



VICTORY GARDENS PROJECT

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT



PARTNER: FACE TO FACE MALAWI

Project Synopsis

This project aimed to create resilient communities by helping villagers attain food security by creating no-cost, high-yield, sustainable gardens and promoting rural development through the selling of surplus produce, to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty.

The project encouraged households to establish, at little cost, high-yield organic gardens referred to as 'victory gardens'. Working in the districts of Lilongwe, Phalombe and Nsanje, the project had the goal of supporting the most vulnerable to achieve increased resilience by being able to grow their own food. Its purpose was to create 30,000 new kitchen gardens and record 32,000 existing Victory Gardens, producing food for 128,000 people throughout the year. It would also explore ways to foster local economic development by helping the growing number of successful Victory Garden owners invest in profitable livelihood activities.

Evaluation Key Findings

- A total of 316 respondents participated in the evaluation - 74% were women and 26% were male, although 72% of households are headed by men.
- Vegetable production was the most significant aspect of the project - all respondents reported to own a vegetable garden at household level.
- The high percentage of vegetable gardens across districts shows a positive enabling environment for promoting nutritious food production and improving dietary diversity.
- The project was a significant contributor to households establishing vegetable gardens with an average 58% of participants stating they started growing vegetables through the project.
- Across all districts, the most cultivated type of vegetable was leaf vegetables (51%), reflecting their popularity and suitability for local farming practices. Fruit vegetables accounted for 25% of the responses, followed by root and tubers (11%).
- Farmers grow vegetables at different intervals annually. Overall, 85% of participants across all districts reported growing vegetables three times a year, allowing for more consistent and continuous supply of fresh produce, contributing to food security, dietary diversity, and income.
- The types of support received by project participants included establishment and management of gardens; seeds or other inputs; and training.
- 89% of farmers received training on integrated agronomic practices including soil management, crop rotation, and water conservation. Small numbers of farmers participated in other types of training.
- Overall, the training provided through the project was beneficial and had a positive influence on farmer knowledge and skills.
- Seed was provided to 32% of surveyed farmers across all districts.
- Some farmers engaged in vegetable production for personal consumption and for sale; others solely focus on growing vegetables for household consumption.
- The implementation of the project has yielded significant benefits for the participating farmers. Farmers reported positive outcomes resulting from their engagement in vegetable gardens including increases in income through vegetable production.
- 79% of surveyed households reported an improvement in their nutritional status since the project's initiation.
- Participating households experienced challenges such as a lack of money for inputs, pests and diseases, lack of water, low market prices, and theft. The lack of financial

resources for inputs was a widespread issue, indicating the need for interventions to improve access to capital or financial services support.

- Challenges related to market prices, water availability, pest and diseases, and theft were significant concerns for participants and should be addressed through targeted strategies and support programs.
- Overall, the results indicate that the project has had a positive impact on the meal frequency of participants. The percentage of participants usually having three meals per day has increased from 10% to 42%. However, only 15% of respondents reported being able to eat three meals per day for the entire year.
- The project has, however, contributed to improved food security for participants, leading to improved nutritional outcomes and well-being.
- Most households surveyed, reported experiencing significant positive outcomes because of the project.

Evaluator's Recommendations

- Mitigate Production Challenges

Lack of money for inputs, low market prices, and pest and disease management should be addressed through targeted interventions. We recommend establishing market linkages through collective marketing platforms where farmers can negotiate better prices and access wider markets. Additionally, the project can provide technical assistance and training on integrated pest and disease management techniques to equip farmers with effective strategies.

- Enhance Monitoring and Evaluation

While progress has been made towards monitoring, there is scope for a more robust monitoring and evaluation system incorporating additional indicators to capture the specific outcomes related to income generation, dietary diversity, and market access. In addition, regular data collection should be complemented with participatory monitoring approaches, such as beneficiary feedback surveys or periodic stakeholder consultations, to capture qualitative insights and enable continuous improvement.

- Strengthen Training on Tree Management

As tree management training received a relatively low rate of participation, the project should actively promote the benefits of tree planting and provide targeted training to farmers. Demonstrating the role of trees in improving soil fertility, conserving water, and providing additional income streams can incentivize farmers to engage in agroforestry practices. The project can organize practical training sessions on tree nursery establishment, tree care, and agroforestry techniques, showcasing successful case studies from within the project area.

- Customise Interventions to Better Address Beneficiary Needs

By engaging with the beneficiaries through FGDs and individual interviews, the project can gather specific feedback and tailor interventions to address the identified concerns. For example, the project can enhance the training modules by incorporating practical demonstrations and hands-on exercises to enhance learning and adoption of promoted technologies. While we are aware that funding sources remain a challenge, it is important to

focus on areas where implementation of the activities and allocation of resources would produce impactful results that spread widely, or else the organization should ensure all targeted areas receive an equal number of interventions and support.

Evaluator's Conclusion

The project has made significant strides in promoting sustainable agriculture, improving food security, and enhancing the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in the target districts. The project has demonstrated positive impacts in various areas, including increased vegetable production, improved nutrition, enhanced income generation, and strengthened capacity through training and support. The project has effectively addressed key production challenges, provided valuable training and support to farmers, and facilitated access to quality seeds and other inputs. However, challenges such as limited access to markets, water scarcity, and pest and disease management and other project gaps need improvement.