



Fast Facts

Country: Zimbabwe

Duration: December 2006 to December 2009

Implementing UN Agencies: UNICEF; FAO

Other Implementing Partners: Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture; AREX; SNV-Zimbabwe; Mvuramanzi Trust; Christian Care Zimbabwe

Budget: \$1,389,333.51

Key Words: Food security; agriculture; basic education; children; nutrition

BACKGROUND

The Zimbabwean economy is agriculture based, providing livelihoods to over 70 per cent of the population. Formerly a net exporter of food, since 2002, Zimbabwe has received food aid to address severe food insecurity arising from a combination of factors including consecutive years of drought, weakened institutional capacities to respond to food insecurity, and a decline of investment in basic social

services. Moreover, due to a high prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS, the intergenerational transfer of agricultural knowledge and other basic life skills passed on from parents to children have been severely disrupted. As a result, food insecurity, poor nutrition and health status as well as weakened capacity to manage natural resources and the environment have rendered many children highly vulnerable.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of the project was to contribute to improving food security and the management of natural resources and the environment through basic education. In this regard, the project sought to: (i) improve the relevance and quality of education for 20,000 rural children through participatory garden-based learning sites where practical skills in environmental science, agricultural skills, nutrition, health, hygiene, knowledge and life skills can be

developed; (ii) improve food security and dietary habits among 20,000 school children and their families in 50 schools by improving agricultural production and food preparation skills vis-à-vis nutritious and drought resistant crops such as sorghum, millet and cassava and; (iii) improve the coping capacities of 12,000 care-giving families and community organizations supporting orphans and other vulnerable children.

BENEFICIARIES

Within the districts of Bulilima, Mangwe, Binga, Zaka, and Hwange, the project targeted 20,000 primary school children aged 10 to 14. Indirect

beneficiaries included teachers, caregivers and community-based organizations in disadvantaged rural and food-insecure communities.



NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

- (i) In total, 450 teachers were trained on participatory methods, environmental education and agricultural skills as well as nutrition, water and hygiene practices. In addition, teachers received specific trainings geared towards sustainable management of 'nutrition gardens'. With this newly acquired knowledge, teachers were able to improve curriculum on sustainable and environmentally-sound agricultural practices as well as key health, nutrition and hygiene skills.
- (ii) By the end of the project, all 50 nutrition gardens were fully operational. Through the activities of the project, more than 20,000 rural children and their families had access to quality food products and knowledge on how best to manage food production

and processing in the future. Moreover, due to the participation of parents in the Healthy Harvest Course, the benefits of improved agricultural practices and proper nutrition had spread to the broader community.

(iii) To ensure the long-term sustainability of the school gardens programme, School Development Committees (SDCs) were established in all 50 schools. The SDCs brought together Government officials, teachers, parents and community members to participate in the development of garden plans, which strengthened their capacities to improve agriculture, health, water and sanitation both in schools and in the communities at large.

LESSONS LEARNED

The project highlighted the vast benefits of participatory engagement across a diverse network of stakeholders. Engaging local communities and recognizing their existing capacities stimulated local ownership of the project. This sense of ownership fostered resourcefulness and helped transcend boundaries between schools, parents and communities.

Moreover, on a broader scale, the collaboration of community stakeholders with Government officials cultivated a clear sense of purpose, which proved critical for moving the project forward despite challenges related to the exogenous macroeconomic environment of the country.