FINAL DRAFT EVALUATION REPORT

FOR

CONSERVING OUR LAND, PRODUCING OUR FOOD PROJECT

SUBMITTED TO

STEERING COMMITTEE

CONSERVING OUR LAND, PRODUCING OUR FOOD -SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF LAND & FORESTS

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BY

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9TH JUNE, 2015

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AEDC	Agricultural Extension Development Coordinator
AEDO	Agriculture Extension Development Officer
BLF	Big Lottery Fund
CBA	Cost Benefit Analysis
COMSIP	Community Savings & Investments Promotion
DAC	Development assistance cooperation
DADO	District Agricultural Development Officer
EA	Environment Africa
EDO	Environmental District Officer
ETE	End of Term Evaluation
FBS	Farmer Business Schools
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GVH	Group Village Headman
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
KII	Key Informant Interviews
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MoAFs	Ministry of Agriculture and Food security
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisational Economic Cooperation Development
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Scientist
SROI	Social Return on Investment
TA	Traditional Authority
TOR	Terms of Reference
TLC	Total Land Care
PVO	Private Voluntary Organisation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our profound gratitude should go to Progressio and Environment Africa and also to a number of people who have played a great role from data collection and to production of this report. The support you gave particularly during the preparation of data collection tools used in this study and constructive comments that has led to the success of this study.

Many thanks should also go to District Commissioner (DC) Salima district council and entire staff for the well-organized meetings despite our short notice. The research team (All enumerators, data clerks and drivers) should also be appreciated for the job well done.

Lastly, I am indebted to all the respondents and chiefs from Salima district, mainly from Traditional Authority Makanjira for their time and commitment during the data collection period.

Lucky Mfungwe – Team Leader
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CHAPTER ONE`

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background information

Progressio and Environment Africa (EA) have a long history of working in Zimbabwe and Malawi. Progressio has worked in Malawi since 2007 and in Zimbabwe since 1963, while EA has been registered in Malawi since 2007 and in Zimbabwe since year 1990. Progressio and its partner (EA) implemented Conserving our land producing our food Project with funding from Big Lottery Fund (BLF) £399,945 and £72,000 being 15.25% of total project cost from other sources. Project life span was from May 2012 to April 2015 (36 Months).In Malawi, the project was implemented in Salima district while in Zimbabwe it was implemented in three districts, namely Zvimba, Guruve and Nyanga.The main purpose of the project was to reduce poverty and food insecurity by strengthening the livelihoods of disadvantaged people in Malawi and Zimbabwe through the use and management of natural resources and developing community resilience to climate change. The main objective of the project was to support 41,000 poor and vulnerable people in Salima district of Malawi and Guruve, Nyanga and Zvimba districts of Zimbabwe to achieve food security by adopting innovative and sustainable approaches to agriculture production and management of natural resources for alternative forms of livelihoods. In Malawi, the project targeted 11,000 people in 46 villages of the Traditional Authority Msosa now Traditional Authority Makanjira in Salima district (central Malawi) while in Zimbabwe, the project targeted 30,000 people in 3 wards per each of 3 districts – Zvimba, Guruve and Nyanga (in the North and North-east of Zimbabwe). Four thousand (4,000) community members formed community action groups to tackle unsustainable use of natural resources.

The End of project evaluation for conserving our land, producing our food was conducted in March 2015. The main objective was to assess the extent to which conserving our land, producing our food project has achieved (effectiveness and impact), its main purpose of contributing to poverty reduction and food insecurity by strengthening the livelihoods of disadvantaged people in Malawi and Zimbabwe through the use and management of natural resources and developing community resilience to climate change. The evaluation also assessed other programme components including programme relevance, efficiency, and sustainability. Furthermore programme implementation arrangements such as management, partnerships or networking and overall administration of activities were also evaluated.

1.2 National policies, Strategies and Conserving Our Land Producing Our Food Project

The literature review indicated that the broad subject of agriculture, environment and natural resources management and climate change management is effectively guided by the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II (2011 – 2016), which is the overarching medium term

strategy for propelling Malawi's development towards attainment of its long term ecological and social-economic development aspirations.

The strategy clearly prioritises agriculture among the six broad thematic areas; and environment and natural resources management and climate change management among the nine priorities within priorities – as key strategies for attaining sustainable social and economic growth in Malawi and a recipe for achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) especially goal number one and goal number seven. Other supporting policies Environmental Management Act of 1996, the National Climate Change Policy of 2013 (Draft), and the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA), which identify and prioritize agriculture and forestry, and human health among the eight sectors that are considered most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. The overall goal of the Draft National Climate Change Policy (2013) is to promote climate change adaptation and mitigation for sustainable livelihoods through measures that increase levels of knowledge and understanding and improve human well-being and social equity, while pursuing economic development that significantly reduces environmental risks and ecological scarcities (GoM, 2013).

Other national policies, strategies and programmes that have principles that directly or indirectly support conservation agriculture include; Malawi Economic Recovery Plan (MERP), Agriculture Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP), National Land Resources Management Policy and Strategy (NLRMPS), The Greenbelt Initiative (GBI), National Environmental Policy, Agriculture Development Programme (ADP), Agriculture Sector Wide Approach (ASWAP) and The National Forest Policy**.** The three key principles of conservation agriculture fit in very well with the principles/objectives promoted by these existing policies. They share common characteristics of improving and sustaining land productivity for agriculture with emphasis on food security, diversification of agricultural production, rehabilitation of degraded land, promoting soil and water conservation measures and generation and dissemination of appropriate demand-driven technologies thus technologies that are ecologically and socio-economically viable. This demonstrates that conserving our land and producing our food project implemented by Environmental Africa is in-line with Malawi Government policies and strategies. They exhibit the same characteristics of contributing to poverty reduction and food insecurity by strengthening the livelihoods.

1.3 Scope of work and rationale for evaluation

Conserving Our Land, Producing Our Food" Project is evidence of uptake and impacts among the most disadvantaged people. The end of project evaluation provided an independent assessment of the project. The assessment was centered on the project outcomes[1] to measure the projects performance.

The evaluation sought to assess the economic benefits of the project using Social Return on Investment (SROI) and other methodologies. Furthermore, the evaluation drew up best practices and lessons learnt in the implementation of the project. This focused on both intended and unplanned results.

The evaluation is thus to inform Big Lottery Fund, the funding agency to this project, Progressio and EA, the implementing partners and the project participants in Traditional Authority Makanjira formerly known as TA Msosa.

[1] a. Increase in household income and food security of poor and marginalised people in Malawi and Zimbabwe through agro-ecology and sustainable, equitable farming approaches and access to market.

b. More sustainable management of forest, land and water resources for the benefit of the most disadvantaged households in Malawi and Zimbabwe.

c. Local communities and Environment Africa engage with local and national government to ensure better management and use of natural resources for the benefit of poor and marginalised communities in Malawi and Zimbabwe, linking to Progressio's policy work at an international level.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 STUDY METHODOLOGY

The survey evaluation design used Organization Economic Development Cooperation/Development Assessment Criteria Framework (OEDC/DAC). The evaluation criteria focus on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

2.1 Sampling

Type of households	Purpose
Purposeful	Project implementation district- **Salima**
Simple random and purposeful	GVH
Stratified sampling	Project participants (Beneficiaries) and Non participants(Non Beneficiaries)
Proportional probability sampling	To have a representative sample based on the number beneficiary households in each GVH
Simple random sampling	Households(208 Beneficiaries and 114 non beneficiaries)

Figure 1: Sampling schedule

A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the clusters (Group Village Headman-GVH) and Households. The survey sampled households from the District (Salima) and Traditional Authority (T/A Makanjira) which were purposively identified. This was followed by sampling (Simple random sampling or purposeful) the Group Village Headmen (GVHs) where the project was implemented followed by sampling of the villages. A Proportionate Probability Sampling (PPS) was administered to decide the number of households to be sampled per village. Non beneficiary households were sampled from villages outside of the impact perimeter but within comparable agro-ecological and social economic characterization. The sampling was carefully structured to ensure inclusion of considerable representation of female-headed, elderly-headed and households headed by people with disabilities among other vulnerable households. The sample size was 322 households represented by 208 Beneficiary households (65%) and 114 (35%) non beneficiary households. Refer to annex for a detailed categorized sampling per cluster (Group Village Headman-GVH).

2.2 Data collection

Image 1: Households interview in progress at GVH Chembe

The evaluation exercise used both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. A structured household questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from project beneficiaries and non beneficiaries.

In addition to the Household interviews conducted, Qualitative study was also conducted using the participatory research technique which included17 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and 19 Key Informant Interviews (KII).

Image 2: Focus Group Discussion in progress

2.3 Data quality control

Different steps were taken to ensure good data quality. Enumerators were trained in the study protocol, administration of the questionnaire, sampling techniques, ethical considerations applied during field work, interview techniques and community entry procedures. The research team was meeting every evening to share the day's experience and map the way forward based on the day's experiences.

2.4 Data analysis and interpretation

The study had two distinct sets of data; quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data was entered in CSPro and statistical analysis was performed using SPSS, STATA and Excel. Descriptive statistics such as proportions, frequency counts, means and corresponding measures of variation and inferential statistical testing for significant changes were used. The results were mainly disaggregated by impact areas and compared to baseline and mid-term values. Qualitative data was organized into themes and then summarized and documented into a report.

2.6 Program Performance Assessment Guide and Assessment Criteria

Each programme intervention was evaluated using the OECD evaluation criteria to determine how relevant, effective and efficient the project has been including the impact and sustainability issues. The major goal of the assessment was to assess the project using the OECD evaluation criteria. The approach uses five major criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. To achieve this goal, the evaluation relied on opinions of staff, stakeholders and community members who are the direct beneficiaries of the project. Through qualitative survey tools, the study explored how the project interventions were rated among the various stakeholders. The objective opinion on each of the indicators provided for rich data that was collected including generating useful information that would lead to successful redesign processes. The rating scale used 5 "excellent" (75% - 100); the rating 4 was "good" score (60 – 74%), then 3 was average (50-59%); 2 was "below average" (30 – 49%) and "1" (below 49) was the lowest grade (unsatisfactory) requiring serious considerations.

2.7 Limitations of the study

This study faced two main limitations. Both baseline and midterm evaluation did not have adequate comparison data. This resulted in restricted comparison to mid-term and end line surveys in most cases. Similar to other surveys, this study may have suffered from recall and reporting biases. The targets have been used as baseline status of the project.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1Descriptive statistics

3.1.1Characteristics of dwelling units

The dwelling units or housing characteristic was analysedto differentiate the status between the project beneficiaries(n=208) and non beneficiairies(n=114) respectively. The attributescomparedwere roofing, wall, floor materials, and number of rooms of the dwelling units.The results show that 85% of the beneficiairies had grass thatched houses compared to 90% of the non beneficiaries. The results show that 15% of the beneficiaries owned houses withiron sheets and 9% of non beneficiaries had houses with iron sheets.

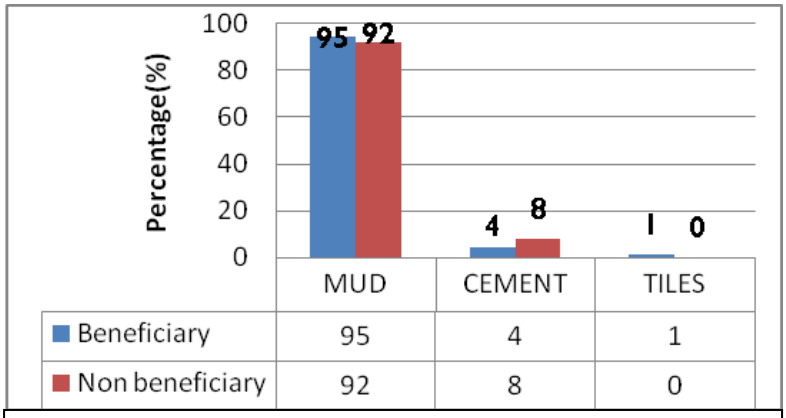


Figure 2: Dwelling units characteristics:Roofing material

Figure 3 shows that 6% of the project beneficiaries have their dwelling units made of mud comparaed to 13% of the non beneficiaries. 56% of the beneficiries owned dwelling units with burnt bricks as compared to 49% of the non beneficieries.

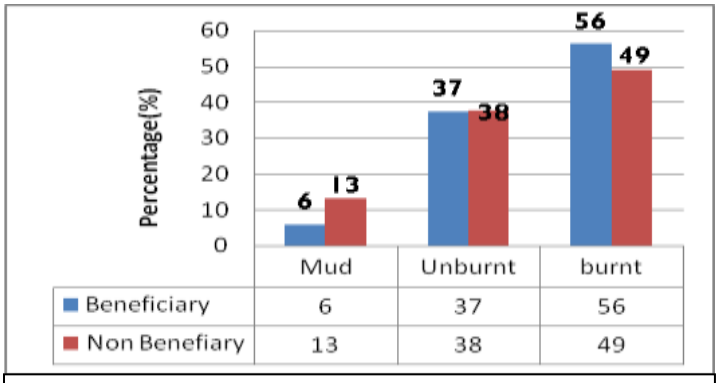
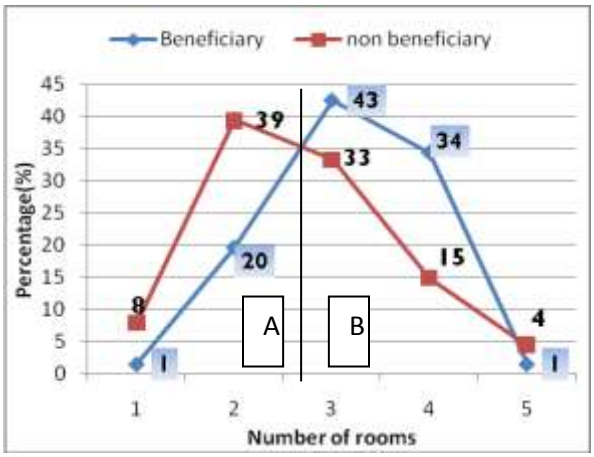


Figure 3: Dwelling units characteristics: Wall material

The results further showed that 95% of the beneficiaries still have dwelling units with a mud floor compared to 92% of their counterparts while those owning houses with floor cemented was composed of 5% of beneficiaries and 8% of non beneficiaries. This shows that non beneficiaries are better off than project beneficiaries. This might be attributed to consumer behaviour mainly the consumer preference. The project beneficiaries might opt to use the monetary gains from the project by investing in other goods and services such as paying for the school fees for children, farm inputs and construction of farm infrastructure than bulding a house with floor cemented.



Analysis of number of rooms for dwelling units for the beneficiaries and non beneficiaries showed that beneficiaries dwelling units have more number of rooms than non beneficiaries as presented in figure 4. The results in figure 4 show that in part A of thefigure4with a range of 1-3 rooms has more non beneficiaries(8% and 39% compared to 1% and 20%) while part B of the figure 4, from 3 to 5 room showed more propotion of beneficiaries(43% and 4 % compareed to 33% to 4% non beneficiairies).

Figure 4: Number of rooms for dwelling units

3.1.2 Occupation of household head

Occupation of the household head is one of the factors that determine adoption of interventions. Figure 5 presents the distribution of occupation status amongst participants (n=209) and non participant(114). The results show that the 73% and 71% of the participants and non participants survived on agriculture respectively. Business person for both project participants and non participants was represented by 10%.

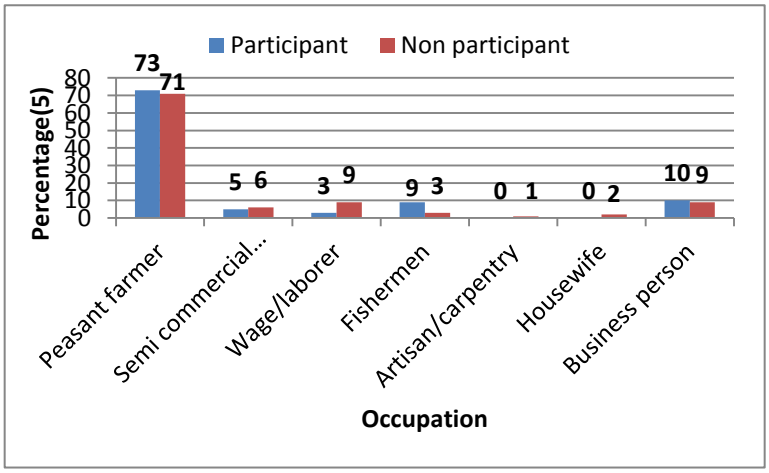


Figure 5: Household head occupation for participant and non participants

3.1.3Education level of household head

The evaluation study established that the 33% and 28% of the participants and non-participants had no formal education attained whilst 38% of the participants and 28% of the non-participants had attained primary education from standard 1 to 4.

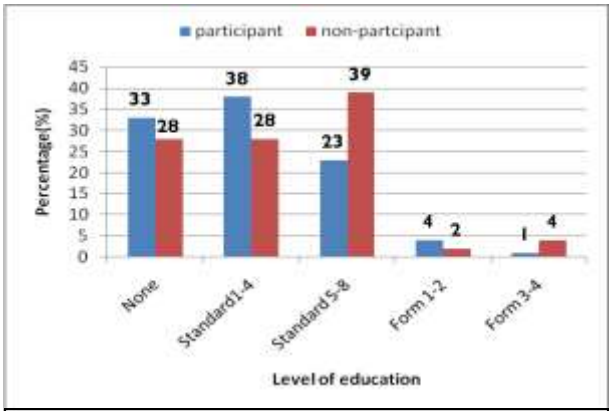


Figure 6: Education level

The study had more respondents from non participant 39% attained primary education - standard 5-8 than participating respondents (23%).However, none of the respondents from participating or non participant had attained tertiary education. Education levels of the respondents varied between the two areas. The one of the important factors that influences the adoption of new technologies among small holder farmers is education, (Babu *et al*, 1997).

3.2 Relevance of the project

Project relevance assessed extent to which the objectives of the project were consistent with the beneficiaries' needs, district development priorities, donor priorities and government policies on development. The appropriateness of project design, resource allocation, informed and timely action are some of the factors that are considered in determining relevance of a project.

3.2.1 Policy level

Policy level analysis shows that the project was in line with the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) by addressing two key priority areas. The key priority areas the projectaddressed are (i) Agriculture and food security; and (ii) Climate Change, Natural Resources an environmental Management.

Table 1: Project Relevance to Malawi Government Development agenda

MGDS PRIORITY	PROJECT STRATEGY	ALIGNED PROJECT OUTCOME
Agriculture and Food Security	Providing effective extension services *through coordination with ministry of agriculture and use of lead farmers*	Improved livelihoods and increased food security of the most disadvantaged people.
	Enhancing livestock and fisheries productivity *through livestock pass on programme of goats, capacity building for the fishermen on sustainable use of land and water resources.*	Improved livelihoods and increased food security of the most disadvantaged people.
	Promoting irrigation farming *through distribution of treadle pumps to VNRMCs*	Improved livelihoods and increased food security of the most disadvantaged people.
Climate Change, Natural Resources and Environmental Management.	Developing capacity for Environment and Natural Resource Management (ENRM) *through the use of well capacitated VNRMCs and non timber interventions*	1. Improved and more sustainable management of forest; land and water resources to benefit the most disadvantaged people;2. Increased skills and knowledge in agro-ecology, marketing & business development and lobbying & advocacy for Environment Africa;
	Improving coordination of environment and natural resource programmes *through collaborative implementation with the department of forestry both at grassroot and district level and the VNRMCs*	1. Improved and more sustainable management of forest; 2. Increased skills and knowledge in agro-ecology, marketing & business development and lobbying & advocacy for Environment Africa;
	Enhancing mainstreaming of environment and natural resource management issues in sectoral policies and programmes at national and local levels *through publishing of papers to influence policy direction*	Improved policies for sustainable climate change adaptation and effective implementation of environmental legislation
	Enforcing compliance to environmental and natural resource management legislation through empowering the communities	Improved policies for sustainable climate change adaptation and effective implementation of environmental legislation;

3.2.2 Community level project relevance

Relevance analysis further analyzed if the project addresses the needs of the communities. Figure 7 shows that before the project interventions, the most critical community challenges were food insecurity, poverty, soil infertility and wilting of crops due to shortage of rains. The project interventions targeted to address these needs as noted with village savings and loans which serve to reduce poverty and food insecurity, conservation agriculture interventions which reduce the effects of shortage of rains by retaining the limited moisture but also rejuvenate and maintain fertility of the soil.

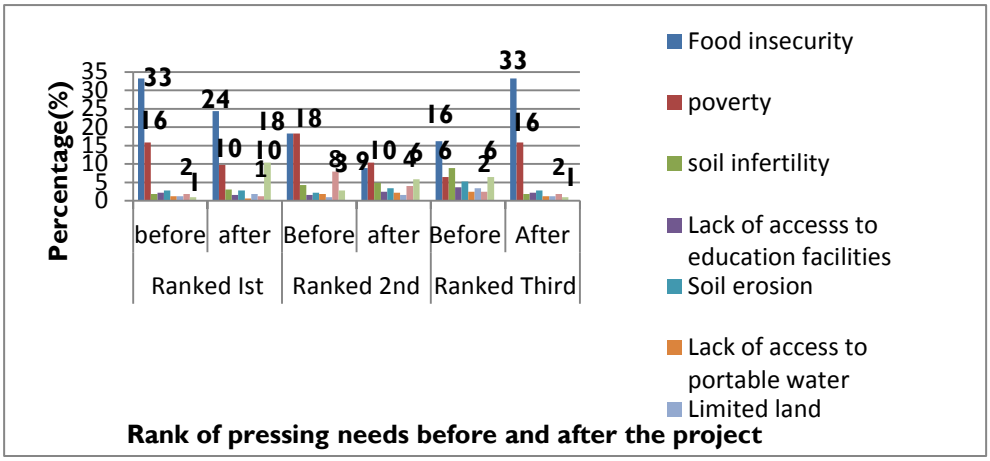


Figure 7: Community Critical needs before and after the project

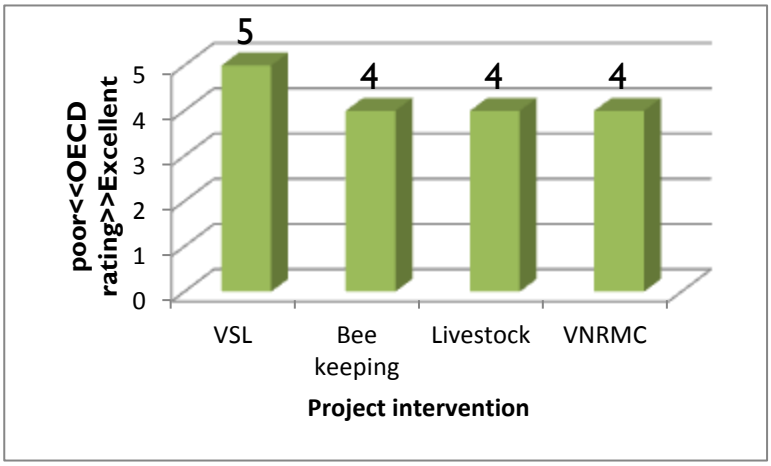


Figure 8: Relevance of project components interventions

Based on these attributes the qualitative analysis through key informant interviews and FDGs established the relevance of Village Savings and Loans (VSLs), beekeeping, Livestock pass on programme and Village Natural resources Management Committees with an average score of 4.4 which is a good score (60-74%).

3.2.3 OECD relevance rating

The overall rating of the project was rated 5 as presented in the table 2 below with corresponding justification for the rating

Table 2:OECD relevance rating

Category	Rating	Reasons for the rating
Relevance	5	i. Project provided solutions to locally identified challenges/pressing needs as defined according to relevant local authorities and the community. ii. The problem identification and identification of the right target population in the district was in consultation with the District Council authorities and other relevant stakeholders. iii. Objectives were and remain valid in the context of food security and poverty alleviation: all activities were oriented towards building food self-sufficiency, dietary diversification, improving household asset ownership status of beneficiary households, increasing income options (income source diversification) and building community capital and improving access to microfinance through VSLs. iv. 1. Microfinance access for the farmers was initially a challenge because of lack of tangible collateral and hence were considered risky applicants, the VSL closed the gap and addressed farmers' needs

3.3 Effectiveness of the project

Project effectiveness deals with the extent to which the project has achieved its intended project outcomes or purposes. Effectiveness also assesses whether the expected project's purposes can be achieved on the basis of the outputs that are realized. On the other hand, effectiveness deals with outputs the project is achieving through utilization of project resources and inputs. This section details progress against set targets and compares study findings with midterm achievements against baseline values. In this study, the target values were adopted as a baseline situation which is compared to Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) and End of Term Evaluation (ETE). The Targets and Midterm focused on output based approach. The ETE tries to build on the output achievements to construe on the project outcomes.

3.3.1 Outcome 1: Benefits towards improved livelihoods and increased food security

To achieve this outcome, the project interventions included village savings and loans scheme, Farmer field school agricultural extension approach, Livestock pass on programme, and conservation agriculture

3.3.1.1 Village savings and loans scheme

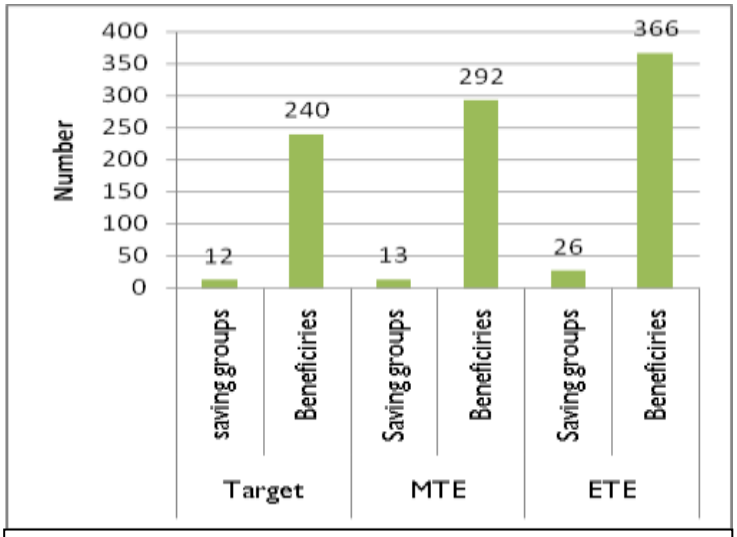


Figure9: Number of VSL groups and beneficiaries

Village savings and loans is one way that utilizes and harnesses the community financial resources. The project initiated the intervention with a target of 12 community saving groups with 240 beneficiaries. At the time of project Midterm Term Evaluation (MTE), there were 292 beneficiaries from 13 groups and 366 from 26 groups at End of Term Evaluation (ETE).

This represents an 8% and 117% at MTE and ETE more than the project targeted in terms of number of VSL groups. In terms of membership at MTE the project had 21% more than the target and 52% at MTE.

A further analysis was conducted to analyze utilization of the VSL loans and shares from the households (n=116) that obtained loan and had accessed the shares from the groups. Results showed that purchase of household items ranked first (43%). VSL also served as a source of capital for investing in business as evidenced by the 36% that started business from the VSL shares/loans.Access to Agricultural inputs is one of the key challenges for the smallholder farmer in Malawi. The project has contributed to alleviate the challenge through the VSL scheme as noted that 24% of those that obtained loans/shares had bought agricultural inputs. Others used the VSL shares/loans to meet school expenses (16%), agricultural labour payment(16%), health expenses and building houses.

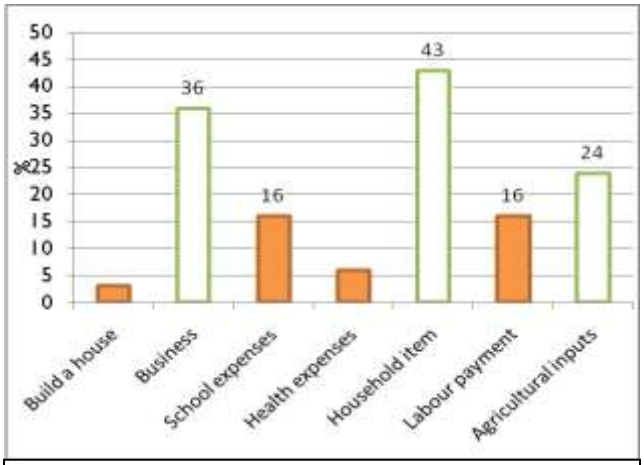


Figure 10: VSL loan/share utilization

3.3.2 Outcome 2: Sustainable management of forest, land and water resources

The study established that 41 farmers had adopted new sustainable ways of fish farming. This is higher than at MTE (0) but lower than the target of 50 farmers representing 82%. This can be attributed to staff turnover. During key informant interviews it was revealed that some staff members had left the organisation for green pastures hence this might have affected the timing of implementing project activities.

It was noted that 325 farmers had adopted one or more soil and water conservation techniques. This was higher (108%) than both at MTE and the target of 300 farmers. 54 woodlots were established at ETE than 29 and 36 noted at MTE and the target respectively representing 150% achievement compared to the target. These trees have played a significant role in reducing soil erosion and moderating the climate. Trees and village forests provide a habitat for many species of animals and plants and shade and shelter, timber for construction, fuel for cooking and fruit for food. It was reported that some of the communities in Salima have planted fruit trees such as mangoes. The fruit trees will provide nutritious fruits to the community and some households will sell the fruits hence source of income. Some of the tree species planted included agro-forestry trees like '*nsangu*' scientifically known as *Faidherbia albida*. *Nsangu* is an indigenous, deep rooted and drought tolerant tree of leguminous familythat fix nitrogen and shade leaves during the rainy season, providing organic residue nutrients up to 75kg N, 2kg P_2O_5, 19kgK_2O,18 kg CaO3, 29kg MgO and 20kg S under the canopy and light penetration for crop production (Aargaard, 2009). They also remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store large quantities of carbon in their tissues (Dyer & Gwynne (2008, p. 95).

> *I practice conservation agriculture but it is on the small plot of land. I wanted to try if its beneficial. However, next season I will increase the coverage. I used to harvest 4 bags of maize on my half acre plot but when I did CA I harvested 6 bags.* ***Ibrahim Mavuto from kasache Villaae, Salima, Malawi***

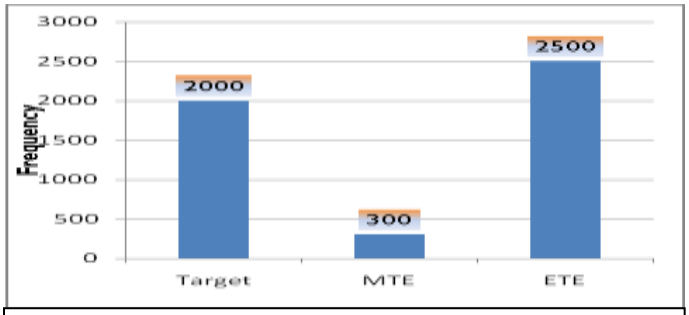


Figure 11: Farmers trained in Conservation Agriculture

The study found out that 2500 farmers were trained in Conservation agriculture (CA) techniques. This was higher than 300 farmers registered at MTE and the set target of 2000. This represents 125% achievement. During the FGDs, there was clear mention by the project beneficiaries that the majority (88%) of the famers received training after they had already planted their crops between December and January 2014/2015 cropping season hence they did

not apply the knowledge and skills gained. The study established that 12% of the farmers practice CA and it was done on a small scale for piloting. Conservation agriculture has been demonstrated to be one of the best technologies so far adopted and applied by smallholder farmers in the realization of co-benefits in food security and climate change management.

It was observed that farmers apply organic fertilizers, farm yard manure and practice agro forestry especially growing of Nsangu tree as measures in soil fertility management. They also practice crop rotation and maintenance of soil cover as measures in crop diversification and cropland management. Soil cover is done during and after the growing seasons. The soil cover materials stay in the field soon after harvesting in May up to the start of the growing season in November. The soil cover assist in loosen up the soil thus reducing the compaction, conserve moisture, reduce labour,reduce soil erosion and increases nitrogen to the soil (Mariki et. al, 2011, CADECOM, 2014). The techniques that have the potential of conserving soil and water resources include rainwater harvesting, the construction of physical structures including contour bunds and box ridges.

Through the Key Informant Interviews (KII) it was established that the main challenge with CA is termites. The soil cover materials are eaten by termites. It was also noted that the area has more goats and few cattle. This is added advantage because cattle are a problem to the soil cover materials than goats. Cattle prefer maize stalks while goat eat fresh grass. It was revealed that majority of community members are Muslims hence bush fires which emanate from mice hunters is not challenge.

3.3.3 Outcome 3: Improved policies for sustainable climate change adaptation

The ETE established that 4 position papers were produced focusing on the Forestry act and charcoal production. This was higher than both the target (3) and the MTE 2. These papers contributed to improvement of 2 policies. The two policies include Forestry Act and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy. The policies are deliberate efforts to direct and oversee human activities and thereby prevent harmful effects on the biophysical environment and natural resources, as well as to make sure that changes in the environment do not have harmful effects on humans.

Sustainable development and weak policies

Salima has been facing a number of environmental challenges including climate-related hazards and disasters. The effects of hazards and disasters are many and include food insecurity (hunger), increase in poverty levels, and death, chronic malnutrition, and environmental damage and limited access to safe potable water among others.

Weak policies cripple implementation of sustainable environment and natural resources management strategies including Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Adaptation and mitigation strategies. The Climate change policy, Environmental Management Bill and Forestry Bill have been formulated but are not yet approved. Other challenges include: Lack of community and local committee (Civil Protection Committees) skills and knowledge to mitigate and adapt to the impact of climate change.

The Conserving Our Land Producing Our Food Project implemented by Environmental Africa has played important role in generating information that has been fed in the formulation of Forect Act and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy among others. During the formulation of DRR policy various documents were reviewed and various stakeholders were consulted in policy formulation process

The policies assist government senior offers in objective decision making as regards to environment and natural resources management. It was noted that in Salima, Environmental issues generally addressed by these policies include ecosystem management, biodiversity protection, the protection of natural resources, and the preservation of these natural resources for future generations.

The ETE noted that 33 Village Natural Resources Management Committees (VNRMCs) with 3540 Members were established. This was higher than 10 VNRMCs (1220members) and 13 VNRMCs (1020) registered as a target and during MTE achievement respectively. This represents 330% achievement. This can be attributed to beneficiaries' knowledge on the causes of climate change, impacts of climate change and the need for reversing the current situation (climate change mitigation and adaptation). During the FGDs. it was revealed that the VNRMC members were trained in forestry management including fire management and raising of tree seedlings in a nursery. The VNRMCs also received farm implements or tools such as wheelbarrows, shovels, hoes, panga knifes and watering canes. The VNRMCs were also supported with tree seeds, seedlings and polythene tubes. Post Disaster Needs Assessment Report (2014) indicates that Salima is one of the districts that have been heavily affected by floods and the community forest has played important role in flood mitigation. The establishment of VNRMCs by EA is in line with Decentralised Environmental Management Guidelines (2012) which outlines the national institutional framework for coordination in environmental management.

3.3.4 Outcome 4: Increased skills and knowledge in agro-ecology, marketing & business development and lobbying & advocacy.

The evaluation study found out that the number of Information Education Communication (IEC) materials developed in agro-ecology, marketing and business development and lobbying and advocacy was 5. This was higher than the number of registered IEC materials at Mid-Term Evaluation (2) and the set target of 4. The study also noted that the number of case studies documented in successful initiatives in conserving our land producing our food was 4. This was higher than 0 case studies noted at MTE and the set target of 3. These represent 125% and 133% increment respectively. However, 7 staff EA members were capacitated in agro-ecology marketing, business development and lobbying and advocacy. This was higher than at MTE (7) but lower than the set target of 10.

3.3.5 OECD effectiveness rating

Table 3: OECD effectiveness rating

Category	Rating	Reasons for the rating
Effectiveness	5	i. The use of lead farmers and forestry extension staff contributed to the success of the VNRM work ii. Constant supervision and monitoring of NRM activities by EA Field Officers helped put beneficiaries on track and have a feeling of being supported iii. EA provided start-up materials such as tubes and this enhanced the work iv. There was training support at the beginning of the project and this built capacity on beneficiaries to manage forestry well v. As much as there was no training initially provided, EA provided close guidance and their supervision and support have helped the banki ya kumudzi (VSL) succeed. vi. Provision of passbooks for VSL? has enabled EA/Progressio to promote transparency and accountability. Monitoring has also instilled responsibility among farmers.

3.4 EFFICIENCY OF THE PROJECT

Efficiency measures the outputs (qualitative and quantitative) in relation to the inputs. This generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving the same outputs, to see whether the most efficient process has been used. Aspects to do with quality of outputs and timeliness in achieving outcomes will also be put into limelight.

3.4.1 Time efficiency

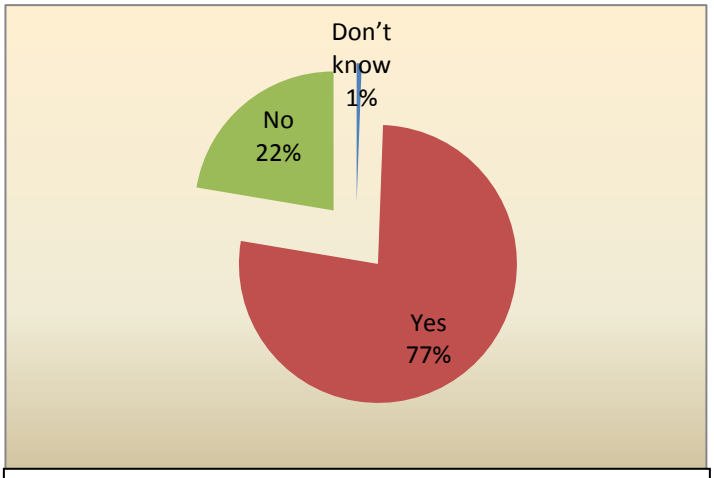


Figure 12: Beneficiary perceptions of time efficiency

Timeliness of activity implementation based on the schedule and conformity to agricultural calendar where necessary is one of the factors that would translate to achieving timely results. The study established that 77% of the beneficiaries perceived the project operations to be timely implemented. In contrast 22% of the beneficiaries showed that activities were not implemented on time.

3.4.2 Level of satisfaction

Level of satisfaction of beneficiaries for the VNRMCs, VSLs and bee keeping was analysed. Results show that at least 76% were satisfied with VNRMCs, 68% were at least satisfied with VSL while non wood interventions level of satisfaction remained at 41% at the time of the ETE.

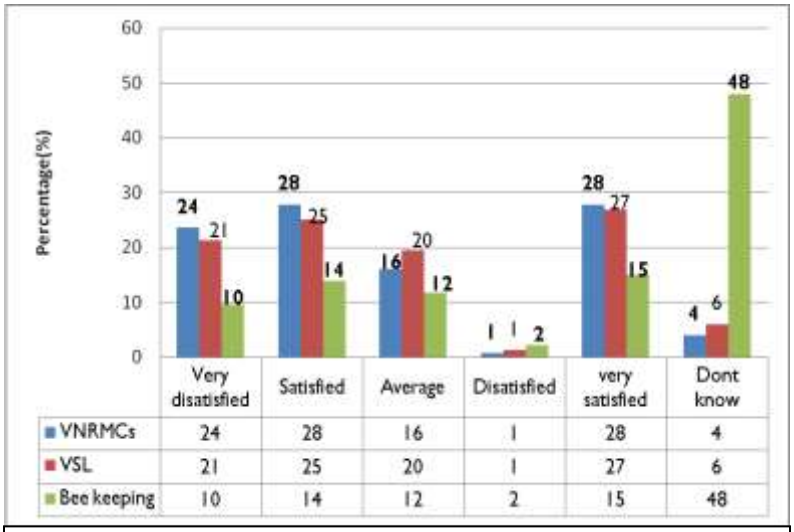


Figure 13: Intervention level of satisfaction by Beneficiaries

3.5 Impact of the project

3.5.1 Comparison of food shortage experiences

Food shortage is in this study referred to the in adequate supply of food at household level to meet the daily dietary energy needs requirement (2100kcals) recommended by World Health Organisation (WHO) per annum. The interest of the analysis in figure 12 was to establish if a household experienced food shortage in any of the months within the study period of 12 months (April 2014 to March 2015). The majority for both project participants and non participants show that food shortages were high in February at 67% and 53% for non participants and participants respectively. In April, food shortages among households reduced to 10% for non participants and while participants did not experience any food shortages. Food shortages are pronounced high in February along the year because it is lean period in Malawi which on average usually begins in January to early March. Harvesting period starts end March to April thus the low food shortages experienced in April (4th Month). However it is worth noting that the analysis shows non-participants relatively experienced more food shortages than non participants. Diversification of income sources by the program beneficiaries through VSL interventions assist in accessing food through purchasing.

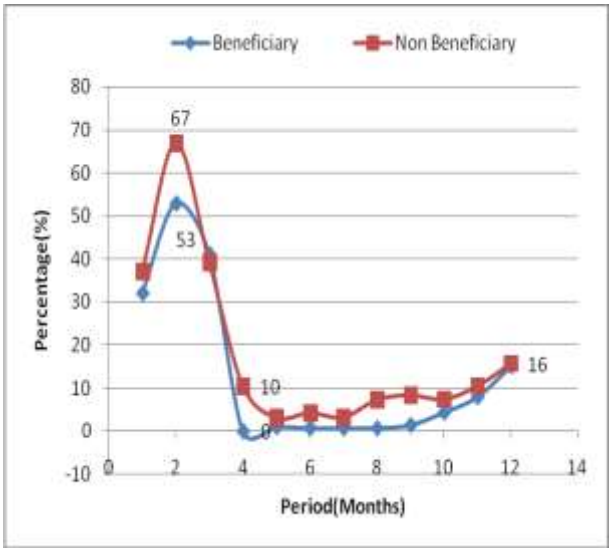


Figure 14: Food shortages experience

3.5.2 Diet diversification

Apart from meeting the food energy requirements, food utilization and diversification are of paramount importance in food nutrition and security. Households were asked if they consumed items analyzed in figure 13 in the previous day before the survey. Results show that food diversification was higher among participants than non participants except for animal products. This could be attributed in adequate availability of livestock in the area. The pass on model of the livestock distribution for the goats and

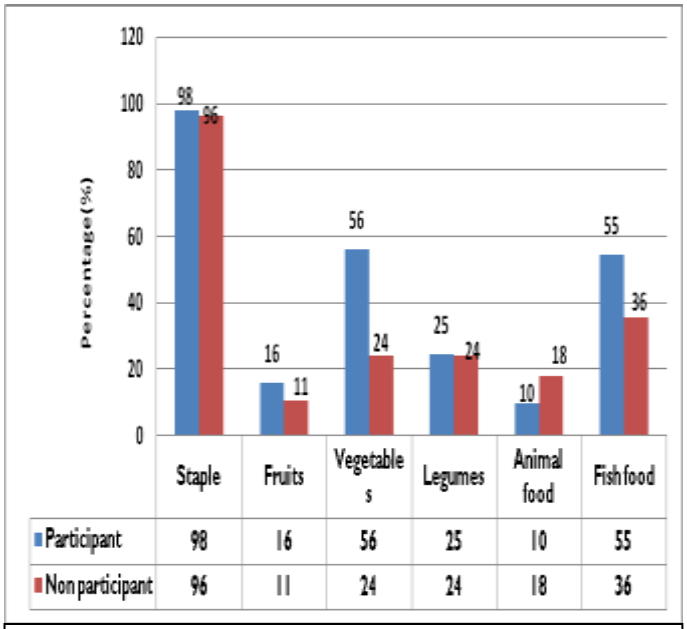


Figure 15: Food diversification

guinea fowlat tender age to the participants will assist to improve the situation.

However, during the KIIs, it was established that guinea fowl posed a challenge to the beneficiaries. The guinea fowl were distributed whilst there were at considerable old age hence they could escape from ex-situ to in-situ environment. It is expected that consumption levels for animal food to improve with time due to the pass on programme for goats which at the time of the Evaluation was only 4 months old.

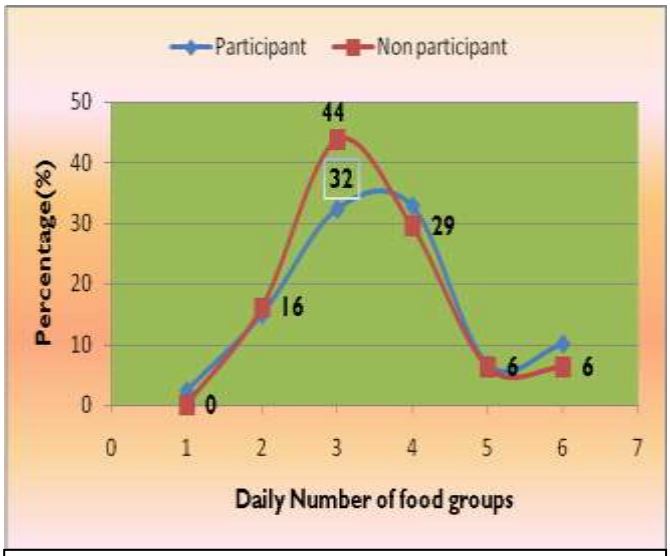


Figure 16: comparison of number of food groups

The study further reports on food groups' intake per day for both participants and non participants. The current recommendation of food groups is six food groups as presented in the previous figure 13. The results conform to each other as figure 14 indicates that households that were not participating in the project could only had relatively more households that afforded 1-3 food groups per day while their counterparts had relatively more households that could at least fall in the range of 4-6 food groups per day. On average, there is a relative difference in that beneficiary households consume 4 food groups compared to 3 food groups for non beneficiary counterparts. In terms of number of meals taken per day during the normal period, results show that for both type of households on average 3 meals are taken per day. A further analysis of number of meals during lean period shows a significance (p=0.00) difference between EA beneficiaries (2 meals) and non- beneficiaries (1meal) this might be attributed to the EA project by increasing the resource base for the beneficiaries though VSL which was also used for buying food as such improving resilience to food insecurity.

3.5.3 Before and after project analysis of household pressing needs

The study established that before the Environmental Africa project, the community most top pressing needs were food insecurity (91%), poverty (91%), soil erosion (67%) and fuel wood (73%). The project interventions addressed these challenges and at the time of ETE results showed that households that indicated that food insecurity was a pressing need reduced to 79% representing a 12% proportional decrease. Poverty is represented by a 15% decrease from 91% before the project inception. Those experiencing soil erosion as a pressing need registered a 56% which has reduced by a proportion of 11%. On the high note firewood was one of the pressing needs and has a registered a significant (p=0.02) reduction from 73% to 41% representing a 32% decrease.

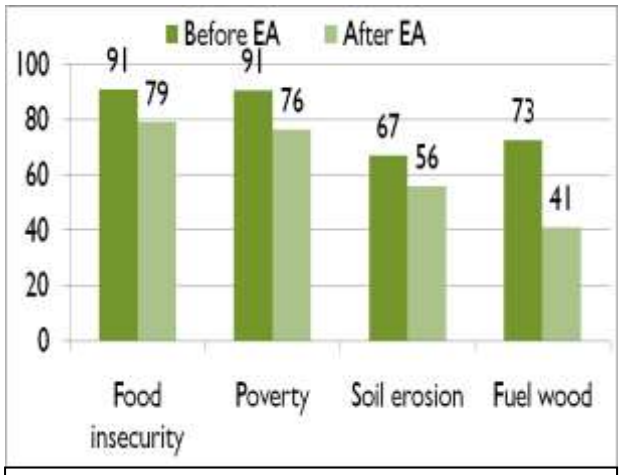


Figure 17: Before and after analysis of household pressing needs

3.5.4 Proportional contribution of income by source

Cash income by source indicated that the crops sales have lion's shares it terms of contributing to household income for both project beneficiaries (63%) and non beneficiaries (57%). The most important sources to discuss are those directly related to project interventions such as livestock and Village savings and loans. The results in figure 16 show that 5 percent of the beneficiary households income is attributed to livestock sales compared to 2% for non beneficiaries.

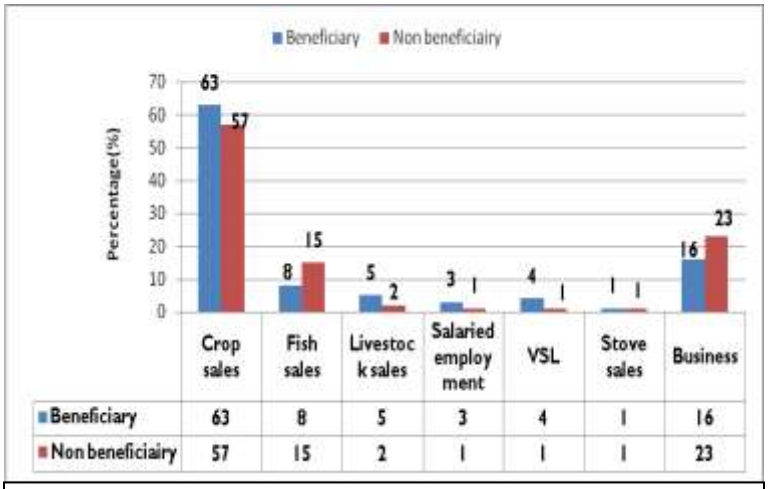


Figure 18: Proportional contribution of income by source

Compare means analysis presented in figure 4 shows a significance difference (p=0.00) in terms of livestock sales among project beneficiaries ($22.30) and non beneficiaries ($5.93).This is attributed to livestock interventions such as the distribution of guinea fowl and livestock (goat) pass on programme. Another interesting model intervention is the Village savings and loans which contributed about 4% of the beneficiary household income compared to 1% for the non beneficiaries as presented in figure 16 which also has a multiplier effect of investing in business interventions. Despite the

fact that the proportional non beneficiary households investing in business is more than the beneficiary households, the VSL interventions have provided opportunities for most of the beneficiary households to obtain loans and invest in small scale business and buy agricultural inputs. One of the beneficiairy household led by **Mr Salephera** testifies **the benefits of VSL in box**

I and my wife decided to both join "bankimkhonde" (voluntary savings and investment group). We opted to use part of our savings to buy separate shares in order to save more. In the same year, we also re-invigorated production of rice which we had stopped back in 2006 due to lack of inputs such as fertilisers and money to purchase additional labour. We took short loans from the "bankimkhonde" and purchased additional inputs for the rice field. I expect to harvest my rice in April/May and anticipate making more money.

Table 4: Compare means analysis

Characteristic	Participant	Non-participant	P-value
Livestock ownership(1=yes; 2=No)	2	1	0.00***
Crop sales(MK)	101458	56996	0.00***
Fish sales(MK)	15834	20376	0.59
Livestock sales(MK)	10036($22.30)	2669($5.93)	0.00***
Salaried employment(MK)	5265	354	0.73
VSL(MK)	6391	3697	0.08*
Stove selling(MK)	1771	845	0.87
Business trading(MK)	30411	31391	0.96

3.5.5 Perceived Livelihood changes by beneficiaries

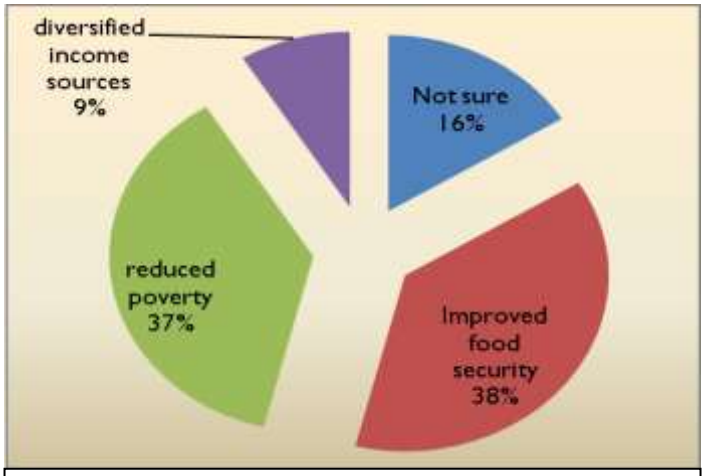


Figure 19: Perceived Beneficiary livelihood

Beneficiary households were asked an open ended question to spell out their livelihood changes that can be perceived to the project. Results in figure 19 show that the changes attributed to the project are improved food security (38%), reduced poverty (37%) and diversified income sources (9%). The results are in line with the main objective of the project to reduce poverty and food insecurity of disadvantaged people in Malawi and Zimbabwe by improving the use and

management of natural resources and developing community resilience to climate change.

3.5.5 OECD impact rating

Table 5:OECD impact rating

Category	Rating	Reasons for the rating
Impact	3.5	i. More positive and sustainable impact expected in VSLs, VNRMCs and livestock. Irrigation and apiculture could have been of high impact if implemented at the earliest stage of project ii. Woodlots have enhanced ownership and responsibility on natural resources. iii. Delays in providing inputs such as tree seedlings, bee-hives, irrigation equipment e.t.c have eroded the potential impact the project would have made on beneficiaries iv. Project has improved food security status, household incomes and natural resources management. v. VNRMCs have changed farmers' attitudes towards natural resources and conservation vi. Project has not influenced adoption of technologies much, the FFS has increased awareness of technologies but adoption is still very low . This can be attributed poor timing in the introduction of the new technologies to the project beneficiaries by Environmental Africa (Late intervention). This can also be attributed to beneficiaries willingness or perception on the new technologies. vii. Farmers have acquired household assets, farming inputs, started small businesses and supported their families from the VSLs viii. Women have been greatly empowered economically and are able to contribute to family welfare by engaging in small businesses to support household consumption needs while husbands are busy doing other things. ix. VSLs have helped strengthen the social fabric as they have promoted coherence and team work in dealing with challenges affecting community such as poverty

3.5.7 Socio Return on Investment (SROI)

SROI is a framework for measuring and accounting for a broad concept of value. It tells the story of environmental, social and economic changes that people and/or an organization experience/s as a result of a project or activity. Using monetary value and financial proxies to value thechanges, a ratio of benefits to costs is calculated (Nicholls, Lawlor, Neitzert, &Goodspeed, 2012).

According to Nichollas, Lawlor and Goodspeed, 2012 SROI has the following principles which this study observed

a. *Involve stakeholders: Stakeholders who have experienced the outcomes must be involved to inform the process on what outcomes should be measured, and how this is measured and valued*

b. *Understand what changes: Both positive and negative changes need to be identified and the way the change comes about articulated clearly*

c. *Value the things that matter: Use financial proxies to recognize the value of the outcomes identified*

d. *Only include what is material: Determine what information and evidence must be included in the analysis to give a true and fair picture, such that stakeholders can draw reasonable conclusions about impact*

e. *Do not over claim: Only claim what the organisation is responsible for and err on the side of being conservative*

f. *Be transparent: Demonstrate the basis on which the analysis maybe considered accurate and honest and show that it will be reported and discussed with stakeholders*

g. *Verify the result: Ensure appropriate independent assurance*

Table 6: Steps of SROI

Step	DETAIL
1. Establish scope and identify stakeholders	The primary stakeholders were defined as farming households in the nine participating communities.
2. Map outcomes	Prior to data collection, the objectives in the project design were re-ordered into a theory of change. After data collection, the map expresed was revised and refined to reflect the experience of the project stakeholders, rather than the project objectives.
3.Evidence the outcomes and give them a value(financial proxy)	This was collected from project beneficiaries, non beneficiaries using KII and FGDs
4 Establish impact	Once each material outcome was identified and mapped in the revised theory of change, the value of each outcome was mapped for each stakeholder group to generate SROI impact calculation maps
5. Calculate the SROI	After mapping material impacts, the values were aggregated into a single total value and divided by the total cost of project inputs to arrive at a SROI ratio. It is expected that more benefits will be emanated after the project lifetime (3 years). Social returns were also calculated for three time periods: 1. Value created by the project immediately after the closure of project activities (year three); 2. value forecast four years after the project (year seven), assuming no additional inputs (considered for this report as the "base case"); 3. Value forecast 6 years after the project (year 9).

3.5.7.1 Theory of change

In effect, the SROI theory of change attempts to explain change as perceived by the target community of the project, rather than fully relying on project concept design. The evaluation data was carefully studied to identify the changes and their interrelations for each stakeholder group. The outcomes selected for calculation represent outcomes that are often the culmination of earlier contributing outcomes. A descriptive theory of change is represented on the table 7 of the following page.

Table 7: Project's theory of change

STAKEHOLDER	KEY INTERVENTION	COMMUNITY AND HOUSEHOLD REPORTED OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS
Beneficiary households	Selection and organization of communities	**1. Increased income and consumables:**
	Promotion of water conservation farming techniques promoted	Improved access to wild resources for
	Establishment of woodlots	Construction and household use
	New sustainable ways of fish farming and marketing techniques promoted	Increased locally available forage and shade led to improved livestock asset value and increased livestock numbers
	Establishment of Community savings schemes	Shift in culture towards (group) savings may lead to better resilience
	Training farmers through farmer field schools	Adopted fuel-efficient stoves led to increased time savings
	Livestock assets and management skills	Adopted fuel-efficient stoves led to reduced amount of firewood used for energy
		increased livestock stocks on farmland
	Provided fuel-efficient stoves	**2. Improved health condition:**
		Improved respiratory health due to fuel-efficient stoves
		Reduced accidental burns due to fuel-efficient stoves
		3. Psychosocial benefits:
		Increased optimism towards the future
		Enhanced status and public participation by lead farmers especially women
		Increased unity and collaboration between community members
Community commons	Conducted orientation and negotiation with chiefs	**1. Psychological benefits**
	Facilitated of community	Change in attitude toward natural regeneration and productive tree
	Consensus on new by-laws regarding the VNRMCs	Shadier, more comfortable micro-climate, reduced heat stress and more aesthetically appealing environment
		2. Environmental benefits
		Atmospheric carbon sequestered through re forestation has global atmospheric benefit
		Reduced carbon emissions through fuel-efficient stoves has global atmospheric benefit (added by evaluator, not community)
		Increased community assets in the form of increased tree stocks in the woodlots

Table 8: Financial proxies (valuations)

STAKEHOLDER	Outcome	Individual outcome	Year 3-END OF PROJECT(MK)	Year 6 (3years after project closure)	year 9 (6 years after project closure)
Project Beneficiaries	**Reduced poverty**	Shift in culture towards (group) savings may lead to better resilience	**1,690,725**	**2,065,409**	**3,082,282**
		Adopted fuel-efficient stoves led to reduced amount of firewood used for energy	**15,000,000**	**18,324,173**	**27,345,798**
		Increased livestock stocks on farmland	**800,000**	**977,289**	**1,458,443**
		Honey production	**4,800,000**	**5,863,735**	**8,750,655**
	Improved health condition	Improved respiratory health due to fuel-efficient stoves	**4,666,200**	**5,700,284**	**8,506,731**
		Reduced accidental burns due to fuel-efficient stoves	**2,333,200**	**2,850,264**	**4,253,548**
		Reducedprevalence of disease due to honey consumption	**4,666,200**	**5,700,284**	**8,506,731**
Community commons (Traditional Authority Makanjira)	**Psychological benefits/ Behavior change**	change in attitudes towardsenvironmental protection and regeneration due to trainings offered to VNRMC members	**31,185,000**	**38,095,955**	**56,851,915**
	Environmental benefits	Increased community assets in the form of increased tree stocks in the woodlots	**405,000,000**	**494,752,661**	**738,336,554**
Total Project value(A)			470,141,325 (£691384.30)	574,330,053 (£644803)	857,092,656 (£1260430)
Total project cost in Malawi(B)			MK32,619,9123 (£47,970)	MK32,619,913 (£47,970)	MK32,619,913 (£47,970)
SROI(A/B			**14:1**	**18 :1**	**26:1**
£1=MK680; The discount rate for projections is 6.9%					

3.6 Sustainability of the project

The ETE assessed how the project activities, outcomes and impacts are likely to continue after donor withdraws or rather continuity of the interventions/activities after the project life span based on the key performance indicators.

3.6.1 Collaboration and networking

The project has embraced the working relationships of key stakeholders at district level such as the Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining through the Department of forestry, Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare and community development who are key in Village savings and loans, and Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. At grass root level which is the implementation level, the study observes that there was a strong coordination between the EA project staff and the key permanent institutions frontline staff (AEDC, AEDO and Forestry field officer). These are permanent structures which will facilitate the continuity of the project activities. The high score of sustainability of the project is attributed to its collaborative implementation with these key permanent departments. On the other hand, the project further recognized the need to use the lead farmer approach. The study established that the project was in line with the lead farmer concept by using the very same lead farmers identified by the government (Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security). This is noted from one of the lead farmers, *Nellie Lungu of Longwe Village who highlighted that she got an opportunity to be the lead farmer for Environmental Africa because she is also a government lead farmer. She also highlighted that being a government lead farmer was a pre requisite to become an EA lead farmer.*

3.6.2 Capacity building for staff, lead farmers and beneficiaries

Knowledge transfer and capacity building is one of the key elements that facilitates sustainability of projects. The project through the Progressio Development Worker (DW) has built capacity for the staff providing them with the necessary knowledge in implementation of the activities. Due to shortage of staff in Malawi the Development worker who was employed at a later stage of the project life span also participated in training the farmers in collaboration with field officers. In terms of staff, the project capacitated 7/10 staff representing 70% in various concepts such as Village Savings and Loans, product development, bee keeping, report writing and documentation of project impact which is to do with knowledge management. The staff members trained were from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (2), Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining, Forestry Department (4) and one(1) Community Development Officer(CDO). This further highlights the project was not only working in collaboration with other stakeholders but also minded building capacity for the staff involved for effective delivery of the project interventions in the communities.

During the FDGs and KII it became very clear that in all the interventions such as Livestock Pass on programmes, VNRMCs, Conservation agriculture and non-timber forest interventions extensive trainings were conducted. For all these, intervention groups have managerial

committees who are well trained in the activities associated with the interventions. However, for the Farmer Field Schools (FFS) the trainings initiated with the committee but eventually all the members in the FFS groups were trained.

3.6.3 Extent to which local resources were utilized

The extent to which the project pumps in resources in community intervntions has a strong influence on ownership of the interventions which translates to sustainability. It is interesting to note that the communities contributed some resources to the EA/BLF project. Tree seeds for developing the nursery gardens were sources and provided by the project beneficiaries .

In addition where impliments such as watering canes, sprayers and holes were delayed to be delivered the community beneficiairies improvised with there own. This level of commitment by the beneficiairies invoked by the project is a necessary indicator of sustainability of the the project acitivities and emerging outcomes. Quantitative analysis shows 67% of the beneficiairies indicated that the project used some local resources and 10% showed that the project extremely utilised local resources.

3.6.4 Threats to sustainability

Figure 20: Threats to sustainability

Factors that would retard progress of sustainability were analysed and results show that 81% indicated that nothing would stop them from implementing the initiatives initiated by EA. While this is a recommendable result results such as poor leadership (8%) may distort levels of sustainability

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3.6.4 OECD sustainability rating

Table 9: OECD sustainability rating

Category	Rating	Reasons for the rating
Sustainability	4	i. Replicability of project activities and some of the elements in the design is high. Evidence of replication is already available e.g. farmers planting own tree nurseries in their backyard, VSLs formed by non-beneficiaries after learning from EA VSLs ii. Project worked with extension workers Agriculture Extension Development Coordinator(AEDCs) and Agriculture EDOs) and forestry officers from the impact area to provide trainings to lead farmers hence farmers know them and it is easy to consult them iii. Project trained and used Lead farmers from the communities and these facilitated project activities such as FFS, VSLs and VNRMCs. The trained Lead farmers have been contacts and intermediaries between EA and the communities. They will always be there for the farmers they have given support to. iv. Project has built community capital and instilled community commitment to most of the interventions with total buy-in from local leaderships (TA, GVHs, VHs) and the district council. Chiefs have been in the forefront encouraging participation in project activities. v. Critical challenge has been that some of the interventions have been initiated later than would have been ideal and farmers need more technical support and guidance. Unfortunately, Extension Workers have only been actively involved during trainings of the lead farmers and providing technical support on some interventions. This may have a negative impact on sustainability of such interventions. vi. If Project duration was longer than the three (3) years, sustainability would have been highest. vii. Community contribution was not emphasized during inception of the project and in the approved project document. However, the communities themselves have had to procure seedlings on their own to supplement on forest management. viii. The use of lead farmers to provide extension support right in the community would ensure that farmers have people around them to consult for guidance before they can see an AEDO

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Innovative models of the project

4.1 Lead Farmer Model and Field Farmer School

Lead Farmer Model and Peer Learning: the project employed a very effective model of extension delivery via the lead farmer pedagogy. The involvement of lead farmers induced peer learning**.** FFS offer a central place where farmers can practically learn and see the benefits of adopting certain agricultural techniques such as conservation agriculture

4.2 Village Savings and Loan Scheme

Integration of VSLs into other interventions scores highly in terms of impact and sustainability. Community capital built and short-term microfinance challenges dealt with. Household intervention packaging versus community needs: Interventions directly targeted to address identified issues and matched most of the interventions were very good and matched well with the needs of the community BLF project served. The impact area targeted was the right one because there were no NGOs working in the area addressing the similar challenges as identified by Progressio/EA.

4.3 Working with government local structures

The use of AEDOs and AEDCs was efficient since they only spent on allowances for the government staff. The local government structure also ensures sustainability of the project.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 KEY LESSONS LEARNT AND BEST PRACTICES

Conserving our land producing our food project over the three years of implementation generated four key lessons and best. Best practices constitute project elements which need to be scaled up. Elements that did not work well need to be analyzed and subsequent decisions made whether to continue. The lessons learnt and best practices are presented as identified and not based on level of importance.

5.1 VSL scheme ensures multiple livelihood impacts

Village savings and loans scheme was integral part of conserving our land producing our food project. The VSL scheme has proved to be one of the most successful interventions contributing to increased household income by offering the beneficiaries chances for flexible savings and credit facilities. The scheme attracted more than 366 members in 26 savings schemes established throughout the project implementation period.

Through the FGDs and KII, it was revealed that beneficiaries' benefited a lot from VSL throughincrease of household income. Through VSL, members were able to save, borrow and start business. The gains from VSL are used to start business, buy agricultural inputs, buy household items and paying for school fees.

The VSLs would be sustainable in the long term through promotion of more Village Savings and Loans Agents (VSLA). The VSLAs are locally trained trainers providing technical support to establish and monitor implementation of VSLs. For the initiative to be sustainable in the long term, VSLAs should offer quality services at a fee so that the VSL groups become stronger and are able to pay for such private services. In addition, the VSLAs should be trained in entrepreneurship so that they are able to sustain themselves and their operations.

5.2 Diffusion of improved agricultural technologies

Farmer Field Schools demonstrations and distribution of sweet potatoes vines, cassava cuttings and sorghum have improved uptake of technologies. It was also noted through FGDs that provision of start-up inputs such as seedlings, sweet-potato vines and cassava cuttings plus distribution of livestock for pass-on motivated poor farmers to work hard. Lead farmers have also played important role in dissemination of information on the improved agricultural technologies.

5.3 Buying of animal species within the same agro-ecological zone

Implementation of livestock pass-on program should consider sourcing livestock species from similar geographical and weather conditions to ensure good survival rates. The project evaluation learnt that livestock from outside the geographical area with different environmental and weather conditions had poor survival rate.

Through the FGDs, it was noted that the registration system has many benefits including significant reduction in overhead costs, relieves staff of procurement hiccups, promoting livestock business among the communities and promotes sustainability of the initiative.

5.4 Working with local structures in the decentralized system and capacity building

Environmental Africa engaged stakeholders and government extension systems right at the outset and during implementation and monitoring of project. Working with decentralized governance structures brings more benefits in terms of collaboration, coordination and sustainability. This is in contrast to establishing new implementation structures specifically for the project. Capacity building was integral part of Conserving Our Land Producing Our Food implementation. The project built capacities of different structure so that they were able to carry out activities effectively. Involvement of the district council, community structures and stakeholders reduces duplication of efforts and ensures sustainability. The approach encourages

the district council to plan, implement and monitor development interventions in collaboration with stakeholders. Integration ensures high acceptability and support of interventions by district and community stakeholders. Therefore, there is a high likelihood that interventions would be sustained as partners are willing to continue with the efforts that they have been part of during planning and implementation. Stakeholders bring in various specialized expertise. Integration of various stakeholders ensured coordinated response and provision of comprehensive services to targeted communities.

5.5 Documentation and dissemination of best practices

Environmental Africa through conserving our land producing our food documented and disseminates 4 best practice related papers and articles and documented 4 case studies. In addition 5 IEC materials were produced on agro-ecology, business development, and advocacy and lobbying.

These publications help to raise awareness on the project inputs and impacts. The publications also help to inform development planning and implementation processes across and beyond the country.

5.6 Funding levels and value for the money

Conserving our land producing our food project funds disbursement was done in an efficient way and funds were used appropriately. During KII it was noted that entire staff of EA in 2013 were fired as a result of fraud.

However, analysis of the budget indicated that funding was not aligned per key result area. Funding by key result area is more effective as it is easy to track how funding is utilized to generate a result. It is therefore recommended that future funding should consider aligning budgets to specific result area. For accountability and transparency, there is need to provide for (provision for) setting up finance management and accountability systems at different levels including implementing partner.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSION

Conserving Our Land Producing Our Food Project has been effective in its implementation approaches, including project management based on attainment of outcome results in all the four Key result areas of Improved and more sustainable management of forest, land and water resources to benefit the most disadvantaged people; Increased skills and knowledge in agro-ecology, marketing & business development and lobbying & advocacy for Environment Africa; Improved policies for sustainable climate change adaptation and effective implementation of environmental legislation; Improved livelihoods and increased food security of the most disadvantaged people.

The project was dynamic and implemented comprehensive and highly adaptable approaches and interventions, including promotion of village savings and loans schemes, promotion of new agricultural technologies through Field Farmer schools and capacity building in project management, livestock production and management through pass on scheme, among others.

The evaluation has demonstrated significant impacts of Conserving Our Land Producing Our Food Project. For example, the project has contributed to food security. Households that indicated that food insecurity was a pressing need reduced to 79% representing a 12% proportional decrease. Poverty is represented by a 15% decrease from 91% before the project inception. The project also invested a lot of resources in capacity building and networking. The project has trained 70% of EA staff and trained various groups such as Lead farmers, 2500 farmers, 33 VNRMCs with 3540 members, 26 Village Savings and Loan Schemes and Bee Keeping Associations. These along with well-trained groups and stakeholders would ensure sustainability of the initiatives. Through VSL scheme, it was noted that 24% of those that obtained loans/shares had bought agricultural inputs. Others used the VSL shares/loans to meet school expenses (16%), agricultural labour payment (16%), health expenses and building houses. The VNRMCs has led to establishment of new forest and natural negeration of forest in the area. Trees play important role in controlling soil erosion, flood and climate change mitigation through carbon sinking.

The major strength and difference of Conserving Our Land Producing Our Food is its implementation strategy that promotes empowerment and promotion of systems and structures of governance and development. The programme built capacities of government and local structures at the community levels to enhance effective, sustained and organized service delivery and demand. Activation and promotion of community structures and systems ensure sustainability and ownership in development planning and implementation. The project pursued

this through various ways outlined in this evaluation report. There is evidence that governance structures and levels of engagement, advocacy and reporting are better in Conserving Our Land Producing Our Food Project impact areas compared to non-impact areas.

Through attainment of these results, the Conserving Our Land Producing Our Food Project has contributed to BLF Strategic Plan Objectives, Salima District Development Plans and Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) II which emphasize on food security, poverty reduction and sustainable use of environment and natural resources and empowerment of marginalized people in a society. The composite of Conserving Our Land Producing Our Food Project results contribute directly to the goal. The project ensured that direct food security and poverty is addressed through increased sustainable use of environment and natural resources. This outcome was also achieved through improvements in environmental policies, promotion of savings and loans scheme and promotion of live stock management. The Conserving Our land Producing Our Food project continued to explore viable means of sustainably facilitating household improved incomes through promotion of innovations, such as village savings and loans. Investments in improving household incomes and reducing poverty directly contribute to increasing resilience to poverty and ensuring adaptation to climate change effects. Studies have demonstrated that households with more assets have better adaptive capacity to climate change effects.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations made out of the evaluation study.

i. There s a need for putting deliberate efforts to transform the intervention groups into vibrant agribusiness Farmer Based Organisations(FBOs) such as cooperatives and linking them to proper markets would complement the benefits received from the project. A viable point of entry is formation of Farmer Business Schools (FBSs) which agricultural extension staff can facilitate to train lead farmers who can then relay the same to other farmers in the impact area.

ii. Since VSLs and VNRMCs registered the best success in all aspects, they need to be used as a conduit for building strong institutions. Using the COMSIP approach & FBOs.

iii. For similar partnerships and working structures, a more precise management and reporting structure and hierarchy is required to improve on structural delays in financial processes and implementation i.e. from implementation unit to funding agency, the chain was long considering possible iterations and feedback before funds could be released.

iv. There is need to enhance participation of relevant ministry government extension beyond trainings from the outset (like in VNRMCs). They should be involved in Monitoring and supervision of project activities in order to ensure continued access to technical support and sustainability.

v. Need for a more harmonized and standardized Monitoring and Evaluation system for monitoring and evaluation progress. One area to improve relates to having standard set of outcome and impact indicators rather than output based that are tracked between baseline, mid-term and final evaluation. It is recommended to have one comprehensive indicator matrix showing clearly impact / outcome level indicators and output / process level indicators. This indicator matrix must also always be used to tract level of progress. This would help to streamline reporting and have one standard reference for result reporting.

vi. For effectiveness in financial management and reporting, there is need to have a finance and accounts specialist at every level that was required to justify expenditures. Funding based on justification and reports Vs timeliness.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Evaluation Matrix for Conserving Our Land Producing Our Food Project

	OUTCOME (KEY RESULT AREAS)	INDICATOR	TARGET	MID-TERM	PROGESS AT EVALUATION
1	Improved and more sustainable management of forest, land and water resources to benefit the most disadvantaged people.	Number of farmers adopting new sustainable ways of fish farming and marketing techniques promoted by End of the project in Malawi (50 new farmers in Malawi)	50	0	41
		Number of farmers adopting one or more soil and water conservation farming techniques promoted by the End of project in both Malawi and Zimbabwe (300 new farmers in Malawi)	300	300 beneficiaries were trained in conservation agriculture, manure making and ridge realignment.	325
		The number of woodlots established in Malawi by the end of the project (36 new woodlots established in total)	36	29 woodlots established	54
2	Increased skills and knowledge in agro-ecology, marketing & business development and lobbying & advocacy for Environment Africa.	Number of IEC materials developed in agro-ecology, marketing & business development and lobbying & advocacy by EA staff in Zimbabwe & Malawi (4 categories/types of IEC materials developed and distributed evenly in both Zimbabwe and Malawi)	4 categories	2 (1 draft manual on advocacy lobbying manual and 1 manual on beekeeping)	5
		The number of EA staff members capacitated in agro-ecology, marketing & business development and lobbying & advocacy	10 members of Staff in Malawi	6 staff members have been trained in agro-ecological and advocacy	7
		The number of case studies documented by EA staff n successful initiatives in the project in Zimbabwe and Malawi (6 case studies (3 in each country) of successfully supported interventions (1 each on agro- ecology, business development and advocacy and lobbying)	3 case studies	0 (No case studies documented)	4
		Number of regional and local exchange visit	3 visits	0	2

3	Improved policies for sustainable climate change adaptation and effective implementation of environmental legislation	Number of environment policy and/or management best practice related papers/articles produced and disseminated in Malawi & Zimbabwe (At least 6 papers in total (3 for Malawi and 3 for Zimbabwe, 2 per year)	3 papers	2 position paper focusing on Forestry Act of 1997, and charcoal production has been done	4
		Number of policies improved with regards to environmental conservation as a result of this project in Malawi	2 Policies	No data	2
		The number of VNMRCs and EAGs established in Malawi and Zimbabwe for community based natural resource management (8 VNRMCs with 320 members in Malawi, 90 EAGs with 3,600 members in Zimbabwe)	10 VNRMCs 1220 members	13 VNRMC established with 1026 members	33 VNRMCs with 354 Members
		The number of engagements by VNRMCs and EAGs on environment legislation / by-laws, lobbying and advocacy in Malawi and Zimbabwe (24 engagements (6 Mal,18 Zim) with local and district level authorities on by-laws & other environmental management related issues in both countries	6 Engagements	No information available	9
		The number of national and international level engagements by Progressio and EA on environmental legislation, lobbying and advocacy (6 national (3 in each country) & 3 international level engagements (total 9) backed by policy position papers or publications in mainstream media	3 National Engagements and 3 International Engagements	2 international advocacy engagements attended	12
4	Improved livelihoods and increased food security of the most disadvantaged people.	Community savings schemes established and functional and number of beneficiaries (in Malawi) (6 savings schemes each with 20 beneficiaries per year for two years)	12Community Savings Scheme with 240 beneficiaries	13 Community savings and lending groups formed to with 292 members	26 savings schemes with 366 members
		The number of farmers that adopt food (including non-timber forest products) processing, value addition preservation techniques in Zimbabwe and Malawi (200 new vulnerable farmers per year 600 farmers in total)	200 farmers	300 farmers have been trained in agronomic practices for different crops like sweet potatoes, cassava,	65

				sorghum and soya beans	
		The number of farmers that adopt one or more new sources of livelihood based on non-timber forest products in Zimbabwe and Malawi	200farmers		97 farmers
		The number of farmers that have adopted one or more new conservation farming methods promoted by the project (5,500 vulnerable farmers in Zimbabwe and 2,000 farmers in Malawi)	2000 farmers	300 beneficiaries have been trained in conservation agriculture, manure making and ridge realignment	2500
		The number of households that are food secure and experience no hungry period throughout the year of which 60% are headed by women or children living with HIV/AIDS, disabled or other vulnerable people	11000 Households	1972 beneficiaries have participated in the RICA survey	7885
		Number food security surveys conducted	3 RICA Surveys	2 RICA Surveys conducted	3
		Number of Farmer Field Schools Established	13 farmer field schools	13 Farmer Field Schools established with 272 members	17

Appendix 2: Sampling frame

GVH	Beneficiary	Non beneficiary	TOTALS
Nyanguru	11	0	11
Mpiringizo	23	0	23
Zingaliwe	0	6	6
Nyambalo	18	19	37
Kasache	27	4	31
Kasache	15	0	15
Chembe	44	6	50
Makanjira	36	0	36
Mangwale	12	0	12
Chiwonjera	0	61	61
Kaitana	2	0	2
Mbirimtengerenji	0	2	2
Kalilangwe	3	1	4
Kamphinda	4	1	5
Kapota	0	12	12
Ndevu	2	0	2
Mwakho	4	0	4
Chisisa	1	1	2
Salimu	1	0	1
Kuchiswe	1	1	2
Makungonya	1	0	1
Chimala	3	0	3
TOTAL	**208**	**114**	**322**

Appendix 3: Detailed SROI Valuation

SROI VALUATION.xlsx

Appendix 4: Household questionnaire

Progressio.EA household questionna

Appendix 5: Qualitative tool checklist

PROGRESSIO OECD CHECKLIST.docx