widowed, 24% of the heads are living with disability, 57% chronically sick and 57% of the heads are above 50 years old. These proportions show that the project actually reached out to the planned target

group as set out at the design stage. Compared to community gardening that is labour demanding, poultry keeping can be done by the elderly, disabled and the chronically sick.

Interviews with key informants and household representatives shows that the rearing of layers at household level started in earnest during the month of May across all targeted wards of Epworth. Figure 4 shows that the majority of households started enjoying the benefits (eggs) from poultry rearing during the month of June.

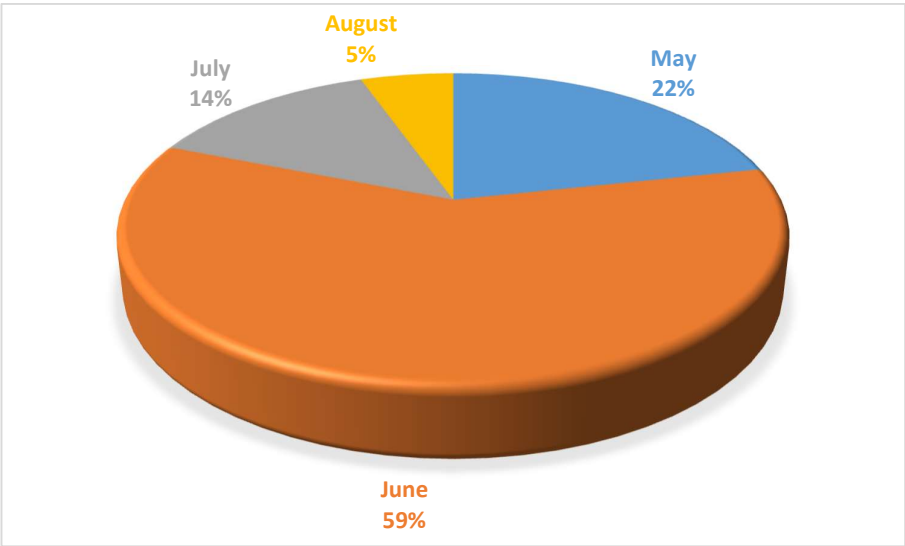


Figure 4: Period when chickens started laying eggs by proportion of households

Some chickens did not spend much time, after being delivered, to start laying eggs, while some took more than a month to start laying the eggs. This has implications on a household’s capacity to continue with the intervention after the end of project stock-feed support. FGDs and KIIs indicated that chickens supplied by Shek Shalom were quicker to lay eggs and the eggs were bigger compared to chickens supplied by Novatech.

The layer chickens served as a vital source of income and food thereby significantly contributing to household food security. Survey data showed that 95% of participating households consumed some of the eggs laid by the chickens while only 5% did not consume the eggs but sold them to raise income. Similarly, only 5% did not sell any of their eggs but rather consumed all the eggs.

On average, households consumed 38 eggs per month with the maximum being 120 eggs and a minimum of 4 eggs. On average, households sold 68 eggs per month with a maximum of 146 eggs and a minimum of 6 eggs per month. Each crate of 30 eggs was being sold for three United States Dollars equivalent to ZWL 240.00 (using the prevailing auction exchange rate). The survey showed that households were more inclined towards raising income to meet other household needs compared to directly consuming the eggs.

A follow-up project on poultry production would need to consider building the capacity of households to be able to purchase on chicken feed once project support comes to an end. This will include paying special attention to the procurement of chickens that would not take more than a week to start laying eggs and also supporting participants with adequate feed that would enable them to save for future stock feeds in the absence of project support.

4.2.3 Effectiveness of Implementation Approach

The main factors that have influenced the achievement of the project's objectives include the approach used by the project to reach out to the targeted participants and ensure continuous monitoring of project activities as well as timely mentoring of participants. The project organized project participants in groups overseen by community volunteers. Three committees were established for the community gardens. The garden committees were useful in mobilizing participants for gardening activities as well as management and monitoring of gardening activities. This approach also helped to motivate participants to conduct gardening activities for their ultimate benefit at household level.

The poultry intervention was also spearheaded by community volunteers at ward level. The volunteers conducted regular (twice per week) home visits to all poultry participants to ensure compliance with recommended poultry management practices. At the school level, the project worked closely with school authorities in the identification of vulnerable pupils to benefit from the project. The school children participated in the day to day management of the school-based poultry runs. Apart from getting school fees assistance from the project proceeds, the students were also provided some eggs on a periodic basis for home consumption. These approaches worked very well for the poultry interventions as out of 1250 chickens distributed to 250 households, only five birds were reported to have died at the time of the evaluation. Without close supervision and support by community volunteers, it would have been difficult to record such high achievements.

Group organization was useful in effective and efficient procurement and distribution of inputs and stock-feeds for gardens and poultry projects respectively. Apart from benefitting from economies of scale, the benefits of working as groups are much higher than working as individuals. This needs to be continued in future if sustainable benefits are to be realized at community level.

4.3 IMPACT

Introduction

This section focuses on the impact of the intervention at beneficiary levels. For a short-term project, it is rather too early to establish project's impact at policy or partner and stakeholder levels. However, it is important to note that the project was well received and supported by the local authority as well as the Department of Social Services within the Ministry of Labour, Public Service and Social Welfare. The evaluation noted that besides mitigating the anticipated food insecurity among vulnerable households, the project has indeed resulted in significant positive effects on the livelihoods of participating population groups. With the passage of time, it is envisaged that the impacts of the project would become more apparent, with the participants becoming more resilient to food insecurity shocks compared to non-participants with similar livelihood conditions. It is only at this stage that concrete changes in policy, partners and stakeholders are expected to emerge. It is also important to note that the project's design was not meant to establish resilient outcomes in household food security but to mitigate the harsh effects of an impending food insecurity situation.

The section largely draws upon input from key informant interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaire interviews with participating households.

Project impact on participating households

About 87% of households indicated having realized improved food security compared to the period before the project. The impact of community gardening has been largely confined to household food security with even the few households that managed to sell some of their produce using the income raised to purchase other required foodstuffs. Participants in poultry rearing, on the other hand, realized more and significant income from selling eggs. Besides using generated income to purchase additional foodstuffs, participants managed to use the income to meet other household needs. Figure 5 shows that 23% of households used the income to address health requirements. This is quite expected as the intervention targeted households with members living with chronic illness.

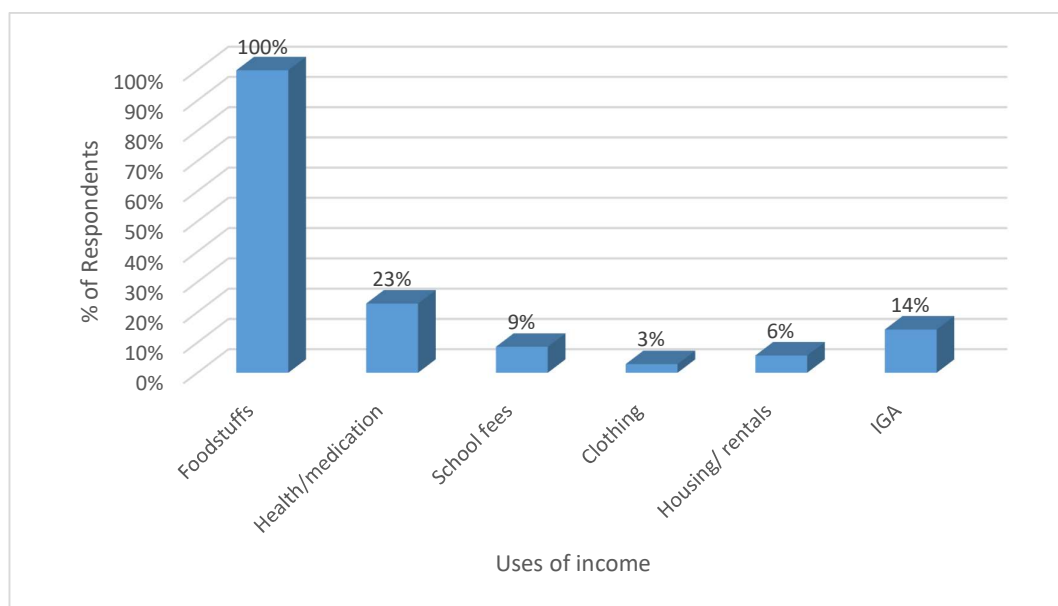


Figure 5: Uses of Income from the Sale of Eggs by Proportion of Respondents

It is also important to note that 14% of the respondents invested the income generated in income generating activities (IGAs). From FGDs conducted, one elderly participant indicated that she had since purchased 5 more layer chickens to grow her newly found enterprise. Others were organizing to purchase stock-feed in bulk. Another participant indicated having started a weaving venture that arose from the sale of eggs. This diversification will leave a lasting impact on the targeted households and the community at large.

Below are some testimonies from related participants highlighting how the project had transformed their lives:

“We are now counted and respected among other community members because of the project. Before that we were social misfits, but now even our skin texture has significantly improved.” Said one middle aged woman at Domboramwari Primary about the benefits of arising from the Project

“Since we started the Project for keeping layer chickens, we are now able to sell eggs and purchase other foodstuffs such as cooking oil, and I am now even able to drink tea in the morning”, said one woman at an FGD held at Muguta Primary School.

“Our children have been enjoying looking after the chickens and everyday they do not cease to visit the chicken run as they enjoy the eggs”, acclaimed one man in Mabvazuva

“We are now able to eat sadza at least once a day, and relish is no longer an impediment because of the community garden”

At Muguta school the garden site was extended to accommodate other vulnerable community members who were not initially selected for the Project. Similarly, at Mabvazuva Community Garden, a group of youths have been motivated to start a garden nearby. All these initiatives have been linked indirectly to the project.

4.4 SUSTAINABILITY

Introduction

By their nature, early response interventions are not designed to bring about sustainable outcomes. Rather their main purpose is to avert potential humanitarian disaster arising from food insecurity. Hence, the project did not specifically focus on this aspect during implementation. Nevertheless, a brief overview of the extent to which the project activities and achievements are sustainable is important to guide any future programming or follow-up action. This section therefore presents the perspectives of the participants and stakeholders interviewed on the key factors that determine the sustainability of interventions.

Project Implementation Approach

The project approach had a strong inclination towards enhancing sustainability of project activities through the active participation of community volunteers in all phases of implementation. Key informant interviews with the volunteers indicated that they will continue to mobilise project participants for project activities, provide on-site mentoring services as well conduct regular monitoring and support visits to project members. These services by volunteers are critical for enhancing the continuity of project activities particularly in view of the dynamic and challenging operating environment. Participants still need group support to overcome any challenges that may arise in each of the interventions.

The project contributed to improved knowledge about raising layer chickens as well as vegetable production among the target population groups. Participants indicated that knowledge gained will continue to be a valuable asset which they will continue to apply in their livelihood activities. Through the community volunteers, the participants will continue to be reminded of good management practices for rearing layer chickens as well as vegetable production.

Threats to sustainability

While 96% of the respondents interviewed vowed to continue with gardening activities and the rearing of layer chickens, there are a number of threats that may affect the sustainability of the interventions. For gardening, continuous supply of adequate water for irrigation is critical if most of the participants are to continue participating in vegetable production without support from VNZ. This is largely dependent on the effective operation of the boreholes established by the project.

As for the poultry intervention, availability of chicken feed is critical for the continuity of the project beyond project support. Layer chickens need to be well fed if they are to lay eggs on a daily basis. During the project implementation period, participants were provided with adequate chicken feed that enabled them to harvest the maximum number of eggs possible on a daily basis. Some of the households that started harvesting eggs as soon as the chickens were delivered had made savings from the sale of eggs. This placed them on a better position to purchase their own feed in the absence of project support. At the time of the endline evaluation, some of these households had started to pull their savings in order to purchase required chicken feed.

However, for chickens that delayed laying eggs as they were not yet mature, participants realised substantial losses as the chickens consumed most of the feed provided by the project without giving anything in return. Consequently, the participants had no savings and most did not have capacity to raise funds for the purchase of recommended feed for layer chickens. Some

participants ended up giving the chickens daily rations below recommended quantities or unrecommended feed for layers. The unfortunate result was that the chickens stopped laying any eggs.

Some poultry project participants interviewed during key informant interviews pointed out that they were not prepared to purchase own feed as they were not informed in time that the project was coming to an end. The consultant came across a sad story of one disadvantaged household with most members living with disability (deaf and dumb). The household head was reported to be angry and wanted the project proponents to take back “their chickens” as they were no longer able to provide the required chicken feed.

If the project was designed with sustainability of interventions in mind, there was need to further strengthen the capacity of community structures as well as participating households. It was highlighted that volunteers were spending a lot of time walking long distances when conducting regular monitoring and support visits to households involved in poultry keeping. Use of bicycles would have significantly alleviated their plight. In addition, more training could have been provided to both poultry and gardening participants with a special focus on gardening and poultry production as business. For the committees, additional training on leadership and group dynamics would have significantly improved their group management practices.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSION

The Early Response to Food Insecurity project was a very relevant and timely intervention that significantly mitigated impending food insecurity among the most vulnerable and disadvantage households of Epworth. The primary target group, orphaned and vulnerable children living in households characterized by multiple vulnerabilities (headed by the elderly, disabled and chronically sick) was reached with a package of interventions that took into consideration their specific vulnerabilities. The use of community structures, and more specifically volunteers, enhanced the cost-effectiveness of the project while strengthening social cohesion among households. Undoubtedly, the project achieved its objective and resulted in improved food security as testified by almost all participants.

While the project changed its original modality of social assistance, from conditional cash transfer to in-kind assistance, the change was very relevant and timely for the project to realise its planned objectives. The project was launched in March, the month when Zimbabwe experienced its first case of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is the time when the government declared a national lock-down in line with the World Health Organisation guidelines for curbing the spread of the pandemic. This further exacerbated the plight and food security status of the targeted households. Most livelihood activities conducted by the project target group were adversely affected further worsening their food security situation.

Just like any other intervention, the project had its own fair share of challenges which would serve as important lessons for future programming. Almost all gardening participants lamented the inadequate supply of water that threatened their vegetable production activities. For the layer chickens, some chickens took longer than expected to start laying eggs. Productivity of the chickens is highly dependent on the amount of feed provided on a daily basis.

Given the right conditions and support, the project amply demonstrated that vegetable production and the raising of layer chickens, have great potential to avert humanitarian food insecurity disasters. The low-cost interventions can serve as a critical launchpad for more longer term, sustainable livelihood interventions. With proceeds from selling eggs, some participating households have sought to grow their ventures while others diversified into other lines of income generating activities.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the recorded successes, the project is indeed worthy replicating or scaling up to other locations and beneficiaries. Critical considerations in scaling up the project include:

- Provision of adequate and reliable water sources for community gardening. A minimum amount of water should be guaranteed per given size of garden if participants are to realise optimum benefits from their vegetable production activities.
- Careful procurement of chickens ready to lay eggs as well as provision of adequate chicken feed are important if participants are to enjoy the benefits of the intervention and be able to save for future purchases of chicken feed. The project should provide beneficiaries with adequate feed which can cover at least 3 more months after the project end to enhance sustainability of intervention.

- A mixed modality, starting with in-kind assistance, is recommended to avoid misuse of the assistance. Cash assistance should be provided after participants have received some training on basic business and financial management. This is however much more relevant for longer term projects compared to the short-term Early Action interventions.
- If the project seeks to improve food security and livelihoods in the long term, there is need to strengthen the supporting community structures and volunteers. This could be done through training project committees on leadership and group dynamics. Community volunteers would need to be supported with equipment, such as bicycles that would assist them when conducting monitoring and supportive home visits to poultry participants.
- To enhance project monitoring and evaluation, it is recommended that project design would need to clearly define the project's theory of change. This can be done through careful design of the project's results chain coupled with measurable outcome and impact level indicators.

6 ANNEXES

6.1 ANNEX I: TERMS OF REFERENCE

CALL FOR CONSULTANCY SERVICES: END OF PROJECT EVALUATION

Introduction

Viva Network Zimbabwe is implementing a project named Early Response to Food Insecurity Project. The implementation of the project started in March 2020 and will end in August 2020. The overall goal of the intervention was to improve food security for food insecure child headed households and families with a high dependency ratio of orphans and vulnerable children food insecure households in Harare. In general, beneficiaries were equipped to mitigate challenges of the anticipated food crisis through growing fast-maturing nutritious seeds and keeping poultry.

Profile of Organisation

Viva Network Zimbabwe is a network of Christian organizations and churches seeking effective collaborative responses for an improved situation of children. The vision of the network is to see children living in safe loving families and communities. The network was started in 1999 and she celebrated her 20th anniversary in February 2019. To date, VNZ has a membership of 56 organisations and 142 churches and she works with different stakeholders who include the government, local leadership, other networks and organisations. Areas of programming for the network include child protection, family strengthening, access to education as well as access to health for children. Since her inception, the network has been instrumental in mobilizing, equipping, coordinating and implementing solution programs for the improvement of the situation of children.

The evaluation team/consultant is engaged to:

- (a) Evaluate the impact of the project in the sites of operation at stakeholders, partners and individual beneficiary levels, including both direct and indirect beneficiaries.
- (b) Assess the success of the project in meeting its outcomes, milestones, objectives and targets with particular reference to impact and sustainability.
- (c) Identify lessons learned and make recommendations on any changes to project strategies and/or methodologies that may be valuable for any subsequent and/or similar project, including how greater impact and cost efficiency might be achieved.
- (d) Assess the extent to which project activities and achievements are sustainable and identify key contributing factors which enhance and/or hinder these prospects.
- (e) Assess the effectiveness of the implementation approach i.e. working with and through community structures. The evaluation should reveal the effectiveness of working with and through community structures the benefits derived from this approach in terms of organisational development and beneficiary reach

Scope of the Evaluation

The scope of the final evaluation includes all programme activities and strategies from the start of the project in all of the project areas that contributed to project outcomes. The evaluation should look at the project as a whole and focus on the following key evaluation questions:

Relevance:-

- Does the project respond to the different target groups' needs?
- To what extent is the project reaching out to the most vulnerable segments of its target groups such as child headed households, orphans and vulnerable children and the community?
- To what extent does the work by VNZ complement the interventions of other actors on the ground? Are there areas of duplication of work?

Effectiveness:

- To what extent were project outputs achieved as planned? -What were the main factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the project's objectives?
- How many people from the different target groups have effectively been reached? Considering a potential follow-up project, how could the reach of the project be extended while ensuring impact on the level of each individual person to be reached?

Efficiency:

- Looking at the number of people reached and the change brought in people's lives, has the project been cost effective?
- To what extent have the two approaches of targeting child headed households and orphans and vulnerable children for poultry and gardening been effective
- To what extent has the approach of working with local volunteers proven successful? Considering a potential follow-up project, should their role be strengthened or limited and could this be achieved?

Apart from the approaches mentioned above, what have been the most effective methodologies and approaches the organisation used to bring about changes to people's lives? What has worked and what has not? How effective have the project's management, monitoring, learning and financial systems been? How have they helped or hindered the delivery of lasting change?

Impact:

- To what degree have project outcomes been achieved? Were there any unexpected outcomes?- Have there been changes to policies, practice and attitudes of decision and policymakers to benefit the project's target groups—both at the local and national level?
- To what extent has the project contributed to the achievement of broader national and international policies, conventions, targets in Zimbabwe?

Sustainability:

- Are the project outcomes likely to be sustainable in the long term?
- Has the project contributed to structural change ensuring long-term improvement of the situation of the target group, considering for instance the mobility and rejuvenation of the group of sex workers? The evaluation should also focus on the project within the broader context including all players (communities and stakeholders).

The following will be deliverables by the evaluation team/consultants:

- (a) Evaluation work plan is to be finalised within 7 days of signing the contract with VNZ
- (b) An evaluation inception report containing the following
- (c) Interpretation of the TOR, Evaluation design, approach and methodology, Work plan and time schedule, Evaluation tools and Sampling technique and sites for field visit
- (d) A draft evaluation report (maximum 20 pages excluding appendices) to be presented to VNZ for comments and review to be submitted within 14 days of completion of the field visits/workshops.
- (e) Facilitate a presentation of findings to a core group of VNZ representatives using a delivery method to be agreed upon.
- (f) The final report should be clear and simply written, free of jargon. The main body of the report should not exceed 30 pages and should include an executive summary and recommendations.
- (g) Guidance on the process by which findings will be shared and discussed with all stakeholders including those who have benefited from the project and how any resulting changes in the report will be included.

Application procedures

- (a) VNZ is seeking qualified offers for the above-mentioned consulting services. You are kindly invited to submit your technical and financial offer for the requested services.

- (b) The proposal should include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following information
- Description of the Firm /Individual Qualifications
 - Understanding of the Requirements for Services, including Assumptions
 - Proposed Approach, Methodology, Timing and Outputs-detailed description of the manner in which your firm/individual would respond to the TOR. You should include the number of person-days in each specialization that you consider necessary to carry out all work required.

Proposed Team Structure

- Proposed Project Team Members which, ideally, should be gender sensitive
- Expected Qualifications and Competencies for the team:
- Post-Graduate for key members of the team in relevant field with at least 3years' experience doing similar work.
- Possession of good knowledge of all concepts, principles and approaches required for the assignment.
- Provide 3 traceable references and documentary evidence like contract awards and written reference letters from clients stating scope of services offered.
- Excellent communication, analysis and writing skills.

Good interpersonal and teamwork skills. Bidders/ Consultants to submit their bids offers by 17 August 2020 to: hr@vnz.org.zw. The actual start date for the assignment will be agreed upon with the winning bidder in line with the Lockdown position

6.2 ANNEX II: PROJECT LOG FRAME

OVERALL GOAL: Food insecure children and families in Epworth, Zimbabwe are provided with essential early action to mitigate anticipated food crisis				
Objective 1: 400 vulnerable households in Epworth, Zimbabwe become food secure through growing fast-maturing nutritious seeds and keeping poultry/ruminants				
Results	Indicators (Milestone, target)	Activities	Means of verification	Assumptions (risks)
1.1. 410 households identified and oriented on early response intervention.	• 400 Households identified and oriented (milestone 205, Target 410) • 410 Manuals printed	• Recruitment and selection of 410 households • Formation of 10 groups of 41 households and 4 working committees of 3 volunteers • 410 Manuals distributed	• Database of households selected • Database of households trained • Databases of sub-groups and working committees • Delivery notes signed by beneficiaries • Register of the training meeting	• Beneficiaries available and ready to attend the trainings • Beneficiaries ready to start projects after training • Beneficiaries willing to volunteer as leaders • Manuals available for reproduction
1.2. 410 households trained on relevant livelihoods project (vegetable gardens or poultry/ruminant)	• 410 Households trained (milestone 205, Target 410) • 410 Guidelines developed/produced	• 410 Guidelines distributed • Training of 410 Households on vegetable gardens/poultry/ruminant projects	• Database of households trained • Delivery notes of guidelines signed by beneficiaries • Register of the training meeting	• Beneficiaries available and ready to attend the trainings • Beneficiaries ready to start projects after training • Beneficiaries willing to volunteer as leaders
1.3. 3 irrigation systems installed in 3 community gardens	3 water irrigation systems installed	Installation of 3 irrigation systems	• No. of irrigation systems drilled	• stakeholders provide land for community gardens • stakeholders cooperate with the installation of irrigation systems • stakeholders willing to support community projects
1.4. 410 households have received cash transfers for the initiation of nutrition gardens or keeping poultry/ruminants	410 Households received cash transfer (milestone 205, Target 410)	• Mobilization/coordination of beneficiaries through working committees • Transferring of cash to 410 households	• Database of people receiving funds • Copy of bank statements • Registers of funds distribution (if cash)	• Beneficiaries are cooperative and use cash for intended purposes • Payment methods are functional and alternative methods available • Agricultural supplies are readily available on the reachable markets

6.3 ANNEX III: SOCIO=DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF HOUSEHOLDS

Socio-demographic characteristics	Gardens N=32	Poultry N=37	Overall N=69
Sex of Household Head			
% Male	47%	35%	41%
% Female	53%	65%	59%
Age of Household Head			
Below 18 years	0	0	0
% 18-30 years	6%	3%	4%
% 31-50 years	66%	41%	52%
% 51-64 years	19%	34%	28%
% 65+ years	9%	22%	16%
Marital Status of Household Head			
% Single/never married	0	0	0
% Divorced/separated	3%	11%	7%
% Married/ co-habiting	63%	67%	59%
% Widowed	34%	32%	34%
Disability & Health Status of Household Head			
% with disability	6%	24%	16%
% with chronic illness	31%	57%	45%
Livelihood Activities/ Source of Income			
Informal Trading	78%	65%	71%
Small livestock production	0%	73%	39%
Casual labour	28%	32%	30%
Crop and vegetable production	28%	8%	17%
Formal employment	9%	5%	7%
Government Social Assistance	9%	5%	7%
Selling Firewood	9%	5%	7%
Begging	3%	5%	4%
NGO Social Assistance	0%	5%	3%
Risky activities	3%	0%	1%
Remittances	0%	3%	1%
Household Size			
Average household size			6
Average number of children in household			3
Average number of adults in households			2
Orphan Status of Children			
% Non-orphan			64%
% Single orphans			25%
% Double orphans			11%