



**Report for CARE-OFDA End of Term Evaluation for the ‘Improving Agricultural Production and Improved Access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for Drought Affected Populations in Masvingo Province (MERP)’ Project.**

September 2018



## **Disclaimer**

This evaluation was commissioned by CARE International in Zimbabwe (CIZ) and financed by USAID –OFDA. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of CIZ or USAID-OFDA but those of the evaluation team.

## Acknowledgements

This final evaluation of the Improving Agricultural Production and Improved Access to Water Sanitation and Hygiene for Drought Affected Populations in Masvingo Province project (MERP) was accomplished due to valuable contributions of many actors. Accordingly, my sincere gratitude goes to the following:

- USAID-OFDA for providing the financial support to the evaluation. Without this support the evaluation would not have been accomplished;
- CIZ for commissioning the study and providing logistical support for the evaluation;
- The Administrator of Masvingo Province, Mr. Fungai Mbetsa for granting permission for the evaluation to be done in the province under his district;
- The district administrators for Bikita, Chivi and Zaka Districts for granting permission for the study to be done in the districts;
- Key stakeholders in the Ministries of Health and Child Care, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises and Cooperative Development and District Development Fund for providing qualitative information to this evaluation as key informants;
- MERP project beneficiaries for serving as survey respondents. Together with information for the key stakeholders, the information from project beneficiaries constitutes the basis on which this report has been developed.
- All other individuals and corporate entities that participated in this evaluation in various ways. Thanks for the respective roles that you played. Omitting specific mention of you is not by design. It is due to human fallibility.

# Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction .....	1
Disclaimer .....	i
Acknowledgements .....	ii
List of Acronyms .....	vi
List of Tables .....	vii
List of Figures .....	viii
Executive Summary.....	ix
1.0 Introduction .....	ix
2.0 Methodology .....	ix
3.0 Evaluation Findings and Conclusion.....	ix
3.1 Appropriateness.....	ix
3.2 Effectiveness.....	x
3.3 Efficiency.....	xi
3.4 Impact.....	xi
3.5 Sustainability.....	xi
4.0 Recommendations.....	xii
4.1 Enhancing Agricultural Production: .....	xii
4.2 Economic Recovery and Market Systems .....	xii
4.3 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene .....	xii
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.0 Context .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 The Masvingo El Nino Recovery Project (MERP).....	1
1.2 The CARE-OFDA Masvingo El Nino Recovery Project (MERP) End of Term Evaluation (EOTE) .....	2
1.3 Specific Objectives of the MERP EOTE.....	2
1.4 About this report .....	2
<b>CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 Evaluation Design.....	3
2.2 Evaluation Approach.....	3
2.3 Delimitation of the Evaluation .....	3
2.4 Sampling .....	4
2.5 Data Collection Methods .....	4
5.5 Data Analysis.....	5
3.6 Research Ethics.....	5
3.7 Study Limitations .....	5
3.7.1 Time constraints .....	5

3.7.2 Competing Priorities for Vehicle Use .....	6
CHAPTER 3: EVALUATION FINDINGS.....	7
3.1 Introduction .....	7
3.2 Appropriateness of the OFDA-funded Response .....	7
3.2.1 Suitability of Response to Needs and Expectations of Target Communities .....	7
3.2.2 Appropriateness of a Multi-Sectoral Response.....	9
3.2.3 Alignment to Government Policies and Priorities .....	9
3.2.4 Alignment to Resilience Building and Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies. ....	10
3.2.5 Emergency Relief or Early Recovery?.....	10
3.2.6 Appropriateness of MERP .....	11
3.3 Project Effectiveness.....	11
3.3.1 Agriculture Sector .....	12
3.3.1.1 Delivery of Outputs in the Agricultural Production/ Food Security Sub-sector .....	12
3.3.1.2 Performance of the OFDA Project in the Livestock Sub-sector.....	17
3.3.2 Performance of the CARE-OFDA project in the Economic Recovery and Market Systems Sector.....	18
3.3.2.1 Performance towards Attainment of Targets in the Microfinance Sub-Sector .....	18
3.3.2.2 Contribution of OFDA Supported VSL Activities to Local Capacity in Economic Recovery and Market Systems.....	19
3.3.3 Performance of the CARE-OFDA project in the WASH Sector .....	20
3.3.3.1 MERP Performance against Set Targets in the Water Supply Infrastructure Sub-Sector .....	20
3.3.3.2 Contribution of the Water Supply Infrastructure Intervention to Local Community Capacity Building .....	21
3.3.3.3 MERP Performance against Set Targets in the Hygiene Promotion Sub-sector .....	21
3.3.3.4 Contribution of the Hygiene Promotion Sub-sector to Building Local Community Capacity.....	24
3.3.3.5 MERP Effectiveness: A Summary Assessment .....	24
3.4 Efficiency of the CARE-OFDA project .....	25
3.4.1 Minimizing Resource Use through Applying a Cascade Model.....	25
3.4.2 Timeliness of Interventions.....	25
3.4.3 Quality of Agricultural Inputs .....	25
3.4.4 Delivering Long term benefits through short-term costs .....	25
3.4.5 Working through Community Volunteers.....	26
3.4.6 Collaborating with Stakeholders in Government.....	26
3.4.7 The policy, expectations and project quality nexus .....	26
3.4.7 Community Participation .....	27
3.4.8 Adequacy of Staffing Levels .....	27
3.4.9 Efficiency Assessment: Summary.....	27
3.5 Impact of the OFDA-funded MERP .....	27

3.5.1 Improved Agricultural Production and Productivity for Small Holder Farmers in Marginalised Areas	27
3.5.2 Improved Household Economic Activity and Welfare .....	28
3.5.3 Improved Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Practices .....	29
3.5.4 Project Contribution to Improving and Minimizing Losses to assets and structures created in Agriculture .....	30
3.5.5 Increased Community Resilience to Disasters and Community Capacity to Withstand and Cope with Disasters.....	30
3.5.6 Strengthened Linkages with District Level Line Ministries and Departments.....	31
3.5.7 Improved Gender Equality and Women Empowerment .....	31
3.5.8 MERP Impact: A Summary Assessment .....	32
3.6 MERP Sustainability .....	32
3.6.1 Stakeholder Involvement and Ownership.....	32
3.6.2 Community Level Structures Established.....	33
3.6.3 Behaviour Change Communication as a Driver of Sustainability of Change. ....	33
3.6.4 Sustainability of Decision Making Processes for Women and Men .....	34
3.6.5 Sustainability Prospects for Resilience Building Strategies beyond external funding.....	34
3.6.6 Project Exit Strategy and its Implementation after the end of the Project Cycle .....	35
3.6.7 MERP Sustainability: A Summary Assessment .....	35
<b>3.7 Chapter Summary .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5: LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>40</b>
5.1 Lessons Learnt .....	40
5.2 Recommendations .....	41
5.2 Recommendations.....	41
5.2.1 Agriculture and Livestock Related Recommendations.....	41
5.2.2 Economic Recovery and Market Systems .....	41
5.2.3 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene .....	41
Annexes .....	43
Annex 1: TOR .....	43
Annex 2: Agriculture Sector Questionnaire .....	43
Annex 3: WASH Questionnaire .....	43
Annex 4: Economic Recovery and Market Systems Questionnaire .....	43
Annex 5: CARE staff Key informant interview guide .....	43
Annex 6: Key Informant Interview Guide for trained volunteers.....	43
Annex 7: Minutes of the CIZ/ OFDA Final Evaluation Inception Meeting .....	43
Annex 8: List of Key Informants .....	43

## List of Acronyms

AMHI	Average Monthly Household Income
CA	Conservation Agriculture
CF	Cluster Facilitator
CIZ	Care International in Zimbabwe
CSA	Climate Smart Agriculture
DEHO	District Environmental Health Officer
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DWSSC	District Water Supply Sub-Committee
EHTS	Environmental Health Technicians
EOTE	End of Term Evaluation
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
IGAs	Income Generating Activities
ITT	Indicator Tracking Tools
KII	Key Informant Interview Guide
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEAL	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
MERP	Masvingo El Nino Response Project
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
OFDA	Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
PHHE	Participatory Health and Hygiene Education
SPM	Selection, Planning and Management
TOR	Terms of Reference
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VHW	Village Health Worker
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WPMC	Water Point Management Committee
ZIMASSET	Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation

## List of Tables

Number	Title	Page
1	Interventions in the Masvingo El Nino Response Programme	1
2	Wards Randomly Selected for Inclusion in the End of Term Evaluation	4
3	EOTE Respondents	4
4	Appropriateness of the MERP: A Summary Assessment	11
5	Project Performance in the Improving Agricultural Production/ Food Security Sub-Sector	13
6	Project Performance in the Livestock Sub-Sector	17
7	Project Performance in the Microfinance Sub-Sector	18
8	Project Performance in the Water Supply Sub-Sector	20
9	Project Performance in the Hygiene Promotion Sub-Sector	22
10	MERP Effectiveness: A Summary Assessment	24
11	MERP Efficiency: A Summary Assessment	27
12	MERP Impact: A Summary Assessment	32
13	MERP Sustainability: A Summary Assessment	35
14	MERP Performance: A Summary Assessment	37



## List of Figures

Number	Title	Page
1a	Schematic Representation of the CARE-OFDA MERP Project (2016-2017) and its Cost Modification (2017-2018)	2
1	Schematic Representation of the End of Term Evaluation Assessment Design	3
3	Food Insecurity Levels Jan- Mar (% of Households) Jan-Mar 2016 & Jan – Mar 2017	7
4	OFDA Project Performance in the Increasing Agricultural Production Sector	12
5	Farmer Perceptions of the Benefits of CA	15
6	Cumulative Achievements in Farer Trainings for Indicators 3, 4 &6	16
7	Projected Months of Food Self-Sufficiency	17
8	Change in Distance to Nearest Water Point between Baseline and Endline	21
9	Knowledge of Critical Times for Washing Hands Before and After MERP	23
10	% of Household Storing Water in Clean Safe Containers	23
11	Average Monthly Household Income Before and After MERP	28
12	Uses of Proceeds from Village Savings and Lending	29

## Executive Summary

### 1.0 Introduction

In September 2018, Care International in Zimbabwe (CIZ) commissioned Keeptrack Consultants to conduct an End of Term Evaluation (EOTE) of the USAID-OFDA funded '**Improving Agricultural Production and Access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Project (MERP)** in Bikita, Chivi and Zaka districts of Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. Initially implemented from 2016-2017 in response to the El Nino induced drought, the project was granted a cost modification for the period 2017-2018 in order to respond to La Nina induced flooding. The extension came with an expansion of coverage from 15 wards initially to 18 wards in the same target districts in the final year. The goal of the project was, '*To provide immediate assistance and recovery to drought affected populations in Masvingo Province through asset (livestock protection), access to water sanitation and hygiene as well as agricultural production.* Project activities were aligned to three sectors namely Agriculture and Food Security Sector, Economic Recovery and Market Systems Sector and the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Sector.

According to the Terms of Reference (TOR), the purpose of the end of term evaluation was to assess and provide reliable end-line information on project performance against set parameters. The evaluation was also expected to include an analysis of appropriateness, timeliness, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

### 2.0 Methodology

A beneficiary based, 'before and after' evaluation design was adopted. The study compared end line values established during the final evaluation to the base line values determined in 2016. A mixed method approach was applied, with data being collected from both secondary and primary sources. Quantitative methods were used to understand what happened during the project and also due to the project while qualitative methods helped to understand how change occurred and why. Data collection methods included a review of key project documents, key informant interviews of stakeholders, focus group discussions of beneficiaries and administration of pre-coded questionnaires on beneficiaries.

Quantitative data were analysed using the statistical package for social scientist (SPSS). Analytical techniques included trend analyses of indicator values, measures of dispersion for selected indicators and juxtaposing end line values with set targets. Qualitative data were analysed through content analysis. Data were continually reduced in thematic categories using the inductive approach.

### 3.0 Evaluation Findings and Conclusion

#### 3.1 Appropriateness

The USAID-OFDA supported project comprised appropriate responses. The El Nino induced drought had exceeded target community capacity to cope and hence the need for external support. . When it was designed in 2016, household food insecurity was rampant in the target districts as a result of the drought associated with the effects of the El Nino experienced in the 2015/16 agricultural season. Nationally, 4.1 million people (about 42% of the rural population) were projected to be food insecure at the peak of the hunger season (January – February 2017)<sup>1</sup>. In Masvingo, 50% of households were projected to be food insecure by the peak hunger season (Jan – March 2017)<sup>2</sup>. The onset of cyclone Dineo in mid-February 2017 precipitated flooding that hampered MERP implementation, destroyed crops, livestock and infrastructure. This gave rise to a need for extension of the USAID OFDA response in Masvingo Province which was one of the worst affected areas.

MERP was aligned to the Zimbabwe Agenda for Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET). Provision of agricultural inputs, promotion of small grain production, promotion of conservation agriculture which were key components of MERP are also key results areas identified in ZIMASSET. Similarly WASH interventions directly spoke to Water Supply and Sanitation Sector interventions in the ZIMASSET. Further, economic recovery which was a major thrust of MERP was also central to ZIMASSET. Therefore, the fact that the USAID-OFDA supported

---

<sup>1</sup> ZimVac, 2016. Market Assessment Report (final). Published in January 2017.

<sup>2</sup> ZimVac, 2016, Rural Livelihoods Assessment Report

MERP resonated with Zimbabwe's socio-economic development policies and priorities was unmistakable. It was, thus clear that the OFDA supported project was very appropriate.

### 3.2 Effectiveness

By September 2018, MERP had achieved or surpassed targets for most of its performance indicators. Increased agricultural production among beneficiaries was realised following increased knowledge and skills in climate smart agriculture provided by the project alongside agricultural inputs distributed to beneficiary farmers. The projected number of months of food self-sufficiency among beneficiary households rose from two (before the project) to eight months (after the project). The target in this regard has been achieved and may have been surpassed had it not been for late distribution of inputs, fall army worm, unreliable rainfall patterns and, in the case of Chivi district, poor quality of sorghum seed.

Improved livestock protection was realised as community based paravets trained and equipped by the project helped in animal disease surveillance working hand in glove with the government veterinary services extension officers. Rehabilitation of dip tanks has improved access to cattle dipping services and contributed to reduction in incidence of tick borne diseases. A combination of training farmers in fodder production and storage and distribution of velvet bean seed distribution has helped improve farmer consciousness of the effect of providing fodder to livestock during dry months on animal health although adoption of fodder production and storage (e.g hay bailing) remains at low levels. In terms of asset protection, training and equipping of paravets and rehabilitation of dip tanks have been effective but the effectiveness of training in fodder production storage was questionable.

Through USAID-OFDA supported Village Savings and Lending (VSL), MERP effectively contributed to building household and community economic activities. Cumulatively the microfinance intervention reached 4528 individuals (3918 females). Participation in VSL improved beneficiaries' access to capital (i.e loans from VSL groups) to enhance their micro-businesses. Using proceeds from VSL some group members bought agricultural inputs, food, livestock units, utensils or paid school fees for children. As such strengthening old and establishing new VSL activities substantially contributed to recovery of the household economy while interaction of beneficiaries with local markets helped to build economic activities in the target communities. In terms of gender and women empowerment among marginalised rural small holder farmers, VSL has proven to be a game changer, enabling acquisition of assets (cash savings, livestock units etc), access to microloans and starting and growing of microenterprises by more women than men. It tilted the balance of resource ownership and control of the means of production in favour of women, since six times more women participated in the VSL groups than men. The cash crisis in Zimbabwe, however, remained a challenge to VSL activities with some groups adopting mobile based savings. This brought about the challenge of the value of money as cash has – in the context of Zimbabwe- higher value than mobile money (e.g Ecocash). Also, of late the increase in inflation rate threatens to reduce value of savings and to this VSL group have responded by adopting asset oriented savings.

In the WASH sector, OFDA support enabled reduction in distance - and hence also time - women and girls travel to fetch water through rehabilitation of 128 perennial water points. Access to safe water supply for people and animals has been enhanced. Establishment of Water Point Committees and training and equipping of pump minders have enhanced community capacity to maintain boreholes and minimize borehole down time. Rehabilitation of perennial water points enhanced community resilience to drought as this will provide a buffer zone for shortage of drinking water in the wake of drought. Further, through participatory health and hygiene education in community health clubs, the project substantially contributed to improvement of beneficiaries' hygiene knowledge, attitudes and practices. To illustrate, the proportion of beneficiaries who knew that it is critical to wash hands after defecation increased from 43% before MERP to 94% after MERP. The uptake of hand washing as a hygiene practice increased as a result of direct health promotions through participatory health and hygiene sessions at community health club sessions. However, the use of soap or ash during hand washing remains a rarity. The training of village health workers has enhanced community capacity to uphold environmental health and hence reduced environmental health hazards. Looking at the achievements in the

WASH sector it was clear that the objective of improving water, sanitation and hygiene practices was achieved. However, the lack of toilets at 30% of the beneficiary households remains an issue of concern.

### 3.3 Efficiency

To a large extent, the OFDA supported project was efficient. Most trainings were done using a cascade model, which helped to minimise costs. Short term expenses (for instance, establishment of water point committees and training and equipping of paravets and pump minders) were used to create long term benefit streams for the target communities as the structures established will serve the target communities into the foreseeable future. Volunteers at community level, lead farmers and village health workers for instance, helped to deliver project outputs like trainings. This enhanced the project's community capacity building processes but also helped minimize staff costs. Thus, the project used cost saving strategies. As such there were no reasonable alternatives that could achieve the same or better results at a lower cost.

Project efficiency was, however, lessened by late distribution of inputs. Also, to a limited extent, programme quality was adversely affected by poor quality of sorghum seed distributed in Chivi which had a low germination rate was – according to beneficiaries- 'not productive at all'.

### 3.4 Impact

The MERP project has contributed to increased household food and income security to beneficiary households through climate smart agriculture and micro-finance initiatives respectively. The estimated number of months of household food self-sufficiency after the project was eight (from a baseline of two months before the project). Some households reported selling excess cereal output.

Building of the household economy through microfinance has increased household income. Beneficiaries' asset position has increased as they accumulated savings through Village Saving & Lending Schemes. Easier access to micro-credit from Village Savings and Lending groups supported establishment and growth of microenterprises. From VS&L proceeds beneficiaries have been able buy livestock which are now increasing in number through reproduction while others have grown their micro-enterprises to a stage that they are now constructing business premises. These are tangible changes in the lives of beneficiaries and beneficiary communities.

Proceeds from VS&L are not only helping beneficiaries raise funds for enterprise development. They are also being used to meet physiological needs (e.g buy food, pay medical bills) and social needs (e.g pay school fees). Groups have also contributed to increased social cohesion.

Women have been empowered through increased asset ownership as a result of participation in VS&L and instalment in decision making position in water point committees, farmer groups, community health clubs and other local community structures. The project was a step towards gender transformation.

Community resilience has increased. The project set up structures which will enable community level problem solving in the absence of external support. Community capacity to identify problems (at their water point, for instance), develop and implement solutions has been developed. The appointment and training of DRR focal persons has helped improve disaster risk management in the target communities while the adoption of climate smart agriculture and micro-finance initiatives enhanced household and community resilience to drought. Further, the rehabilitation of boreholes enhanced community resilience to water shortages in case of drought. It is clear that the project is likely to have far reaching impact.

### 3.5 Sustainability

The project has high prospects of sustainability. It was implemented with and through government structures. The project went beyond just stakeholder cooperation to collaboration. As a result, government ownership is high. Relevant government line ministries are ready to take over activities implemented. However, government capacity to absorb the intervention is constrained by a severely restricted fiscal space.

Project sustainability was anchored in the establishment of local community level structures that will perpetuate project effects: farmer groups, equipped paravets, pump minders, water point committees, gender and nutrition focal persons, dip tank committees, among others. These will remain in the community after the external funding cycle ends. CARE has linked these to relevant government line ministries and departments and hence they will be able to continually obtain technical advice.

The project developed knowledge, skills and practices among beneficiary populations. These outcomes are likely to be sustainable as end of project does not necessarily retrieve values inculcated.

#### 4.0 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

##### 4.1 Enhancing Agricultural Production:

- Ensure early procurement and distribution of agricultural inputs to avoid negative effects of late planting on yields;
- Consider distributing thorny sorghum varieties that are not palatable to birds;
- Consider inclusive food security enhancement strategies since there are labour deficient households in the target communities (people living with disabilities, the elderly). For these, indigenous poultry production could be one option;
- Consider construction of weirs to harvest water for micro-irrigation as a resilience building strategy given the increasing frequency of drought in Zimbabwe.
- Consider piloting use of green technologies (solar power) to power micro-irrigation schemes that enable all year round agricultural production (as opposed to seasonal production).

##### 4.2 Economic Recovery and Market Systems

- Increase promotion of the need to procure productive assets using proceeds from VS&L;
- Explore mobile VS&L platforms and the benefits they may bring to beneficiaries in a cashless economy like Zimbabwe

##### 4.3 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

- Funds permitting, consider borehole drilling in addition to rehabilitation as some places in the target communities still had unacceptable distance to water points;
- Couple water infrastructure provision/ rehabilitation with support to improved sanitation infrastructure development since having one without the other reduces intervention impact;
- Explore methods of increasing adoption of use of soap/ ash during hand washing since this was a gap.
- Consider innovative approaches to promoting setting up and maintenance of hand washing facilities at homesteads to enhance hygiene practices.



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Context

In Zimbabwe, the El Nino induced drought of the 2015-2016 season was one of the worst since the turn of the millennium. It affected an estimated 50% of households<sup>3</sup> in Masvingo Province by the peak of the hunger season (January – March 2017). In February 2017, as the lean season drew to its end, after normal to above normal rainfall had largely characterised the 2016-2017 season, the onset of cyclone Dineo dashed hopes of bumper harvest for some households as it precipitated flooding that destroyed crops, livestock and infrastructure in Zimbabwe's Southern Provinces, heightening food insecurity prospects for vulnerable households. Masvingo was one of the worst affected provinces. So devastating was cyclone Dineo that the then president of Zimbabwe, R.G Mugabe pronounced a state of flooding disaster in the affected areas.

The effects of these climatic deviations on vulnerable rural households in Masvingo province were exacerbated by negative macro-economic fundamentals: mainly high unemployment levels and a gripping liquidity crisis characterised by continually declining access to cash in rural areas. A major effect of these adverse developments was a decline in food and nutrition security status at household level. It is in this context that CARE has been implementing the USAID-OFDA funded Masvingo El Nino Response (MERP) project in Bikita, Chivi and Zaka districts of Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. MERP was the abbreviated version of a project technically named, 'Improving Agricultural Productivity and Access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for Drought Affected Populations' in Masvingo Province.

#### 1.1 The Masvingo El Nino Recovery Project (MERP)

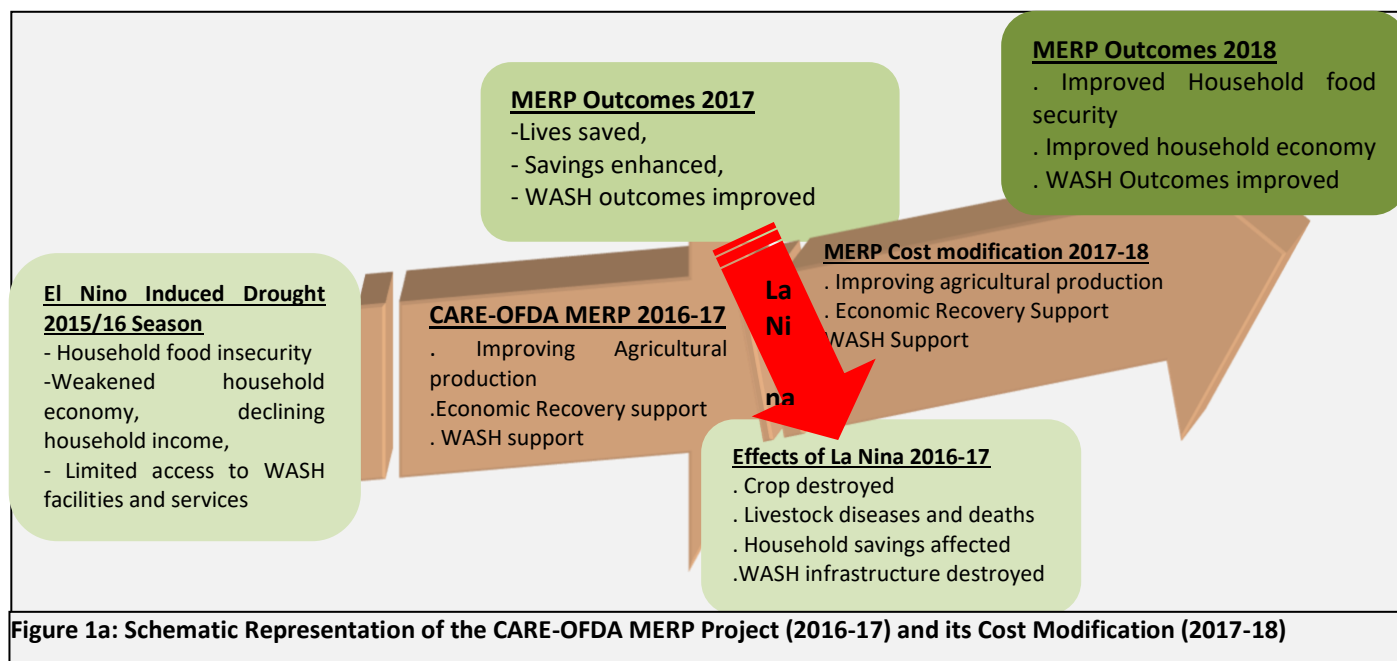
The Improving Agricultural Productivity and Access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for Drought Affected Populations in Masvingo Province (MERP) project is a USAID-OFDA funded El Nino response (2016/17) that was extended, through a cost modification, from October 2017 to September 2018 to respond to the effects of the La Nina phenomenon (fig 1). The project targeted marginalised small holder farmers in Zimbabwe's agro-ecological regions 4 and 5 where average annual precipitation is normally low (around 400mm) and evaporation rates high, leading to moisture deficits for crops. Its goal was *'to provide immediate assistance and recovery to drought affected populations in Masvingo Province through asset (livestock) protection, access to water sanitation and hygiene and agricultural production.'* It applied a three-pronged approach, comprising (i) Agriculture and Food Security; (ii) Economic Recovery and Market Systems and (iii) Water, Sanitation and Hygiene interventions (table 1). Initially implemented in 15 wards during the period October 2016- September 2017, the project was expanded to cover 18 wards of Bikita, Chivi and Zaka districts of Masvingo (six wards in each district) during the cost modification that extended from October 2017 to September 2018. Upon its closure, the project had cumulatively reached 102 283 beneficiaries against a cumulative target of 65 945 beneficiaries, thus surpassing the set cumulative target by 55.1%. The project effectively demonstrated the possibility for long term impact and sustainability of integrated emergency response and early recovery programmes that hinge on community capacity building rather than direct food aid.

**Table 1: Interventions in the Masvingo El Nino Recovery Programme**

Sector	Sub- Sectors	Objectives
Agriculture and Food Security	Improving Agricultural Production/ Food Security	Improve Agricultural Production and Productivity among smallholder farmers in marginal areas prone to drought
	Livestock	

<sup>3</sup> ZimVac Rural livelihoods Assessment Report, 2016

Economic Recovery and Market Systems	Microfinance (Village Savings and Lending)	Build household and Economic Activities through establishing Village Savings and Lending Activities
Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	Water Supply Infrastructure	Improve water, sanitation and hygiene practices
	Hygiene Promotion	



## 1.2 The CARE-OFDA Masvingo El Nino Recovery Project (MERP) End of Term Evaluation (EOTE)

In August 2018, CARE International in Zimbabwe commissioned Keeptrack Consultants to conduct an end of Term Evaluation of MERP. The purpose of the EOTE was to provide reliable end-line information on project performance against set parameters and also assess the appropriateness, timeliness, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project.

### 1.3 Specific Objectives of the MERP EOTE

As given in the Terms of Reference, the specific objectives of the end of term evaluation were to:

- Capture and document lessons learnt from the project implementation for knowledge management and learning and future programming;
- Come up with practical recommendations for replication of the programme in different contexts of the country;
- Document and produce success stories per sector and this includes Agriculture, WASH and Economic Recovery and Market Systems; and
- Assess the appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the programme in the three target districts.

### 1.4 About this report

This report is divided into five chapters. In the introductory chapter (Chapter 1), the MERP context is outlined, MERP is briefly described and the purpose and objectives of the EOTE are stated. Chapter 2 outlines that evaluation design and methodology while evaluation findings are presented in chapter 3. In chapter 4, conclusions drawn from the evaluation are stated while in the final chapter (Chapter 5) lessons learnt and recommendations made are discussed.



2.1 Evaluation Design

A beneficiary based ‘before and after’ evaluation design was adopted (fig 1). Outcome indicator values determined during the end line survey were compared to baseline values to determine the difference in the agricultural production and productivity, household incomes, savings and access to loans as well as access to safe water and sanitation and hygiene practices. Achieved outcomes were also assessed against set targets. The evaluation also elicited stories of change of selected beneficiary households in order to understand beneficiaries’ perspectives of changes associated with their participation in MERP activities.

2.2 Evaluation Approach

The evaluation adopted a robust participatory, mixed methods approach which enabled outsiders (evaluation team) to collect data from insiders (CIZ staff and stakeholders) and enhanced credibility of findings and client and stakeholder ownership of the evaluation process and deliverables.

Use of a mixed methods approach enabled the EOTE to benefit from the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods, using the strengths of one to offset the weaknesses of the other.

The evaluation team began the study with the end in mind: it developed an analytical framework and a data analysis scheme prior to development of data collection tools. As a result, the evaluation entirely focussed on the evaluation questions in the TOR, the indicators in the OFDA project log frame and other evaluation needs as clarified by CARE during the inception meeting. A six point scale was used to rate project performance<sup>4</sup>

2.3 Delimitation of the Evaluation

The EOTE was done in Bikita, Zaka and Chivi districts. These districts were pre-selected for participation in the study because they are the districts in which the programme was implemented and hence presented ample opportunities for assessment of programme relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

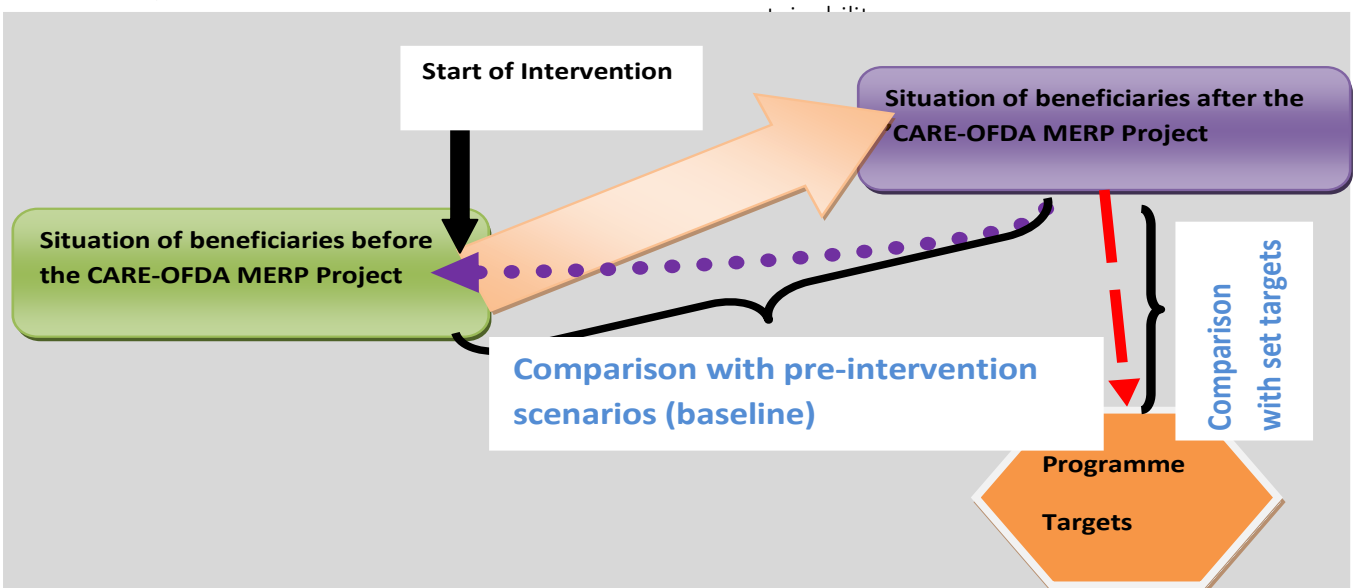


Figure 1: Schematic Representation of the End of Term Evaluation Assessment Design

Table 2: Wards Randomly Selected for Inclusion in the End of Term Evaluation (EOTE)

<sup>4</sup> The scale was as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS) – there were no shortcomings; Satisfactory (S) – There were minor shortcomings; Moderately satisfactory (MS) – There were moderate shortcomings;

Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU) – There were significant shortcomings, Unsatisfactory (U) – There were major shortcomings. Highly Unsatisfactory (HU) – There were severe shortcomings

Province	District	Ward in which MERP was implemented	Wards selected for the EOTE
Masvingo	Bikita	18,19;21;22;24; 25&31	31;21&22
Masvingo	Chivi	11,19,22,23,28& 32	11&32
Masvingo	Zaka	8,23;26;27;28;32	32&27

## 2.4 Sampling

### 2.4.1 Sample size determination

As per TOR, the project targeted 62 700 beneficiaries. These constituted the population being studied. At 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, the EOTE sought to reach a minimum randomly selected sample of 387 beneficiaries. A 9% adjustment for selection bias was made resulting in the sample being 420 respondents for the survey. The resultant study coverage was as shown on the table below:

**Table 3: EOTE Respondents**

Method	Planned respondents	Actual Respondents	% Reached
Agriculture Sector Questionnaire	420	391	93.1%
ERMS Sector questionnaire	200	181	90.5%
WASH Sector Questionnaire	200	145	72.5%
FGDs	9	9	100%
KII <sup>5</sup>	72	58	80.6%

<sup>5</sup> The list of key informants targeted for the EOTE is shown on the incepting meeting minutes (Annex 7)

### 2.4.2 Sampling procedures

Purposive sampling was used to identify respondents for KIIs and FGDs. Only those individuals, who, by virtue of their professional station in life stand on vantage ground to provide information needed for this EOTE were included as key informants and participants in focus group discussions.

Multi-stage probability sampling was used to identify respondents for the outcomes survey. First, the total sample was allocated to the three target districts using the probability proportional to size technique (PPS) to ensure adequate representation of each district in the sample. In each district a simple random sampling technique was used to identify clusters for inclusion in the study. A complete listing of the wards in which the MERP project was implemented in each district was done. Two wards in which the study was then done were selected using an excel worksheet to generate random numbers. In Bikita District, a third ward in which had WASH interventions was then added since the two randomly selected did not have sufficient coverage of WASH sector interventions for the minimum threshold required for the evaluation.

Beneficiary registers were used to identify the exact respondents in each village selected for participation in the study. Where the number of beneficiaries in a selected village exceeded the number of respondents for the village, systematic sampling was used to select respondents, using the beneficiary registers as a sampling frame.

## 2.5 Data Collection Methods

### 2.5.1 Desk Review

A comprehensive review of documents provided by CARE was done prior to primary data collection. Documents reviewed included the MERP project document, log frame, monitoring and evaluation plan, needs assessment report, baseline survey, activity reports, monthly reports, quarterly reports, semi-annual and annual reports, mid-term review report, M and E datasets, and workshop reports, among other relevant documents. The review provide a picture of what data was already available for the evaluation and the gaps in the available data

and hence informed the development of data collection instruments

### **2.5.2 Key Informant Interviews (KII)**

KII were held with relevant CARE International in Zimbabwe staff members, relevant line ministries, local authorities (District Administrator's office, District Social Services officers at the rural district councils), traditional leaders in the target communities and any other key informants that CARE may suggest. Findings from each key informant were cross-checked and validated through discussions with other key informants. The evaluation sought clarification of any unclear observations from the MEAL manager and the MERP project manager. The KII elicited information on project relevance effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, lessons learnt, good practices developed as well as recommendations for future programming.

### **2.5.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGD)**

In each district, three FGDs were held; one with smallholder farmers, one with community health clubs and the other with selected VS & L club members. These FGDs were done in local languages to eliminate the issue of language as a barrier to evaluation accuracy and authenticity. The FGDs dwelt on the evaluation criteria and questions given in the TOR and, hence, gathered data that could easily be analysed and synthesized to answer evaluation questions and also be easily triangulated with data collected using other methods from other sources.

### **3.5.4 Outcomes survey/ Questionnaire Administration**

Pre-coded MERP outcomes survey questionnaires were administered to a sample of direct beneficiaries of MERP. Items on the questionnaires were derived from the indicators in the MERP log frame and internal M and E tools. Three sector specific questionnaires were used: one for the Agriculture sector, one for the WASH sector and one for the ERMS sector. Specimen questionnaires are available as annexes to this report.

### **3.5.5 Direct Observation**

Direct observation of the infrastructure, boreholes and dip tanks supported by the project was done. Direct observation was also used during homestead

hygiene inspection visits. An observation checklist was used for this purpose.

## **5.5 Data Analysis**

Quantitative data (e.g from the internal monitoring system and also from the outcomes survey) was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Analytical techniques used included comparison of baseline to end line data, trend analysis of indicator values from the baseline through successive monitoring rounds to the end line, comparison of end line data to set targets, among others. Descriptive statistics (percentages/frequencies, means, minima, maxima and standard deviation) were mainly be used. This ensured simplicity and relevance to all anticipated sections of the audience.

Qualitative data were analysed using content analysis. Constant comparison was used to reduce data. Data were continually reduced in thematic categories using the inductive approach. Data from various sources were triangulated during the analysis process.

### **3.6 Research Ethics**

The evaluation team abided by the ethical code of conduct for evaluators. They sought informed consent from respondents before data collection. Respondents were assured of confidentiality of their personal information and their evaluation perspectives. Confidentiality was not only promised to respondents but exercised throughout the mission. All data collection forms were anonymised to ensure confidentiality. The consultant avoided bias through applying robust sampling procedures and triangulating data. The whole evaluation process abided by the principles of integrity and utmost honesty.

### **3.7 Study Limitations**

#### **3.7.1 Time constraints**

As per TOR, the EOTE mission had a 17-day time line. The mission had a delayed start due to the harmonised national elections which worsened the need for a rapid assessment. In the circumstances the evaluation team settled for a beneficiary based survey, utilised an extensive desk review, self-administered interview guides for CARE staff and pre-coded questionnaires to rapidly collect data.

### 3.7.2 Competing Priorities for Vehicle Use

The evaluation ran concurrently with other MERP wind up activities – the capturing of GPS coordinates for boreholes and dip tanks, for instance. Where the field team required a stand by vehicle to pick them from one place to the other within the same village, in some instances, they ended up having to walk where a vehicle could have made the travel faster as the vehicle would have been temporarily allocated to other uses. The team had to make do with this arrangement and still managed to reach more than the minimum planned number of respondents, thanks to a committed energetic enumeration team.

### 3.1 Introduction

The OFDA-funded MERP project resulted in impressive outcomes in terms of agricultural production and productivity, improved culture of saving and increased financial inclusion for beneficiary marginalised, rural smallholder farmers and improved access to WASH services in 18 wards of Bikita, Chivi and Zaka districts of Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. While typically an emergency response and early recovery project, the initiative was laudable for avoiding direct food aid in preference for interventions that helped solve short-term needs while enhancing community resilience. The project made significant contributions to household food security for poor households- including those without any animals to provide draught power. While the project had positive outcomes on most beneficiary households, its effectiveness could still have been higher had distribution of inputs had been timely in all instances (which unfortunately could not be achieved due to limited availability of inputs on the market).

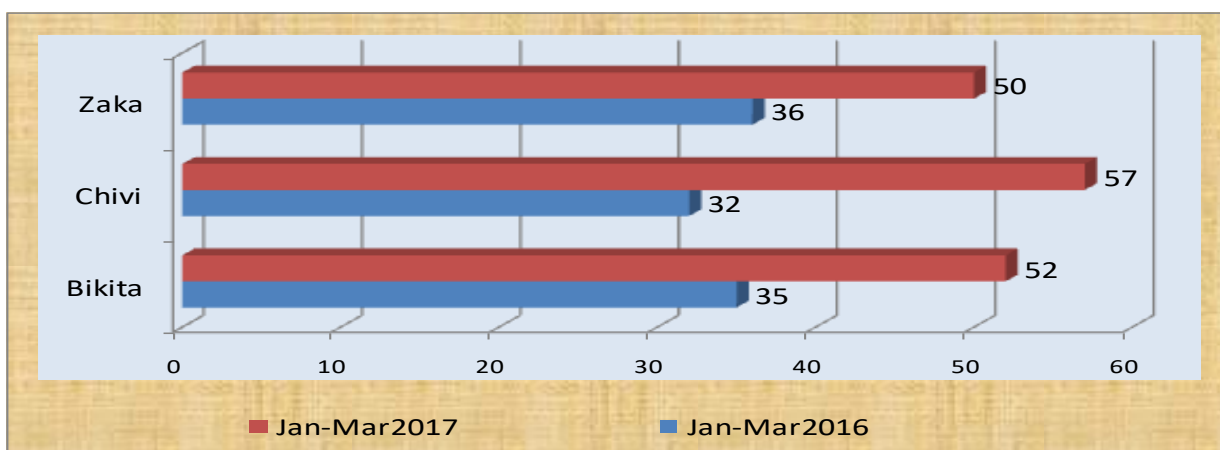
In this chapter findings of the OFDA final evaluation are discussed. The findings are aligned to the evaluation criteria in the terms of reference.

### 3.2 Appropriateness of the OFDA-funded Response

#### 3.2.1 Suitability of Response to Needs and Expectations of Target Communities

The MERP project was an appropriate response to the needs of selected beneficiaries. When it was designed in 2016, household food insecurity was rampant in the target districts as a result of the drought associated with the effects of the El Nino experienced in the 2015/16 agricultural season. Nationally, 4.1 million people (about 42% of the rural population) were projected to be food insecure at the peak of the hunger season (January –February 2017)<sup>6</sup>. In Masvingo, 50% of households were projected to be food insecure by the peak hunger season (Jan – March 2017)<sup>7</sup>. A spike in the estimated levels of food insecurity in target districts of Bikita, Chivi and Zaka from the first quarter of 2016 to the first quarter of 2017<sup>8</sup> (fig 1) clearly portrays the relevance of interventions in the ‘Improving Agricultural Production/ Food Security’ sector. The appropriateness of responses in enhancing agricultural production and productivity at the time of intervention design was aptly captured TANGO’s assertion, ‘In terms of shock exposure, coping strategies and well-being outcomes people were worse off in 2015 than they were in 2014 and these conditions and outcomes further deteriorated in 2016’<sup>9</sup>

Fig 3: Food Insecurity Levels Comparison (% of Households): Jan-Mar 2016 & Jan-Mar 2017



<sup>6</sup> ZimVac, 2016. Market Assessment Report (final). Published in January 2017.

<sup>7</sup> ZimVac, 2016, Rural Livelihoods Assessment Report

<sup>8</sup> Adapted from Zim Vac 2016 Rural Livelihoods Assessment Report.

<sup>9</sup> USAID/ TOPS, 2018. Zimbabwe Resilience Research Report, prepared by TANGO International

*Source: Constructed on the basis of data in the ZimVac 2016 Rural Livelihoods Assessment Report.*

The onset of cyclone Dineo in mid-February 2017 precipitated flooding that hampered MERP implementation, destroyed crops, livestock and infrastructure. This gave rise to a need for extension of the USAID OFDA response in Masvingo Province (which was one of the worst affected areas)<sup>10</sup>.

As of September 2018, the Zimbabwe meteorological department was predicting another El Nino cycle for the 2018-19 agricultural season. This is expected to result in normal to below normal rainfall in the country; a forecast that implies continued relevance of emergency response and disaster preparedness support for target populations.

The OFDA project was appropriate to the climatic conditions of Masvingo Province, especially the selected wards of Bikita, Chivi and Zaka where it was implemented. The wards selected lie in agro-ecological regions 4 and 5 of Zimbabwe, where aggregate annual precipitation is normally low (400mm or less) and unevenly distributed throughout the rainy season while temperatures soar high. Soils quickly lose their moisture content soon after the rains, a scenario that is gradually getting worse with climate change. Targeting these wards with climate smart agriculture (mainly promoting the practice of Conservation Agriculture and the concomitant emphasis on production of small grains) was clearly appropriate. Not only was the response appropriate in terms of suitability to the current climatic conditions of Masvingo but also to the cultural adaptation of the local people. The 2017 ZimVac Rural Assessment Report shows that Masvingo is one of the three provinces where high proportions of households grow small grains. The promotion of small grain production to a people with a known trend towards adoption of small grain production enhanced appropriateness and heightened chances of continue use of new concepts taught and skills developed after the end of the project cycle.

Qualitative evidence from key informants and beneficiaries suggests that when the intervention began, some beneficiary community members had expected a response in the form of direct food aid. As a result, the intervention was not immediately accepted in some areas. There was a mismatch between the intervention and community expectations. It is noteworthy, however, that by the end of the project most key stakeholders and beneficiaries acknowledged that the project provided interventions that they needed and not what they wanted or had initially expected. They further noted that the intervention was akin to teaching vulnerable communities to fish as opposed to giving them fish.

Responses in the Economic Recovery and Market Systems sector were also relevant. Given the high levels of household food insecurity as discussed above, enhancing economic participation to facilitate economic recovery of target households was necessary. The MERP baseline study, established that - at the time the project was designed - the majority of target community members earned – on average – thirty cents per person per day. Establishing new and strengthening existing Village Savings and Lending (VS&L) groups was an appropriate avenue for stimulating savings, improving access to micro-credit (loans from group savings) and stimulating micro-enterprises which would contribute towards increased average household income and, hence, the total amount available for food purchase. Further, investing in establishing and strengthening existing VS&L groups was appropriate considering the crippling liquidity crisis in Zimbabwe, a macro-economic fundamental that disproportionately affects the rural population and women. Village savings and lending schemes and their expected effects on stimulating micro-investments in the target communities would stimulate circulation of cash and provide beneficiaries with a buffer zone, some sort of lower limit in household unavailability of cash to buy food and pay social services (education and health), hence contribute to preventing unrestricted slide towards negative coping strategies.

Considering the restricted access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene facilities in Bikita, Chivi and Zaka prior to the intervention, inclusion of interventions to increase access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene was relevant. The MERP baseline established that that more than three in every five households (62.5%) were travelling more than 500 m to fetch water while about 30% took two or more hours to fetch water and return to their homesteads. Also, key informant interviews during the final evaluation revealed that in Bikita District, provision of clean,

---

<sup>10</sup> Due to the extent of the problem, the then President of Zimbabwe, H.E R.G. Mugabe declared a state of flood disaster on 02 March 2017 (Source: ZimVac Rural Livelihoods Assessment Report 2017)

portable water supply was the top priority for the district. Rehabilitating boreholes would reduce the distance travelled and time spent in fetching water, and hence was relevant.

Long down time for the boreholes in target communities had become an issue. For instance, key informants in ward 31 of Bikita District stated that one of the boreholes rehabilitated had been down for eight years prior to intervention. The OFDA intervention was appropriate as it helped restore functionality of boreholes and reduce community reliance on unsafe alternative water sources. However, adequacy of response was queried by some respondents who considered the exclusion of borehole drilling as gap since there were some areas where a single borehole caters for up to ten villages (e.g Chikurira borehole in Bikita) and serves some households that walk up to 3kms to fetch water. This was also the case in some targets wards in Zaka.

Analysis of 2016 ZimVac Rural Livelihoods Assessment data shows that universal access to safe water for drinking was –and still is - yet to be realised in the target districts. Between 65.1 and 75% of the households have access to safe water source in Chivi and Zaka while in Bikita between 75.1-85% of the households have access to safe water. Alongside the problem of lack of universality access to safe water sources was the problem of open defecation. The prevalence of open defecation in Bikita, Chivi and Zaka was in the range 39.1 -56% according to the 2016 ZimVac Rural Livelihoods Assessment report. From this analysis, it is clear that rehabilitation of safe water sources was an appropriate although inadequate intervention as its impact in terms reduction in water borne diseases and child nutrition could have been higher had the construction of sanitation units been also included. While the lack of direct support to establishing toilets at vulnerable beneficiary households at programme design is apparently a gap in the design, it is noteworthy that on implementation, promoting household hygiene alongside establishment and strengthening of existing village savings and lending clubs saw some beneficiaries accumulate savings that they used for building toilets, contributing towards closure of the design gap in so-doing.

### 3.2.2 Appropriateness of a Multi-Sectoral Response

MERP was a multi-sectoral response to the El Nino induced drought. It comprised responses in agriculture, Economic Recovery and Market Systems and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene. In view of the intertwined nature of the problems that beneficiaries faced as a result of drought (household food insecurity, inadequate safe water supply, depleted asset base, among others) a multi-sectoral, inter-disciplinary response was required. The building of linkages between sectoral responses helped enhance project effects, for instance VS&L savings were used to buy agricultural inputs and livestock (enhancing the agriculture sector outcomes) or materials for construction of sanitation units (enhancing WASH outcomes).

### 3.2.3 Alignment to Government Policies and Priorities

The OFDA-funded MERP programme was strongly aligned to the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET) which was the blue print for socio-economic development of Zimbabwe for the period 2013-2018. Agriculture sector interventions under MERP were fully in sync with the provisions in the Food and Nutrition Cluster of ZIMASSET. One key result area for this cluster was increased cereal production, with particular focus on maize and small grains. Cluster strategies included timeous availing of adequate and affordable agriculture inputs to smallholder farmers, promoting production of drought resistant, high yielding and heat tolerant varieties, producing and distributing basal and top dressing fertilisers, establishing a strong network of agro dealers, among others. All these ZIMASSET food and nutrition cluster strategies were included in the OFDA programme. Further, Livestock production and development, the second key result area of ZIMASSET's food and nutrition cluster was strongly reflected in the Livestock sub-sector of the OFDA's Agriculture sector interventions. Where the Livestock Production and Development key result area of ZIMASSET envisaged livestock pest and disease surveillance, implementing livestock drought mitigation strategies, the OFDA-funded MERP turned these strategic intents into practice by training and equipping paravets to increase pest and disease surveillance, rehabilitating dip-tanks to enhance tick-borne disease prevention; training smallholder farmers in fodder production, provision of velvet been seed and supporting construction of livestock watering troughs at perennial boreholes to mitigate the effects of drought. It is clear, therefore, that the OFDA project's Agriculture Sector interventions complemented government efforts in the food and nutrition cluster of ZIMASSET.



Also fully aligned to ZIMASSET were the WASH interventions under the OFDA-funded MERP. The interventions spoke to the expected outcomes and planned strategies under the Water Supply and Sanitation sector under the Infrastructure and Utilities Cluster of the ZIM-ASSET. 'Improved rural water supplies' was an expected outcome of ZIMASSET which the OFDA programme contributed to through rehabilitating broken down bush pumps and mobilising communities into water point management committees. In addition, the OFDA programme directly contributed to increasing sanitation and hygiene coverage to reduce communicable diseases like diarrhoea in line with the provisions of the social services delivery key result area under ZIMASSET.

Although direct alignment of the Economic Recovery and Market Systems interventions of the OFDA-funded MERP project with ZIMASSET is unclear, it is clear that a commitment to poverty reduction characterises both. Where the ZIMASSET emphasizes establishing savings and credit cooperative societies among micro, small and medium enterprises in specific sectors of the economy, MERP promoted Village Savings and Lending (VSL) clubs, which can be registered as SACCOS as they mature.

That the OFDA-funded MERP resonated with Zimbabwe's National Socio-Economic development blueprint is thus unmistakable.

#### **3.2.4 Alignment to Resilience Building and Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies.**

The cost modification of the OFDA programme included training in Disaster Risk Management for ward level staff of the Ministry of Agriculture (Agriculture Extension Officers, Veterinary Services Extension Officers), the Ministry of Health (Environmental Health Technicians) and representatives of the local communities (Disaster Risk Management focal Persons). Training covered identification of hazards and mapping of interventions that can be unleashed before, during and after the unfolding of the hazard to reduce vulnerability to disasters. Focal persons were supported to develop ward risk management plans and to serve as communication agents in early warning systems for the local communities. These activities directly contributed to resilience building and disaster risk reduction for the communities.

Through promotion of climate smart agriculture (CSA), the OFDA project contributed to reduction in vulnerability to such climate change induced hazards as continued increase in temperatures and changing annual precipitation patterns (annual aggregate precipitation and distribution of rainfall in each season). Capacity building marginalised small holder farmers in conservation agriculture, for instance, sought to enable them to minimise moisture loss from planting stations and concentrate organic and synthetic fertilisers at planting stations to maximise yield per unit area even when below normal rainfall is received during the season. The project typically promoted adoption of sustainable agricultural practices which are expected to result in household food security among smallholder farmers while maintaining soil fertility and avoiding erosion. Likewise promotion of drought resistant crops like sorghum and cow peas from which some harvest is obtained even when the rains are erratic contributed towards reducing the risk of household food insecurity even during drought years. These interventions are clearly aligned to household resilience building.

The Economic Recovery and Market Systems model (Village Savings and Lending) included in the OFDA project served as a social safety net for VSL club members. It contributed to strengthening household income and asset base leading to reduced vulnerability to economic and social shocks. It contributed to poverty reduction. This is crucial as poverty is a key factor in vulnerability to disasters. Further, Village Savings and Lending in the MERP served as a vehicle for raising cash for agricultural inputs, purchase of food during periods of household food insecurity, purchase of materials for construction of sanitation infrastructure (toilets) and/ or use as capital for microenterprises.

The WASH component helped to reduce the likelihood of environmental hazards. Rehabilitation of WASH infrastructure alongside participatory health and hygiene education (PHHE) contributed towards reduction of water borne diseases. Thus besides just being an Emergency response programme, MERP was strongly aligned to disaster risk reduction strategies for the future.

#### **3.2.5 Emergency Relief or Early Recovery?**

The Masvingo El Nino Response Project had a stronger leaning towards early recovery than mere emergence relief. Rehabilitation of bush pumps for perennial boreholes qualifies as an emergency relief intervention since it



saved lives through providing safe drinking water for people and animals in the wake of an El Nino induced drought. The rest of the interventions (promoting climate smart agriculture, enhancing livestock production, supporting economic recovery and market systems, improving hygiene knowledge, attitudes and practices) would be more appropriately regarded as early recovery and disaster resilience building interventions than relief aid. The programme did not include a component on direct food aid as a crisis modifier. The programme was thus apparently less appropriate as an emergency relief project but more appropriate as a resilience building and early recovery programme whose ultimate end will be enhanced household food security in the short to long term for beneficiary households and long term community resilience in general.

### 3.2.6 Appropriateness of MERP

On the basis of a six point scale, MERP appropriateness was rated satisfactory. The project was generally appropriate, although it had minor inadequacies in appropriateness (table 4).

**Table 4: Appropriateness of MERP: A summary Assessment**

Evaluation Criterion	Rating	Remarks
Appropriateness	Satisfactory (S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CSA and livestock protection were appropriate to agro-ecological regions 4 &amp; 5 where MERP was implemented.</li> <li>- The El Nino and La Nina induced drought and flood disasters required a response of the nature that MERP took;</li> <li>- MERP was aligned to ZIMASSET and appropriate to the community resilience building needs of the community</li> <li>- All the three sector-based responses were appropriate</li> <li>- However, the WASH response did not include hardware sanitation support although there clearly were needs in this area.</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Project Effectiveness

To a large extent, MERP achieved its set objectives. Agricultural production and productivity was higher for plots cultivated using Conservation Agriculture (CA) supported by the project than those planted using conventional methods. Farmers reported increased total yields as well as yield per unit area of land for sorghum and cow peas due to CA extension support and input supply under the project. Farmers also reported improved survival of cattle associated with improved access to veterinary services as a result of the work of paravets trained under the project, reduced incidence of tick-borne diseases due to dip tank rehabilitation as well as preservation of animal weight and meat quality during the dry season due to capacity building in fodder production and provision of velvet bean seed to support fodder production. Interventions in the livestock sub-sector helped to preserve assets (livestock) in the wake of the El Nino induced drought and the subsequent La Nina induced flooding. Adoption of fodder production methods taught by the project, however, was generally limited although it was clear that training in fodder production inspired most small holder livestock producers to revive their traditional methods of storing dry maize husks as supplementary feed for animals during the dry season.

In the economic recovery and market systems sector, increased savings (asset ownership), increased engagement in micro-enterprise inspired by availability and accessibility of micro-loans from village savings and lending schemes revived or established as well as increased social cohesion among village savings and lending (VS&L) club members were the key project benefits enjoyed by beneficiaries. Dual and triple VS&L group membership was a common trend in Bikita District as members sought to maximise the benefits from VS&L clubs. Interestingly savings made and income earned (interest on loans and penalties on defaulters) from VS&L activities were being used for procurement agricultural inputs, livestock units (hens, goats and – in some cases- cattle), food in cases where household food insecurity was experienced, and/or inputs for construction of improved sanitation facilities (toilets) and pot racks, making the VS&L model the vehicle for integration of all the project components (sectors) as beneficiaries used funds raised through group savings and interests on loans to support

interventions in the agriculture and WASH sectors. Targets for VS&L activities were exceeded although there apparently were gaps in terms of input and output market linkages.

In the WASH sector, the target number of beneficiaries of water point rehabilitation was exceeded (62 442 against a consolidated target of 22 620) as the target number of water points rehabilitated (120) was also exceeded (128 actually rehabilitated). Increased access to safe water supply was the result. Rehabilitation of water points reduced the distance and time travelled to fetch water in a social setting where women and girls are largely the people expected to fetch water. Reducing the distance and time taken by women and girls to fetch water also translated to reduced time poverty for girls and women. The project lack direct support to improved sanitation supply and the gap was reflected at community level where open defecation remains an issue. Improved hygiene practices were noted among beneficiaries as most stored drinking water in closed containers, had separate rubbish pits for biodegradable and non-biodegradable solid waste as well as two-tier pot racks to ensure hygienic washing and drying of utensils. Availability of hand-washing facilities with water and soap was low with beneficiaries citing the destruction of tip taps by children as a major reason for absence of hand washing facilities.

In this section, the extent to which set targets and objectives in each of the three sectors that comprised MERP were achieved is discussed. The evaluation looks at the cumulative outputs and outcomes of the project as opposed to just looking at the cost modification of the project for two reasons: (i) the TOR does not specify whether the evaluation should focus on the cost modification only or consider the whole project from the initial phase; and (ii) the cost modification was a continuation of the same project and distinguishing outcomes of the initial phase from those of the second phase could be difficult.

### 3.3.1 Agriculture Sector

#### 3.3.1.1 Delivery of Outputs in the Agricultural Production/ Food Security Sub-sector

The MERP project surpassed set targets in the Agricultural Production/ Food Security Sub-sector for **four** indicators, achieved (100%) set targets for **three** indicators and delivered more than 90% of the consolidated targets for the other **two** indicators. Project delivery against targets in this sub-sector was thus satisfactory.

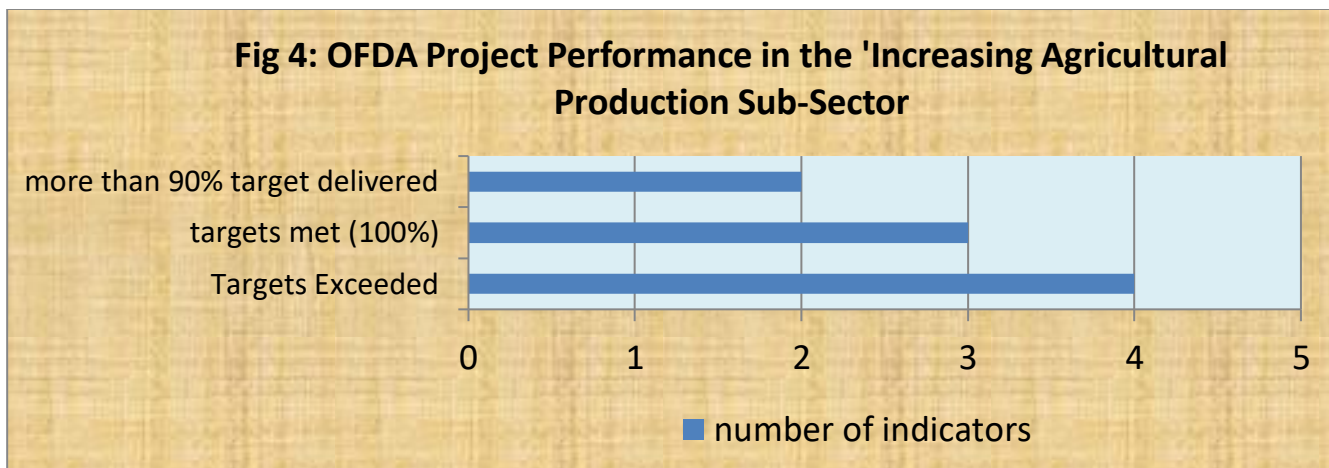


Table 5: Project Performance in the Improving Agricultural Production/ Food Security Sub-Sector

Sector: Agriculture and Food Security					
Sub-sector Name: Improving Agriculture Production/ Food Security Sub-Sector					
Indicator	Sex	Baseline Value 2016	Consolidated target	cumulative achievement	cumulative achievement %
Indicator 1: Projected increase in the number of months of food self-sufficiency for beneficiary households		2	8	7.9934	100%
Indicator 2: Number of people benefiting from seed systems/agricultural input activities, by sex	F	0	22692	28543	126%
	M	0	14508	12606	87%
	Total	0	37200	41149	111%
Indicator 3: Number and percentage of people trained by USAID/OFDA partners practicing appropriate crop protection procedures, by sex	F	0	4538	4997	110%
	M	0	2902	2443	84%
	Total	0	7440	7440	100%
Indicator 4: Number of farmers trained in Climate smart agriculture disaggregated by sex	F	0	4538	4997	110%
	M	0	2902	2443	84%
	Total	0	7440	7440	100%
indicator 5: Number of people trained in disaster preparedness mitigation and management	F	0	132	211	160%
	M	0	84	222	264%
	Total	0	216	433	200%
indicator 6: Number of people reached with nutrition activities and messages	F	0	4538	6633	146%
	M	0	2902	4278	147%
	Total	0	7440	10911	147%
Indicator 7: Number of Agro dealers trained in seed voucher redemption disaggregated by sex	F	0	22	13	59%
	M	0	14	20	143%
	Total	0	36	33	92%
Indicator 8: Number of Lead farmers trained in Post Harvest handling, disaggregated by sex	F	0	454	372	82%
	M	0	290	322	111%
	Total	0	744	694	93%
Indicator 9: Number of gender and nutrition focal point persons trained	F	0	108	123	114%
	M	0	108	96	89%
	Total	0	216	219	101%

Sources: OFDA final ITT, September 2018; CARE OFDA Final Report October 2016 – Sept 2018; MERP baseline survey report & MERP End line agriculture sector survey data set (for indicator 1)

### 3.3.1.1.1 Effectiveness of Seed Supply Systems/ Agriculture Input Supply

By the time of project closure, a total of 41 149 drought affected, marginalised small holder farmers had benefited from top dressing fertiliser, sorghum and cow peas seeds provided by CARE, the OFDA partner in MERP through a voucher input supply system. Where the 2016 MERP baseline noted beneficiary community members' inability to buy agricultural inputs, the 2018 MERP post planting survey noted that 94.1% of the beneficiaries had received input support through USAID- OFDA support. Importance of USAID-OFDA input systems was also corroborated by end line survey data which showed that 92% of the farmers had received part of their cereal seed through voucher redemption from Agro-dealers identified and trained through OFDA support. During the end line survey, beneficiaries reported that the provision of fertiliser and seed alongside training in CA, contributed to increased agricultural production and productivity. Velvet been seeds for animal fodder production were also distributed, however, by February 2018, only 1.1% of the seed had been utilised<sup>11</sup>. A gender transformative approach was used in input supply as 69% of the beneficiaries of the seed systems/ agriculture input supply were women. Inputs were distributed through 33 agro dealers trained in seed voucher redemption, two fifths of whom were female. Providing hybrid seed of sorghum - a drought resilient cereal (carbohydrate source) - alongside cowpeas - a drought resistant legume (protein source) - to mainly female small holder farmers was an effective way of enhancing food and nutrition security for marginalised households considering that women are the 'custodians' of rural household food and nutrition security. Qualitative evidence from key

<sup>11</sup> OFDA Input and Post Planting Survey Report, February 2018

stakeholders and beneficiary representatives shows that inputs provided to men were in greater danger of misuse (e.g. through being sold to get money to buy beer) than those provided to women.

Most of the farmers planted the seed supplied. However, about one in every twenty beneficiaries interviewed indicated that they had kept their seed for the 2018/19 season considering that the seed was distributed late and received when farmers had planted other crops on the plots they had earmarked for the seed from the CARE/ OFDA seed system. Others had shared some of the seed with relatives, although this was an insignificant proportion. Further, most of the fertiliser provided by OFDA was used on the CA plots supported by the project. However, some farmers used the top dressing fertilizer provided on maize plots instead of the CA plots under sorghum as required under the project. Despite these issues, it is still crucial to note that seeds and fertilisers distributed by CARE were confirmed received by the beneficiary farmers, planted during the same year or stored for use during the following year in instances where distribution was late or where inputs were received when the weather conditions were no longer conducive to effective input utilisation. These findings reflect the findings of the 2018 OFDA Input and Post Planting Survey report which noted that by the end of February 2018 (two months before the end of the season), 43.8% of the farmers had not fully utilised the cow peas seed provided; 34.8% had not fully utilised the sorghum, 98.1% had not fully utilised the velvet bean and 52.1% had not fully utilised the ammonium nitrate provided. The main reason for beneficiaries' failure to utilise the inputs provided included late input distribution, mid-season drought characterised by scorching heat and late season incessant torrents that blocked planting activities experienced towards the end of the 2017-2018 season.

Most farmers reported increased yields from the hybrid seed provided through the voucher system. On the basis of end line data, the average yield sorghum yield per hectare on beneficiary CA plots was 2.5 tonnes per hectare during the 2016/17 season. This slightly fell to 2.3 tonnes per hectare during the 2017/18 season. Although, the national average productivity for sorghum is 4tonnes/hectare, the average productivity levels for project beneficiaries were commendable considering the late distribution of inputs and the poor rainfall patterns over the two seasons. In Chivi District in particular, germination rate of the sorghum seed was particularly low and the resultant crop did not yield any harvestable grain due to the poor rainfall distribution.

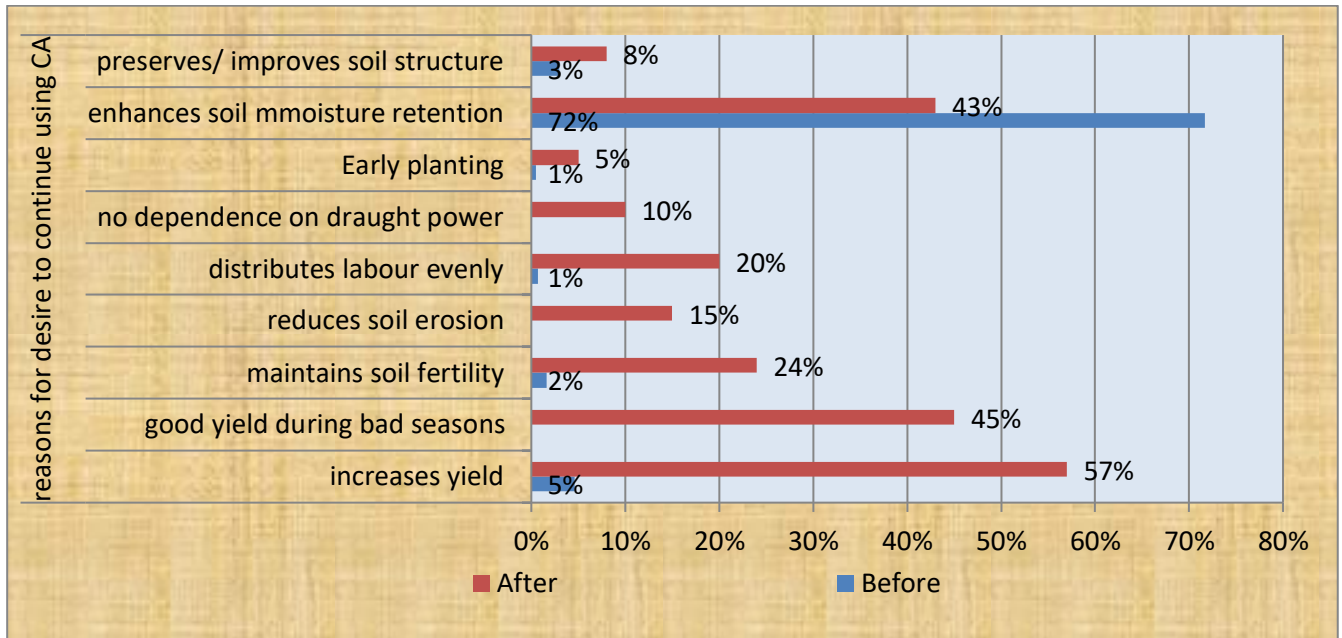
Where high yielding sorghum seed was provided, the cultivar provided was palatable to birds and some of the grain that the farmers could have harvested was lost to birds. Providing thorny sorghum varieties would have minimised the labour involved in driving away birds and also the loss of potential yield to birds.

In Bikita, an unexpected outcome of the project was consumption of velvet beans by people whereas it had been distributed for fodder production. Some respondents reported roasting velvet beans and grinding them to make 'coffee'. These indicated that the 'coffee' from velvet beans tasted more delicious than the usual coffee they buy from shops.

### *3.3.1.1.2 Improved Climate Smart Agriculture Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices*

The USAID/OFDA project helped to improve small holder farmers' farming knowledge, attitudes and practices through various trainings. Training in climate smart agriculture, for instance led to practice of conservation agriculture among the beneficiaries and also the adoption of conservation agriculture by non-beneficiaries who observed its benefits as it was being practised by project beneficiaries. The project trained 7440 farmers (67.2% female) in climate smart agriculture. End line data shows that 99.3% of the beneficiaries had used conservation agriculture at least once over the project period (2016-2018). Similarly, of the 7440 farmers trained in crop protection through manual and chemical weed control, pest control in the field as well as post-harvest crop handling and protection, almost all (96.8%) reported that they are practising the concepts learnt and the skills trained. The negligibly few who stated that they were not using concepts and skills taught indicated a willingness to adopt practices taught but cited lack of financial resources to buy chemicals (e.g. for protection of grains from the action of the larger grain borer post-harvest). The combined effect of high adoption rates for knowledge, attitudes and practices promoted by the OFDA project in climate smart agriculture and crop protection was an increase in agricultural production and productivity for beneficiaries. This in turn, led to improved household food security for beneficiary households as projected months of food self-sufficiency increased from just two months before the project to eight months after the project.

Prior to the MERP project, smallholder farmers had resisted to adopt CA and small grain production. This had contributed to household food insecurity and missing an opportunity to earn income from sale of excess farm produce. The project demonstrated the benefits of CA and small grain production, especially its contribution to agricultural production and household resilience to the impact of drought. Farmers perceived the difference that conservation agriculture makes in increasing yields (fig 5). During this evaluation, farmers gave two main reasons for a desire to continue using CA: three in every five farmers (57%) stated that they will continue using CA because it increased yield per unit area while a further 45% percent indicated that CA enabled them to get a harvest even when the rains were erratic.



**Fig 5: Farmer Perceptions of the Benefits of CA**

Consequently, adoption of CA among beneficiary farmers was very high, almost universal. However, a small proportion of the respondents (2.7%) indicated that they will not continue using CA, mainly citing the excessive labour involved. These mocked at CA in local languages: where the majority referred to CA – mainly the practice of digging potholes for use as planting stations - as, *Dhiga Udye* (*dig and get something to eat*), the latter referred to it as, *'Dhiga Ufe'* (*Dig and die*). It is noteworthy, however, that the project provided riper tines for mechanisation of CA to reduce the drudgery involved in manual CA. Also, the project promoted collaboration of farmer group members in taking turns to prepare potholes (planting stations) as a group for each member of the group as a social innovation that made the tough work doable.

The project contributed towards increased household nutrition status for marginalised small holder farmers through disseminating information to more than 10 000 beneficiaries. In this regard, the project exceeded the set target (7440) by almost 50 % (fig 6).

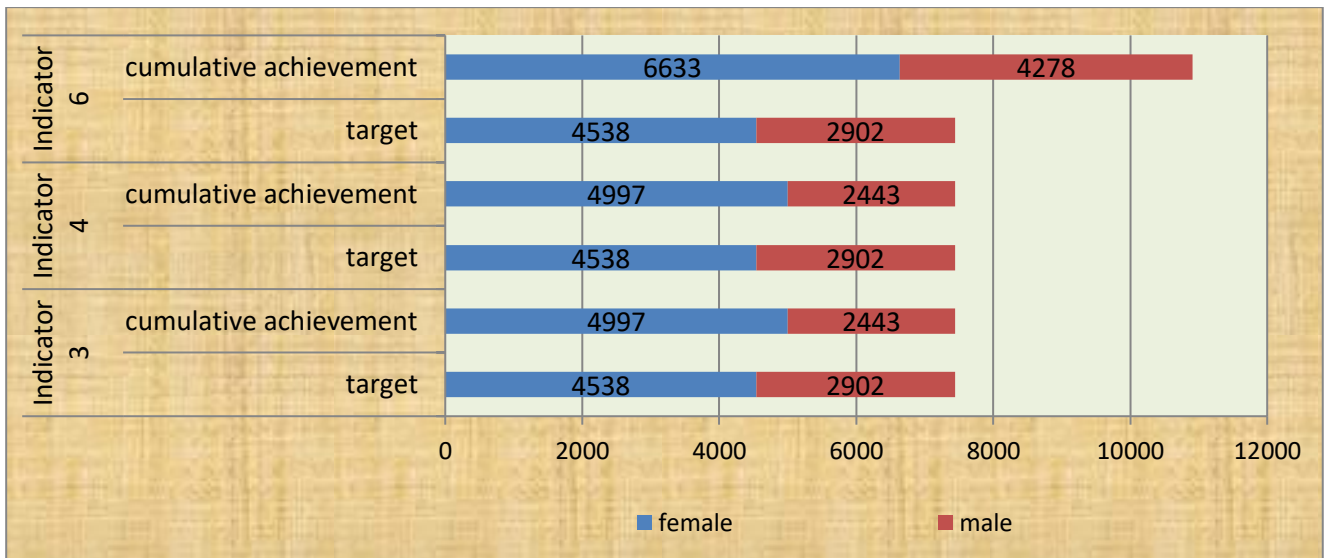


Fig 6: Cumulative Achievements in Small Holder Farmer Trainings for Indicators 3, 4 and 6<sup>12</sup>

### 3.3.1.1.3 Increased Community Disaster Preparedness

The project mainstreamed disaster risk reduction. It facilitated participatory identification and training of disaster risk management focal persons. Four hundred and thirty three people were trained in disaster preparedness, management and mitigation, thus exceeding the target set at project design (216). The focal persons were active in developing ward disaster preparedness, management and mitigation plans focussing on action to take before, during and after the occurrence of a disaster. The ward level focal persons also served as a link to the District Civil Protection Committee to ensure timely response by higher echelons for disaster risk management in the case of emergencies. Further, the focal persons helped to quickly pick and disseminate early warning messages for their respective areas of jurisdiction, hence constitute an important cog in local level early warning systems. As a result community, disaster preparedness has substantially improved.

### 3.3.1.1.4 Projected Months of Food Self-Sufficiency among Beneficiary Households Increased

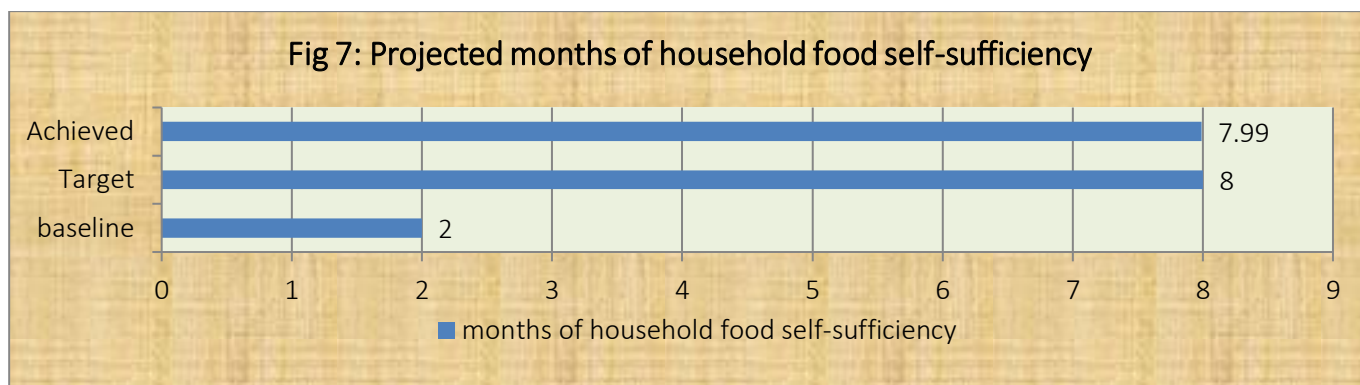
When OFDA support to El Nino affected small holder farmers started in 2016, the average number of months of food self-sufficiency for beneficiary households was two<sup>13</sup>. By the end of the first phase of the project in 2017, the projected number of months of self-sufficiency had risen to six. A sample survey of beneficiaries conducted during this evaluation has shown that the mean number of months of food self-sufficiency for beneficiaries had risen to 7.99 months by the end of the cost modification (against a target of 8 months). The set target was achieved (fig 7). The achievement of this target was however not merely due to the tangible agricultural inputs that OFDA provided to beneficiaries. Extension services provided under the OFDA project were regarded as having significantly contributed to the increase in the number of months of household food self-sufficiency. Findings from FGDs with beneficiary small holder farmers show that the farmers attribute the increase in the months of food self-sufficiency in the 2017/18 agricultural season to effects of training in conservation agriculture, leveraging group efforts for provision of labour as promoted under the farmer group concept, competition among farmers due to a desire to have 'field days' held at their farms as well as the seed and fertiliser provided under the OFDA project. Considering the sharp increase in the number of projected months of food self-sufficiency for the beneficiary small holder farmers (from 2 to 8 months), it is reasonable to assert that the objective of increasing agricultural production was achieved. The target may have been exceeded had it not been for the fall army worm<sup>14</sup> and the irregular rainfall patterns experienced during the intervention.

<sup>12</sup> The indicators are defined as follows: Indicator 3 – 'Number and Percentage of people trained by USAID/ OFDA partners practising proper crop protection procedures, by sex; Indicator 4: number of farmers trained in climate smart agriculture disaggregated by sex, and indicator 6: 'number of people reached with nutrition activities and services.

<sup>13</sup> MERP baseline survey report, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> A pest with origins in the Americas. In Zimbabwe it was resistant to local pesticides.





### 3.3.1.2 Performance of the OFDA Project in the Livestock Sub-sector

#### 3.3.1.2.1 Delivery of Outputs against Log frame Indicators and Targets

MERP performance in output delivery in the livestock sub-sector was superb. Targets were exceeded in all the five performance indicators. The number of animals benefiting from the livestock support interventions was four times higher than the set target while the number of beneficiaries of the livestock support scheme was six times higher than the target (table 6). Thus, planned outputs were more than adequately delivered.

**Table 6: Project Performance in the Livestock Sub-Sector**

Sector: Agriculture and Food Security					
Sub-sector Name: Livestock					
Indicator	Sex	Baseline Value 2016	Consolidated target	cumulative achievement	cumulative achievement %
Indicator 1: Number of Animals Benefiting from/ affected by Livestock Activities		0	9159	36030	393%
Indicator 2: Number of People Benefiting from Livestock Activities by Sex	F	0	1862	7978	428%
	M	0	1191	9427	792%
	Total	0	3053	17405	570%
Indicator 3: Number of Veterinary Interventions		0	2	2	100%
indicator 4: Number of Animals treated		0	9159	18746	205%
indicator 5: Number of people trained as paravets disaggregated by sex	F	0	31	9	29%
	M	0	20	44	220%
	Total	0	51	53	104%

Sources: OFDA final ITT, September 2018; CARE OFDA Final Report October 2016 – Sept 2018

#### 3.3.1.2.2 Effectiveness of the Livestock Sub-Sector Interventions in Asset (Livestock) Protection

The MERP project increased accessibility of veterinary extension services. Prior to the intervention, veterinary services were out of reach for the marginalised beneficiary farmers. Training and equipping of paravets (by providing them with a paravet kit) created human resources for animal disease surveillance, castration, dehorning and other services. The paravets reside in the target communities. They were linked to qualified government-employed veterinary extension officers who provide them with support when they encounter cases that they are not qualified enough to tackle. This has resulted in increased animal disease surveillance and reduced livestock deaths (although high death rates for goat kids associated with poor goat husbandry practices remain a problem, especially in Chivi). Positive outcomes of this intervention are, however, sometimes compromised by inability of farmers to purchase drugs to treat identified animal ailments; a situation that in many instances livestock farmers who are engaged in Village Savings and Lending solve by accessing soft loans from their groups. Further, the effectiveness of use of paravets as a community based veterinary extension services was in some cases affected by migration of the trained paravets. Training paravets for a particular community did not guarantee availability of paravet services in the target community. In Zaka District, for instance, some of the trained paravets were said to have migrated before the project ended and, hence had to be replaced.

Dip tank rehabilitation helped improve dipping facilities for cattle and other animals. This increased accessibility of dip tanks as well as animal dipping frequency which in turn led to reduced infection of animals by tick borne diseases. Active involvement of community members in dip tank rehabilitation implied increased community ownership of the asset and provided motivation for utilisation of the rehabilitated assets. Challenges in community cooperation in dip tank rehabilitation were, however, reported in Bikita and Zaka. This negatively affected the rate of intervention implementation. Also, towards the end of the project, intervention effectiveness was compromised by a factor beyond the control of the project: shortage of dipping chemicals which saw a change in the set frequency of animal dipping.

Adoption of fodder production and hay bailing remains low. Although the project provided velvet bean to all lead farmers, some did not plant the seed, while others regarded hay bailing too laborious for them. It is noteworthy, however, that among those that adopted it, velvet bean has been proven to have high palatability to cattle and goats. In fact some farmers have found it palatable even to people when prepared and consumed as a substitute for coffee (an unexpected outcome as stated above).

Considering the effects of training and equipping of paravets, the rehabilitation of dip tanks, capacity building in fodder production and hay bailing, provision of velvet bean seed for fodder production and sickles for harvesting fodder for feeding livestock in the dry season, it is reasonable to assert that the project made satisfactory performance towards delivery of its objective of livestock protection.

### 3.3.2 Performance of the CARE-OFDA project in the Economic Recovery and Market Systems Sector

#### 3.3.2.1 Performance towards Attainment of Targets in the Microfinance Sub-Sector

CARE, USAID/OFDA’s partner in the MERP project has a longstanding history of effective, impactful delivery of rural microfinance programmes. Over the years, CARE has perfected a model of Village Savings and Lending which it rolls out as a good practice for enhancing livelihoods and ensuring project sustainability. In the MERP project, CARE surpassed most targets in the microfinance sub-sector (table 7)

**Table 7: Project Performance in the Microfinance Sub-sector**

Sector: Economic Recovery and Market Systems				
Sub-sector Name: Microfinance				
Indicator	Sex	Consolidated target	cumulative achievement	cumulative achievement %
Indicator 1.1: Number of People, disaggregated by sex, newly receiving financial services due to USAID/ OFDA support	F	299	1579	528%
	M	191	252	132%
	Total	490	1831	374%
Indicator 1.2: Number of People, disaggregated by sex continuing to receive financial services due to USAID/ OFDA support	F	448	2339	522%
	M	287	358	125%
	Total	735	2697	367%
Indicator 2: Percentage of financial accounts/ groups supported by USAID/ OFDA that are functioning properly		75%	74%	99%
sector activities		128969	169952.76	132%
indicator 4.1 % of savings groups holding regular meetings		75%	87%	116%
indicator 4.2: % of savings groups collecting member contributions on time		75%	70%	93%
Indicator 4.3: % of groups experiencing on-time loan repayments		75%	76.80%	102%

Sources: OFDA final ITT, September 2018; CARE OFDA Final Report October 2016 – Sept 2018; MERP End line ERMS dataset, Sept 2018 (for indicators 2; 4.1; 4.2; & 4.3)

The project management to establish new Village Savings and Lending (VS&L) groups and strengthen old ones. Cumulatively the microfinance intervention reached 4528 individuals (3918 females). In terms of gender and women empowerment among marginalised rural small holder farmers, VS&L has proven to be a game changer, enabling acquisition of assets (cash savings, livestock units etc), access to microloans and starting and growing of microenterprises by more women than men. It tilts the balance of resource ownership and control of the means



of production in favour of women. Group membership statistics show that there are six times more women in VS&L groups than men (more details on is provided in the section on impact) and hence more women than men reap the benefits of VS&L interventions supported by the project.

Internal project monitoring data shows that the USAID/OFDA supported VSL groups had cumulative savings of \$169 952.76 circulating in the form of loans. Interest from loans constituted passive income for group members. Ability to earn passive income that arises from monthly interest on loans was a rare income source in Zimbabwe where the banking sector does not give any interest. In addition to creating passive income for group members, VS&L has increased group members' access to loans for social and investment reasons. MERP end line survey data shows that at least 84% of the beneficiaries had received a loan from their VS&L groups and the average loan size was USD40.86; the minimum loan size was \$2 while the maximum was \$500, portraying the differences in group capacity to lend. The savings and loans helped to boost household economies for group members. Members reported using funds obtained as loans or share outs of savings for purchasing agricultural inputs, food, utensils, livestock units, construction materials, among other things. The three top most reasons for borrowing from VS&L groups were investing in micro-enterprises (27.1%), paying school fees (24%) and buying food (8.8%)<sup>15</sup>. This shows that participation in the USAID-OFDA supported VS&L activities enabled beneficiaries to initiate new income generating activities and enhance existing ones as well as meet social development and physiological needs for their households. Thus, their household economy was improved; which is clear evidence of achievement of the objective for this sub-sector.

The project also achieved its objective of building community economic activity through VSL. It enabled beneficiaries to have cash in Zimbabwe's cashless economy. It improved cash circulation in the rural communities. Trade (buying and selling) increased in the target communities as VSL members pursued various income generating activities to raise money for savings and also to pay back loans and interests thereon. Liquidity of VSL members implied an increase in aggregate demand at community level as the number of people with ability to back their desire to buy with purchasing power increased.

The harsh macro-economic realities of Zimbabwe, have –however – not spared the VS&L groups established or strengthened by the USAID OFDA project. Speculation of price hikes has always tinted the business atmosphere in Zimbabwe and often the speculation has been followed by actual inflation. This threatens to wipe up savings. In response to this, groups are moving towards converting cash savings into other tangible assets (purchasing inventories, livestock, utensils, furniture etc). The crippling cash crisis is also affecting savings, with some group adopting mobile cash based savings as a way of trouble shooting. Despite these hindrances, it was still evident that VS&L activities were indeed helping to build household and community economic activities. It was, thus clear that the project objective for the Economic Recovery and Market Systems Sector interventions was to a large extent achieved.

### **3.3.2.2 Contribution of OFDA Supported VSL Activities to Local Capacity in Economic Recovery and Market Systems**

The OFDA supported microfinance intervention has greatly contributed to local capacity in economic recovery and market systems. The intervention provided stimulus for micro-enterprise and in many cases the micro-enterprises stimulated are transforming into small enterprises. VS&L groups were linked with the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises and Cooperative Development which provided monitoring and support in the absence of the project.

In establishing new, and reviving old VS&L groups, CARE trained Cluster Facilitators (CF) in VS&L methodology as well Selection, Planning and Management (SPM) of Income Generating Activities (IGAs). These CF then helped establish VS&L groups and support existing ones. CF constitute a local community based resource for propagation and replication of VS&L activities from which the VSL benefits described in section 3.3.2.1 are expected to accrue to group members. It follows from this that the identification and training of Cluster Facilitators helped to promote engagement in income generating activities (through SPM trainings) and development of a culture of saving and investment (through VS&L training) in the local communities.

---

<sup>15</sup> Source: ERMS End line survey data set, September 2018.

The potential for local economic recovery stimulated by the VSL activities is huge. This is mainly due to innovation by group members. In Chivi District for instance, one beneficiary is constructing a shop using proceeds from VSL. In Bikita, some groups are have engaged in asset-oriented savings. Each time they have a share out of savings they buy an asset, a goat for instance. In Zaka, one married, female VSL beneficiary remarked, *'Baba vakashamisika vava kubva kubasa vakawana ndatova nezvin'ombe zvangu zviviri zvandakatenga nemari dzangu dzomukando'* (The last time my husband came back to our rural home from his urban-based employment station, he was surprised to find that I had bought two cattle using my 'own monies' from VS&L). Again in Bikita, the 'Heifer Group' in ward 32 has taken a positive spin off the VSL shuttle. Instead of having 5-10members the group has 30 members. Member contributions were used to start a cattle production project for the group as opposed to supporting individual group members' IGAs. The group now has now has 29 cattle and is engaging in several other projects. This signifies the contribution to asset recovery for beneficiary households that VS&L is making: Beneficiaries who had lost livestock to drought are acquiring livestock using VS&L proceeds. As commercial transactions underpinned by the USAID/OFDA support VS&L and SPM training occur, circulation of money in the beneficiary communities is increased while market systems and economic recovery are stimulated.

### 3.3.3 Performance of the CARE-OFDA project in the WASH Sector

#### 3.3.3.1 MERP Performance against Set Targets in the Water Supply Infrastructure Sub-Sector

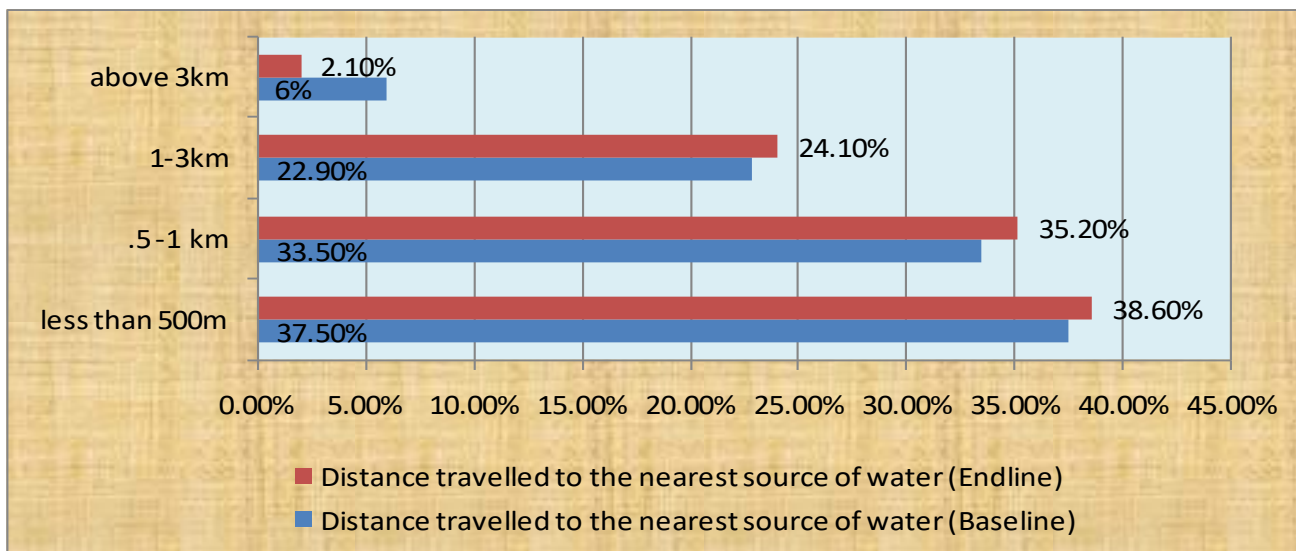
MERP exceed targets for four of the five performance indicators for the Water Supply Infrastructure sub-sector but did not achieve anything for the fifth key result area (rehabilitation of water points through chlorination of water points) as it did not have a budget for it (table 8). It was unclear why the partner included activities without a corresponding budget line item.

**Table 8: Project Performance in the Water Supply Sub-Sector**

Sector: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene					
Sub-sector Name: Water Supply Infrastructure					
Indicator	Sex	Baseline Value 2016	Consolidated target	cumulative achievement	cumulative achievement %
Indicator 1: Number of people directly benefiting from the Water Supply Infrastructure Programme	F	0	13799	35335	256%
	M	0	8822	27107	307%
	Total	0	22621	62442	276%
Indicator 2: Number of Water Points rehabilitated and are functional		0	120	128	107%
Indicator 3: Number of pump minders trained and equipped	F	0	7	8	114%
	M	0	13	19	146%
	Total	0	20	27	135%
indicator 4: Number of Water points developed, repaired or rehabilitated (bacteriological)		0	120	140	117%
indicator 5: Number of Water Points developed, repaired or rehabilitated (chlorine)		0	120	0	0%

Sources: OFDA final ITT, September 2018; CARE OFDA Final Report October 2016 – Sept 2018.

Rehabilitation of water points increased access to water supply for beneficiaries. The rehabilitation of **128** water points enables access to safe water for **35 335** women and girls as well as **27 107** men and boys. Access to safe water was restored for beneficiaries, some of whom had resorted to fetching water from unsafe water sources after the boreholes broke down, reducing the risk of exposure to water borne diseases in so doing. Distance to the nearest safe water source was reduced (fig 8), for instance the proportion of people who travel less than 500m to fetch water increased from 35.7% at baseline to 38.6% at end line. In the steeply patriarchal Shona societies of Masvingo Province where fetching water is predominantly the role of women and children, this reduction in distance to water point signifies reduction in the manual labour and time that women and girls will spend fetching water.



**Fig 8: Change in Distance to the Nearest Water Point between Baseline and End line Survey**

### 3.3.3.2 Contribution of the Water Supply Infrastructure Intervention to Local Community Capacity Building

The WASH intervention has put effective measures for minimising current and future water point down time in place. Water Point management committees (WPMC) for monitoring responsible use of rehabilitated water points have been put in place. These have a functional leadership structure will enables autonomous operations in the absence of external support e.g. committee chairpersons can call for meetings to plan activities for improving borehole head works or to respond to reports of malfunctioning pumps. The committees have individuals responsible for policing (enforcing regulations on how to use the borehole and reporting any mischief by community members to the committee). The committees also raise funds- mainly through regular small borehole user contributions (e.g. \$0.50 per user) –for purchase of replacement parts for the borehole when they wear out. The water point management committees are local structures that ensure that local communities can solve water point down time issues in the absence of external support. They also can organise community efforts towards improvements of borehole head works. What is impressive about the WPMC established with OFDA support is that there are more women than men in the WPMC (cumulative membership is 1194 of whom 729 are women), including in the committee leadership structure. Presence of more women than men in these committees enhances likelihood of sustainability of the local community capacity enhancement structures built as women are less likely to migrate in search of employment than men.

Local community capacity to maintain/ repair bush pumps (boreholes) was enhanced through training and equipping of pump minders. Once borehole loses functionality, reports are sent to the trained pump minder who diagnoses the nature of malfunction, identifies parts to be replaced and communicates to the WPMC which provides resources for procurement of spares and logistical support (bus fares) for the borehole repair process. The combination of WPMC and trained and equipped pump minders constitutes increased local community capacity to prevent and respond to water point down time. Pump minders were trained by technicians from the District Development Fund and linked to relevant members of the District Water and Sanitation sub-committees (DWSC) for quality control and sustainability purposes. It is clear therefore, that the OFDA supported project substantially contributed to building local community capacity to keep rehabilitated boreholes in good running order in the long-run.

### 3.3.3.3 MERP Performance against Set Targets in the Hygiene Promotion Sub-sector

The OFDA project performed fairly well in direct hygiene promotion. It reached 23 434 individuals, 57.3% of whom were female (table 9). Involving beneficiaries in participatory health and hygiene education sessions helped improve their hygiene knowledge, attitudes and practices. The setting up of community health clubs (CHCs) and school health clubs (SHCs) created platforms for direct public health promotions facilitated by village health workers and school health coordinators trained by the project. Community health clubs on one hand and

school health committees on the other constituted platforms whose hygiene promotions were mutually reinforcing. Children who benefited from the hygiene promotion in school health clubs became a force for change in the communities as they demanded positive changes in the health practices of their households.

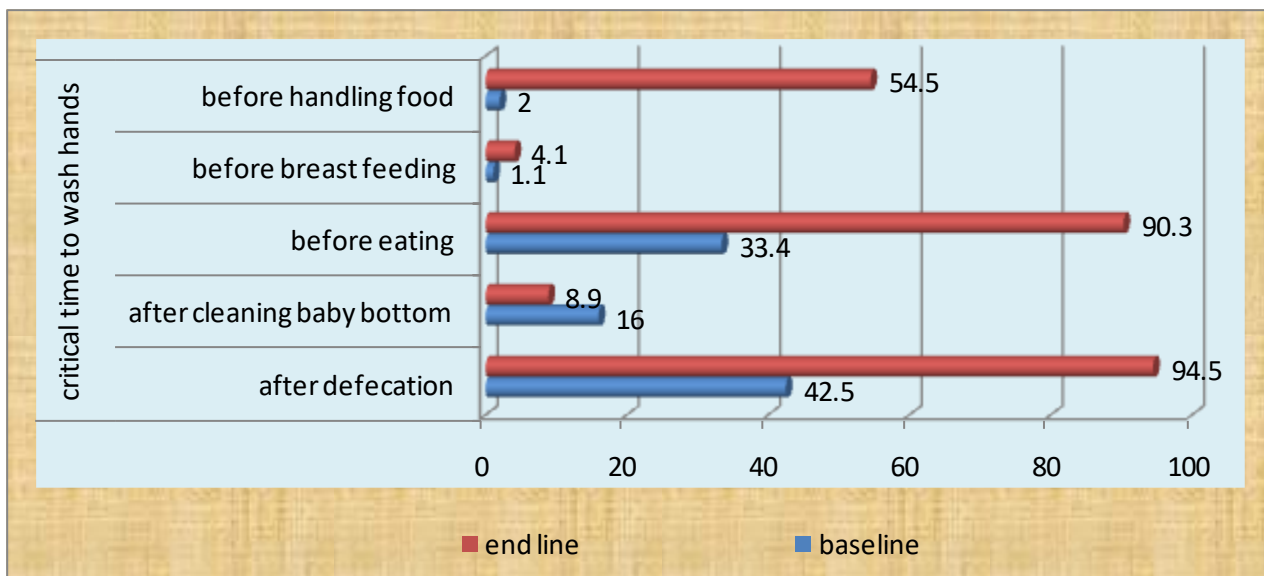
**Table 9: Project Performance in the Hygiene Promotion Sub-sector**

Sector: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene					
Sub-sector Name: Hygiene Promotion					
Indicator	Sex	Baseline Value 2016	Consolidated target	cumulative achievement	cumulative achievement %
Indicator 1: Number of people receiving direct health promotion (excluding mass media campaigns and without double counting )	F	0	13799	13438	97%
	M	0	8222	9996	122%
	Total	0	22021	23434	106%
Indicator 2: Number of Village Health Workers Trained (VHW)	F	0	66	73	111%
	M	0	42	42	100%
	Total	0	108	115	106%
Indicator 3: Number of PHHE cards distributed		0	3375	7298	216%
indicator 4: Number of community health clubs established		0	108	120	111%
indicator 5: Number of School Health Coordinators Trained	F	0	8	15	188%
	M	0	7	11	157%
	Total	0	15	26	173%
Indicator 6: Percent of respondents who know at least 3 of 5 critical times to wash hands			N/A	57.90%	N/A
Indicator 7: Percent of Households with soap and water at a hand washing location			11%	12.40%	113%
Indicator 8: Percent of Households which keep their drinking water safely in clean containers		91%	N/A	95.70%	N/A

Sources: OFDA final ITT, September 2018; CARE OFDA Final Report October 2016 – Sept 2018; MERP End line WASH dataset, Sept 2018

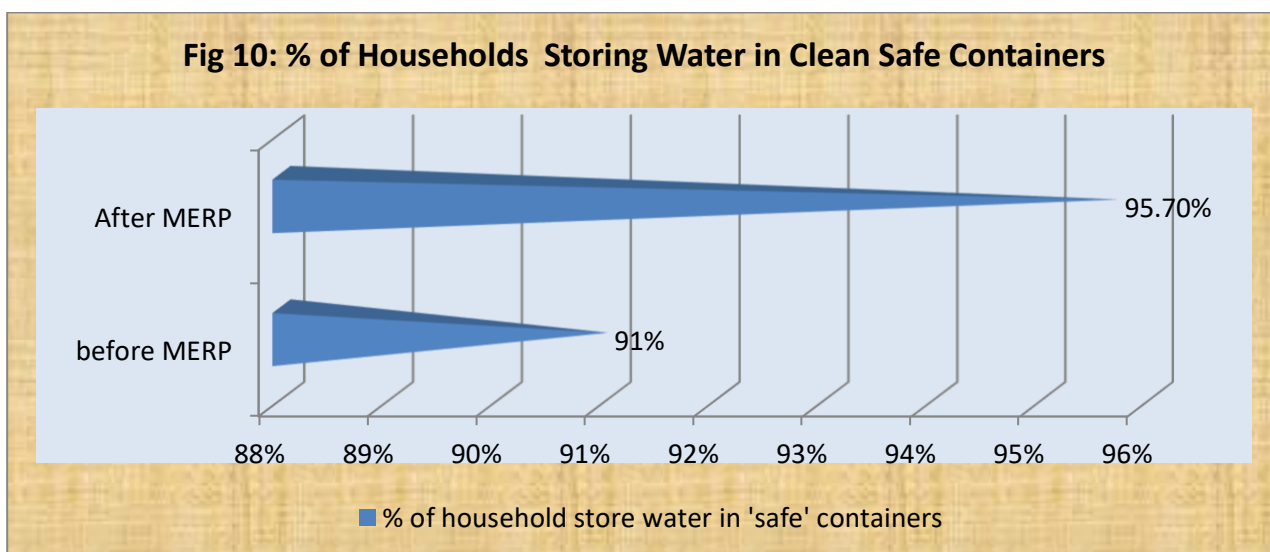
Hygiene promotion led to significant increase in hygiene knowledge. Use of the Participatory Health and Hygiene Education approach coupled with distribution of PHHE cards for consolidation proved effective. By the time of the final evaluation, about three in every five beneficiaries could identify at least three of the five critical times for hand washing. Although a baseline value for this indicator was not available and no proper target was set for the same, comparison of knowledge of each critical time for hand washing for the baseline and end line shows significant change in knowledge levels (fig 6). More than nine in every ten beneficiaries of the direct hygiene promotion activities knew that one should wash hands after defecation (94.5%) and before taking food (90.3%).

To a large extent the knowledge of critical times to wash hand had been translated into practice. However, the use of soap during hand washing at critical times remained limited, in some cases due to the unavailability of soap in the home. Evidence from the end line survey shows that almost all the respondents (98.6%) washed hands before eating the last time they had a meal. Among these, only three in ten (27.7%) had used soap. Similarly, 97% confirmed having washed hands prior to handling/ preparing food the last time they prepared food but 60% of them had washed hands using water only (without soap). Thus, there was evidence of behaviour change, although low household income levels still hindered full adoption of the behaviours taught (in this case the use of soap).



**Fig 9: Knowledge of Critical Times for Hand washing Before and After MERP**

The hygienic practice of keeping water in safe, clean containers has remained a near universal practice of the target communities from project inception (baseline) to end line. A slight increase was, however, recorded at end line (fig 10).



While evidently there has been positive change in many hygiene knowledge, attitudes and practices, the practice of setting up a hand washing location at the homestead remains largely yet to be adopted. Only 12.4% of the respondents had a hand washing location with water and soap at the time of the end line survey. Some respondents stated that their tip taps had been destroyed by children while others argued that if they leave soap at the hand washing locations ravens carry it away. It was also apparent, however, that the lack of a hand washing location was in most cases associated with the lack of a toilet at the homestead as well (30% of the households did not have toilets at the homestead, a scenario that typically gives rise to open defecation). While a situation where 30% of beneficiary households do not have toilets is unacceptable, it is noteworthy also that this end line value is significant improvement from the baseline value of 50.7%. Although the programme did not provide hardware support to construction of sanitation units, PHHE motivated CHC members to invest in building toilets. In the face of resource constraints, some resorted to raising funds for toilet construction through VS& L. As such, even among the 30% of respondents who indicated that they did not have toilets, some had begun construction of toilets and were at various stages: some had completed toilet pit digging, some had finished the sub-structure

for the toilets while other had begun working on the superstructure. Meanwhile an unexpected outcome of the promotion of toilet construction without provision of material support for the construction works has been the digging of two to three metres deep pits which have been left unclosed for months and have become a hazard to livestock as some livestock were reported to have died after falling into the pits. Hardware support to construction of toilets could have been

Nonetheless, on considering the foregoing observations, it still remains clear that the objective for the WASH sector, *‘to improve water, sanitation and hygiene practices’* was met. MERP successfully improved water, sanitation and hygiene practices.

### 3.3.3.4 Contribution of the Hygiene Promotion Sub-sector to Building Local Community Capacity

OFDA supported training of Village Health Workers (VHW) in PHHE. The VHW have in turn helped in training community health clubs. Technically, the Village Health Workers are front line volunteer workers of the Ministry of Health and Child Care. They were trained by Environmental Health Technicians (EHTs) who are ward level public health officers in the ministry of health. Training village health workers and linking them with local EHTs has increased grassroots capacity for public health promotion. Human resources for public health in the local communities have been increased. Instead of a public health promotion system whose lowest echelons hang at ward level (with no linkage to village level), training of village health workers has added a village level echelon for public health promotion.

Local community capacity to prevent water borne diseases has also been developed. PHHE for members of community health clubs has helped to improve club member’s hygiene knowledge and practices. This has enhanced community capacity to prevent and/or control water borne diseases. Current and future community capacity to prevent water borne diseases was also enhanced through training of school health coordinators who helped set up school health clubs for imparting health and hygiene education to school children. The hygiene knowledge, attitudes and practices disseminated to children through the health clubs contributed towards reducing hygiene related health hazards in the school setting as well as the communities since children tend to practise what they learn at school in the home.

### 3.3.3.5 MERP Effectiveness: A Summary Assessment

To a large extent MERP delivered quality outputs against set indicator targets. As a result the objectives of the project have been largely achieved (table 10).

**Table 10: MERP Effectiveness: A Summary Assessment**

Evaluation Criterion	Rating	Remarks
Effectiveness	Satisfactory (S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The combination of input provision and training in climate smart agriculture to a large extent resulted in increased agricultural production as well as yield per unit area.</li> <li>- Strengthening of old and establishment of new VS&amp;L clubs substantially contributed to growth in household and community economic activities.</li> <li>- Direct hygiene promotion and water point rehabilitation support have influenced positive change in beneficiaries’ hygiene knowledge, attitudes and practices</li> <li>- However, gaps in access to improved sanitation facilities still exist in the beneficiary communities</li> </ul>



### 3.4 Efficiency of the CARE-OFDA project

#### 3.4.1 Minimizing Resource Use through Applying a Cascade Model

The project trained 744 lead farmers each of whom in turn trained nine other farmers, giving a total of 7440 farmers trained in Climate Smart Agriculture under the project. The option of directly training all the 7440 farmers as opposed to applying a ‘train the trainer’ model existed. Direct training of all the 7440 would have resulted in increasing the training budget ten-fold. Thus, in adopting a cascade training model (directly training only one in every ten farmers), the project used only a tenth of the resources that could have been used in directly training all of the 7440 farmers and yet still reached the same number of beneficiary small holder farmers. The usual concern, that cascade trainings result in watered down knowledge and skills for final trainees was, in the case of MERP, refuted on the basis of primary evidence collected during this evaluation as the knowledge and skills levels of farmers in the farmer groups were similar to the knowledge and skills levels of the lead farmers who trained them. The cascade model led to cost savings while maintaining the quality of outputs and outcomes.

MERP not only applied a cascade model applied in promoting climate smart agriculture but also in participatory health and hygiene training where the village health workers (VHWs) and school health masters were trained for onward training of community health clubs and school health clubs respectively. The model was also used in the Economic Recovery and Market Systems sector where cluster facilitators were trained and equipped to train others. Overall, the use of a cascade model throughout the project resulted in huge cost savings. Apparently, there were no models for training which could have been cheaper than the cascade model. This in turn implies that the project was efficiently implemented.

#### 3.4.2 Timeliness of Interventions

To a large extent, most of the interventions of the OFDA project were done in time. Farmer trainings, the training of VSL cluster facilitators, paravets, pump minders, school health masters and village health workers were largely regarded as having taken place in a timely manner as per the project implementation plan. However, the cost modification of the OFDA project was regarded as characterised by challenges in timeliness of provision of agricultural inputs. For instance, in Chivi District farmers stated that sorghum seed was delivered to them late. Similarly, distribution of velvet beans for the 2017/18 season in Bikita was done when some farmers had already planted all their available plots. As a result of the delay in the receipt of inputs some farmers had stored the inputs for use during the 2018/19 season. Others ended up planting the seeds on less fertile plots as they had already allocated all their fertile plots to other crops. These delays in input distribution affected agricultural production and productivity for the beneficiary small holder farmers.

Delay in provision of inputs also increased crop susceptibility to pests. Farmers in the target districts argued that cowpeas were more susceptible to attack by aphids if they were planted late than when they were planted early in the season.

Evidence from key stakeholders showed that due to late procurement of inputs, CARE’s attempts to procure inputs from local sources sometimes coincided with government input procurement for its support to small holder and large scale farmers dubbed ‘Command Agriculture,’ with input suppliers tending to prioritise government orders. This coincidence could have been avoided had procurement for the OFDA project been done as early as June of each year (to pre-position supplies) or if CARE had entered into framework contracts with input suppliers (e.g seed houses) well in advance.

#### 3.4.3 Quality of Agricultural Inputs

Through a system of input vouchers redeemed at agro-dealers’ shops, the project provided sorghum and cow pea seed and inorganic top dressing fertiliser. Farmers were generally happy with the quality of the inputs.

#### 3.4.4 Delivering Long term benefits through short-term costs

Using short-term costs, the OFDA project set up structures and systems at community level which will yield benefits in terms of improved community resilience to disasters in the long term. Training of paravets done in the short term will yield benefits in terms of quality of livestock produced in the long term as the community based paravets bring animal care and veterinary services within easy reach of the communities. The training of

lead farmers, VSL cluster coordinators, VHWs and DRR focal persons was a short term investments which will yield a long term flow of benefits to the target communities, provided the trained people are not removed from the communities by migration or death or incapacitated by illness or lack of motivation. Creating long term benefits through short term investments maximised the project's 'value for money'.

Further, the MERP invested in rehabilitation of perennial boreholes, building of drinking troughs for animals and rehabilitation of dip-tanks in the target communities. Investment in these hardware project components done in the short term is expected to yield long term benefits. Some key informants argued that rehabilitated boreholes and dip tanks may last more than ten years before major repairs are required. It is therefore clear that across all sectors, the OFDA project used incurrence of short term costs to provide long term benefits to beneficiaries and beneficiary communities.

The project invested in behaviour change communication in terms of household food security (promotion of climate smart agriculture comprising conservation agriculture, promotion of small grain production and water retention techniques), livelihoods strategies (VSL) and health and hygiene (PHHE). Adopters of the positive behaviour promoted will reap benefits in the long term despite the behaviour change promotion activities having been funded within a short time period. This enhances project value for money.

#### 3.4.5 Working through Community Volunteers

The project established a system of community level volunteers who served as frontline workers on the project. Lead farmers, paravets, VHWs, VSL cluster facilitators, school health masters and other volunteers did work which would otherwise have been done by and through full-time project field officers. This would have led to a bloated field team and ballooning wage bill. Working through volunteers ensured that the work was done through several paraprofessionals without any title to a salary, which effectively meant savings on the project wage bill.

#### 3.4.6 Collaborating with Stakeholders in Government

During the OFDA project, CARE collaborated with key stakeholders. Officers in the Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development, the Ministry of Agriculture, the District Development Fund among other stakeholders in government helped in facilitating trainings that fell within their respective areas of technical expertise. As per policy CIZ avoided paying any facilitation allowances to these government officers although other NGOs serving the same 'spaces' were providing allowances. This translated to cost minimisation.

#### 3.4.7 The policy, expectations and project quality nexus

The OFDA project had a clear policy that government staff who served as facilitators during workshops or supported field activities would not receive any allowances<sup>16</sup>. Government staff from line ministries, on the other hand expected to be provided with allowances for lunch if they left their offices before lunch and attended a CARE-OFDA project activity that straddled lunch hour (1300hrs -1400hrs). The Zimbabwe government's statutory instrument 1 of 2000 was cited as the source of the expectation. While the CARE –OFDA project had a policy against allowances for government stakeholders, projects run by other NGOs (e.g. CARITAS, Musasa and others) were providing such allowances<sup>17</sup>. As a result, whenever CARE-OFDA activities ran concurrently with activities for other development agencies which provided facilitation allowances for government staff, qualified line ministry staff tended to choose the latter and assign 'interns' to the CARE –OFDA project, or just excuse themselves. This practice to some extent affected the quality of some trainings by line ministry staff, a clear example of trade-off between cost saving and project quality concerns. Yet even when the experienced staff members of the line ministries participated, key informants noted that their motivation levels were low. It is noteworthy, however, that despite the low motivation of government staff, some government stakeholders still felt that the OFDA project was clearly '*more organised and impactful*' than similar projects that were being delivered by other entities alongside it.

---

<sup>16</sup> Because of this policy, CARE was nick-named '*careless*' by some stakeholders in government line ministries.

<sup>17</sup> Caritas was providing USD20 per day for facilitation, for instance.



### 3.4.7 Community Participation

The project minimised cost outlay for infrastructure rehabilitation through local community participation. During rehabilitation of dip-tanks and boreholes communities participated in providing labour (in the case of dip tank rehabilitation both manual and technical labour such as building were provided by community members) and locally available materials. The OFDA project provided materials that needed to be bought (e.g roofing sheets, treated poles and cement). Community effort subsidized the cost of rehabilitating the 68 perennial boreholes and the seven dip tanks that were covered by the project.

### 3.4.8 Adequacy of Staffing Levels

The OFDA project generally had an adequate number of adequately qualified staff across the three districts. However, in Bikita, WASH intervention was slightly affected by a six months absence of an officer responsible for the WASH activities. After resignation of an officer who was responsible for WASH, there was a six month lag in recruitment of a replacement staff member. This negatively affected the pace of delivery of outputs in the WASH sector in Bikita District.

### 3.4.9 Efficiency Assessment: Summary

Overall, project efficiency was rated satisfactory (table 11). There was no reasonable possibility that better results than those obtained under the OFDA project could have been obtained through doing things differently. The project had mechanisms that largely ensured efficiency of operations. However, to some extent project efficiency and quality were adversely affected by delayed delivery of inputs and low motivation levels among stakeholders.

**Table 11: MERP Efficiency Summary Assessment**

Criterion	Rating	Remarks
Efficiency	Satisfactory (S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Use of a cascade model minimised training costs;</li><li>- The project delivered long term benefits through providing short-term support;</li><li>- Working with and through community volunteers, government stakeholders and beneficiaries translated into cost savings;</li><li>- However, late procurement and distribution of agricultural inputs increased input procurement costs and compromised yield in some cases.</li></ul>

## 3.5 Impact of the OFDA-funded MERP

### 3.5.1 Improved Agricultural Production and Productivity for Small Holder Farmers in Marginalised Areas

The MERP made substantial contributions towards improving agricultural production and productivity for marginalised small holder farmers. Prior to the project, farmers often planted long season crop varieties that require a lot of moisture. Crop failure frequently resulted in poor harvests, with reliance on cereal from own production been restricted to an average of two months. As earlier discussed, one effect of the project has been an increase in the projected months of food self-sufficiency for beneficiary households to eight months. Some small holder farmers were able to produce enough for their household consumption needs and excess for sale to earn income for the household. Provision of short season varieties of small grain crops suitable to the changing climatic conditions of the targeted low rainfall areas alongside capacity building in conservation agriculture and soil moisture retention techniques resulted in higher yields for farmers. Farmers reported that yields were three times higher on CA plots than on plots they cultivated using conventional farming methods. As such, about three in every five beneficiaries cited increased yields as the reason they will continue using CA even when external funding ends. Further, almost half of the farmers observed that CA enabled them to get some reasonable yields even during seasons when normal to below normal rainfall is received.

Satisfaction with increase in production and productivity associated with CA has seen beneficiary farmers use CA for maize and other crops although the project promoted the use of CA for just sorghum and cow peas. Also, small holder farmers without animals for draught power considered CA techniques as mechanisms that enabled them to harvest as much yields as those who have draught power.

### 3.5.2 Improved Household Economic Activity and Welfare

Engagement in VSL has contributed to increased household income levels. From a baseline of an average monthly household income of \$11<sup>18</sup>, the average monthly household income (AMHI) among beneficiary households quadrupled to \$48.74 at the time of the end line survey (fig 11).

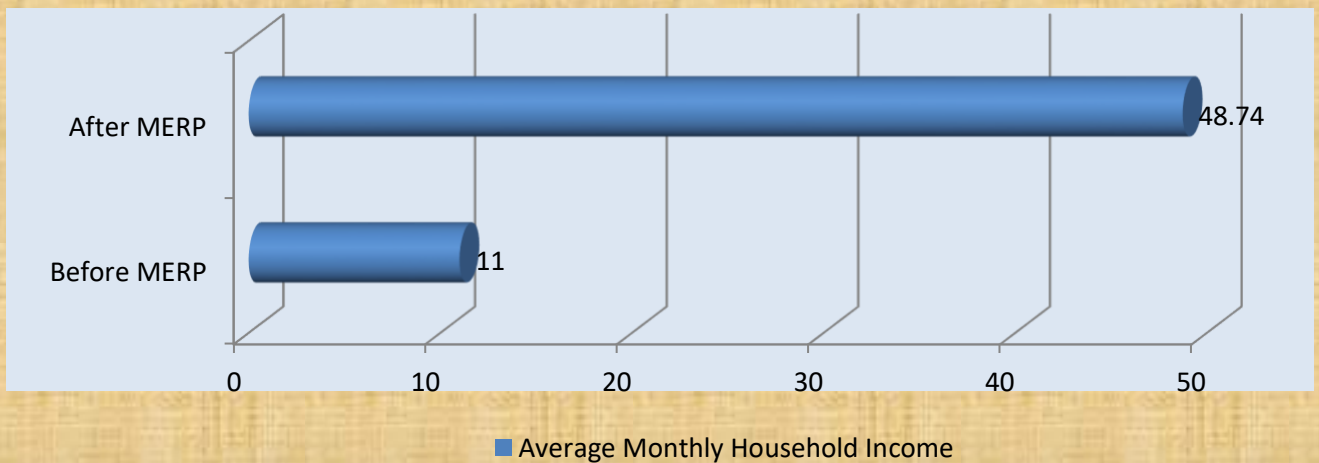
Economic activities woven around VS&L enabled beneficiaries to pay their children’s school fees (20%), invest in microenterprises (18%) buy livestock, food or agricultural inputs (fig 12). Further, training in Selection, Planning and Management of IGAs enabled household members to engage in micro enterprises from an informed point of view. Beneficiaries realised changes in microenterprise viability levels following the trainings.

*“...When I chose to take part in the OFDA project, I never had imagined the changes it would bring into my life. I was soon surprised to be chosen to serve as lead farmer for a farmer group that has both women and men. For the first time in my life, I led and taught a group comprising both women and men. All along I had thought that such a role was for men. ....*

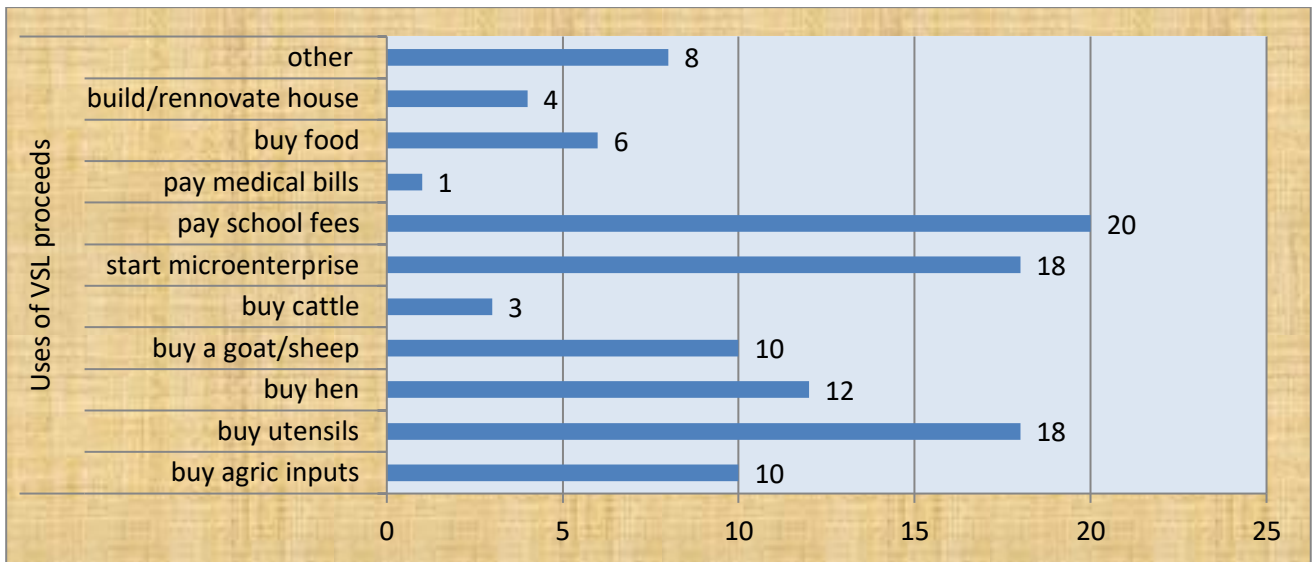
*But not only that: The project changed my priorities for cereal crops that I grow for family consumption. Where I used to focus on maize I now focus on sorghum and other small grains for I now know that these are more suitable to the weather patterns in this area. I now practice CA. Over the past two years I have been able to produce enough for my family and have excess to sell. Last year, I raised more than \$200 from crop sales. For me, that was great! .... ”*

**Margaret, 45 years, one of the lead farmers, Ward 23, Zaka District**

**Fig 11: Average Monthly Household Income Before and After MERP**



<sup>18</sup> MERP baseline survey report 2016



**Fig 12: Uses of Proceeds from Village Savings and Lending**

Looking at the uses of proceeds from VS&L, it is clear that some of the effects of interventions in this sub-sector will enhance household agricultural production as well as household food security and nutrition status as some of the proceeds are used to buy agriculture inputs and food respectively. Even in the WASH sector, the impact of VS&L was felt as some VSL Club members decided to focus on buying materials for constructing toilets. Apparently, VS&L has turned out to be the project centre pin for impact, sustainability and women empowerment.

The VSL intervention has had multiplier effects. New groups are spontaneously coming up in the target communities as non-beneficiary community members recognise VS&L as a good practice. Some have approached cluster facilitators for guidance.

*“... last year we bought home furniture using money from our VS&L share out. We had regarded that as success. However, this year our cluster facilitator said we needed assets that can increase value over time. So, we decided to buy each other goats. As we speak each and every member of our group has been able to buy a she-goat. I bought one. It bore three kinds last week. I now have four goats. Soon I will have enough to exchange for a cow. For me, life is changing for the better....”* **Angela, 39, Ward 21, Bikita District**

### 3.5.3 Improved Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Practices

Mutually reinforcing effects of direct health promotion through School Health Clubs and Community Health Clubs greatly contributed to change in hygiene knowledge, attitudes and practices among beneficiaries. Consistent hand washing practices are now being upheld by most beneficiaries. While notably the WASH intervention has had some impact, the level impact could have been higher had the intervention not been thinly spread. In some wards of Bikita, for instance beneficiary homesteads were far apart with several non-beneficiary homesteads between them. The lack of change in the water, sanitation and

*‘...My children frequently had diarrhoea, sometimes missing school. At that time I suspected that my mother-in-law was a witch who wanted to kill my children. I hated her ., But after attending community health club sessions, I realised that I was the witch who was making my children ill, for I had never considered washing hands before preparing food something to be consistently done. I changed my behaviour..... And tell you what.... the frequency of diarrhoeal diseases among my children also changed. I can’t remember when any of my children had diarrhoea.. Because I love my children, I will keep smart in order to keep them fit and alive...’*

**Tendai, 38 years, Chivi District**

hygiene practices of these non-beneficiary households remains a threat to the environmental health of the target communities.

Qualitative evidence from beneficiaries suggests that the incidence of water borne diseases has declined. This decline is expected to be sustained into the future as VHWs and EHTs will continually remind beneficiaries. The impact is also expected to increase as beneficiaries who are currently gradually working on building toilets using income from ISALs complete their sanitation units.

#### **3.5.4 Project Contribution to Improving and Minimizing Losses to assets and structures created in Agriculture**

The selection, training and equipping of paravets who are local community members provided a cadre of individuals who will help to ensure survival and fitness of livestock assets as farmers in the beneficiary communities work to re-build stock lost during drought. Dip tank and water point committees will oversee the continuous improvement and avoidance of losses at dip tanks and boreholes respectively. Pump minders have been trained to identify borehole faults, carry out maintenance and repair work as well as as link with the District Maintenance Team where complex problems that need higher level attention arise. The project has built community capacity to identify problems at community assets (e.g lack of fence/ boundary wall at borehole), develop plans for solving the problems and implementing the same. Community capacity building served as a major contribution of this project to minimising losses to assets and structures created in agriculture.

To minimise losses in the Climate Smart Agriculture intervention, the project set up farmer groups which collaborate and share lessons learnt. For functionality, these farmer groups elected a lead farmer who will continue coordinating activities. The lead farmer serves as the custodian of a ripper time and sickle that group members can use.

Further, establishment of Village Savings and Lending groups with constitutions and leadership structures substantially contributed to loss minimisation. Group functionality is ensured through the leadership and coordination roles of the leaders in place and cooperation of the members as they share the same interest of group survival and growth. In addition, the groups are also supported at cluster level by the cluster coordinator. These community level systems will help minimise losses to assets. Towards the end of the project, however, there have been losses to savings for some groups as some non-members who borrowed the money simply vanished with it. Keeping the operations of VS&Ls strictly internal to the group, that is, restricting lending to members only will be crucial to preservation and growth of savings.

#### **3.5.5 Increased Community Resilience to Disasters and Community Capacity to Withstand and Cope with Disasters.**

MERP substantially contributed to community resilience to disasters. Disaster Risk Management focal persons constitute important links in community disaster preparedness structures and early warning systems. Capacity building of the focal persons has increased their disaster risk perception. Linkages between the focal point persons and the district civil protection committee have been created and ward level disaster management plans have been developed. Overall, these measures have helped increase community resilience despite the fact that no emergency stocks were provided.

Through training the project enhanced beneficiary capacity to withstand and cope with disasters. Training in climate smart agriculture enabled the marginalised small holder farmers to withstand the effect of drought. Training in fodder production and hay bailing provided farmers with skills to keep their animals alive and minimize decline in meat quality during dry seasons and drought years. Training in VS&L and SPM enhanced the household economies of beneficiaries and economic activities in the target communities enhancing their resilience to economic shocks. VSL participation has also meant quick access to cash to buy food in the case of a food insecurity emergency or get medical attention when health emergencies are encountered. Clearly trainings under the MERP project to a large extent contributed to improved community capacity to withstand and cope with disasters.

Rehabilitation of water points that are perennial, establishment of water point committees and training of pump minders have enhanced community capacity to withstand the likely unavailability of safe drinking water in case of drought. The project took advantage natural endowments (perennial underground reserves of water) and

community capacity building efforts to enhance resilience to water shortage. This has- to a large extent guaranteed the availability of water for both people and livestock even during a natural disaster.

### 3.5.6 Strengthened Linkages with District Level Line Ministries and Departments

The project has created strong linkages between grassroots structures, communities as well as ward and district level line ministries and departments. Paravets at grassroots level were trained by and linked with staff from the Department of Livestock and Veterinary Services. They have been trained to work in close cooperation with the veterinary services extension officers at ward level and are linked to the district level structures through the ward level officers. Village Health Workers were linked with local Environmental Health Technicians and through these EHTs to the District Environmental Health Office (DEHO). Similarly lead farmers and other members of the farmer groups were linked with ward level agricultural extension officers and through them also linked to the district structures. Likewise pump minders have been linked to the District Maintenance Team which assists them when they encounter complex borehole break downs that they cannot fix. The net effect of these linkages has been a reduction of the levels of marginalisation of the beneficiary communities and increased proximity and access to mainstream government support and/or response when necessary.

### 3.5.7 Improved Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

As already stated above, the MERP was a game change in terms of gender equality and women empowerment. It sought to bring about gender transformation. It cut across the grain of the typical patriarchal structures and systems of the Shona societies in Masvingo Province.

In the CSA intervention, the majority of lead farmers were women. In the project's cascade training model they became the primary participants of capacity building sessions while the other farmers were secondary participants. Having both female and male beneficiaries being elected to serve as lead farmers on an equal basis communicated the message that in women and men are equal. Having women in leadership demonstrated that women can be community leaders just like men. Similar analyses can be made for water point committees where the majority of members were women, including in the leadership roles for the committee. Most Village Health Workers were women. And so were cluster facilitators for village savings and lending. Putting women in leadership roles tilted the decision making plane in favour of women: where women were traditionally marginalised from community level decision making processes, the project thrust them right into the centre of the decision making processes, yet it thrust them in a manner that was not confrontational, a manner that did not elicit negative backlash in terms of male resistance.

Traditionally male only roles were also allocated to women under this project. Some women were trained to be pump minders while others were trained to paravets. This allocation of traditionally male only roles to women has made the women realise that 'they too can do it!'

The project substantially contributed to women's empowerment through increased control and ownership of assets. In this regard the Village Savings and Lending Scheme deserves special mention. The accumulation of savings, the earning of interest, the increased access to soft loans, the increased capacity to select plan and manage small businesses, the acquisition of livestock as a result of participation of women in VS&L activities have effectively increased the net worth of women in the savings groups. They have become a marvel to their spouses. Where women used to ask for money from their spouses, husbands are now asking for money from their wives. The women have tipped the scale. This has brought a check to men's decision making powers in at family level since with ownership and control of resources comes the power to decide how the resources should be used.

Increased control of assets has also contributed to reduced gender based violence. Lack of funds to purchase basics was regarded one notorious cause of domestic violence. With women's increase access to financial resources and control of the same gender based violence incidents were on the decline.

Finally, the project helped to reduce time poverty for women. Women who used to walk long distances to far away boreholes were relieved of the walking and carrying burden when closer boreholes were rehabilitated. Waiting time at boreholes was also reduced as pressure at each borehole was reduced due to increase in the number of functional boreholes. This impact, however, was restricted to some areas since in many others,

stakeholders had concerns over the exclusion of a borehole drilling component in the project design since areas which never had boreholes did not benefit from the project (there was nothing to rehabilitate).

### 3.5.8 MERP Impact: A Summary Assessment

Considering the foregoing it is clear that the project had substantial impact in the lives of beneficiaries and also in the target communities in general. As such, project impact was rated highly satisfactory (table 12).

**Table 12: MERP Impact: Summary Assessment**

Criterion	Rating	Remarks
Impact	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Projected months of household food self-sufficiency increased from two to eight; with some beneficiaries having excess yields to sell despite the mid-season drought experienced in the 2017/18 season;</li> <li>- Average monthly household income for beneficiaries increased from \$11 to \$48.74 with sale of excess farm produce and proceeds from VS&amp;L activities being cited as the main drivers of change in income levels</li> <li>- The project contributed to improved hygiene practices, with some beneficiaries reporting reduced incidence of water borne diseases in their households.</li> <li>- Women have been empowered and couple propensity to engage in gender based violence has been reduced.</li> <li>- Community resilience to disasters has been enhanced</li> </ul>

## 3.6 MERP Sustainability

### 3.6.1 Stakeholder Involvement and Ownership

Relevant government line ministries were actively involved in the targeting of interventions (selection of wards), the implementing of activities, monitoring and - to some extent- evaluation of project Outcomes. In the Agriculture Sector, ward, district and provincial officer in the Ministry of Agriculture (mechanisation department, Agricultural Extension Officers, Animal Health Supervisors and Veterinary Extension Officers) were actively involved in the response. Agriculture extension officers helped with trainings in CA, water conservation, and fodder production, hay bailing and other trainings. In the Economic Recovery and Market Systems Sector, CARE to some extent – although not as robust as in the agriculture sector- actively involved officers in the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises and Cooperative Development while in the WASH sector, Ministry of Health and Child Care was actively involved in targeting intervention and delivery of participatory health and hygiene training (the efforts of Environmental Health Technicians is worth mentioning in this regard). CARE elevated stakeholder involvement in the project from mere coordination to collaboration. As a result, stakeholder ownership of the project was generally high. There were no clandestine operations. CARE shared summary reports with all relevant stakeholders. Evidence from key informants interviewed during this evaluation shows that most stakeholders had clear understanding of the status of the project with regards to their respective sectors/ sub-sectors and also clear about the project’s exit strategy. They showed willingness and preparedness to takeover project activities to their extent of their respective line ministries/ government departments’ capacities.

There, however, were limitations and threats to sustainability prospects related to handing over activity support and monitoring to relevant government line ministries. Currently the government is cash strapped. Its fiscal space is severely restricted. Where staffing gaps exist, these are likely to continue existing as the government has pronounced a ‘vacancy freeze’ since it cannot afford the cost of replacement staff. Beside the human resource



gap, most government departments currently suffer from inadequacy of mobility resources and during the MERP project cycle relied on provision of mobility support under the project.<sup>19</sup> In short, government is currently too plagued with financial, material and human resource constraints to effectively take over the role of supporting and monitoring of activities when the project comes to an end. It does not have adequate capacity to absorb the response. Further, movement of government officers trained (school health masters, for instance) under this project to new work stations was also regarded a threat to sustainability. These limitations on part of government constituted an upper limit to the extent of sustainability of project effects associated with perpetuation by relevant government departments. It is notable that during the field work for the OFDA project final evaluation, Agricultural Extension Officers, Veterinary Extension Officers, and Environmental health Technicians who participated in the project were still in the target wards and were thus one assurance of some degree of sustainability linked to active involvement of government stakeholders.

### 3.6.2 Community Level Structures Established

The OFDA project set up a raft of community level structures that have potential to sustain project effects in the future. It capacitated resource persons (paravets, VHWs, pump minders, lead farmers, and DRR focal persons) by providing them with knowledge, skills and instruments for use in the community. These are members of target communities who will continue to live in the target communities after the MERP cycle comes to an end. The resource persons were elected (democratically) by beneficiaries or the beneficiary communities in general. They are acceptable service providers in the beneficiary communities. During this evaluation, early signs of sustainability due to the presence of these community level structures were observed: in Chivi the evaluation team encountered a farmer group working as a team, thrashing finger millet harvested by one of the group members; at Mandadzaka Primary School in Bikita a pump minder trained under the OFDA project was observed fixing a bush pump that was down and again in Bikita District a farmer group was observed working together, preparing conservation agriculture potholes in preparation for the 2018/19 agricultural season. These observations were regarded as early signs of continued functionality of structures established by the project beyond the project cycle.

School Health Clubs established by the project will continue to operate promoting public health among school children beyond the project cycle. Continued functionality of community health clubs (CHCs) was not guaranteed. Evidence from beneficiaries shows CHC functionality was already being affected by member fatigue towards the end of the project. It should be noted that that the health and hygiene knowledge, attitudes and practices,

Village Savings and Lending groups are evidently sustainable structures. FGD with VS&L group members indicated that they will continue running savings and lending schemes after the end of the project cycle. Cluster facilitators interviewed also indicated that they will continue coordinating cluster level activities. The VS&L clubs and the clusters have proven to be effective mechanisms for enhancing social cohesion and VS&L group member relationships are expected to result in survival of groups well into the future. In the three target districts, some VS&L groups that CARE established during the Kufuma Ishungu (KI) project more than five years ago that were strengthened during this project were still in existence and continually yielding a flow of benefits to the group members. These have survived –in some cases continued to grow- despite the current cash crisis and other adverse traits of Zimbabwe’s macro-economic environment. Talk sustainability!

### 3.6.3 Behaviour Change Communication as a Driver of Sustainability of Change.

MERP was a recovery and resilience building-oriented programme. It did not focus on relief aid. Beneficiaries were taught new concepts and skills that they will continue to use beyond the project cycle. Positive attitudes towards climate smart agriculture, health and hygiene practices and a culture of saving and investment were inculcated. Transformative practices were developed. Among beneficiaries, adoption of the behaviours promoted was high and, all things equal, reversal of the gains in terms of positive behaviour change in the three sectors was a remote possibility.

---

<sup>19</sup> CARE staff often accommodated government stakeholders aboard their vehicles during business trips.

### 3.6.4 Sustainability of Decision Making Processes for Women and Men

The project altered traditional gender norms, social structures and decision making processes in favour of women. Where community decision making was dominated by men in the typically patriarchal Shona societies of the three target districts, the community level structures set up under the project placed women in leadership positions. Most lead farmers were women. In water point committees and community health clubs more women than men held top leadership and decision making positions. Women have been included as members of dip tank committees which traditionally was rare as issues pertaining to purchase, protection and sale of cattle lay squarely in the men only realm. Further, in the micro-finance sub-sector, a majority of the cluster facilitators were women. In Zaka and Bikita Districts, some of the chairpersons and secretaries of the water point committees were women. The changes in decision making processes at community level have resulted in women being decision makers who stand on equal footing with men when it comes to community level decision making. These are changes in decision making structures which are unlikely to change after the project comes to an end. Bluntly put, the project has facilitated placement of women in community level decision making positions that which they are likely to retain well into the future after the end of the project.

More dramatic have been the changes in decision making processes between women and men at household level. Engagement in VS&L activities has enabled women to generate savings, earn income from savings (interest on loans) access capital for micro-enterprises and generally control more resources than they did in the past. Where traditionally decisions with regards to purchase or sell cattle rested with men, some beneficiary women have been able to raise money and purchase cattle without relying on their husbands. With greater control of resources came greater decision making powers. As already discussed above, VS&L clubs are a sustainable intervention and so will be the empowerment of women and the shift in decision making processes between women and men that they have brought about.

### 3.6.5 Sustainability Prospects for Resilience Building Strategies beyond external funding

For building resilience to climate change driven environmental hazards (mainly drought), the project promoted climate smart agriculture as a strategy. This included growing short season varieties of drought resistant small grains using conservation agriculture techniques. Adoption of these strategies for resilience to climate change was high. Almost all the beneficiaries (99.3%) used conservation agriculture at least once over the period 2016-2018. Again almost all the beneficiaries (97%) would like to continue using it after the end of the project cycle. The demonstrated benefits of climate smart agriculture are so telling an argument for its effectiveness as a resilience building strategy that even non-beneficiaries have begun adopting it. In Zaka and Bikita districts the evaluation team encountered tangible evidence of continuity of the use of CA beyond external funding: farmer groups were preparing CA plots for the 2018/19 season although they had already been sensitized to the fact that USAID-OFDA support to the project had ended. Thus, the continued use of CA beyond by most beneficiaries beyond external funding and even gradual increase in its adoption by non-beneficiaries are highly likely development in the beneficiary communities.

Social capital created during the project also had high prospects of sustainability beyond external funding. Farmer groups, Village Savings and Lending Clubs, Water Point Committees, Dip tank Committees and Community health Clubs set up by the project all helped to cement relations between community members and enhance social capital for households. The relations created will continue beyond external funding. These are expected to enhance household and community relations to shocks.

As already discussed in preceding sections, VS&L has proven to be a resilience building strategy with great potential for sustainability beyond the project cycle. Its benefits justify continued member participation. It does not depend on any external funding and thus has capacity to run – and even get stronger – in the absence of external support. The fact that the project has trained cluster facilitators resident in the beneficiary communities implies continued presence of support to VS&L clubs beyond the project cycle unless they are removed by migration or death or incapacitated by health reasons (which circumstances all have low probabilities of immediately affecting a significant proportion of the cluster facilitators at once). Thus, like the Climate Smart Agriculture techniques talk the internal savings and lending techniques developed are household and community resilience strategies that have high likelihood of sustainability beyond external funding.



### 3.6.6 Project Exit Strategy and its Implementation after the end of the Project Cycle

The exit strategy of the project was defined in terms of the resilience building strategies developed during the project. It focused on capacity building of community members (farmers, VS&L associations, and community WASH bodies) and government extension staff as the basis for the exit strategy. The knowledge and skills invested in the communities, including WASH training and community-based management, improved agricultural practices and livestock management, and VS&L group training provides institutional capacity retention across generations. The lead farmer approach and other community-based management structures support continued implementation. To enhance ownership, CARE used empowerment-participation processes during planning, targeting, implementation and monitoring. These transitional mechanisms are self-sustaining and highly likely to continue operating after the end of the project.

Further, the community-based groups established work closely with government extension offices and are mechanisms for transition and stability.

As the project neared its closure, CARE reinforced the exit strategy defined at project inception by sensitising relevant government line ministries to provide continued support to the beneficiaries and beneficiaries. CARE also sensitised community based management structures to continue operating as they did during the time when external support was available. These measures are expected to contribute to project sustainability.

### 3.6.7 MERP Sustainability: A Summary Assessment

On a six point scale, MERP sustainability prospects were rated satisfactory (table 13).

**Table 13: MERP Sustainability: A Summary Assessment**

Criterion	Rating	Remarks
Sustainability	Satisfactory (S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MERP worked closely with government stakeholders. This ensured government ownership of the project. However, government capacity to absorb MERP activities is constrained;</li> <li>- MERP established community level structures that enhance sustainability prospects for MERP;</li> <li>- Improved knowledge, attitudes and practices in Climate Smart Agriculture and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene are likely to characterise beneficiaries into the foreseeable future. These are sustainable effects</li> <li>- Migration of community level volunteers trained under the project remains a threat to sustainability</li> </ul>

## 3.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, evaluation findings have been presented. The findings have been organised around the five evaluation criteria provided in the terms of reference, namely appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The evaluation established that MERP was appropriate as it responded to real needs of the target populations in the wake of the El Nino induced drought and the La Nina induced flooding and aligned to government priorities with regards to socio-economic development and resilience building. Activities were implemented and managed in efficient manner that ensured cost minimisation and value for money. Results observed among beneficiaries show that project objectives are being achieved and hence the project was deemed effective. Achievement of project objectives has culminated in improved household and community level food security as agricultural production and productivity increased while household income security improved due to project activities. Further, access to safe water supply has improved while beneficiary hygiene knowledge, attitudes and practices have improved. As such the project has had far reaching impacts in the beneficiary community. To sustain the project outcome and impact, CARE set up community level structures. These were linked to ward and district level echelons of relevant line ministries, thus reducing exclusion from mainstream government service delivery. Presence of functional local level structures has led to a level of self-

reliance that has given high prospects of sustainability of project outcomes and impact. Overall, the performance of the OFDA funded project was rated satisfactory.

## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the findings of this evaluation, the evaluator concludes that the performance of the USAID-OFDA supported MERP was satisfactory<sup>20</sup>. Table 15 below unpacks the basis of this summary conclusion.

**Table 14: MERP Performance: Summary Assessment**

Evaluation Criteria	Rating	Remarks
Appropriateness	Satisfactory (S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CSA and livestock protection were appropriate to agro-ecological regions 4 &amp; 5 where MERP was implemented.</li> <li>- The El Nino and La Nina induced drought and flood disasters required a response of the nature that MERP took;</li> <li>- MERP was aligned to ZIMASSET and appropriate to the community resilience building needs of the community</li> <li>- All the three sector-based responses were appropriate</li> <li>- However, the WASH response did not include hardware sanitation support although there clearly were needs in this area.</li> </ul>
Effectiveness	Satisfactory (S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The combination of input provision and training in climate smart agriculture to a large extent resulted in increased agricultural production as well as yield per unit area.</li> <li>- Strengthening of old and establishment of new VS&amp;L clubs substantially contributed to growth in household and community economic activities.</li> <li>- Direct hygiene promotion and water point rehabilitation support have influence positive change in beneficiaries' hygiene knowledge, attitudes and practices</li> <li>- However, gaps in access to improved sanitation facilities still exist in the beneficiary communities</li> </ul>
Efficiency	Satisfactory (S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of a cascade model minimised training costs;</li> <li>- The project delivered long term benefits through providing short-term support;</li> <li>- Working with and through community volunteers, government stakeholders and beneficiaries translated into cost savings;</li> <li>- However, late procurement and distribution of agricultural inputs increased input procurement costs and compromised yield in some cases.</li> </ul>
Impact	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Projected months of household food self-sufficiency increased from two to eight; with some beneficiaries having excess yields to sell despite the mid-season drought experienced in the 2017/18 season;</li> <li>- Average monthly household income for beneficiaries increased from \$11 to \$48.74 with sale of excess farm produce and proceeds from VS&amp;L activities being cited as the main drivers of change in income levels</li> </ul>

<sup>20</sup> A six point rating scale was used. The scale was as follows: *The scale was as follows: **Highly Satisfactory (HS)** – There were no shortcomings; **Satisfactory (S)**: There were minor shortcomings; **Moderately Satisfactory (MS)**: There were moderate shortcomings; **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)**: There were significant shortcomings; **Unsatisfactory (U)**: There were major shortcomings; **Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)**: There were severe shortcomings*

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The project contributed to improved hygiene practices, with beneficiaries reporting reduced incidence of water borne diseases in their households.</li> <li>- Women have been empowered and couple propensity to engage in gender based violence has been reduced.</li> <li>- Community resilience to disasters has been enhanced</li> </ul>
Sustainability	Satisfactory (S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MERP worked closely with government stakeholders. This ensured government ownership of the project. However, government capacity to absorb MERP activities is constrained;</li> <li>- MERP established community level structures that enhance sustainability prospects for MERP;</li> <li>- Improved knowledge, attitudes and practices in Climate Smart Agriculture and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene are likely to characterise beneficiaries into the foreseeable future. These are sustainable effects</li> <li>- Migration of community level volunteers trained under the project remains a threat to sustainability</li> </ul>
Overall	Satisfactory (S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In terms of appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, the USAID-OFDA funded MERP's performance was satisfactory while its expected impact is highly satisfactory. Overall, project performance was thus rated satisfactory.</li> </ul>

Further, the following conclusions have also been made on the basis of the findings of the study:

- i. Late distribution of inputs and poor rainfall distribution patterns negatively affected yield in some areas, especially Chivi District. However the difference that climate smart agriculture makes was still clearly demonstrated despite the adverse effects of input supply inefficiencies;
- ii. Conservation agriculture has made so much difference in the in the lives of beneficiaries that adoption rates were almost universal. In fact, non-beneficiaries are also adopting CA, with some having now negotiated their way into farmer groups established by the project;
- iii. In the livestock subsector, training of paravets has increased community capacity for animal disease surveillance and timely response to outbreaks, dip tank rehabilitation has contributed towards increased access to animal dipping services and reduction in tick borne diseases, construction of drinking troughs at rehabilitated boreholes has increased access to drinking water for animals and reduced distance travelled by animals to water sources but adoption of fodder production and hay bailing was far from optimum although an unexpected outcome of the project in this sub-sector has been the consumption of velvet beans by human beings.
- iv. Despite negative macro-economic fundamentals of Zimbabwe, most of the VS&L clubs revived or established through USAID-OFDA support remained buoyant, delivering benefits to group members. Group savings have grown bigger, member access to micro-loans and engagement in microenterprises and asset acquisition have increased. With most VS & L group members being women, promotion of VS&L has translated into empowerment of women as it has increased women ownership and control of resources and means of production in the steeply patriarchal cultural settings of the Shona societies resident in Bikita, Chivi and Zaka districts of Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. However, the proportion of VS&L group members who bought utensils using proceeds from VS&L activities was something of concern as purchase of productive assets could have taken the groups further than purchase of non-productive assets.
- v. Rehabilitation of bush pumps (boreholes) restored functionality for boreholes that had been down for a long period, sometimes more than a year. Access to safe water improved, distance travelled by girls and women to the nearest water point was reduced. So was the risk of violence against girls on

the way to or from water points. Results in this area were satisfactory although, the project design did not include drilling of new boreholes in identified priority areas. However, the exclusion of hardware support to vulnerable beneficiary households was a gap since effectiveness and impact of WASH interventions are maximised when increased access to safe water supply is coupled with increase access to improved sanitation facilities and strengthened through hygiene promotion.

- vi. Direct hygiene promotion contributed to substantial change in the hygiene knowledge, attitudes and practices of beneficiaries.
- vii. Community mobilisation and community capacity building strategies used during the project enhanced sustainability prospects of project effects.

### 5.1 Lessons Learnt

Key lessons learnt during this project include:

- i. Through adopting climate smart agriculture – mainly growing of small grains, using conservation agriculture, water harvesting and moisture retention strategies – marginalised, vulnerable smallholder farmers in semi-arid agro-ecological regions of Zimbabwe can attain food self-sufficiency and also have excess yield for sale. Thus, climate smart agriculture - in current context of climate change under which climate related hazards are becoming more and more frequent – should be a key strategy for enhancing household food, nutrition and income security for marginalised households;
- ii. **Women can do it:** The gender construct that community leadership and decision making is best done by men is a myth. Women can lead in much the same way as men. In the MERP project established water point committees, farmer groups, community health clubs and village savings and lending clubs in which women held leadership positions, no leadership crisis was reported. The groups were running just as smoothly as those led by men, in some cases even better;
- iii. **Village Savings and Lending clubs** are an effective tool for women empowerment. They increase women control of assets and family financial flows. They need to be mainstreamed in all emergency response and resilience building programmes;
- iv. **Community capacity building through establishing grassroots structures** empowers communities and enhances impact and sustainability of project effects as well as community resilience to shocks;
- v. **Collaborative efforts by farmer** group members make the drudgery involved in pothole preparation for conservation agriculture doable. Promotion of group efforts in pothole digging was a good technique that CARE used. This has also demonstrated that in the context of manual labour based CA (where neither riper tines nor drought power is available ), revitalisation of the traditional cooperation concept of '*nhimbe*' may deserve consideration;
- vi. **WASH** responses in rural setting are most effective and impactful when hard ware and software interventions are coupled together both in the water and in the sanitation sub-sectors. Rehabilitating boreholes without hardware support to toilet construction leaves room for the environmental hazard of open defecation to undo the outcomes and impact of the intervention.

## 5.2 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings the following recommendations are made:

### 5.2.1 Agriculture and Livestock Related Recommendations

- To avoid late procurement and distribution of agricultural Inputs, CARE may need to consider entering into framework agreements with reputable seed houses and fertilizer companies for supply of inputs. Input procurement will need to be done well in advance of the planting season. Pre-positioning input supplies would be the best approach to ensure that inputs are distributed early enough to ensure early planting; although it may imply warehousing costs.
- When providing small grain seed, CARE may need to consider providing varieties that are not palatable to birds and also varieties that are pest resistant. Cultivars that are palatable to birds require extra labour for driving away birds on the part of the farmer. As such, this evaluation recommends that in future CARE provides thorny sorghum varieties that are not susceptible to attack by birds;
- Considering the high death rates of goat kids reported in the districts despite the presence of the project, future projects of a similar nature should consider capacity building beneficiaries in goat husbandry, especially in the event that such a project is implemented in a region where livestock production is a key livelihood strategy. This capacity building should also come with development of the whole goat value chain in general to enable farmers to obtain value from goat production.
- CARE may need to consider inclusive approaches to responding to household food insecurity to cater for labour constrained households since the CA approaches promoted under this project heavily depended on the availability labour in the household. These could include households with many people with disability, high dependency ratios due to the presence of chronically ill, mentally challenged or elderly people. Targeted responses for these households will be required. An example of these interventions could be promoting the rearing of indigenous chickens. The intervention could include training in poultry rearing, provision of a start-up batch of chickens as well as start-up feed and chemicals.
- Productive asset Creation to counter the effects of climate change may need to be considered as part of emergency response and resilience building in view of climate change induced hazards. Water harvesting through the construction of weirs is thus strongly recommended. The 'cash for assets' and/ or 'food for assets' asset creation models may therefore require due consideration during future projects.

### 5.2.2 Economic Recovery and Market Systems








- CARE may need to increase promotion of the need to buy productive assets or to plough proceeds from VS&L into micro-enterprises as the development trajectories of those who buy non-productive assets and those who buy productive assets are totally different. In the long run, those who buy productive assets pave their way out of the vicious cycle of poverty. This recommendation rises out of concern over a substantial proportion of beneficiaries who reported having bought utensils using proceeds from VS&L (where others reported having bought chickens, goats or cattle, materials for construction of business premises, for instance).
- CARE may need to explore mobile savings and credit cooperative platforms that are being rolled by ECONET as a possible solution to the gradually worsening cash crisis. VS&L trainings will then incorporate the use of mobile saving and lending platforms as one of the modules. This may go a long way in enhancing functionality and survival prospects of VS&L group in the gripping liquidity crisis characteristic of modern day Zimbabwe.

### 5.2.3 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

- WASH responses in the future may need to be provided in a holistic manner. Excluding provision of resources for construction of toilets weakens intervention impact. In future, CARE may need to consider including provision of cement, reinforcement materials and ventilation pipes for construction of ventilated improved pit latrines at homesteads of extremely vulnerable households which cannot construct the same even after massive campaigns for toilet construction/ against open defecation are done. This will go a long way towards creating an open defecation free environment. This is particularly important, especially these days when Zimbabwe has repeatedly been plagued by water borne diarrhoeal diseases.
- In addition to rehabilitating existing boreholes there is need to support new borehole drilling, funds permitting. This, for instance, is emphasized by the fact that even after the rehabilitation of boreholes in Bikita District had been done, increasing safe water supply remained the top priority of the district council.
- Explore innovative ways of changing attitudes and practices relating to use of ash/ soap during critical times for hand washing since adoption of use of soap/ ash during hand washing was just too low to be acceptable. Similarly, the setting up and **maintenance** of hand washing locations with soap and water at homesteads needs more aggressive campaigns as the evaluation received more excuses for the absence of hand washing locations (tip taps) than evidence of their presence at the homesteads visited for hygiene inspection reasons.



Annexes

<p>Annex 1: TOR</p>  <p>Adobe Acrobat Document</p>	<p>Annex 2: Agriculture Sector Questionnaire</p>  <p>Microsoft Office Word 97 - 2003 Docu</p>	<p>Annex 3: WASH Questionnaire</p>  <p>Microsoft Office Word 97 - 2003 Docu</p>
<p>Annex 4: Economic Recovery and Market Systems Questionnaire</p>  <p>Microsoft Office Word 97 - 2003 Docu</p>	<p>Annex 5: CARE staff Key informant interview guide</p>  <p>Microsoft Office Word 97 - 2003 Docu</p>	<p>Annex 6: Key Informant Interview Guide for trained volunteers</p>
<p>Annex 7: Minutes of the CIZ/ OFDA Final Evaluation Inception Meeting</p>  <p>Microsoft Office Word 97 - 2003 Docu</p>	<p>Annex 8: List of Key Informants</p>  <p>Microsoft Office Word 97 - 2003 Docu</p>	