Evaluation

Country:	**Zimbabwe**
Project Title:	**Agricultural Assistance and Water Project Manicaland**
Project Holder:	Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e.V. 53173 Bad Godesberg, Germany
Principal Donor Agency:	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) - Referat 213

Project Number:	Welthungerhilfe: ZWE 1032 / AF 1542 BMZ: 2008.1878.1
Project Duration:	05.09.2008 - 31.12.2010 (including extension)
Project budget:	1'157'000 Euro

<u>Evaluation</u>	
Commissioned by:	WHH
Evaluation Period:	21 November - 09 December 2010
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Hann. Münden (Germany), 02 February 2011

I. SUMMARY

1 Brief Description of the Project and Framework Conditions

Within a span of about two decades, Zimbabwe has turned from a vibrant, efficient and highly diversified economy and net exporter of food to a nation reliant on copious amounts of food aid and technical support in all sectors. The project attempts to counter the catastrophic demise of food production and livelihood conditions which has affected the rural population most adversely. The overall objective (OO) of the project is thus to contribute towards a "reduction of the emergency situation in selected communities in the province of Manicaland". The outcome (specific objective or project purpose) is stated as "rural agricultural production and the availability of drinking water have improved in specific communities in Manicaland through enhanced expertise and technical interventions in the agricultural and drinking water sectors". The project is following the LRRD approach, linking relief to rehabilitation and development.

Under the relief component (output 1) 1817 households (HH) were provided with seeds, fertilizer and tools. Of these 80 % managed to plant their fields in time for the 2009/2010 cropping cycle and 37 % managed to set aside seed for the following season. Under output 2, 144 contact farmers were trained and successfully applied an improved system of traditional cropping termed *conservation agriculture* (CA). A total of 923 HH practised CA on some of their cropping area. Under output 3, linking rehabilitation to development, 40 fenced irrigation gardens were constructed and handed to an equal number of project-trained garden committees. Under the rehabilitation component (output 4), 105 bore holes were repaired or rehabilitated. 171 borehole committees were reactivated or newly formed and 36 pump minders were trained and supplied with adequate tool kits.

2 Outcomes and Impacts

For a number of significant deliveries the planned output was exceeded. The number of irrigation gardens installed (+ 33 %) and number of bore holes rehabilitated (+ 44 %) surpassed the planned quantity frames. Although women, who procure most HH water, benefit from reduced collection distances due to an increased number of bore holes, there are indications that the work load of women has increased with regard to the irrigation gardens and - presumably - also CA activities. The project could not have been expected to make a meaningful contribution towards achieving a more equitable distribution of the HH work load. Potentially the project will contribute well to the ability of farming communities in the project area to manage natural resources and production systems on a lasting basis. The project has adapted well to date, although it remains to be seen to what extend marketing constraints can be overcome in the future.

3 Sustainability

Appropriate national or sectoral policies are in place but frequently not enforced. There is no financial contribution from national or regional budgets, although there is strongly stated support at community and district levels. National support has been contradictory in recent years, with the Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare imposing a work ban

on NGOs on 04 June 2008, which lasted for almost 3 months. Private sector support is less clear. Interactions with district line agencies and provincial bodies have fostered trustworthy relations. The project has made considerable efforts in consulting with local communities and decision making bodies and to reactivate and establish other bodies. Technical interventions have been delivered in collaboration with local line agencies. It is not clear whether the local institutional structures will be able to contribute to the continuing flow of benefits. The project has attempted to engage local leadership, which has reacted positively to project driven revival of traditional coping strategies and project thrusts aimed at conservation of natural resources while increasing agricultural production and incomes. The project thus corresponds to local perceptions of need and there were high levels of participation. While there will be ownership of individual outputs there is likely to be no institutional ownership as such. The project has created mainly communally owned assets. It is unclear how these will evolve. Infrastructure generally tends to deteriorate rapidly, due to inadequate maintenance. This is caused by poor management, rather than a lack of resources. None of the committees formed have instituted meaningful membership or user fees. Beneficiaries will continue to rely on outside assistance for bore hole repairs and maintenance of gardens. Many gardens obtain water from bore-holes. This dependency bears the inherent risk of gardens failing if bore holes break down. Farmers may experience problems in procuring horticultural seeds once material supplied by the project is used up. Noteworthy efforts were made in training local people. Local customs have been respected fully. There are excellent relations between beneficiaries and the project. No new dependencies regarding long term needs for support were created. There are indications of increasing aid dependency (donor syndrome) spawned by blanket food and/or cash aid provided by other agencies.

4 Relevance

At proposal level, beneficiaries and intervention sites were not specified. This necessitated the collection of baseline data and consultations with stakeholders at various levels to identify intervention sites and target groups prior to commencement of implementation. The 4-month project extension enables the project to accompany farmers through the relevant parts of a second cropping cycle. Two budget amendments became necessary, the second of which was devised in such a manner as to make a zero-cost extension possible. Time and attention required to source quality tools and equipment, mainly procured locally via South Africa, were severely underestimated. There was inadequate consideration of the inherently vital sequencing of deliveries. Construction of gardens irrigated from bore holes could only commence once boreholes were repaired and yield data was available. It remains unclear, whether vermiculture can make an economically viable contribution towards household incomes. Inputs remained largely unchanged, but activities have been revised in depth culminating in some changes of outputs. Activities and outputs are consistent with the intended impacts and effects. The assumptions held true.

5 Effectiveness

The framework conditions (political stability, telecommunication, financial stability, availability of inputs and equipment) improved from early 2009 onwards. The project start was delayed due to late approval by the donor, triggered by the NGO suspension. When the project was finally approved, the designated project manager was on international annual leave. Initial procurement was effected by the regional office, in close cooperation with the

national staff, which was largely taken over from a precursor project. Due to the late start of field activities, the rain-fed cropping cycle 2008/2009 was not covered. Adequate care was taken to liaise with relevant actors to avoid duplication. Handouts, limited to the provision of farming inputs and tools for the first cropping cycle following project commencement, strengthened acceptance of the project in target communities. Harmful dumping of deliveries was avoided. Individuals at all levels expressed their appreciation of the project. Virtually all CA users are convinced of comparative benefits and state that they will continue to apply the technique. Many gardens have completed their first production cycle without major complications. Beneficiaries are greatly motivated and may be assumed to continue with CA and management of their gardens. Deliveries throughout are characterised by a high quality standard. The objectives were generally achieved. The planned outputs and activities were generally adequate to achieve the project purpose and results although the level of detail required for community consultation and participation was underestimated.

6 Efficiency

Staffing inputs were provided more or less on time, although international staffing costs were seriously underestimated. As most agricultural labour at HH level in Africa is provided by women, the project might have benefited from a stronger contingent of female field staff. Vehicle operational costs appear to be comparatively high, but remain within the quantity frame of the originally approved budget. Baseline data was collected but not analysed. Patchy agricultural yield data compiled by the project, which could have been used to substantiate the comparative merits of CA or documented the success of the irrigation gardens, proved inconclusive. Two budget amendments became necessary. Deliveries and material inputs appear to be appropriate and well managed. The utilisation of 10 facilitators (40 % female), strengthened the project's presence at field level. Gender issues were considered during targeting, but have not been given the degree of attention that is warranted by the evidently large proportion of women-led households. Only occasionally special efforts were made to address the plight of vulnerable individuals such as orphans. The project office is strategically placed between the two project regions, some 130 km from the respective operational regions. This necessitated lengthy travel and reduced field time. The utilisation of local facilitators substantially countered this constrain. Project planning did not include identification of intervention sites and target groups. Time lost to identify intervention sites and specific beneficiaries was compounded by problems encountered with delivery of procured seed. The project had little choice but to skip the 2008/2009 cropping season.

7 Most Important Recommendations

<u>Recommendations to the project:</u>

1. Consider compiling and assessing available baseline data for use in future project.
2. Assess means to continue support to target group beyond project termination.
3. Consider options to establish fruit trees in the irrigation gardens before project end.
4. Assess possibility of instituting of membership fees for all groups before project end.
5. Consider ways to further strengthen linkage / collaboration between garden and borehole committees, to minimize time taken to repair bore holes.

Recommendations to Welthungerhilfe and / or BMZ:

6. Consider concentration of project activities in spatially consolidated areas.
7. Consider a commission for an ex-post evaluation of 2 to 4 food security and water-sanitation projects in Zimbabwe 2-4 years after project termination.
8. Consider commissioning an in-depth study to assess means to improve sustainability potential of infrastructure interventions generally and water-sanitation in particular.
9. Consider options to improve M&E in future projects.
10. Avoid donor syndrome (ie. excessive dependency of communities on aid). Avoid aid flows without substantial community contribution.
11. Allow adequate time & resources for project planning.
12. Ensure follow-up projects / phases to consolidate activities and increase sustainability.
13. Women are pillars of society ... channel at least 50% of deliveries through women.
14. Consider means to target widows and orphans more effectively.
15. Consider establishment and long term support of demonstration sites (on farm or separate in strategically located area) or support experiment stations.
16. Consider routine incorporation of perennials into annual cropping systems (agro-forestry).
17. Consider 3-4 sequential project phases for projects - especially when adopting the LRRD approach.
18. All pertinent project documents should be in the language of the country where project is located.

9 General Conclusions

The project has made a tangible impact to improve the livelihood situation of a large number of beneficiaries. Local culture and customs have been fully respected. Cooperation with local line agencies and other stakeholders was intense. Liaison with other aid agencies was satisfactory. Security, logistical and other challenges have been dealt with promptly and professionally. Gender aspects have not been given due consideration. Project management has made a commendable effort to keep the project on track in spite of formidable challenges. The anticipate transition from relief to rehabilitation and development is jeopardised by continuing political strife. It remains to be seen what the target group can ultimately gain from the project’s deliveries.