

ABSTRACT

The current study was an impact assessment of the Insiza World Vision agricultural recovery programme that is a community based famine prevention and mitigation intervention. The research focused on the projects that constitute the agriculture recovery programme. The programme has taken an integrated livelihoods approach to alleviating the immediate needs of the affected communities and to addressing the longer term vulnerability issues resulting in famine and food insecurity.

The programme was designed to prevent and alleviate famine in Insiza that is a drought-prone district of Matabeleland South Province. The key programme components include the rehabilitation of dip tanks, conservation farming, microdosing, the establishment of community gardens irrigated by the rehabilitated dams and boreholes, the formation of savings and loan groups and the provision of training in small livestock, crop management and conservation farming. The assessment focused on establishing the impact of the programme to the beneficiaries and the community at large. The impact assessment focused on the direct impact on the food security status, income and livelihoods of the programme beneficiaries. The assessment took place three years after the programme had been introduced in Insiza district. Given this time frame it was expected that the project would have had significant impact on the livelihoods of the beneficiaries by the time the assessment had been carried out in July 2008. To some extent the findings of the assessment confirmed this expectation, although consecutive droughts in the district masked some of the programme impacts. The results, however, do indicate that the programme has had a significant impact on household food security, thus meeting the primary goals and objectives of the project.

Furthermore the assessment was undertaken within a context of hyperinflation. It also coincided with widespread food shortages in the country brought about by government imposed price controls. These multiple shocks no doubt diluted the measurable impact of the project in terms of direct livelihood benefits. Having said

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this, the findings suggest that the project has helped people cope with the effects of drought and inflation.

The programme has contributed to a significant improvement in household food security amongst the beneficiaries by providing them with a new source of food, steady supplies of food and nutritionally more diverse types of food. There has also been a significant reduction in the importance of food aid to the household food basket since the programme started. The sale of vegetables from the nutrition gardens, eggs and chickens from the small livestock project has provided people with a new source of income and the findings suggested that a good portion of this income was spent on food.

The programme has had a noticeable impact on the income of the beneficiaries. The new source of income provided by the programme has compensated for this year's loss of income from cereal crop sales. In this respect the programme has also met its goal of alleviating or mitigating the effects of the ongoing drought. The results also show changes in the relative importance of different income sources, with the projects within the programme being scored as the most important source of income for beneficiaries this year. This income has enabled people to cover priority expenses such as household food purchases, school fees and other household expenses.

Other important benefits include the considerable timesaving on water collection for vegetable irrigation, especially with the use of micro-irrigation. Part of this time saved is now being allocated to food production.

A hundred respondents were identified and these comprised beneficiaries, nonbeneficiaries and key informants of the World Vision agricultural recovery programme in Insiza District. In light of these findings from the study, it is recommended that extensive capacity building should be undertaken to enhance food security in the area.