

## Impact Assessment of the Zimbabwe Dams and Gardens Project

**Location:** Chivi District, Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe

**Date:** 2007

**Sector focus:** Nutrition, agriculture, water resources

**Spatial focus:** Village

### Organization

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Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Tufts University, Medford, MA 02155, U.S.A.

### Bibliographical details

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John C. Burns and Omeno W. Suji, "Impact Assessment of the Zimbabwe Dams and Garden Project." Medford, MA: Feinstein International Center & CARE International, September 2007 (<http://fic.tufts.edu/>).

### Language availability

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English

### Abstract

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The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has supported a series of projects to test innovative ways of rapidly improving the nutrition and well being of households in danger of famine. Care International Zimbabwe secured one of these competitive grants (each with a cap of US\$1 million and time scale of 18 months). Using an established model of dam rehabilitation, gardening, and savings groups, CARE rehabilitated one small dam built originally in the 1950s and finished two unfinished ones begun in the late 1990s. The Feinstein International Center at Tufts University was contracted by the Gates Foundation to develop a participatory evaluation method to be used by the foundation. This was developed and tested in the villages served by the dam CARE had upgraded. While this work was clearly participatory, no new community based action plan was developed and the intention was to provide assessment of the impact of the project for purposes of the donor and planners.

### Intended users

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Project planners (CARE International) and Donors (Gates Foundation)

## **Background and context of country, location and project**

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- **Recent disasters?** Southern Zimbabwe, where the project took place, is drought prone, and from the early 1990s there had been a series of droughts and harvest failures.
- **Other recent crises (economic, political)?** Zimbabwe had become more politically unstable as the Mugabe government held on to one party rule. Food aid distribution had been used for manipulating voters, rewarding backers of the ruling party and punishing opposition supporters. As this project began, Zimbabwe was enduring hyper-inflation and extreme shortage of commodities in shops.
- **Recent displacements and population movements?** None affecting the project area, except that with the take over and failure of most White-owned, large scale farms, men who had been out migrants from the study area, away working on these commercial farms, returned home. It is possible that some former resident who had been living in Harare were among the hundreds of thousands evicted from self-built settlements, and some of these may have returned to their rural homes.
- **Recent conflict?** Low level violence due to more and more heavy handed control by the ruling party. On election day, 29 March, 2008, the BBC reported from rural Masvingo district, "10 people have been arrested in connection with clashes between opposition Movement for Democratic Change and ruling party Zanu-PF supporters in the rural constituency of Bikita West" (BBC: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7321070.stm> ).

## **Technical description**

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- **Hazard/risk type:** Drought, acute childhood malnutrition, diseases associated with acute childhood malnutrition, water born disease due to limited domestic water sources and contamination of sources by livestock, livestock disease due to weakening of animals, famine.
- **Type of assessment:** Participatory Impact Evaluation.<sup>1</sup>

## **CRA process**

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- **Vulnerability analysis:** None. In choosing the project sites, assumptions were already made about vulnerability based on history of drought and secondary data on income and livelihoods.
- **Capacity analysis:** None. Again, the planners made assumptions about the ability of rural people in the project area to utilize irrigation and more conveniently located domestic and livestock water. As an afterthought the planners expressed some concern with the ability of the rural stakeholders to maintain the rehabilitated rural water systems, but this was expressed as a "follow up issue."
- **Analytical methods:** Participatory Impact Assessment.
- **Tools:** Focus group definition of some 18 indicators of project impact, falling into 6 clusters: improved nutrition, income effects, water access effects, home improvements, access to fresh water fish, access to reeds for thatching, making mats, and harvesting edible ants. This community based definition of impact indicators was a preliminary activity of the assessment. Following on, focus groups scored the project according to these criteria. They also developed local maps and time lines, as well as discussing the dam rehabilitation/gardening project in terms of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). Household surveys provided dietary and income data.

## Notes on Methods and Tools

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Government agricultural extension personnel were used as enumerators, and this in the 2007 political environment may have influenced what the respondents felt free to say. Because of the situation of hyper-inflation during the survey period, many respondents were away from home lining up at shop for scarce items or other ways engaged. It was hard to find people at home to interview. Pressure from the donor meant that the evaluation was rushed.

## Lessons learned

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Methodologically, this form of participatory impact assessment seemed to deliver meaningful and accurate data – when checked by triangulation with secondary data on income and vulnerability. However, one should not underestimate the time required. 8 days in the primary sample village and one day each for secondary observations were not enough.

In substantial terms, the rehabilitation of small dams together with irrigated gardening and savings/loan groups based on income derived from sale of some of the garden produce seemed an efficacious combination for rapid, short term improvements in diet under extreme conditions (post harvest failure and national hyper-inflation).

However, the assessment took place only 5 months after completion of rehab of the dam and after only the first harvest of vegetables from the garden. It was too early to judge the sustainability and long term impact of the project. Observations suggested that potential conflict between registered users of the water and outsiders was a serious problem. It was also difficult to mobilize sufficient labor in the villages to fence the reservoir (to protect water from livestock trampling and contamination). Maintenance of the rehabilitated infrastructure was not provided for and would probably become a problem in the future.

## Key words

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Drought, infrastructure, water resources, nutrition, impact assessment.

## Cross references to other CRA Toolkit case studies

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See “Beating Hunger: The Chivi Experience” under African PAR case studies.

## Resource people

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## Author of Explanatory Note

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<sup>1</sup> Leonard Oruko (2002). *Field Guide for Conducting Participatory Impact Assessment*. Client-Oriented Agricultural Extension Project. London: DFID & NARO, September.  
<http://www.naro.go.ug/Information/COARD%20Project%20Documentation/Impact%20Assessment/Field%20guide%20for%20Participatory%20Impact%20Assessment.pdf> ; Sulley Gariba (nd). *Participatory Impact Assessment as a Tool for Change: Lessons from Poverty Alleviation Projects in Africa*. Ottawa: IDRC [http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-88063-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-88063-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html) .