Markets and Seeds Access Project (MASAP)

Mid Term Review

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Final Report

development solutions

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFZ	Associated Foods Zimbabwe
CBI	Crop Breeding Institute
CIA	Crop Improvement and Agronomy
CTDO	Community Technology Development Organisation
COE	Community Owned Enterprises
COMACO	Community Markets for Conservation
EGS	Early Generation Seed
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FiBL	Swiss-based Research Institute of Organic Agriculture
FISP	Farmer Input Support Programme
GALS	Gender Action Learning Systems
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
IFAD/FIDA	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IP	Intervention Partner
KII	Key Informant Interview
MASAP	Markets and Seeds Access Project
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MoLAFWRD	Ministry of Lands Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development
MOYDTVC	Ministry of youth empowerment, development and vocational training
MSD	Market System Development
MWACSMED	Ministry of Women affairs, community, small and medium enterprises development
OPV	Open Pollinated Varieties
OECD – DAC Committee	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's- Development Assistance
PORET	Participatory Organic Research and Training Trust
PELUM	Participatory Ecological Land Use Management Association
PLWHA	People Living with HIV and AIDS
PPP	Public Private Partnership
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SCCI	Seed Control and Certification Institute
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SHF	Small holder farmer
SKI	Seeds and knowledge Initiative
SME	Small to medium enterprises
TAPE	Tool for agroecology performance evaluation
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of reference
ZAAB	Zambia Alliance for Agroecology and Biodiversity
ZARI	Zambia Agriculture Research Institute
ZOPPA	Zimbabwe Organic Producers and Promoters Association

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report details the process, findings and recommendations of the mid-term review of the Markets and Seeds Access Project (MASAP) being implemented in Zambia and Zimbabwe funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

The overall goal of the evaluation was to assess the results of the first phase and provide recommendations for the second phase. The evaluation included a desk review of key MASAP and other relevant documents, interviews with key stakeholders at national level in Zambia and Zimbabwe and data collection in the four project areas: Mudzi and Tsholotsho in Zimbabwe and Sioma/Sesheke (which are treated as one area) and Chipata in Zambia. This data collection included key informant interviews, focus group discussions and case studies. Data was analysed using thematic coding. The findings and recommendations are presented in this report.

The study found that MASAP is **relevant** to the needs and contextual challenges of the communities, stakeholders and private sector partners in the target districts as well as the aligning with and contributing to national and international development goals and priorities. the project activities have been designed to address these various factors in a holistic and sustainable manner. Due to different contexts the project has developed more rapidly and to a greater extent in Zambia. Although hampered by delays and drought challenges, the intervention results to date have succeeded in addressing some contextual challenges of the target populations particularly with respect to linking farmers to markets for the target crops and commodities. While the project successfully addresses challenges linked to seed access, market linkages, farmer and COE capacity building and improving access to finance, some needs and challenges such as drought mitigation and access to irrigation need to be investigated in future phases. Identifying and addressing the needs of young people also needs to be integrated more strongly into future phases.

MASAP is **coherent** in terms of linkages and synergies among the project team, partners, policy, operational modalities and governance. More linkages are now being realised between the three components and research is beginning to influence policy as well as farmer capacity. Relations within the MASAP consortium members and between the donor, project implementors, the project partners, beneficiaries and key stakeholders were found to be very good and have facilitated the effective running and success of the project. MASAP is complementing other civil society and government projects and programmes. More relevant Ministries and departments notably from the health and environment sectors need to be engaged for added effectiveness.

The project is **effective** in that it is generally on track to achieve most of its targets despite the major setback of the 2023-24 drought. Both IP and COE representatives interviewed extolled the benefits of the project to their businesses but qualitative data to show how their businesses had improved through the project could not be ascertained. Generally, project service provision was noted to be effective however uptake of drought mitigation strategies by farmers was very low which could indicate poor quality training. The project did not respond well to the shock of the 2023-24 drought and the measures proposed in the drought response plan must be implemented in the next phase.

Some aspects of the project were deemed **efficient** however better systems for timely disbursement of inputs and monitoring their quality are needed. The process for reviewing IP Business plans needs to be streamlined. More focus is needed on monitoring project outcomes. Reorganisation of staff time allocations and budgets needs to be looked into in order to improve efficiency. The timing of the second phase must be adjusted so that it does not hamper the momentum of the project with respect to the agricultural season.

The study found that generally, the MASAP project has had positive **impact.** The first phase has focused on development of commodities, attracting off-takers and developing public private partnerships and this has been successful. There has also been progress in development of farmer managed seed systems through policy reform. The project has empowered women, and increased incomes. Project enablers include government

support, private sector engagement and success for farmers that had irrigation. Barriers were the drought, the choice of some of the project districts, an outbreak of rosette virus in Chipata and weak development of EGS multiplication systems. Lack of access to sustainable finance systems and concrete ways to improve nutrition are also lacking.

The main project activities including seed multiplication, production of target crops, market growth, contract farming and the commodity processing businesses are likely to be sustained beyond the life cycle of the project. The project did not appear to be having any negative social or economic impacts, but negative environmental impacts should be investigated further.

Recommendations were given to address specific findings. These are summarised as follows

- Clarify approaches on key aspects such as agroecology and improving dietary diversification.
- Identify effective ways to attract more young people to be involved in the project.
- Improve integration of project components and information dissemination from component 3 to enhance the effectiveness of the other components.
- Improve the synergies of the project with key ministries (notable health and environment) and initiatives such as those of PELUM and SKI.
- Improve the MSD approach by developing a more sustainable financing method with existing financial institutions.
- Streamline cumbersome financial and administrative procedures notable related to reviewing business plans of IPs.
- Improve production of EGS by public breeding institutes.
- Improve the capacity of project service providers.
- Put measures in place to devolve grants from the project to finance institutions.
- Improve training and mentorship of IPs and COEs.
- Develop better strategies and a contingency plan to respond to drought more effectively.
- Develop a comprehensive response plan for IPs that face loses resulting from drought.
- Investigate and find ways to address low uptake of drought mitigation practices by farmers.
- Investigate the feasibility of using other districts for seed production.
- Improve communication with farmers relating to seed prices in contracts.
- Improve project monitoring to include more outcome and impact reporting.
- Amend the project contract so that the next phase does not start during the agricultural season.
- Reorganise staffing time and budgets to improve project efficiency.
- Focus on achieving viability and sustainability of current interventions before expanding onto other districts.
- Improve financial indicators.

1 INTRODUCTION

This report details the process, findings and recommendations of the mid-term review of the Markets and Seeds Access Project (MASAP) being implemented in Zambia and Zimbabwe funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

1.1 Context

Southern Africa is experiencing the increasing impacts of climate change which is negatively impacting economies, electricity generation, human health and livelihoods. In Zambia and Zimbabwe, women and other marginalized groups in rural communities are facing some of the worst effects of climate change and economic challenges. The agriculture sector is particularly threatened by hazards including frequent droughts, heatwaves and mid-season dry spells as well as intense rainfall and flooding, which are leading to declines in soil fertility, water scarcity and increased pest and disease attacks resulting in diminished agricultural productivity. The productivity of staple crops, cash crops and livestock are declining, leading to reduced incomes and food insecurity. It is imperative that farmers in the most climate-vulnerable areas switch from maize to drought tolerant traditional cereals such as millet, sorghum and legumes such as cowpeas and groundnuts. However, due to weak markets for these crops, their labour-intensive nature, poor post-harvest practices and limited availability of high-quality seeds, their production is low.

Most farmers are using retained seed but do not have the skills and knowledge to select the most productive and drought tolerant varieties. In addition, farmer selected varieties, farmer led seed systems and farmers seed rights are not sufficiently protected or supported in most countries' legal and policy frameworks (SDC, 2022). Promoting and increasing the availability of certified seed for traditional grains, supporting producers with improved climate resilient farming methods, developing markets for traditional crops and associated commodities, increasing private sector engagement while improving the enabling policy environment are important catalysts for increasing resilience of rural communities to climate change.

A Market systems analysis carried out in 2022 found that while traditional cereals and legumes have high market development potential, lack of access to good quality seed is a major obstacle for their increased production (SDC, 2022). This is largely due to the formal seed sector being dominated by large multinational seed companies which focus on hybrids and marketable crops such as maize. These companies shun smallholder farmers (SHF) as potential seed producers because they lack the perceived necessary skills and irrigation facilities. SHF also face constraints of low financial literacy and business skills, weak organisation and governance capacity, lack of access to finance and inputs as well as inability to compete with established companies and markets (SDC, 2022).

The Zambian economy has experienced growth in the past because of market liberalization and a positive investment environment. However, in the recent past, the economy has been affected by: (1) the Zambian kwacha depreciating from an average of US$1: ZMW19.95 in 2021 to the current US$1: ZMW26.50, (2) inflationary pressures and (3) the severe impact of the El Nino induced drought during the 2023/24 season that has halved projections for economic growth (MASAP, 2024a) and severely hampered agricultural production, food security and electricity generation. Despite this, the country generally experiences macroeconomic stability and improved governance. The political and economic environment is conducive to the MASAP project and the activities of its intervention partners.

The context in Zimbabwe has been more complex because the political matrix has been embedded in the economic activities of the country. The general macro/micro-economic operating environment has been affected by policy inconsistencies that have prevailed for far too long to the extent that near, medium- or long-term planning is difficult. Although agricultural policies have been less affected, periodic changes have been made which changes have a bearing on the implementing modalities of the project. However, monetary policies and subsequent hyperinflation on the local currency have undermined viability of markets. The project of the magnitude and duration of MASAP is subjected to the conditions of continual changes and adaptation to policy changes, for example the currency and exchange rate policies. The 2023/24 cropping season was declared a

national disaster due to the severe drought, with approximately 60% of crops written off entirely causing food insecurity for an estimated 6 million people and 2.6 million at risk of water insecurity. The Zimbabwe economy has experienced instability for the past three decades and there appears to be no respite in the horizon. The major contributing factors have persisted; unstable currency that has its exchange rate determined by the street actors, high inflation rates, high interest rates, constricted liquidity in the financial services sector and depressed commercial productivity. Despite the introduction of a new currency, macroeconomic instability prevails with surging inflation and declining economic growth (MASAP 2024a). The drought and economic situation have negatively impacted on the project and the activities of the implementation partners. Furthermore, the poor state of repair of most economic levers has made the cost of doing business in Zimbabwe extremely high, thus impacting the economic competitiveness of the nation.

1.2 Project description

The MASAP is a long-term project being implemented in up to three phases of four years each. The first phase (December 2021 to November 2025) is focusing on rolling out activities in the four initial districts of Tsholotsho and Mudzi in Zimbabwe and Sioma/ Sesheke (classed as one district for the sake of the project) and Chipata, Zambia.

The second phase, (2026 to 2029), is expected to consolidate the results from the first phase and provide opportunities for scaling up project activities by increasing the value chains and adding more districts across Zambia and Zimbabwe. The third phase, (2030 to 2033), shall concretely embed all the system and structural changes inside the institutions to allow for sustained project outcomes and a smooth phasing-out of the project.

MASAP aims to use a Market Systems Development (MSD) approach to engage market actors and other key stakeholders to support the development of value chains and markets. The aim is to develop competitive, inclusive, resilient markets underpinned by understanding and altering underlying market structures, rules, and relationships to create sustainable, large-scale changes. MSD tackles root causes of dysfunction to improve resilience and inclusiveness across entire systems[1]. MASAP has adopted a hybrid approach whereby it is directly intervening to address market failures through providing catalytic funding in a way that borrows MSD principles but addressing the challenges using Market Development (MD) approaches[2]. This approach is most suited to the prevailing structural economic and political conditions in the two countries. Chipata district is the only district that is favourable to implement a near MSD approach.

The overall goal of the project is to strengthen seed production systems (value chains) and increase the utilisation of improved and diverse plant varieties of small grains and legumes so that they contribute to resilient livelihoods of smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe and Zambia.

Specific outcomes are:

- Smallholder farmers – in particular women, youth and other marginalised groups – have nutritious food and higher incomes.
- Sustainable and predictable availability and access to affordable quality seed and related services by smallholder farmers through increased engagement of the private sector.
- A developed gender and youth responsive enabling policy environment supportive of small grains and legumes sectors' needs and interests.

The project has been designed to address market failures, bottlenecks and challenges – such as low availability of quality and affordable seeds, labour-intensive processing of seeds and commodities, behaviour change (such

[1] For more information see https://beamexchange.org/

[2] Market Development (MD) focuses on improving market access and participation, often through direct interventions. Market Systems Development (MSD) by contrast emphasises understanding and altering underlying market structures, rules, and relationships to create sustainable, large-scale changes. MSD tackles root causes of dysfunction to improve resilience and inclusiveness across entire systems

as eating healthy foods and balanced diet), access to finance, insurance, inputs, and output markets – in the seed and commodity value chains.

Project target groups

The primary target group for the project are 94,000 smallholder farmers (470,000 beneficiaries) of which 60 percent are women and youth. The secondary group are farmers' associations, local seed companies, Agriculture Ministry departments (seed services, crop breeding institutions and extension), civil society organisations and policymakers.

1.3 Evaluation purpose and objectives

The overall goal of the evaluation was to assess the results of the first phase and provide recommendations for the second phase. The key objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Draw detailed conclusions regarding the outcomes to date of the MASAP project.
- Identify gaps and opportunities of the project.
- Identify good practices and lessons learnt.
- Identify MASAP's niche and value add in the thematic field of MSD and small grains and legume value chains in both Zimbabwe and Zambia; and
- Formulate specific recommendations/ entry points for Switzerland's support during the second phase of the project.

The evaluation was guided by the six evaluation criteria established by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC): relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

1.4 Evaluation scope and framework

The evaluation included a desk review of key MASAP and other relevant documents, interviews with key stakeholders at national level in Zambia and Zimbabwe and data collection in the four project areas: Mudzi and Tsholotsho in Zimbabwe and Sioma/Sesheke (which are treated as one area) and Chipata in Zambia. This data collection included key informant interviews, focus group discussions and case studies.

Data collection tools were developed to align with the research questions as stipulated in the ToR (Annex 1). These questions were answered through a variety of sources which were analysed, and recommendations given. The analysis included integration of the cross-cutting themes highlighted in the ToR. Special consideration was given to the impact of the El Nino induced drought on the project targets, indicators and outcomes.

2 METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the evaluation approach and methodology including methods of data collection and analysis.

2.1 Evaluation approach

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach with qualitative data collected through primary methods including key informant interviews (KII), focus group discussions (FGD) and case studies (Stories of change). Secondary quantitative data was derived from the desk review including project monitoring records and other relevant documents. Thus, multiple data sources were used to triangulate the evidence and validate the results. Multiple stakeholders were consulted to obtain a wide range of views.

Participatory methodologies were used to actively engage different stakeholders including the implementing partners, government departments, academic institutions, private sector companies and groups of

beneficiaries. Data was collected at national, district and ward level in both countries ensuring that project participants opinions are represented in detail.

The evaluation was conducted in an impartial, objective and independent manner. The review followed a rigorous, structured evaluation process. The research design, data collection and the data analysis were thoroughly supervised. The findings will be validated through a presentation of preliminary results at a workshop and through presenting the findings in a report that will be submitted to SDC and the MASAP team for review. The evaluation adhered to SDC evaluation standards and informed consent was sought before interviews and focus group discussions.

2.2 Evaluation methodology

The evaluation included secondary and primary data collection and analysis.

2.2.1 Secondary data collection

Secondary data collection included a desk review of key, relevant project documents as well as records from private sector companies. These documents are listed in the references (Annex and include MASAP Project document, the MASAP Market Systems Analysis report, the 5th Operational report, The Year 3 Drought Response Plan, The Post-harvest Surveys for Zambia and Zimbabwe, The Agro-Insurance: Ex-ante analysis report and the Considerations for MASAP Business Plans report. The documentation was comprehensive and was availed by the MASAP management team.

2.2.2 Primary data collection

Primary data included KII at national, district and community levels. Key informants included SDC (2) and MASAP (NIRAS/ CTDO/ FiBL) management team representatives (5), other civil society (2), national government representatives (1 in Zimbabwe), district government representatives (11), local leaders (9) as well as representatives from academia (1) and the private sector (7). In addition, FGDs were conducted with seed producers and commodity producer groups at community level and case studies were conducted with individuals and groups. Annex 2 lists the key informants.

2.2.3 Sampling for research projects/implementation sites

Two study wards were identified, one close to a market and one far from a market, in each of the four study areas. FGD participants were identified using beneficiary lists supplied by MASAP. FGD participants were segregated according to age and gender. The aim was to achieve representation of the following groups: young women, older women, young men, older men, seed producers and commodity producers. Originally, we had planned to have FGDs with the following groups: young women, older women, young men and older men. Table 1 summarises the actual profiles of the research participants that were interviewed. The reasons for the deviation from the original plan and what transpired is presented in section 2.4.

Table 1: Summary of district research participants in Zambia and Zimbabwe

Zambia: Chipata		
3 FGDs with older women	2 KIIs with private sector	1 case study
2 FGDs with young men	1 KII with NGO	
2 FGDs with young women	2 KIIs with district government	
1 FGD with older men	2 KIIs with headmen	
	1 KII with councillor	
Total: 8 FDGs	Total: 8 KIIs	
Zambia: Sesheke/Sioma		
2 FGDs with older men	2 KIIs with headman	1 case study
1 FGD with young men	1 KII with Ward Councillor	
2 FGDs with older women	3 KIIs with district government	

	2 KIIs with national government	
	2 KIIs with cooperative leaders	
	2 KIIs with ward leaders	
Total: 5 FDGs	Total: 12 KIIs	
Zimbabwe: Tsholotsho		
6 FGDs older women	2 KIIs Private Sector	1 Case study
3 FGDs older men*	3 KIIs District Government	
	1 KII Local Leadership	
Total: 9 FGD	Total: 6 KII	
Zimbabwe: Mudzi		
3 FGDs older women	2 KIIs Private Sector	1 Case study
3 FGDs older men	3 KIIs District Government	
1 FGD young women		
1 FGD young men		
Total: 8 FGD	Total: 5 KII	

* Three FGD were done with older men in Tsholotsho In order to balance group numbers

2.2.4 Data collection

KII tools were developed for different stakeholders. FGDs used a semi-structured guide. Four stories of change (one from each district) were developed using a case study guide to carry out in-depth interviews with individuals or groups. The data collection tools are presented in annex 4. The field data collection was led by Tapiwa Shiri in Zimbabwe along with two research assistants and Patrick Chilumba and his colleagues along with some research assistants. Data collection was co-ordinated by Theresa Marimo. Data collection was overseen by Anna Brazier.

2.3 Data analysis and validation

The data was gathered by the research team assisted in the field by research assistants. Data was collected using Kobo Toolbox as well as voice recordings of interviews and FGD. The data was cleaned and analysed using thematic coding. A hierarchical code book was developed using both inductive and deductive methods. The data was analysed considering the research questions and OECD criteria for overarching themes, trends and patterns.

The study process, findings and recommendations were presented in a draft report for review by SDC and the MASAP team. A validation workshop was held for presentation of the findings, correction of errors and filling of any gaps. SDC and the MASAP team sent back the draft report with comments and corrections in order that the final report can be produced and submitted.

2.4 Limitations of the evaluation

The evaluation team was made aware that in this first phase MASAP has been influenced by 1) the project commencing during the 2021/22 agricultural season; 2) delays cause by the management team and intervention partners learning the administrative, financial and reporting procedures and 3) the third season being impacted by a devastating drought. These have affected the results of the project and made it difficult for the evaluation team to collect quantitative data. Missing or inadequate data includes: i) incremental tonnage secured by private companies, ii) incremental revenue realised by both farmers and private companies, iii) total return per dollar invested by SDC (total revenue realised as a ratio of total project cost), iv) cost per beneficiary being measured by the total US$ outlay to acquire a beneficiary (total project cost divided by the total number of beneficiaries reached). Data relating to number of beneficiaries reached comprises direct beneficiaries only. The exercise to ascertain the number indirect beneficiaries is currently being conducted by the MASAP team. As a result, the ratio is incomplete and can be misleading. Furthermore, we were not able to ascertain the level of profitability attributed to the project due in part to the short period of operation and the devastating effects of the drought.

Field data collection in Zambia faced challenges, as many groups were unaware of the exercise, leading to delays in organizing participants. This issue arose because the evaluation team made last-minute changes to the wards included in the study, replacing those initially selected by MASAP. This change aimed to prevent potential bias and followed a strong recommendation from SDC that MASAP officers should not select the wards and groups for the study. Consequently, the evaluation team randomly selected wards and individual farmers for interviews. Additionally, since the MASAP Field Officer's contract had expired a month before fieldwork began, the research team had to independently identify contacts and prepare the selected wards for the study. Therefore, only five FGDs were carried out in Sioma/Sesheke.

In Sesheke male respondents could not participate in the data collection because they were in their fields which were far away from the study site. However, the low participation of men did not compromise the quality of data because the female respondents were very knowledgeable about the project.

The research team had aimed to hold focus group discussions with young men and young women in each study site. However, as shown in table 1 this was only possible in Chipata for Zambia. In Sesheke/ Sioma only one FGD was held with young men and none with young women. In Tsholotsho no FGD were held with youth and in Mudzi only one FGD was held with young women and one with young men. In both Zimbabwe and Zambia, it was challenging to mobilize youth representatives for focus group discussions. This was partly because youths constitute a small percentage of the total number of beneficiaries and also because they were too busy to participate.

Most local community leaders in Sesheke had very limited knowledge of the MASAP project and were speaking from hearsay during interviews. This indicated their limited participation in the project. Some of the farmer groups and commodity groups were newly formed so it was difficult to assess their achievements since their activities to date had been limited. The limitations in the number of focus groups meant that it was not possible to disaggregate the data during analysis according to opinions stated by men, women, young people and older people since women and older people were disproportionately represented in the data. It is hoped that by collecting opinions from a large group of key informants, this limitation has been reduced.

Two key government informants from Zambia were not available for interview during the study. Tragically Dr F. Miti passed away just before the study commenced. Mr L. Mbulwe was on leave during the study. Therefore more national key informants were interviewed in Zimbabwe than in Zambia and the MASAP management team members consulted tended to give examples on what is happening in Zimbabwe rather than Zambia producing a Zimbabwe-centric view of the project.

3 FINDINGS

This mid-term review has come to appreciate that MASAP is a complex project with diverse elements and activities across diverse districts in two very different national contexts and agroecological conditions. The project designers and funders must be applauded for endeavouring to develop a holistic, interconnected initiative aimed at enhancing long-term growth, resilience and sustainability in the seed and agriculture sectors of the target communities and nations. However, as with all large and complex projects, the inception year was affected by first mover challenges including delayed receipt and distribution of inputs, mobilisation and organisation of beneficiaries and preparedness of the private sector companies.

According to respondents in Zimbabwe, the 2022/23 agricultural season was characterised by poor rainfall distribution that affected productivity. The El Nino induced drought in the 2023/24 season affected all project districts except Chipata, severely reducing yields. This negative agricultural output, coupled with challenging economic conditions in Zimbabwe has affected the project outputs. Furthermore, constraints of procedures, budget, manpower and time have been evident in this first phase. As a result, the findings of this report must be read with the full recognition that there were major factors beyond the control of the project implementation team which have negatively influenced and impaired some of the outputs. Despite the challenges faced, the project has managed to achieve significant outputs and outcomes as well as learnings which will be adopted to secure a successful second phase.

3.1 Relevance

The study found that MASAP is relevant to the context, needs and challenges of the target communities, groups, project partners and key stakeholders.

3.1.1 Extent to which the key activities or processes aligned/contributing to each stated component/outcome remain relevant to the context.

A review of the relevant project documents as well as key informants' responses showed that the project activities (summarised in annex 3), are based on a considered appreciation of the contexts, needs and challenges of the target countries and communities. These include lack of access to affordable, good quality seed of drought-resilient, nutritious small grain and legume crops; lack of value chain development and weak markets for these crops; high post-harvest losses; food insecurity and nutrition challenges; climate change impacts and marginalisation of women and youth in the target areas. In addition, a poor enabling environment, related to lack of private sector engagement, weak policies, lack of protection of farmers rights and lack of policy implementation have exacerbated these factors. The study found that the project activities have been designed to address these various factors in a holistic and sustainable manner. However given the unforeseen challenges experienced by the project in the first phase, additional activities will be required to reduce negative impacts of such problems in future. These are discussed more in the recommendations section of this report.

Due to the different political and economic contexts in Zimbabwe and Zambia the project has been more active in the latter country where a conducive free market environment has allowed for a more hybridised MSD/MD approach. In Zimbabwe the project has had to deal with two shocks – drought and economic volatility which has led to an intervention approach that is biased towards market development. As explained by a national key informant: "*Zimbabwe has a very unstable economy which has created financial difficulties and difficulties in finding experienced IPs that can scale up and grow the market. In Zimbabwe three partners ran into financial difficulties. Becoming an IP is a long process. The business plans are reviewed and have to be approved by SDC. As an example, the business review by the SDC appointed business advisor requires a five-cycle review process that takes nearly five weeks, inevitably prolonging the approval process. In Zimbabwe the IPs are small and precarious. In Chipata there is a vibrant economy with lots of business happening. There is momentum to scale up."* Resolutions for these issues are discussed in the recommendations of this report.

In addition, the more conducive rainfall in Chipata has meant that the project has developed more quickly in that district in terms of more beneficiaries and IPs being brought on board. Sioma and Sesheke in Zambia are more like Tsholotsho and Mudzi in Zimbabwe. They are remote and the rainfall is poor.

However, a key informant explained: "*Although Tsholotsho has had the most struggles there are successes. Farmers had already shifted from trying to grow maize a long time ago, so it was easy to target them to try the new high yielding sorghum and millet varieties. And Ingwebu Breweries are providing a steady market for Red Sorghum, so production is increasing, and more farmers are being engaged by the project. Significant amounts of sorghum were produced by some farmers despite the drought. One farmer managed to get 6 x 50kg sacks…the increasing failure of maize in areas where people used to plant it (Sesheke, Sioma and Mudzi) means that it is easier to encourage farmers in these areas to change to traditional grains in those areas*". Although Tsholotsho is a very marginal district, it remains the best district agronomically, to multiply the drought tolerant varieties according to key informants.

3.1.2 Relevance of intervention results to address the contextual challenges and extent to which project design and approach are relevant to national and global development objectives

Although hampered by delays in the beginning, the intervention results to date have succeeded in addressing some contextual challenges of the target populations and groups such as improving linkages between farmers, markets and off-takers, growing the markets for the selected crops and supporting the growth of commodity based community owned enterprises (COE) in the target districts. Generally, the growth of the commodity value chains has been greater than the growth of the seed production aspects of the project to date. During the validation process, the MASAP team noted that this focus on commodity development first was deliberate in order to create a demand for commodities which would therefore have the effect of creating a demand for seed, thus stimulating the market. During the first year the project focussed on commodity production and markets and engaging IPs. The project is now seeking more partners to develop EGS. Zambia has led the way in terms of public sector development of EGS but the management team is confident that Zimbabwe can learn from this experience and can follow the example. The growth of seed production in Chipata has been notable due to higher rainfall in the first season of the project.

The three project components complement each other well and support the logic and premises of the project theory of change (ToC). The ToC (summarised in Annex 3) is based on some assumptions which may need to be interrogated. For example, the assumption that raised incomes or even increasing small grain production in the target districts will result in improved food security and nutrition. A further challenge underlying the ToC is the degree of difficulty in convincing SHF and private sector to switch from high value cash crops such as maize to relatively low value small grain and legume crops. As noted by a national key informant "*The drawback is that traditional crops are not considered as commercial crops, so people don't grow them a lot. They are also not seen as economically viable for seed companies… People growing traditional grains get lower yields than those growing maize"* Another key informant noted that under optimum conditions maize yields are higher but under drought conditions small grain yields are higher. These issues are discussed in more detail in the later sections of the report. However, the project experience thus far has shown that there is a market for small grain and traditional commodities and if this can be supported it will create a demand for seed of these crops thus encouraging more seed producers and improved prices.

Lack of interest in small grain and legume production and seed development by the private sector were identified as a major barrier to farmers in drought prone areas switching from maize to more drought tolerant crops. MASAP has been effective in encouraging farmers to organise themselves into associations and creating linkages with private sector contractors and off-takers associated with the small grain and legume commodities.

According to one key informant it is debatable whether an MSD approach has been implemented in either country[3]. In both countries MASAP has provided extensive direct support to the private sector – more aligned to a market development approach. This has much to do with suboptimal macro-economic environments in both countries, however in doing so, it might have missed an opportunity to create financial innovations that would support the private sector in years ahead. Take for example the donor funded revolving input funds – most companies have been given funds to procure inputs to provide on credit to farmers. A better solution may have been to develop a global MASAP fund, managed by a financial institution in each country. Another example are the grants provided to the private sector for asset procurement- a modest interest-bearing package co-developed with a financial institution could have achieved the same result, but with the added advantage that loan repayments would create a fund for future MASAP grantees. Resolutions for this issue are discussed in the recommendations section.

Some other approaches are less clearly explained in the project document or the operational reports. As pointed out in a report, considerations for MASAP Business Plans (Dawes, 2024), it is not clear whether the IPs (many of which claim to be promoting agroecological practices), appreciate what agroecology is (as defined by FAO and others) and that they extend beyond conservation farming. The project needs to develop a clear definition of the agroecological methods and principles that it is promoting and develop a sound way of measuring their implementation and impact. Elements of the FAO Tool for agroecology performance evaluation[4] could be employed. Similarly, the project approach to improving dietary diversification is not clear.

The project is aligned with and contributes to the implementation of the following national policies:
In Zimbabwe: The National Agriculture Policy Framework, the Zimbabwe National Strategy and Action Plan for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, The National Climate Policy and Climate Change Response Strategy, Zimbabwe's Agrobiodiversity strategy and the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan as well as the National Policy on Agroecology. It supports the development of the National Seed Policy.
In Zambia: The National Agriculture Policy, the National Policy on Climate Change, the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, the National Seed Policy and Plant Variety Protection Act.

With respect of MASAP's contribution to **international development objectives** the project contributes to the sustainable development goals (SDG) in terms of contributing to poverty reduction (SDG 1, No poverty) reducing hunger and promoting sustainable agriculture (SDG 2, Zero hunger) championing women's participation in the project (SDG 5, gender equality), contributing to rural economic growth and employment (SDG 8, Decent work and economic growth), advancing the use of new technologies (SDG 9, Industry innovation and infrastructure), reducing inequality by including women, young people and people living with HIV (SDG 3 Global health and well-being), helping to combat climate change and its impacts (SDG13, climate action) and promoting sustainable land use (SDG15, Life on land). The project also advances the principles enshrined in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture[5] of improving farmers rights and promoting food sovereignty[6] and seed sovereignty. By promoting the conservation and development of traditional crop varieties the project upholds the principles of the Convention on Biological Diversity[7].

3.1.3 How consistent are the achieved effects with the needs of the target groups?

Most study respondents felt that the project interventions addressed the needs of the target populations in the following main ways shown in table 2.

[3] As per our earlier definition, MSD seeks to identify the underlying root causes for market inefficiencies or exclusion. Instead of direct interventions, it fosters systemic changes in market relationships, rules, and incentives. The goal is to create more inclusive, competitive, and sustainable markets that benefit marginalized groups, such as small businesses or low-income consumers, without dependency on external support.
[4] Tool for agroecology performance evaluation https://www.fao.org/agroecology/tools-tape/en/
[5] https://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/en/
[6] https://www.fao.org/agroecology/database/detail/en/c/1253617/
[7] https://www.cbd.int/

Table 2: Project interventions that addressed needs of the target populations (number of times mentioned by respondents in KII and FGD)

Project interventions	National/ project KII (n = 6)	Private sector KII (n = 7)	District KII (n = 11)	FGD (n = 30)	Total
	Number of times mentioned by respondents during FGD and KII				
Improving farmer skills and knowledge (through farming and business training)	2	6	11	33	52
Improving linkages of small holder farmers to markets	7	4	3	27	41
Improved access to better quality, drought-resistant seed	3	2	3	30	38
Improving community seed banks	2	2	2	19	25
Improving SHF access to inputs			2	5	7
Improving COE/ farmer access to finance				6	6

The introduction of processing machinery was seen as a major improvement to the lives of community members not just for setting up processing enterprises but also to save labour hours for women and young people and thus more labour-saving equipment was identified to further address mechanisation challenges within the community. However, some needs and challenges still needed to be further addressed by the project. A major challenge identified mainly by district respondents in both Zambia and Zimbabwe was lack of water sources for livestock and crop irrigation. Focus group participants noted that the project should also expand to include diversification into other income generating activities such as livestock production and irrigated gardens. A key informant noted that during phase II of the project, the importance of mixed farming (livestock, forestry, irrigated gardens) diversifying and spreading the risks, will be taken into consideration, preparing farmers for the next drought, to secure their food supply, if the agricultural crops fail.

Lack of youth involvement was interpreted as being due to challenges and needs of young people not being met by the project. One respondent remarked that "*youths are attracted by short term projects that yield results within a shorter cycle. Agricultural activities are by nature not short cycled, and easily impacted by factors outside the control of the farmer. Consequently, youths are less attracted until they observe positive results emerging from early adopters".*

Private sector respondents also talked about how the project was addressing their needs. For example, a key informant noted that "*The project has enabled us to expand our product offering to include cowpeas… tinned cowpeas and cowpea flour. It is also improving our feedstock supply".* Other private sector respondents said they appreciated the business advice and project grants from MASAP. Another private sector respondent said that the project has afforded the opportunity to introduce state-of-the-art processing equipment that has enhanced their product offerings, quality and output/productivity. Another respondent from Zimbabwe noted that MASAP had facilitated the development and implementation of policies (related to small grain promotion and climate responsive agriculture) that government had intended to advance but lacked the motivation and resources until the project came along. The government has begun restriction of distributing maize seed in the districts where MASAP is operating. The review team noted that the Ministry of Agriculture representatives in Chipata fully own their roles in MASAP and are involved in training of the beneficiaries. The language of the officials suggested ownership of the project by government.

3.2 Coherence

This section looks at how well the intervention components are integrated and how well the project fits with national and other objectives. The study found that the MASAP is coherent in terms of linkages and synergies among the project team, partners, policy, operational modalities and governance.

3.2.1 Internal coherence, between the components of the project, among partners, operational modalities and governance structure

The study found that initial focus for the project during the first two years of implementation was on components 1 and 2 and although component 3 was progressing there was little linkage between the different components. However, now the project is realising more links between component 3 and the other components. The results of MASAP research in aspects such as improved post-harvest practices are now feeding into training at farmer field schools and the improved policy environment resulting from stakeholder platforms, dialogues and advocacy work is starting to influence the growth of the market for small grains and legumes (component 2) as well as farmer managed seed systems and farmer variety registration.

In terms of relations between the project implementors, the project partners, beneficiaries and key stakeholders most key informant and FGD respondents highlighted that these were said to be very good and have facilitated the effective running and success of the project. For example, a district respondent noted: "There is g*ood coordination between partners and other stakeholders. The project has worked with the Ministry of women's affairs, Ministry of youth and the local government".* The project works mainly with the Ministry of Agriculture at National level but the Ministries responsible for youth and gender also sit on the various stakeholder forums and Ministry of youth is represented on the steering committee. A key informant noted that in Zambia, at the beginning of the project, national level representatives from Ministry for agriculture were engaged and sensitised about the project but most of these people have now left their original positions and the project needs to re-engage with the new representatives. At district level the main focal points in both countries are the government agriculture officers. The agriculture extension officers are involved with identifying farmer groups and carrying out training. In Zambia the ministry of SMEs is involved with the project and helps the project to link with the groups that it is working with. They are also involved with training groups in business skills at district level. In Zambia youth employees are not represented at district level. Key informants noted that more engagement of Ministries of health and environment at stakeholder platform level would be beneficial to the project in terms of furthering its goals related to improved nutrition and environmental sustainability.

With respect to operational modalities and governance structures it was reported that the project management and implementation teams as well as some project partners took time to learn the procedures and protocols demanded by an SDC project. Many of these were new to the team and project participants and this learning process have caused delays in implementation. However, now that everyone is conversant with these systems the governance structure is working well.

The relationships within the MASAP management team and the consortium were reported to be good with the team being applauded for being strong, hard-working and dedicated. The MASAP team also feel that they have good relationships with the donor and with the government of Zimbabwe and Zambia. MASAP team representatives said that when they get constructive criticism, they take it on board and address it. This sentiment was reiterated by two respondents. The flexibility and ability of the donor to listen to the concerns voiced by the MASAP team was also appreciated. This has enabled the project to be highly adaptive.

In terms of component 3, a respondent noted that: "*The consortium of universities has been very useful in co-development of action research tools, co-learning and joint capacity development of students. The Consortium has also jointly implemented project activities such as in Mudzi district".* He recommended that the project should carry out more participatory trials with farmers and get them to plant small plots of different varieties so their performance can be monitored. However, the MASAP was already in the process of setting up or running demo prots for agor-ecology in the two countries. In Zambia, the Agroecology Expert had set up some demo

plots in Chipata and Sioma while in Zimbabwe, CTDO also established some demo plots. However, in Zimbabwe these were affected by the drought. CTDO planned (and is still planning) to set up varietal trials in both Mudzi and Tsholotsho. Another respondent noted that the project has created *"Support structures that involve government departments, farmers and private companies. In addition, the project has strengthened groups that were created by other departed NGOs instead of reinventing groups".*

3.2.2 Extent to which MASAP is compatible and coordinating with other interventions

MASAP uses the markets system development (MSD) approach which is in line with many SDC approaches. The project links well with the ethos of SDC being promoted through their Agriculture and Food Security Network platform. It also aligns well with SDC policies on agroecology, climate and targeting the most vulnerable. The project links with other CSA projects being implemented in other areas by the consortium members as well as Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI) projects being supported by SDC. The project leverages on existing agricultural and traditional knowledge within the communities (such as indigenous weather forecasting systems). It is also riding on the influence of other key projects such as the Amalima Loko project being implemented in Tsholotsho and now ended Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund building resilience through improving the Absorptive and Adaptive Capacity for Transformation of at-risk communities (BRACT) project that was implemented in Mudzi. This link with other civil society projects was reiterated in an older women FGD respondents noted that MASAP "*works well with other partners… they even embraced the concepts brought by other projects like BRACT." (Older women FGD).* More details on relationships between private sector and MASAP beneficiaries can be found in the case study section (Annex 4).

Several key informants at national and district level and some FGD participants noted that MASAP aligns with and supports national policies. In Zimbabwe MASAP is in line with the vision 2030 and National Development Strategy 1. It complements the government Pfumvudza/Intwasa conservation agriculture programme which promotes the growing of traditional grains. It further complements the Zimbabwe and Zambian government drive for compulsory traditional grain production in the drought prone agro-ecological regions (IFAD/ FIDA 2024 and FISP for Zambia). Through promoting and equipping COE, the project is fostering the rural industrialisation project of the Zimbabwe government where devolution is anchored on local economic development.

It is also through production of small grains by IPs engaged by MASAP that some seed companies have started supplying small grains to the government through the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) in Western region of Zambia. MASAP has also promoted production of Early Generation Seed (EGS) through engagement of COEs by Zambia Agriculture Research Institute (ZARI). ZARI thereafter supplies the EGS to different seed companies throughout the country to multiply and supply certified seed to the government through FISP. MASAP is also building onto projects such as those of SKI, by expanding the district level Traditional Food and Seed Festivals to cover the MASAP districts and linking them to the national festivals too. At the national level, the festivals are being enhanced through integration of a Market Day and strengthening activities related to nutrition and health, as well as to youth involvement.

According to a key informant, in Zimbabwe the Grain Marketing Board is taking all traditional grains and is expected to pay a higher price for sorghum than maize. The price for traditional grains on the open market is also high especially during the off-season (IFAD, FIDA 2024). In Zambia the government is also putting measures in place to support traditional grain production. Further, aflatoxin testing in groundnuts is now part of policy. The climate adaptive agriculture training and promotion also compliments government policy in both countries.

In terms of relations with the community a FGD respondent summed it up by saying that MASAP "*encourages community engagement, participation and ownership ensuring that all projects are community driven… building capacity within the community, empowering local organisations and residents to drive positive change". (Older Men FGD).* Key informants also noted that there had been a positive response to the project from the private sector (seed companies, off takers and processors) and it links with the direction that many of the partners want

to move in but have lacked the resources and motivation to do so. Thus, the project has strongly catalysed growth in a sector that had potential but was not expanding.

3.2.3 Review of stakeholder coordination systems, including the National Stakeholder Platforms and the Regional Steering Committee

The MASAP stakeholder co-ordination systems seem to be working well. MASAP is co-ordinated by a regional steering committee that meets twice per year. There is also an associated WhatsApp group where emerging issues are posted and discussed by stakeholders. This is noted by national respondents to be effective and encourages collaboration and cross-country learning. According to a key informant, this strong engagement with national governments makes implementation easier at district level. In Zimbabwe, Government officers even assist with monitoring the project at district level. However, a key informant from Zimbabwe noted that the project has not engaged much with ministries other than Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Small to Medium Enterprises (SME). This includes, as highlighted earlier ministries of health (for nutrition), and environment (for environmental sustainability).

The same informant noted that MASAP needs to become more widely known in other national platforms. It is partly known by the Ministry of SME and Women's affairs in Zimbabwe but apart from the Ministries for Agriculture and Youth it is not well known. The same respondent noted that there should be more links with Ministry of Health and Ministry of Environment and that MASAP should have a symposium with more key ministries as well as other key stakeholders to increase the impact.

According to a key informant, the project has facilitated the establishment of national seed working group that has been constituted for driving the process of farmer seed registration. This has two sub-committees, a research committee and a policy committee and chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture, which supports building ownership of the of the project by the Government of Zimbabwe.

Key informants noted that there should be more co-learning within the steering committees, bringing in a wider range of stakeholders such as the standards association, food and nutrition co-ordinating bodies, consumer associations and other ministries. The MTR team noted the needed to expand/strengthen the some of the existing linkages and networking with Seeds and Knowledge Initiative (SKI) and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) as well as CGIAR institutes. There are some initiatives already underway that have the potential of strengthening these linkages. MASAP has reached out to UCT for exchange regarding how MASAP and SKI can enhance collaboration. There are plans to hold a a strategic meeting between MASAP Management and SKI Management when the two meet at the upcoming policy workshop in Harare at the end of November 2024. The MASAP networking, mapping, discussion forums and Seed and Food Festivals underway in both Zambia and Zimbabwe, and the trainings on water harvesting involve, some SKI partners. With the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the MASAP noted that engagements and exchanges have been made through their involvement in policy dialogues and on nutrition sensitive agriculture. The team acknolwdged this needs to be strengthened in the future.

Another key informant noted that although ICRISAT is supplying EGS to the project, it would be better to strengthen public breeding institutes for supply of EGS. Respondents noted that at district level, more needs to be done to complement the work of government departments. The project must not create parallel structures. The project currently works with government extension services but they often lack resources and motivation.

Poor district stakeholder engagement was noted by the review team in Zambia where chiefs and councillors interviewed showed little knowledge of the project. At district level, there have been some transfers for officials who were involved in the project and new officers have been transferred to MASAP supported districts. This is especially so in NW Province. The review team noted that most officials that participated in the launch of the project were transferred to other districts hence more sensitization of community leaders and government cadres is critical in these areas.

3.3 Effectiveness

This section looks at whether the intervention is achieving its objectives. The overall goal of MASAP is strengthened seed value chains and increased utilisation of improved and diverse seed varieties of small grains and legumes contributing to improved incomes and availability of nutritious food. This in turn contributes to resilient livelihoods of SHF especially women, youth and other marginalised groups in Zimbabwe and Zambia. The programme achieves this by improving sustainable and predictable availability and access to affordable quality seed and related services by SHF through increased engagement of the private sector and developing a gender and youth responsive enabling policy environment supportive of small grains and legumes sectors' needs and interests.

MASAP is yet to conduct an outcome and impact assessment of the progamme, planned for end of year 3, during December 2024 and January 2025. Therefore, the data presented in the following sections are mainly related to outputs and are derived from the 5th Operational report.

3.3.1 Extent to which the project achieved its objectives, indicators and targets

Progress towards the targets and indicators of the project to outcome level are shown in Annex 3. The study found that the project is generally on track to achieve most of its targets despite the major setback of the 2023-24 drought. It is also worth noting that despite the short period of the project, there is evidence of of behavioural changes around the adoption of improved seed, thereby replacing the use of recycled seed and utilising labour-saving technologies like threshers. IPs interviewed have also confirmed that grains obtained from farmers that have threshers is cleaner, free from sand particles. However, more studies would be required to ascertain whether families have started consuming the nutritious legumes and traditional grains. Progress on components 1 and 2 seems to have been faster in Zambia with more farmers and IPs having been engaged at a faster rate than in Zimbabwe (Annex 4). As already mentioned (and confirmed by the MASAP team) this is due to the more conducive market environment in Zambia and the fact that Chipata has better conditions for seed and commodity production and market linkages.

According to the most recent operational report (MASAP 2024a), the project has achieved 84.5% of its phase 1 target to link 28,936 farmers with markets and related services through engaging 20 IPs. The project has directly reached 28,936 SHF (29.9%) out of a phase 1 target of 94,400 with diverse seeds and planting materials. While the project maybe reaching more indirect beneficiaries these are yet to be accounted for by the MASAP implementation team. The MASAP team reported plans were in place to do so at the end of year 3. This study will also examine how MASAP activities have influenced the behaviours of other community members, as well as the negative and positive impacts on other indirect beneficiaries.

Of the 28,936, 46% are women and 27% youth. They include SHF linked to contract farming, engaged in trainings (e.g. good governance and conflict resolution in farmer associations) through various service providers, engaged in action research and benefitting from innovation funds. A total of 7 (out of a phase 1 target of 8) farmer associations have been supported through cross-cutting climate and gender project activities and there are plans to integrate HIV/ AIDS awareness and support. Support for people living with HIV/ AIDS was limited to avoiding exclusion of any marginalised groups during beneficiary selection and conducting training in HIV prevention during farmer field schools. But more could be done systematically include HIV and AIDS in the project activities.

Although MASAP aims to increase crop yields, there were yield declines in both the 2022/23 seasons and the 2023/24 seasons mainly due to poor rainfall. The 2022/23 yields could also be due to late disbursements of inputs. The recent drought led to yield losses of over 75%.

The project has supported 20 private sector companies (IPs), linked to SHF directly through contract farming for seed or commodity production, who have received advice on improved business models and marketing and good governance. At the stages of Concept and Business Plan development, IPs were required to articulate their strategies for upholding good governance principles during project execution. This ensured that IPs addressed critical governance aspects—such as accountability, transparency, and ethical management. To strengthen these governance frameworks, participants from both newly onboarded and established IPs participated in an orientation on the principles of good governance, covering among other elements; Accountability and Transparency, Compliance and Ethical Standards, effective Financial Management; Internal Control Mechanisms, effective Risk Management, Stakeholder engagement, participation and management; compliance with Laws and Regulations. Despite these trainings MASAP has had to deal with specific circumstances of IP shortcomings. MASAP suspended disbursements to one of the Zimbabwean IPs, due to "misalignment of objectives and poor financial management". MASAP engaged Corporate Governance Experts to help another IP, Buntu Foods, to address shareholder disputes and operational challenges. Nyamasvinga Investments in Zimbabwe successfully completed a new factory building and received training on financial management and food safety and quality assurance as a result of the project.

The project has established a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) in Zambia for production of Early Generation Seed (EGS). This partnership involves the public breeder institute ZARI and several private seed companies, aggregators, smallholder farmers and equipment companies. MASAP is currently negotiating a similar arrangement with CBI in Zimbabwe. To foster collaboration and knowledge sharing, MASAP has facilitated 6 multi-stakeholder policy engagement platforms in Zambia and Zimbabwe (out of a phase 1 target of 10). MASAP has also established 5 (out of a phase 1 target of 10) innovation platforms bringing together government institutions, the private sector, and community representatives.

MASAP has already achieved its four-year target of promoting and supporting 10 diversified seed production initiatives among SHF in Zimbabwe and Zambia. These include promoting small grains and legumes, postharvest handling and seed storage, contract farming, seed multiplication, inspection, and supporting traditional food and seed festivals. The project also exceeded the target for participation by women, youth, and disadvantaged groups in research activities, with 3,448 individuals actively involved out of a phase 1 target of 990.

The project has assisted 3,152 farmers to purchase processing equipment to boost their income. The business models that have been promoted are in the areas of:

1) mechanisation where labour serving technologies have been introduced,
2) processing or value addition like grinding mills, peanut butter making machines, threshers for making stockfeeds,
3) provision of paid for services such as tillage, transportation, threshing, and
4) technology transfer through multiplication of improved seed. Farmers indicated that they raise the funds in various ways but mainly through sale of small animals such as goats.

The project has trained 5,195 SHF (1,238 in Zimbabwe and 3,957 in Zambia) in seed production. This fulfils 98% of the phase 1 target of 5,310 farmers in both countries.

In Zimbabwe, four recipients received funds for construction materials and processing equipment. In Zambia, two recipients received funds for training in crop production and raw material procurement, with four requesting final payments. All six recipients submitted quotations for equipment, including walking tractors and planters. To stimulate further use of the innovation fund during year 4, the fund will be promoted during all capacity building activities and beneficiaries will receive training in the application process. The progress on project indicators is detailed in annex 3.

Most study participants in KII and FGD agreed that the project was effective with respect to achieving targets, improving access to seed and seed services.

3.3.2 Profitability of private sector companies MASAP is supporting

The profitability of the IPs could not be ascertained during the study since those interviewed said that it was too early in the project to say whether the aspects supported through MASAP were making a profit. In addition, the problems related to drought and the economy in Zimbabwe made the past year very challenging for IPs.

The IPs that have been engaged through the project have shown they are prepared to go the extra mile through active participation. This is evidenced by the deployment of technical staff members stationed at district levels. Further, the companies have committed resources to support all activities of the project including financial resources to buyback produce from farmers. They invest more than 50% into the project for produce buyback as MASAP contributes less than 50%. Two key informants noted that the IPs see a lot of potential in the commodities.

The evaluation sought to establish the incremental commodity tonnage bought from participating farmers, incremental revenue and profitability attributed to the project. All the private sector players interviewed indicated that it was too early in the project cycle to be able to isolate produce and attribute revenue and profitability to the intervention of the MASAP project. Incremental in this context is defined as the new additional tonnage or revenue that has been realised by the companies because of the project interventions. It is the project expectation that after receiving funding to procure a new processing plant, there is new production gains that have been realised. These could be quantified and projected as an important metric to measure financial performance of project and partner participation. One company representative highlighted that this was the company's first year of operation, which year was a complete write-off. The company revealed that all the EGS that had been secured for multiplication was lost because of the drought.

Two other IP representatives remarked that although this was their second season of operation, both seasons had been affected by, 1) logistical delays in distributing inputs in year one that negatively affected the quantity of produce available for buy-back and 2) the El Nino induced drought that decimated productivity. Resultantly, the companies were not able to record and produce revenue and profitability figures.

The absence of incremental revenue (revenue realised by all beneficiaries divided by the total project cost) from the private sector companies, after 2.5 rainfed growing seasons, has hampered the evaluation of an important metric; the calculation of the return per SDC investment In addition, the COEs were in their first cycle of having received machinery whilst some COEs and farmer groups in Mudzi were in the process of receiving machinery during the time of review. As such, they are still to realise income from the interventions and investments.

A key informant noted that the higher risks in Zimbabwe have made things a bit more complicated for IPs. All have had cash flow problems, and the project takes a risk in providing grants to them. There is need to better control the cash flow. Another key informant noted that some criticise MASAP for going too far into development programming because of the use of grants but this is necessary because of the very thin nature of the existing markets. The project aims to have a more facilitating role, and the grants were intended to work more like a revolving fund. Several respondents suggested that IPs need more capacity building including more financial and business training and business tours. The review team noted that private companies have no recognisable financing model to fund their out grower projects. This makes it difficult to have well-structured buyback project that has well defined payment timelines. The project should consider partnering with financial institutions in assisting companies with revolving cashflow injections at buyback points. This will alleviate the payment delays experienced by farmers.

Community Owned Enterprises

Respondents pointed out that COEs are provided with financial resources and business training to make them contribute towards economic development through offering services to the communities. The economic activities include ploughing, transportation, threshing, and milling services. The business training was highly appreciated by many COE respondents. One COE representative in Tsholotsho praised MASAP for providing a

thresher, and training the group in business management, financial management, technical use of the equipment and general maintenance. This group is a predominantly female group with one male member and two female youths. They thresh their own produce and look forward to offering the service to surrounding farmers. The review team noted that while it is acknowledged that the COEs receive mentorship at different stages of business development, they need more intensive mentorship/ incubation until they have mastered running a microbusiness. It is proposed that the mentorship be offered by partners that are designed to remain active in the project areas after the project has ceased.

3.3.3 Assess the effectiveness of the service providers such as government departments and civil society organisations

The project has several service provision aspects through a wide range of service provision agents. The key service provision agents can be classified in terms of different groups shown in table 4.

Table 4: Examples of different service providers to the MASAP beneficiaries

Government departments	Civil society	Academic institutions	Private sector	Consultants
Agricultural extension services provide training in improved, climate smart agricultural practices to FFS	Seed and Knowledge Initiative (**SKI)** and Members of Participatory Ecological Land Use Management Association (**PELUM) Zambia and PELUM Zimbabwe, and Zambia Alliance for Agroecology and Biodiversity (ZAAB)** link some of the MASAP project beneficiaries to their agroecology projects. **Bioinnovation Zimbabwe** co-ordinated food and seed festivals and provides some nutrition training.	**Universities** train community members in some project districts on research methods and improved agricultural practices	**Commodity companies** train farmers in improved agricultural practices **Seed companies** train farmers in seed production **Equipment retailers** – train COE members of maintenance and correct use of equipment	**Transversal experts** providing training on GALS including youth participation and good governance to FFS members **Business and legal consultants** provide advice to IPs The Agroecology Expert in Zambia training on farmer research methods and demo plots establishment and management.

Most KII and FGD respondents felt that the government and private sector service providers were effective. The services provided by these include training and technical support. For example, SHF groups receive training on improved agricultural production methods (including climate resilient agriculture and agroecological techniques and post-harvest handling) and seed production methods through farmer field schools from agricultural extension agents with support from private sector companies and CTDO in some cases in Zimbabwe. Farmer groups receive information on improved nutrition, HIV/AIDS information and GALS through consultants (Transversal experts). COEs receive training on various use and maintenance of processing and other machinery purchased through the project and business management and financial literacy. IPs receive technical support on improved business management. Some national respondents noted that the community engagement and private sector officers contracted by the project have been effective and have followed up on the impacts of their training.

District KII and FGD participants showed that the training gained through the project was one of the most relevant and impactful aspects to date. This indicates that the service providers are being effective. However,

studies have shown that government extension capacity is often marred by lack of resources. A recent study by IFAD/FIDA (2024) for example lists problems with government extension services in Zimbabwe as including low extension agent to farmer ratios, lack of motivation of extension staff, shortage of transport, lack of extension staff strategies, poor internet access, limited availability of training aids, limited co-ordination of government and NGO extension streams and limited exposure to technologies leading to low productivity, food insecurity and low prices. An indication that agricultural training in MASAP is not as effective as it should be is discussed in the next section.

Some private sector respondents mentioned the benefit of having the project business advisory service to help them streamline their operations. Other respondents mentioned the need for more links with other civil society initiatives including the agroecological work by SKI and PELUM members and linking with the IFAD Sorghum promotion project which is working in the same provinces in Zimbabwe.

3.3.4 Assess the usage and benefit of the innovation grants

Study respondents noted that IPs, farmer groups and COEs have benefitted through accessing sub-award grants and innovation grants. The model for COEs and farmer groups is that they access innovation grants where they contribute twenty percent (20%) towards the total cost of the asset/machinery/equipment being acquired. Private sector companies (IPs) have a different model whereby they benefit though their contribution is not directly linked to the asset being acquired. The project funded the full cost for a new processing plant for one of the IPs. As their contribution the IP paid for transport, import duty and pre delivery inspections. They also had to secure funding for raw materials to be processed by the plant and distributed to retailers. This plant has enhanced their productivity and quality of produce. Two IP grant recipients revealed that the introduction of threshers to traditional grains producers is reducing the level of impurities including soil particles in grains and the resultant maize products.

Respondents noted that innovation grants had attracted young people to the project and empowered them as well as creating employment for young people in the community. They increased income and gave young people access to new technology. Young people are not usually attracted to agriculture related livelihoods, but this business development element catalysed by the grants motivated young people to get involved. One respondent noted, "*Through the input finance scheme, we can secure inputs for our farmers. There is no cost sharing on asset acquisition except our exercising our management expertise".* A key informant in Zimbabwe noted that young people have been empowered by innovation grants and this has created employment, increased income and access to new technology.

However, Dawes (2024) notes that "*using donor funds to purchase company assets, or upgrade company facilities, ignores financial markets and provides beneficiary companies with an unfair competitive advantage".* He recommends creating a MASAP fund available at reasonable interest or alternatively the project covering part or all the bank interest as a grant. Dawes concludes that *"MASAP has an opportunity to negotiate with banks and leverage better terms and conditions for IPs"*.

The existing method of providing sub-awards and innovative grants should be used as an entry strategy to provide catalytic funds to generate market activities in districts that are generally marginalized. The farmers have no known relationship with any financial institution, thus trying to develop a non-existent market system requires some stimulus funding. Financial institutions are not participating in value chains that are operating in marginal areas. As the project matures into the next phase, key relationships between farmers, IPs and the financial institutions should have been developed. The first entry point would be to create a fund financed by the project. The funds would be availed to recipients as loans to fund all production, marketing activities and the acquisition of assets. This is the desired intervention methodology but has challenged most MSD inspired projects because the market systems lack notable participation of financial players. Most projects have implemented modified MSD approaches to suit local conditions.

3.3.5 Response of the project to external shocks

The external shocks that impacted on the project during the review period included economic instability in Zimbabwe (including inflation and price fluctuations), and outbreak of rosette virus in Chipata and the El Nino induced drought in the region. The latter was the main shock identified by most research respondents and had a major negative impact on the project with total crop failure being realised by many farmers especially in the drier districts.

It was noted by some respondents that the whole MASAP project is designed to respond to drought and to build resilience to climate change by promoting the cultivation of drought-tolerant crops. However, one respondent stated that the project was not quick to respond to the drought and lacked a principled approach so that it is clear what needed to be done in case of a drought. Anticipatory action or crisis modifier models could be considered by the project as a future response to severe drought. Several review KII respondents noted that the agroecological regions chosen for the project are not ideal for seed production due to the lack of reliable rainfall or irrigation and thus the drought severely hampered achievement of the project results leading to losses of seeds, crops and income.

Drought mitigation measures that had been put in place through the project included training farmers in climate resilient agroecological methods such as moisture conservation. However, uptake and implementation of these methods has not been widespread according to a respondent. This requires more linkages with SKI projects. Timing of planting was also found to be key. As noted by a key informant *"Those that planted earlier did better. This year we are recommending that farmers should plant by the end of October to be sure to harvest. Thus, farmers should be given seed as early as possible".* However, the 2023/24 drought was the worst in 40 years according to the Zimbabwe Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development and in such a case it is unlikely that even drought resistant crops and agroecological methods could produce meaningful yields. After a brainstorming session the project team and other stakeholders came up with a comprehensive drought response plan and budget (MASAP 2024b). This proposed short- and long-term actions to take including:

Short-term actions

- Debt write off by procuring new crop inputs for the next growing season
- Early procurement and distribution of inputs by mid-September 2024 (for the 2024-2025 season)
- Support irrigated production of EGS in winter (covering MASAP crops) in Zambia
- Awareness raising on the benefits of traditional grains and legumes under low rainfall regimes
- Documentation of outliers (Farmers who managed to harvest above average yields) under the El Nino induced drought conditions) for the MASAP crops
- Riverine based small scale irrigation schemes (farmer managed) in Zambia

Long term actions

- A microinsurance study has been carried out. A further study on agro insurance in targeted districts should be conducted including a feasibility analysis, build a business case and pilot the prototype product and if successful, commercialise.
- Promote moisture conservation techniques (linking with work already happening through agroecology partners through component 3).
- Establish large scale demonstration plots showcasing drought mitigation strategies
- Develop a (working capital) finance facility for IPs in Zambia
- Invest in irrigation
- Training on contract management (especially understanding of Force Majeure)

Study respondents also proposed some of these measures as well as others. The main measures proposed by various study participants are presented in table 5.

Table 5: Measures proposed to reduce the impacts of drought on the project (number of times mentioned by respondents)

Drought mitigation measures	National/ project KII (n = 6)	Private sector KII (n = 7)	District KII (n = 11)	FGD (n = 30)	Total
	Number of times mentioned by respondents during FGD and KII				
Irrigation	7		3	10	20
Move seed production to other districts	5	1	1		7
Agroecological methods/ water harvesting and conservation	3			1	4
Debt write-off	2		2		4
Weather insurance	2		1		3
ISALs			1	1	2
Seed banks			2		2
Early seed distribution	1				1

Some of these proposals are explored in more detail in the following sections.

3.3.5.1 Irrigation

Irrigation was the most common solution proposed by study respondents. A key informant noted that the government of Zimbabwe is aiming to have 350000ha of crops in the country under irrigation. If MASAP could fund 10000ha of land to be under irrigation this would be a great contribution to this effort. Another key informant in Chipata district Zambia stated that if MASAP could work with Living Waters, an NGO drilling boreholes in the district, then the production of both MASAP supported crops and others like vegetables would significantly increase and further help improve income and nutrition.

However, as noted by a key informant, access to irrigation is complex, needs a lot of investment and there probably isn't time to put in the infrastructure before the next phase so it may be necessary to identify other districts close to the current project areas that already have irrigation. A national key informant noted a further problem which is that farmers want to grow high value crops such as horticulture in irrigation schemes not small grains. Therefore, it is very likely that farmers in irrigation schemes will switch to other crops when the project ends.

All the five private sector companies interviewed intimated that use of irrigation would improve the success of seed multiplication process. However, the company representative confirmed that it is highly unlikely that farmers in irrigation schemes would substitute the high value horticultural crops for low value and low yielding traditional grains and legumes for seed production. Further, there are limited irrigation schemes in the selected districts to implement seed multiplication.

3.3.5.2 Insurance

Although insurance for farmers was proposed by several respondents, several also doubted whether it would work. As noted by a key informant, most companies won't insure for low value crops. Groundnuts production is a possibility. In addition, there is a danger of creating an artificial project-based situation if insurance is promoted through the project. The project funded a study in Zambia and Zimbabwe on the feasibility of introducing insurance for farmers (Risk Shield Consultants, 2024). The study found that the main risks faced by MASAP farmers are drought and pest and disease problems. Farmers are keen on weather index insurance. The main challenges identified in Zambia were low levels of awareness and understanding among farmers and aggregators

on how the products work; generally high cost of premiums due to the high risks involved and reluctance among farmers to purchase the products on a purely voluntary basis. In Zimbabwe the added challenges are lack of trust in insurers by farmers and losses incurred by insurers in past experiences with insuring farmers.

The study recommends that in Zambia there is good scope for agriculture index insurance to be piloted through MASAP in 2024/25 particularly with IPs such as Farmer Outgrower Foundation, Share Africa Zambia, Shais Foods, Dilroba and Acre Plus. In Zimbabwe the study recommends piloting insurance with Associated Foods Zimbabwe (AFZ) and Zadzamatura. Dawes (2024) suggest that insurers will likely prefer to insure groups of farmers rather than individuals. He cautions against the project paying for insurance as this could create dependency. Rather farmers should be encouraged to group together and pay for insurance embedded in the cost of inputs through the IP credit packages.

3.3.5.3 Debt write-off

A respondent noted that contract farming in Zimbabwe is risky for IPs because by law contracts with farmers must have a clause to protect them from force majeure such as drought. There is currently no such law in Zambia and this fact makes IPs more eager to engage with farmers but puts farmers in a precarious position. The project could consider engaging the Zambian government to address this through policy in future.

The project put in place a blanket measure for debt clearance for farmers who did not produce anything during the last season. It is a concern from the review team that a complete debt write off may set an artificial precedent which cannot be maintained once the project has ended. This needs to be considered for successive phases.

3.3.5.4 Water conservation techniques and other climate-resilient practices

According to a key informant, the project has already been supporting water harvesting promotion and training for farmers through Community Engagement and action research (Components 1 and 3). In Zimbabwe this has begun with mapping of agroecological projects in Mudzi and Tsholotsho by Zimbabwe Organic Producers and Promoters Association (ZOPPA) while PORET has been engaged to strengthen field and community level water harvesting in both districts. ZOPPA will propose recommendations to strengthen networking and information exchange. Also, through the project, PORET are working with CTDO and Agritex on feasibility studies with the community to decide which structures will work best. These will be promoted through farmer field schools. In Zambia a similar process is being carried out by ZAAB and RESCOPE in liaison with PELUM Zambia. These innovations need to be scientifically monitored through the project. In addition, the project could investigate production of vegetables using methods such as wicking beds to complement household food availability and possible income generation enhancement.

Improved soil and water management (including use of conservation agriculture techniques such as minimum tillage and planting in basins, mulching, cover cropping and agroforestry have been shown to have important positive impacts on crop yields during droughts (see for example Steward et al 2018, Ngetich et al 2022 and Lamptey, 2022). The case study of Gilbert Andiseni presented in Annex 5 of this report shows how soil and water conservation techniques can be highly beneficial in a drought situation.

Recent post-harvest surveys carried out with MASAP farmers in Zambia and Zimbabwe (MASAP, 2024c and 2024d) showed that farmers under MASAP used more appropriate responses to mitigate the effects of the drought than non-MASAP farmers. These included planting short season varieties, reducing the area of land under production, planting drought resistant crops and varieties, reducing their use of fertilisers and changing the planting date. Overall, the Zimbabwe survey found that although many farmers received low or no yields due to the drought, the MASAP farmers achieved greater yields than non-participating farmers. However more investigation needs to be done on the low uptake of improved agricultural practices generally by project farmers and water conservation practices. The post-harvest surveys found that less than a quarter of farmers surveyed

in Zambian districts and Mudzi and about half of those surveyed in Tsholotsho were using recommended conservation farming planting basins.

Other worrying issues highlighted by these surveys were that climate information did not reach most farmers in Zambia meaning that most farmers were not aware of the likelihood of a drought in 2023-24. During dry spells and early cessation of the rains most farmers did not take any action. In Zimbabwe advice about the commencement of the rainy season and when they should start planting was inaccurate leading to a high opportunity cost. All crops grown by sampled farmers performed poorly, during the 2023-24 season including the drought-tolerant crops and varieties. The effect of good agricultural practices was negligible due to the extent of drought. Key learnings from the study in Zimbabwe showed that farmers who outperformed their peers were in areas with better soils, planted earlier in the season (October), practiced sound water harvesting techniques and staggered their planting (MASAP 2024d).

3.3.5.5 Implementing the project in other districts

Several respondents proposed moving the seed production aspects of the project to districts that have higher rainfall. A respondent suggested linking with the sorghum production being promoted by IFAD in Matabeleland North and Mashonaland East which are in the same provinces as MASAP but include districts with better rainfall or irrigation water availability. The districts identified by the IFAD project as having high potential for sorghum production (IFAD, FIDA, 2024) are:

- Goromonzi, Murehwa, Mutoko and UMP (Mashonaland East)
- Mt Darwin, Rushinga and Muzarabani (Mashonaland Central)
- Mhondoro Ngezi (Mashonaland West)
- Kwekwe and Chirimhanzu (Midlands)
- Hwange, Binga, Lupane and Nkayi (Matabeleland North)

As pointed out by Dawes (2024), there is need for the project IPs and the project management team to develop strategy for an above-average rainfall season in 2024-25 resulting from the projected La Nina event which could lead to crops being impacted by waterlogging, leaching, and weed infestations. However, there are contrasting reports that seem to suggest that the *La Nina* effect is weakening and the *El Nino* effect is strengthening.

3.4 Efficiency

This section investigated whether the project results have been achieved in a cost-effective way. Some aspects of the project were deemed efficient however better systems for timely disbursement of seed and other inputs and monitoring their quality and the fairness of terms presented through contracts with farmers. The evaluators could have used the MEL data to measure the cost per beneficiary, a metric that divides total cost of the project by the number of beneficiaries. The metric measures how much MASAP is spending on acquiring a beneficiary. However, this would have given an isolated ratio that cannot be correlated with other metrics to have a full view of the economic or financial efficiency of the project. Furthermore, in the absence of other financial metrics like incremental revenue from both IPs and COEs and farmer groups the cost per beneficiary would have lacked its correct relevance.

3.4.1 Strategic and timely implementation of activities and quality of the internal monitoring

There were mixed views from study respondents on whether the implementation of activities and the disbursement of funds and inputs for the project had been done in a timely way. A key informant noted that the project had a delayed start due to the initial markets assessment, but this study was necessary to give crucial information which was needed to inform IP selection for the project. He also noted that during 2023-24, the MASAP team were operating under the drought conditions which meant a loss in project turn over. However, the savings made were channelled into the drought response.

Key informants noted that there were also delays due to the establishment and learning about SDC procedures. This is a new type of programming for the project staff, and it took a while for them to get used to the systems which led to delays. However now the system is working well.

3.4.1.1 Delays in delivery of inputs and activities

Delays during the first year of the project (2021/22) were caused by the contracting period commencing during the first agricultural season.

While most respondents in Zimbabwe agreed that activities such as training were conducted on time, most complained that the disbursement of seed (to farmers) and funds to some COE, IPs and academic research partners was delayed. The delay in seed disbursement seems to have mainly been a problem in the 2022/23 season. In Zimbabwe part of this delay was due to groundnut seed that were imported from Zambia being held up at the border with Zimbabwe due to lack of prior arrangements with the importation authorities. The delay affected the distribution of seed in both provinces resulting in delayed establishment of crops. Crop productivity was compromised as a result. This can be addressed in future by better, timely liaison with the government focal point for MASAP who can intervene on behalf of the project.

In Zambia, respondents reported delays in the delivery of inputs and training. Implementing partners (IPs) consulted during the study cited delayed project funding as the primary cause of these setbacks, which, in turn, postponed the provision of seeds and training sessions. The delays largely result from the lengthy financial reporting process. After IPs submit their periodic financial reports and MASAP clears them, there remains an extended wait for SDC's approval and fund disbursement, leading to significant lag times. Some seed from AFZ was distributed in October 2023, and farmers only planted in December 2023. The MASAP management team noted that effective rains only came to Mudzi came around the 27th of December 2023, so despite the late delivery of seeds, farmers were able to plant.

The quality of some inputs and other logistical problems were also mentioned. As noted by a focus group of older men in Mudzi "*They didn't manage to bring inputs in time… the fertiliser was poor quality and there was no labour assistance to handle the products. Also, the seed was overpriced at $4 per kg and they buy $1,2 per kg meaning it is hard for us to get more seed".* Overpriced seed was also mentioned by some farmers linked to Vine Agro in Zambia. The MASAP team noted that the imported seed from Zambia was much cheaper than what was quoted by local seed houses in Zimbabwe. This influenced the decision to import seed. Farmers were given seed at USD3,20 per kg which was the landed price.

It is the view of the review team that this issue around pricing and cost levels are emanating from lack of full understanding by farmers. If a farmer receives 8kg of seed at a cost of US$32, they are expected to repay the loan by way of commodity exchange. Matching volume of seed against volume of commodity appears to be not matching from a simplistic view, yet seed is more valued than produce. More communication is likely to solve this problem.

During the second year of implementation, most of the logistical challenges had been addressed as evidenced by farmers and the private sector companies confirming that all inputs were received and distributed well in time.

3.4.1.2 Poor seed quality

Another issue that came up in the study was poor quality of seed distributed to both commodity farmers (sorghum) and seed producers (groundnuts). The seed was said to have included mixed varieties which hampered crop management activities and quality of yield. As a group of groundnut seed producers form Mudzi noted: "There was *delay in seed provision… the seed was mixed, yet we are supposed to grow one variety. The seed germination was good even though it was mixed. The seed was affected by insects…They gave us wet fertilisers."*

Other respondents had more positive things to say about project efficiency. For example, a group of young male commodity producers in Mudzi noted that *"financial distribution was done very well since we had a budget, and funds were delivered in time".*

3.4.1.3 Monitoring

Monitoring the project was noted by a key informant to have been challenging due to the size and scope of the project and the fact that it spans four diverse implementation areas in two different countries. The same key informant noted "*It has been very difficult for one person to do all the monitoring and evaluation required for such a large project in two different countries. We should have trained the IPs to collect data. We don't know if we are under-representing or over-representing. We need to strengthen the project M and E, and it needs to be external and verifiable."* The informant noted that monitoring the project in Zambia was easier than in Zimbabwe due to the economic volatility and pricing and reporting in foreign currency in the latter country. According to key informants, a part time monitoring assistant has been recruited to help during key monitoring periods, but they conceded that that person should probably be employed for more days. A key informant noted that reporting should focus more on outcomes and not just activities. For example, it is important to know not just how many farmers have been trained but also how they have used the training. Another challenge with the monitoring system is that *"the baseline was done in a good year but there needs to be a multiyear overlay to get a realistic picture"*

3.4.2 Extent that management, monitoring and steering mechanisms support implementation

Generally, project implementors and most participants interviewed noted that the project management was efficient. A national key informant noted "*The project team works well together. Initially it took time to get two teams working together in different countries*". However, another key informant noted that while the overheads are always spent on time, the project activities are underspent. This was a challenge related to the drought stalling some activities. Key informants in Zambia complained about the cumbersome project financial procedures which hampered decision-making and implementation. This needs to be investigated further as respondents did not elaborate. A recommendation from the review team is that the review process of business plans should be simplified to speed up the vetting process. This should include in initial review of concept notes in order to identify potential plans and a reduction of review stages from 5 reviews to 3 reviews.

3.4.2.1 Timing of the second phase

A major problem noted by several MASAP management respondents in the timing of phases. As noted by the same informant, "*The current contract ends in November 2025 but this is in the height of the agricultural season so we need to consider whether we can rationalise the timing of the contract better*". Key informants noted *"We would like to extend the contract to start the second phase early or instead to have a 5 - 6-month second phase inception period. We would not need extra funds, but the funds need to be shifted to cater for the changed timing. This needs to be worked out with SDC and would require a contract amendment. Everyone understands and is aware of the problem".*

A key informant explained how timing issues have impacted on component 3 activities. *"Timing has been a major challenge related to project management. One difficulty is that all funds must be accounted for before the next disbursement can be made but some of the academic institutions we have been working with are not very good at recordkeeping and there are invoices and receipts missing. These institutions are not used to the SDC systems, so they are still learning about how to follow the correct procedures. This timing issue impacts on the research which has a very narrow timing window during which it can be carried out. This is especially a problem for the University of Zimbabwe and Lupane State University. Timing is also an issue with the findings of the insurance study. The project needs to start piloting agro-insurance as early as October".*

3.4.2.2 Reorganising staff inputs

Several respondents from the MASAP team said that the project would be more efficient if more staff inputs could be reorganised. Some noted that in the second phase salaries would probably need to be raised to keep the current team on board. According to Key informants these additional personnel should include a grant advisor who can also advise on disbursements and follow up on IPs and due diligence. This does not need to be a full-time position. It could be 50%. They noted that the additional manpower will not be needed for the same level of effort in the next phase because the procedures have now been set up. They said that more days should be allocated to the transversal experts to make them more effective and there should be more days allocated for the action research personnel as this is a large component.

Respondents noted that more staff time is required to cover the two countries as well as more staff to cover all the research activities. It was suggested that a nutrition advisor could be hired to investigate how the project can contribute to increasing dietary diversity.

3.4.2.3 More funds for component 3

The management team needs to look at the budgets for different components and find out where more funds can be directed towards component 3. A key informant noted that action research is more expensive than conventional research. He explained that *"the project needs to be more realistic in terms of allocation of finances against the objectives to be achieved or work to be done. There is need to improve on budgets for more farmer and stakeholder engagement to fulfil action research requirements and co-ownership of the research results. It is also important to disburse funds quickly and efficiently to support project work."*

The informant also noted that in the current phase there were limited financial resources for more stakeholder engagement as well as to interact with communities to address food processing and or postharvest management challenges. Funds were also absent to support practical experiments to gather scientific evidence. She explained that limited funding also *"caused a significant delay in the setting up field seed storage experiments. The project was designed to have two consecutive storage seasons (2023/2024 and 2024/2025) for the storage experiments in Mudzi District but only one storage season (2023/2024) was completed due to insufficient funds to procure the necessary seed grain quantities, hermetic bags, and other relevant materials. Additionally, a workshop was planned to be conducted with the farmer field schools in Mudzi to share the research findings, but it has been put on hold due to funding constraints. More resources are also needed to translate the results of the research into actions in the other two project components".*

A key informant also talked about financial challenges related to the policy work of the project. *"In the proposal the budget for the baseline was only USD 9 000 but it actually cost USD28 000. There were not enough funds to hire a consultant to review policy at national, regional and international levels".* He also noted that the project needs to consider better incentives for government representatives. This sentiment was reiterated by the MASAP management team who said that low incentives for government inhibits active involvement of stakeholders.

3.4.3 Potential for simplification without compromising quality

As has already been mentioned, the MASAP project is large and complex and there is a danger of becoming over ambitious in the early stages. A key informant noted for example that there are many IPs in Chipata, and several are doing the same thing (groundnut processing). Having too many IP is not efficient, and they should have more partners along the value chain. Another respondent noted that there are not enough large national partners such as national seed companies. The advantage of working with large companies is that they don't need to invest in equipment, but it is hard to get large companies to be interested in traditional crops and remote districts.

Key informants pointed out that the next phase will require less time and manpower for certain aspects such as training project partners in the project management, finance and reporting procedures since the existing IPs

and other partners are now familiar with the various systems. However, as the project grows, more partners will be brought on board putting an additional burden on the existing team. The problems related to lack of manpower, inadequate workdays and inadequate financial resources discussed above seem to suggest that the project should prioritise and try to focus on implementation of key activities and grow more slowly.

3.5 Impact

The study found that generally, the MASAP project has had positive impact despite the challenges cause by the El Nino drought.

3.5.1 Early indicators of impact

Generally, research respondents in KII and FGD felt that the project was having a positive impact. The main positive impacts of the project to date, according to respondents are shown in table 3:

Table 3: Main positive impacts of the project to date according to study participants (number of times mentioned by respondents in KII and FGD)

Main positive impacts of the project to date	National/ project KII (n = 6)	Private sector KII (n = 7)	District KII (n = 11)	FGD (n = 30)	Total
Expanding markets / linking farmers to markets	8	3	10	38	59
Improving access to quality seed	5	2	20	30	47
Agriculture training	1	3	5	26	36
Increasing incomes	1	3	4	24	32
Improving nutrition	4		2	21	27
Business training	1	2	5	20	28
Improving resilience	4	3	5	11	23
Improving food security	1	2	2	15	20
Recruiting farmers to participate in the value chains	3	3	4	10	20
Access to improved processing technology	2		4	13	19

One respondent noted *"after two difficult growing seasons we have not seen an increase in average yield. However, we have noted that the private sector has become actively engaged in the project and they can see business opportunities. We had a target of 50 IPs and so far if all the new ones are approved we will have 29. This is important for upscaling the activities to grow the market. This phase is the testing stage where we can prune out the IPs that are not successful to leave us with very strong partners".*

During focus groups, producers were enthusiastic about the impacts of the project. For example, a group of older men in Sesheke noted that "*MASAP has helped us with access to seed and has also helped us learn how to plant groundnuts. Our income has improved because of this knowledge and market availability.*" While a group of young women in the same district said "*We were trained how to grow groundnuts, from planting to harvest. The knowledge we received from MASAP has helped us, but the drought has affected our yields. The project provided the market, and they even gave us shellers for processing groundnuts. However, due to drought, we did not harvest much".*

Key informants explained that the first phase has focused on development of commodities including attracting off-takers and developing public private partnerships. Through this the project has established a link from EGS to private sector companies to commodity development. They highlight the case of Ingwebu breweries as a particular success story because the project has encouraged the company to move into a new district where a lot of their market is based. This relationship was facilitated because SDC agreed to work with hybrid sorghum

and in exchange Ingwebu is running (and paying for) trials of various OPV sorghum varieties to see which ones do well.

The project has also started to grow the markets for the various crops. In Chipata the project has been more successful with better seed, better cultivation and more farmers linking with the market. This is related to a more vibrant and liberalised economy in a higher rainfall area, but it also indicated the potential of the project. A key informant noted that "*most IPs have stayed with the project. We have only lost one due to not following protocols. This is good because normally in MSD projects you drop 3-5 IPs in the first year".*

In Zambia, MASAP has positively influenced the country's Farmer Support Input Programme (FISP). The rising interest among farmers in MASAP-supported seeds, which were already part of FISP, has led to a substantial increase in the allocation of these crops within the program. For instance, during the drought, farmers who planted cowpeas were able to harvest some yield, unlike those who only planted maize. This outcome has helped to drive a higher demand for cowpeas within FISP, highlighting the resilience of these crops under challenging conditions.

3.5.1.1 Growth of farmer managed seed systems

A national key informant noted that the project has improved farmers' access to better sources of seed. *"The project has begun to develop* ***farmer managed seed*** *systems to improve farmer retained varieties and the project is working with stakeholders to develop a legal framework for farmer varieties. The next step will be to link farmers with plant breeders. Gene banks that store germplasm must also describe the varieties. SHF need to be supported to register their seed collections and commercialize their seed enterprise as small community owned businesses. Public breeding has not yet released drought tolerant varieties. For farmers selection of drought tolerant seed is a matter of life and death. Big seed companies such as Seed Co have failed to reach SHF. They focus on hybrids, but the project can facilitate linkages, for example with groundnuts, releasing improved varieties. These big companies are starting to see this as an opportunity".*

3.5.1.2 Benefits to women

Almost all study respondents, both male and female agreed that the project has benefitted women in terms of empowerment, increasing incomes and reducing labour. For example, a FGD of older men in Tsholotsho noted: "*Our community is dominated by women and the introduction of the project has improved their economic activities. Introduction of labour-saving technologies".*

A group of women commodity producers from Mudzi noted that the project has *"reduced our labour due to the provision of threshers, grinding mill and shellers. It equipped us with knowledge and educated us on business management It encouraged us on establishing village lending and savings schemes. It empowered us to work as women and financially empowered us."* Another older women's commodity group in Mudzi noted *"We are able to do other income generating projects that are not seasonal being financed by the income we get from MASAP project".*

Several respondents applauded the project for focussing on women beneficiaries to run COEs. For example, a key informant from Sesheke said: "*Women are more resilient and better at managing money. They are more honest and focused on long-term financial stability than men, which makes them more successful in business."* For a detailed picture of how women have benefitted see the case studies presented in Annex 5.

3.5.1.3 Action research

Another important achievement is the success of the action research in component 3 and that the results have started to feed into the other two components and results of research are being disseminated. However, several respondents noted that information dissemination needs to be improved. A key informant noted that there needs to be "*better coordination in project implementation with CTDO, in Zimbabwe, for improved uptake of research findings. We need more opportunities to share our results with other stakeholders and practitioners/scientists and even beyond our borders. This has been a gap so far".*

3.5.2 Emerging enablers and barriers for achieving the intended impact

Enables and barriers to the success of the project were identified during the review.

3.5.2.1 Enablers

The main enablers for the project to date noted by the research participants are Government support, enthusiasm from private sector, appreciation of project impacts by farmers and other community stakeholders. The project aligns with and compliments a policy environment in both countries that is potentially supportive, and the stakeholder platforms have enabled key government stakeholders to participate in, advise and support the project.

The private sector has shown that they are interested in the commodities and markets and appreciate the linkages and technical and financial support that is being given by the project. The farmers and other community members are enthusiastic about the project and appreciate the impacts even in the face of the drought which does not seem to have deterred their interest in continued participation.

Another enabler has been increased production for farmers that have access to irrigation. A key informant in Chipata said that after observing the successes of MASAP in the area an NGO called Living Waters is drilling a commercial borehole and constructing a small system to provide piped water for drinking and irrigation.

3.5.2.2 Barriers

Most of these barriers have already been discussed previously. The main barriers to the future success of the project identified through the study are firstly the **impact of the drought.** As already discussed, most farmers got low or no yields meaning that not only do they have little income, but they also cannot pay back the loans to the contracting agents. This means that the project will have to consider supporting the IPs to implement a loan amnesty which also have the danger of creating an unrealistic president. A key informant suggested that the project should leave the matter for different IPs to make different arrangements.

In Zimbabwe some IP respondents complained about **the distances between the project districts** which made their operations challenging. In Tsholotsho, one IP was not happy about the choice of wards selected for the project. They also noted: "*In Tsholotsho there is a plethora of NGOs… they have a donor syndrome and too many donor activities in the district affects the viability of the project and production in the field.*"

In Chipata, the widespread outbreak of **rosette virus** among groundnut farmers was a localised barrier that can be addressed by improved agricultural practices and varieties during the next season.

A national key informant noted that the project **development of EGS is still weak** and is more advanced through ZARI in Zambia where the government has earmarked irrigation schemes for seed production. In Zimbabwe discussions between the project and the Crop Breeding Institute are still ongoing but have not seen concrete results to date.

Other issues that need to be addressed in the next phase include catalysing COE and IP **access to finance** so that it is less dependent on the project. **Improved farmer training** also needs to be addressed especially the gap identified in the post-harvest surveys between improving farmers knowledge and realising uptake of the improved techniques. This means investigating and addressing mindset challenges and behavioural barriers among farmers as well as admitting that training and disseminating knowledge is not enough.

In order to fulfil its objectives, the project needs to do more work on the aspect of **improving nutrition** in the target communities and this means overcoming several behavioural barriers including the low social status of consuming traditional foods which are associated with drought and poverty and the power of maize as the preferred staple food for the majority of Zimbabweans. The project needs to address the paradox that in

increasing incomes and prices for small grains they may simply facilitate the purchase and consumption of maize. Nutrition was noted by some of the management team as being a weak area. As noted by a key informant: *"We are working with very nutritious crops but more needs to be done in terms of disseminating nutrition messages. Not just through food festivals and radio program there needs to be a more community-based approach such as drama and engaging university students".*

Measuring changes in the diet among project participants is a challenge. Currently a study is being conducted in Mudzi by Marondera University through component 3. However, it is important to develop indicators and measurement tools for all beneficiary populations in the project. Study respondents said that to date the project had not improved nutrition due to the drought situation although several FGD respondents noted that they had been trained in good nutrition and identified that project participants with HIV would benefit from improved nutrition. For example, a key informant from Sesheke noted: "*The project has empowered women through cooperatives and provided nutritional value for people living with HIV".*

However, it is not clear what "improved nutrition" means to the project participants. It could imply increase income through produce sales to purchase more packaged and processed foods rather than increased consumption of a wide range of nutritious crops grown in the local community. This needs to be investigated.

3.5.3 Extent that action research activities translated into advocacy and policy influence

Component 3 of the project has focussed on bringing policy, academic and civil stakeholders together through policy dialogues as well as carrying out action research that will provide evidence to inform improved policies as well as improved practices by farmers.

Progress has been made in terms of improving the registration process for farmer varieties in Zimbabwe. A key informant described the process to date whereby a MASAP baseline study was carried out in five districts (Mudzi, Tsholotsho, Buhera, Mutoko, Zaka) to establish what farmer varieties exist. A review of existing seed laws and policies has also been carried out and the results of both processes were validated in a recent stakeholder workshop. The key informant noted that the *"survey has motivated the government of Zimbabwe to consider developing an inclusive seed policy which is likely to happen in the near future. They are also likely to develop mechanisms for commercialisation of farmer varieties….The main achievement as far as policy goes is motivating the governments to move forward on the development of inclusive seed policies and registration of farmer varieties".*

A key informant noted that "*the government of Zimbabwe already had policies to encourage more production of traditional grains but had been dragging its feet so when MASAP came along this made the government realise the need to advance the policy. Government has seen how employment and nutrition can be improved".*

Progress has also been made with the government of Zambia which has a more vibrant formal seed sector than Zimbabwe but is lagging behind Zimbabwe on developing supporting policies. Respondents noted that in Zambia there is a more conducive policy environment supporting the growth of commodity markets and private sector seed companies to expand the value chains of the crops being promoted through MASAP.

3.6 Sustainability

This section looks at whether the benefits of the project will be long lasting. Most study respondents felt that the main project activities would continue beyond the life cycle of the project.

3.6.1 Prospects for sustaining the identified results, and scaling-up activities

Although the project is in its infancy, there are signs of the results being sustained. Several FGD respondents noted that aspects that will be sustained include seed multiplication, production of the crops in the target value chains, market growth and contract farming and the commodity processing businesses. Interestingly several respondents noted that training and information sharing would also continue. For example, a farmer group

leader noted: "*Activities that are likely to continue after the project has ended include seed multiplication - commercial production of groundnuts, cowpeas and sorghum, farmer trainings and information sharing. Tocek will continue to provide seed production support. The markets will come to purchase our good quality seed".*

According to KII, the innovation grants have enabled COEs to set up value addition businesses which according to respondents will continue to be successful after the project. The market linkages and financial trainings will help the COEs to be sustainable. However, a district government official from Mudzi suggested that for increased sustainability, "*the COEs should be supported more through enhanced technology such as digital marketing and improved machinery for value addition which gives more income".*

A key informant noted that for sustainability, MASAP should ensure that as many IPs as possible are committed to keep working with farmers. He recommends that the project develops an effective exit strategy. Some respondents were worried about IPs and COEs becoming dependent on project finance and grants. A key informant noted that grants need to evolve into financing from finance institutions. Initially the project can guarantee this financing from institutions and progressively mature these into full bank funded loans.

A key informant noted that the scale-up and reform of the farming systems and increased incomes from the project will create "*a natural momentum"*. However there needs to be more learning and more exchange visits between stakeholders, districts and countries for the project to be effective and currently there are not the resources for this. He also notes that there is need to investigate exit strategy options involving national government seed services.

3.6.2 Sustainability analysis

It is clear from the responses in this study that there have been positive impacts with respect to institutions, economies as well as social benefits. In addition, most respondents agreed that the project has potential to increase the resilience of farmers to climate shocks. No respondents identified any negative environmental impacts of the project. However, the review team is concerned that if the market for the project crops becomes lucrative, potential negative impacts could arise from increased land clearance and deforestation for increased crop production. In addition, stream banks and wetlands could be damaged if farmers seek these water sources for irrigation due to increasing droughts. These conditions are already a problem in many communities in Zimbabwe. In theory, these problems should be addressed or reduced through the agroecological techniques that are meant to be being promoted by the project. However, it is not clear what agroecological methods IPs are actually promoting and as already discussed, uptake by farmers is extremely low.

It is clear from the responses of this study that the MASAP project is building the capacity of government departments and institutions. However, the model of using external consultants for the implementation of some aspects is concerning unless there is a concerted effort to use these experts to build the capacity of local extension officers, lead farmers and other community workers who will remain in the community beyond the life of the project. Careful monitoring of this capacity building must be done by the project to ensure that it is effective.

Other MSD projects favour local business advisors (public sector employees and in some countries, independent advisors that charge a fee to provide services) to be trained by the consultants. These advisors will guarantee continuation and sustainability of the process after the project ends. There need to be more partnerships with other ministries, other projects, more private sector companies. Apart from the Ministry of agriculture and Women's Affairs, other ministries and government departments should be involved in the training and have their capacities built so that they can continue to support communities and monitor impacts in the future. Existing initiatives and programmes of national nutrition departments and Ministries of Health in the two countries should be linked to the project nutrition objectives.

The project is clearly having economic benefits with respect to growing markets for the project crops, seed and commodities, linking farmers to off-takers, helping to establish viable COEs and improving the business management of the IPs. The challenge for the project is to grow local markets for the seed and commodities within the project districts since the temptation to aim for more lucrative markets will be strong.

Similarly, with respect to social benefits, the project needs to find ways to increase local consumption and purchase (within the target communities) of foods derived from the small grain and legume crops. It is important to aim to improve the dietary diversity and nutrition of the target communities first before focussing on high value national markets. The project is having other social benefits noted by respondents including empowerment of women and youth. A negative social impact could be that the project activities put an extra burden on women. However, most respondents highlighted that the project was saving labour rather than increasing it.

3.6.3 Are the selected regions for MASAP conducive to the project objectives?

The expansion into districts with improved rainfall or irrigation has already been discussed. Most respondents felt that the project should be scaled up however is not clear that the demand and markets for the seed and commodities have grown sufficiently to warrant this. District respondents (KII and FGD) would like the project scaled up to other wards. Several also mentioned the need to scale up the project to other neighbouring districts with similar environmental and climatic conditions. Only one respondent was noted to not want the project to be scaled up in case the market becomes saturated. It is important that the project focuses on achieving viability and sustainability in the current project districts before trying to expand.

3.6.4 To what extent has the project been able to integrate cross-cutting issues?

The 5th Operational Report states that *"the project exceeded the target for participation by women, youth, and disadvantaged groups in research activities, with 3,448 individuals actively involved out of a target of 990. This shows the project's commitment to inclusivity and empowers marginalized groups to contribute their knowledge and experiences to the small grains and legume value chain". (MASAP 2024a)*

All respondents both male and female noted that the project has benefitted women and young people and well as people living with HIV and AIDS (PLHA). The latter were said to be particularly benefitting through improved nutrition although this was hard to ascertain since most respondents also said that their own nutrition had not improved due to the drought. As one farmer group leader from Mudzi noted "*Groundnuts and cowpeas production favours women because the activities are lighter than tobacco and cotton. It allows women to have more time to commit to other activities. It is providing another source of income. The youth are involved but their numbers are low. The farming practices are lighter for people living with HIV. It has not taken a strain on their health. Young people should be given small pieces of land - promoting of quicker income generating activities. Accessing machinery will improve value addition and save on labour" (Farmer Group leader Mudzi)*

Of these three groups, women seem to be benefitting most from the project. The project is specifically tailored to the needs of women in the target communities and the project activities favour the participation of women. It was heartening to find that male respondents were noting the benefits to women, and this could be a sign of the positive results of the GALS approach. For example, an older male FGD noted that as a result of the project "*women are empowered to raise income through sales from produce and hiring out of machinery.* Project team respondents noted that GALS was mainstreamed through all groups. It was noted as an excellent tool for improving women's access to income and more participation in decision making.

A key informant from Chipata noted that "*Capacity building is essential. The project focuses on training in business management, ensuring everyone, including women, young people, and those living with HIV, are involved to prevent discrimination."*

With respect to involving PLWAs the MASAP team respondents explained that they decided not to directly target PLWAs because this could lead to discrimination. "*By targeting women, it is hoped that HIV positive people will not be discriminated against".* Explained a key informant. She went on to note "*we have been careful to be gender sensitive for example making sure that training occurs at an appropriate time for women"*. MASAP needs to review whether this approach is adequate.

Several study participants pointed out the lower numbers of young people that have been involved in the project and the MASAP team respondents noted that this is an area that needs to be improved through coming up with innovative way to encourage more youth participation along the whole value chain rather than focussing on involving them in crop production which tends not to be attractive to young people.

Another transversal theme that is comprehensively addressed by the project, as has been elaborated previously, in this report is adaptation to climate change. The project concept has the capacity to build resilience of SHF to shocks. However, anticipatory planning would need to be integrated in the project to enhance its ability to do so for SHF in the project.

4 CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the conclusions of the MTR, lessons learned drawn from the findings as well as the recommendations.

4.1 Conclusions

The MTR found that MASAP is **relevant** to the needs and contextual challenges of the communities, stakeholders and private sector partners in the target districts as well as the aligning with and contributing to national and international development goals and priorities. The project activities have been designed to address these various factors in a holistic and sustainable manner. Due to the different political, economic and climate contexts in Zimbabwe and Zambia, the project has developed more rapidly and to a greater extent in Zambia. Although hampered by delays and drought challenges, the intervention results to date have succeeded in addressing some contextual challenges of the target populations particularly with respect to linking farmers to markets for the target crops and commodities. The study concluded that the three project components complement each other well and support the logic and premises of the project ToC although some of the assumptions underpinning the ToC need to be investigated. In Zimbabwe, due to the difficult context, the project approach has focussed on market development rather than addressing systemic issues hampering the market. Approaches to agroecology and dietary diversification as well as their impacts were not clear and could not be investigated through the study. It was also not clear what measures are being put in place to conserve natural resources. While the project successfully addresses challenges linked to seed access, market linkages, farmer and COE capacity building and improving access to finance, some needs and challenges such as drought mitigation and access to irrigation need to be investigated in future phases. Identifying and addressing the needs of young people also needs to be integrated more strongly into future phases.

The study found that the MASAP is **coherent** in terms of linkages and synergies among the project team, partners, policy, operational modalities and governance. More linkages are now being realised between the three components and research is beginning to influence policy as well as farmer capacity. Relations within the MASAP consortium members and between the donor, project implementors, the project partners, beneficiaries and key stakeholders were found to be very good and have facilitated the effective running and success of the project. Initially the project management and implementation teams and partners took time to learn the procedures and protocols demanded by the project and this led to delays however this is no longer a problem. MASAP is complementing other civil society and government projects and programmes in the target countries and districts and is actively linking with complementary initiatives such as those of SKI and PELUM members. The MASAP stakeholder co-ordination systems, committees and platforms seem to be working well and are

facilitating the implementation of the project as well as co-learning. More relevant Ministries and departments notably from the health and environment sectors need to be engaged for added effectiveness.

The study found that the project is **effective** in that it is generally on track to achieve most of its targets despite the major setback of the 2023-24 drought. Most study participants in KII and FGD agreed that the project was effective with respect to achieving targets, improving access to seed and seed services. The profitability of the IPs could not be ascertained during the study since those interviewed said that it was too early in the project to say whether the aspects supported through MASAP were making a profit. In addition, the problems related to drought and the economy in Zimbabwe made the past year very challenging for IPs. The absence of incremental revenue from the private sector companies has hampered the evaluation of an important metric; the calculation of the return per SDC investment. Despite this both IP and COE representatives interviewed talked about the benefits of the project to their businesses. Most respondents agreed that the service provision agents were effective. However, analysis of the MASAP post-harvest surveys conducted in Zambia and Zimbabwe showed that uptake of many of the agricultural techniques being promoted particularly drought mitigation strategies was very low. This needs to be investigated further.

Most respondents felt that the project funds and grants were extremely beneficial. However, there is a danger that these funding systems can create dependency, unrealistic expectations and distort the market. Alternative mechanisms should be investigated through financial institutions. The project did not respond well to the shock of the 2023-24 drought. Short- and long-term measures have been proposed to mitigate future impacts of drought and these should be put in place as soon as possible. The project also needs to develop better mechanisms to mitigate and respond to future shocks such as economic volatility and pest and disease problems.

Some aspects of the project were deemed **efficient** however better systems for timely disbursement of seed and other inputs and monitoring their quality are needed. In addition, the fairness of contract farming terms should be reviewed. Delays in disbursement of seed and in some cases grants and other finance were highlighted as being key problems in the project. Project monitoring was efficient although more focus is needed on monitoring outcomes. Project management was efficient although lack of manpower and low budgets were said to be constraints in implementing the project. The poor timing of the second phase which is due to start in the middle of the agricultural season is another cause for concern which must be addressed. The project needs to vet the IPs to ensure that there are not too many that are duplicating activities, which can lead to inefficiencies.

The study found that generally, the MASAP project has had positive **impact** despite the challenges cause by the El Nino drought. Early indicators of impact include linking farmers to markets, improving access to quality seed and providing beneficial training in improved agricultural methods and business. The first phase has focused on development of commodities, attracting off-takers and developing public private partnerships and this has been successful. The project has also begun to develop farmer managed seed systems through policy reform. The project has been highly beneficial to women in terms of empowerment, increasing incomes and reducing labour. Enablers for the project include government support, private sector engagement and success for farmers that have access to irrigation. The main barriers have been the impacts of the drought, the choice of some of the project districts, an outbreak of rosette virus in Chipata and weak development of EGS multiplication systems. Lack of access to sustainable finance systems and concrete ways to improve nutrition are also lacking. Component 3 of the project has focussed on bringing policy, academic and civil stakeholders together. This has helped catalyse policy reform and the development of systems for registration of farmer selected seed varieties.

In terms of **sustainability** although it is early to say most study respondents felt that the main project activities would continue beyond the life cycle of the project. Aspects that were identified as likely to continue are seed multiplication, production of the crops in the target value chains, market growth and contract farming and the commodity processing businesses. The project has had positive impacts with respect to building the capacity of institutions as well as positive social and economic benefits. Negative effects on the environment resulting from

the project could not be ascertained by the study but should be investigated further. The use of external consultants for implementation must include building the capacity of service providers. Most respondents felt that the project should be scaled up to other wards in the same districts, to other districts with similar conditions. All respondents both male and female noted that the project has benefitted women and young people and well as PLWHA. Youth are not participating as much as they should be in the project.

4.2 Lessons learned

This section looks at the key lessons that have been learned from the review of the MASAP project. Although the project aims to build the resilience of target communities it had not developed a clear and principled response to reduce the impacts of drought which is an inevitable shock. The post-harvest surveys have exposed some important gaps in the project such as lack of farmer update of drought mitigation practices. The severity of the 2023/24 drought was unexpected however since climate change projections show that droughts are likely to become more frequent and intense in the region it is important that the project puts sound measures in place to help communities mitigate such disasters. Many of these have been presented through the drought response plan.

Lesson 1: The early distribution of seed is of paramount importance in the project particularly in the face of changing weather patterns due to climate change. This may be a make-or-break decision point for the success of the project. By nature, administrative and financial procedures have set laid processes that in most cases can cause risky delays in implementation of highly time sensitive agricultural interventions.

Lesson 2: There is a risk that grants can lead to dependency syndrome especially in marginalised communities like Tsholotsho which has experienced multiple donor related activities. The project has been cautious in its disbursement of funding to IPs and COEs. However, a project of this nature needs to build sound relationships between financial institutions and SMEs in order to reduce this risk.

Lesson 3: Training of farmers, COEs and IPs plays an important a role in the success of the project. Effectiveness can be enhanced by better tracking of outcomes (adoption of knowledge and technologies) of such capacity building.

Lesson 4: Integrating nutrition in the project requires a sound understanding of the interrelated factors that contribute to poor nutrition. There appears to be a lack of understanding among project implementors of the complex interrelated factors that contribute to poor nutrition, and this is going to reduce the ability of the project to achieve its goals related to improving demand for and consumption of the crops being promoted through the project as well as increasing dietary diversity in the target districts.

Lesson 5: Agroecological methods such as improved soil and water management, can play a key role in increasing productivity, building resilience of farming systems and reducing negative environmental impacts of crop production. However, it is not clear what methods are being promoted and whether those promoting them have a clear idea of what the agroecology approach entails beyond the associated practices. Uptake by farmers seems to be low and the monitoring of uptake does not seem to be comprehensive.

Lesson 6: A project of this scale needs a balance between ambition and manpower. Although the project is large and complex it is generally well designed. However, the financial and manpower resources are currently strained and there is a danger of becoming over ambitious.

Lesson 7: Integration of all three components will enhance project impacts. The project has started to realise the benefits of the integration of all three project components which reinforce each other and increase the project impacts. The integration of all three project components, will increase over time, to assure maximum impact of the project.

4.3 Recommendations

This section presents key recommendations from the evaluation team based on the analysis of the findings from this study.

Finding	Recommendation	Responsibility	Time frame
The project needs to clarify its approaches on key aspects such as agroecology and improving dietary diversification.	• Hold a stakeholder workshop to ensure that all IPs and other service providers agree on what should be promoted. • Develop clear guidelines and monitoring tools on agroecological practices that the project would like to promote, • Hire a social behaviour change expert to advise on promotion of desired nutrition behaviours and farming practices.	MASAP team (Component 3 team)	Before phase 2
Low youth participation in the projects- needs of youth not being met	• Carry out participatory action research on the barriers, and motivators for young people with respect the MASAP value chains • Integrate the findings into the project activities. • MASAP should consider other complementing economic activities that attract youths such as servicing the machinery supplied to COEs, providing two wheeler vehicles to youth groups so that they can offer transport services etc. • Though the project is targeted at youth, the implementation structure does not appear to show bias towards this demographic.	MASAP team (Component 3 team), MASAP management team, MEL officer	Before phase 2
Lack of integration between the project components and lack of information dissemination and co-learning resulting from component 3.	• Ensure that the action research projects and evidence gathering are directly related to supporting the activities in components 1 and 2. • Ensure increased integration of results of component 3 to feed into the other components through more exchange of information. • Develop more virtual and physical platforms for information dissemination including making appropriate use of social media.	MASAP team (Component 3 team)	Before phase 2
Lack of interaction with some relevant key ministries for the project. More synergies needed with SKI, PELUM projects, FAO and CGIARCGIAR institutions.	• Develop better interaction and synergies with programmes of Ministry of environment and Ministry of health. Investigate more ways to benefit from interventions of other civil society organisations and research institutions. • More sensitization of community leaders and government cadres is critical in the project districts.	MASAP project manager, policy advisor, steering committee co-ordinator	Before phase 2
Lack of a comprehensive MSD approach	• Create a fund managed by a financial institution whereby IPs recommended by MASAP could, in the first two years, access funding at subsidised interest rates. This would be used towards the importation of seed, procurement of inputs and on lending to farmers. In the third year, the fund is converted into a guarantee fund to allow the financial institution to utilise its own financial resources to lend to IPs. The guarantee fund shall be used as security cover to the financial institution for the loans accessed by the IPs. The		

Finding	Recommendation	Responsibility	Time frame
	project would convert the guarantee fund into a performance bonus to the financial institution in direct proportion to the success rate of the fund. • For future sub-awards/grants to be awarded to the IPs for the purposes of acquiring assets, the same fund could be used as asset finance to the IPs and the asset acquired shall be security. • However, because financial institutions are risk-sensitive to interventions in marginal areas they may be reluctant. As such, direct project intervention might be required to catalyse the process, graduating the access to finance to financial institutions upon successful completion of piloted interventions.		
Cumbersome procedures causing delays particularly with respect to approval of IP business plans.	• Clarify exactly which financial and administrative procedures are causing obstacles. • Consider simplifying procedures. • SDC business advisor to review the initial concept notes while the MASAP team carried out background checks on the IP. This will help to shortlist the partners who can then be invited to develop full plans. • Reduce the number of times that IP business plans need to be reviewed. The plans currently go through five reviews. The management team feel that this could be reduced to three reviews which would speed up the approval/ rejection process. • Give more support and capacity building to project partners with respect to procedures	SDC MASAP Management team	Before phase 2
Weak production of EGS through public breeding institutes	• Hold a workshop with Zambian and Zimbabwean breeding institutes to encourage exchange of ideas. Develop a way forward for breeding of EGS with an action plan and budget.	MASAP Project manager, Steering Committee co-ordinator, representatives from public seed certification agencies in Zambia and Zimbabwe	During phase 2
Weak capacity of service providers	• Investigate how to link with ongoing complementary government programmes (such as nutrition programmes), civil society and private sector initiatives. • Build the capacity of service providers to increase sustainability	MASAP management team, government departments, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Environment, SKI, PELUM members in Zambia and Zimbabwe	During phase 2

Finding	Recommendation	Responsibility	Time frame
Grants and other funding systems could cause dependency and can undermine financial markets	• Grants need to evolve into financing from finance institutions. Initially the project can guarantee this financing and progressively mature these into full bank funded loans. • All loans will be managed by the Financial Institution. MASAP will provide an initial guarantee and progress to weaning the COEs and IPs completely. The capital injected shall be converted in bank capital depending on the level of success.	MASAP management team, Private sector finance companies	During phase 2 and 3
Low capacity of IPs and COEs	• Provide more training, mentorship and advice to IPs and COE • Consider partnering with financial institutions in assisting companies with revolving cashflow injections at buyback points. This will alleviate the payment delays experienced by farmers.	MASAP management team, business capacity building experts Private sector finance companies	During phase 2 and 3
The project did not respond well to the El Nino induced drought	• Fully explore the short- and long-term strategies proposed in the drought response plan. • Implement a clear contingency plan with a mechanisms for risks to be shared between IPs, MASAP and farmers. • Consider a crisis modifier or anticipatory action model. • Identify the most effective measures that fall within the project aims and mandate. • Implement these • Pilot an insurance scheme to confirm proof of concept.	MASAP management team, CTDO, NIRAS Private sector insurance companies, IPs, Representatives of farmer groups	Before and during phase 2
Although the contract farmers affected by the drought are not in debt but IPs face losses	• Develop a comprehensive response plan with IPs that ensures a fair response for all farmers and IPs on a case-by-case basis.	MASAP Management team, IPs, Representatives of farmer groups	As soon as possible
Low uptake of farmers on important drought mitigation practices (notably soil and water management)	• Hire a social behaviour change expert to carry out a barriers and motivators study related to drought mitigation practices by SHF. There is opportunity to work with SKI and PELUM partners. • Integrate the findings plus the results of the planned women's opportunity costs to uptake of seed production study into the project strategy. • Revise training approach. • Develop better mechanisms for monitoring uptake • Develop incentives for uptake	MASAP Management, Behaviour change expert	Before phase 2
Implementation of seed production in other districts with better rainfall or irrigation	• The irrigation proposals seem to be fraught with challenges • Investigate whether there are more suitable districts for seed production in the same provinces and MASAP such as those identified in the IFAD study	MASAP Management team, CTDO, NIRAS	Phase 2

Finding	Recommendation	Responsibility	Time frame
Delays in distribution of seed and poor quality of seed	• Ensure that seed is distributed as early in the season as possible and ensure that the seed is high quality and does not contain mixed varieties.	MASAP Management team, CTDO, NIRAS, IPs	As soon as possible
High prices for seed in contracts	• Work with IPs and monitor contracts to ensure that fair prices are being charged for payback seed. • Improve level of communication between IPs and farmers to reduce the level of misconceptions.	MASAP Management team, IPs	As soon as possible
Project monitoring needs to be improved	• Engage more monitoring personnel to support the MASAP team • Develop more realistic ways to determine the baseline for monitoring • Develop more participatory ways for project participants to monitor project impacts • Ensure that indicators capture the outcomes of activities such as agricultural training. • Find effective ways to monitor consumption of the promoted crops • MASAP needs develop additional reporting templates that capture incremental tonnage, incremental revenue and incremental profitability that has been realised due to the intervention of the project. • The MEL log frame should include the return on SDC investment metric measured by dividing the total incremental revenue by the total project cost. This shows the impact of the investment. • Monitoring should include the cost per beneficiary ratio, a metric that measures how much it cost the project to acquire a beneficiary. The ratio is obtained by dividing the total project cost or project financial divided by the number of beneficiaries at any given point in the project's cycle.	MASAP management, MEL department	Before phase 2
The inappropriate timing of the second phase needs to be addressed	• Amend the MASAP contract after consultations with SDC to agree on the best way forward	SDC, NIRAS, MASAP Management team	As soon as possible
Problems related to staffing and budgets for activities	• MASAP to review this as a team and put forward a proposal to SDC. • Reorganise staffing time and budgets available to accommodate component 3 activities. • Prioritise key market systems that are emerging as the project progresses. The aspect of seed multiplication, partnering financial institutions to create a sustainable funding model.	MASAP management team, SDC	Before phase 2
The MASAP districts should be expanded	• Before considering expansion a new market study would need to be conducted.	MASAP Management team, Markets	Before phase 2

Finding	Recommendation	Responsibility	Time frame
	• The project should focus on achieving viability and sustainability before considering expanding into other wards and districts.	study consultants	
Financial indicators	• Include economic metrics like incremental revenue by COEs, IPs in the MEL • Track the incremental tonnage of produce acquired by IPs but linked to the project • Track the profitability of IPs and COEs through meticulous record keeping of activities and expenses relating to the project • Tracking cost per beneficiary and • Return on SDC investment.	MASAP management. Consultants	Before phase 2

5 ANNEXES

5.1 Annex 1: Research questions as stated in the TOR

Evaluation criterion	Evaluation questions
Relevance Are we doing the right things?	• Evaluate the extent to which the key activities or processes aligned/contributing to each stated component/outcome remain relevant to the context. • Relevance of intervention results to address the contextual challenges and extent to which project design and approach are relevant to national and global development objectives • How consistent are the achieved effects with the needs of the target groups?
Coherence How well does the intervention fit?	• Internal coherence, between the components of the project, among partners, operational modalities and governance structure. • Complementarity and synergies: To what extent is MASAP compatible and coordinating with agricultural interventions and projects of SDC and other actors, including Government and other development partners, in Zimbabwe and Zambia? • Review the stakeholder coordination systems, including the National Stakeholder Platforms and the Regional Steering Committee – the added advantages and opportunities, as well as potential gaps.
Effectiveness Is the intervention achieving its objectives?	• To what extent has the project achieved its objectives, indicators and targets, or how likely is it that they will be achieved? • Assess the profitability of a sample of the private sector companies that MASAP is supporting (not the whole company but the section supported by the project based on the grants provided). • Assess the effectiveness of the service providers such as government departments and civil society organisations. • Assess the usage and benefit of the innovation grants. • How effectively has MASAP responded to external shocks, including the El Nino related drought? What design measures could be adopted to make the project more shock-responsive?
Efficiency Were the results achieved in a cost effective way?	• Analysis should also include strategic and timely implementation of activities and quality of the internal project monitoring systems. • To what extent do management, monitoring and steering mechanisms support efficient implementation? • Where can potential for simplification be realized without compromising quality?
Impact What difference does the project make?	• What early indicators of impact do we see after the first years of implementation? • What are emerging enablers and barriers for achieving the intended impact? • To what extent have action research activities translated into advocacy and policy influence?
Sustainability Will the benefits last?	• What are the prospects for sustaining the identified results, and scaling-up activities beyond the projects' first phase? • Sustainability analysis to include institutional, economic, social, and environmental components. • Are the selected regions for MASAP conducive to the project objectives or should these be adjusted for the next phase? • To what extent has the project been able to integrate cross-cutting issues such as gender, climate change and HIV?

5.2 Annex 2: List of people met during the evaluation

Annex 3: Summary of project components, activities and theory of change

MASAP Theory of change states that:

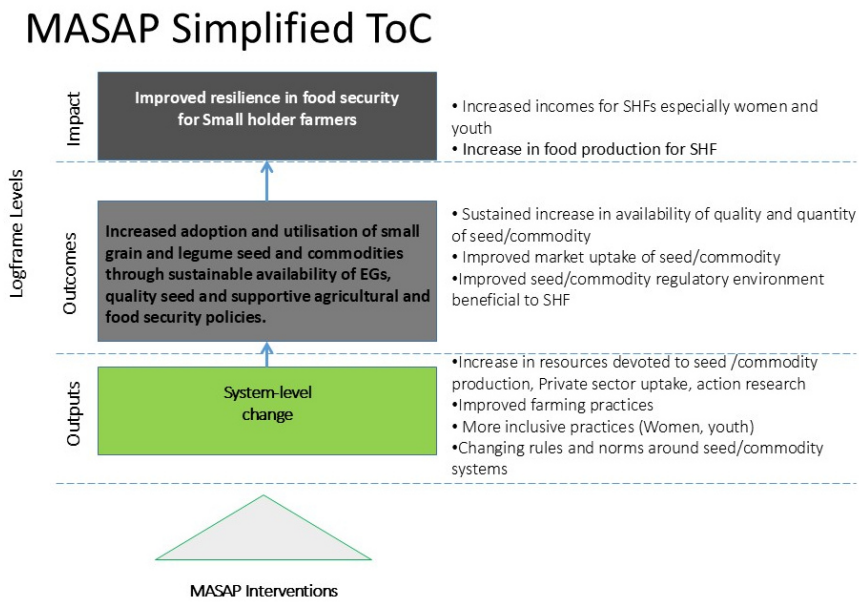

Figure 1 MASAP Simplified ToC (adapted from Conceptualising MASAP Interventions (PowerPoint Presentation)

If SHFs, in particular women and youth, and their households are supported to produce and market quality seeds of open and self-pollinated varieties of small grains (sorghum and millet) and legumes (groundnuts and cowpeas) then their resilience to food security is improved, through having higher and diversified incomes resulting from adoption and utilisation of small grains and legumes seeds and sales of these commodities. If COEs and associations are strengthened and supported to effectively provide services that meet the interests, demands and needs of smallholders, then there will be increased access to and adoption of certified seed of small grains and legumes by smallholder farmers. Given that women and youth form the bulk of labour among SHFs but less involved in the marketing, if their roles, voices and needs are recognised and supported to become active players in the value chain, then it is expected that the whole household of SHFs will benefit from increased incomes.

If the private sector in the seed value chain is strengthened through increased engagement, establishment of PPPs and addressing market failures, then their ability to perform their roles in the seed value chain is improved because their innovative and effective business models and value chain mechanisms will prepare them to address the interests, demands and needs of smallholders through increasing the availability of EGS, access to affordable quality seeds of small grain and legume and related services to the SHFs. If the private sector is strengthened to support SHFs by increasing access to on farm technologies, finance and insurance then the SHFs are able to produce high quality seed and products and can more easily recover from shocks and adverse events because the services will ensure efficient production of high quality EGS through meeting the workload and financial needs.

If evidence based seed and food security policies, supportive of small grains and legumes sectors' needs and interests, are developed and applied at national and regional level giving a supporting policy framework to farmers and the private sector, then improved resilience in food security of smallholder farmers will be ensured through increased adoption and utilisation of quality and adapted seeds. If evidence related to small grain and legume seed and commodity is available and circulates among stakeholders then it is likely that evidence-based policy options that accelerate crop-specific development, production and marketing of small grains and legumes will be developed.

Summary of MASAP components and associated activities (adapted from the MASAP Final Project Document)

Component 1: Adoption and utilisation of small grain and legume seed by smallholder farmers
To provide SHFs, (60% women and youth) with opportunities for increased income (of at least 30%per district) from production and sale of improved varieties of OPVs of small grains and legumes. This will contribute to a more resilient agricultural system and enable diversified and nutritious diets. As part of registered COEs, the SHF will access technical and business development services (inputs, loans, extension services etc.) and will aggregate seeds and produce for market off-takers.
A1.1 Assess the needs of smallholders in small grain and legume seed and commodity markets. A detailed value chain analysis (VCA) for - groundnut, sorghum, pearl and finger millet and cowpea for crop rotation.
A1.2 Capacity needs assessment and planning. The results of the capacity needs assessment will be developed into a detailed training and capacity building plan.
A1.3 Seeking continuous dialogue with relevant government institutions, including MoUs.
A1.4 Identify drivers/ buyers in the targeted value chains and districts. A detailed stakeholder mapping will be conducted to identify potential drivers/ buyers in the targeted value chains and districts.
A1.5 Strengthen stakeholder coordination, ensuring farmer representation. Establish stakeholder platforms and hold dialogues.
A1.6 Technical support to small grain and legume seeds and commodity COEs and associations. Training in seed production will focus on sourcing of EGS, production of basic and certified seeds.
A1.7 Support to existing and the establishment of new COEs and associations. Establishment of well-governed COEs and associations (with boards and sub-committees), where women and youth are managers and leaders. Training in entrepreneurship, business planning, and cooperative good governance will be built into the training modules.
A1.8 Promotion of climate-resilient and agro-ecological farming practices. Drawing on ongoing climate smart agriculture (CSA) projects and synchronise with the Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI) project. MASAP will also leverage on CSA knowledge within the communities as capacitated by the AMALIMA resilience project in Tsholotsho and ZRBF BRACT project in Mudzi8.
A1.9 Targeted activities to ensure gender and social inclusion in the value chains. Training planned to ensure women are able to participate. Targeted activities will be conducted for women, youth and other vulnerable groups. The Gender Action Learning System (GALS) approach will give women and men more control over their personal, household, community and organisational development.
A1.10 Promotion of diversified diets and mitigation measures for COVID-19 / HIV/AIDS. Training activities and meetings used to disseminate labour-saving techniques for promotion of diversified diets, nutrition and COVID-19 / HIV/AIDS mitigation. The capacity building will also include improved post-harvest processing, handling and storage technologies.
Component 2: Private sector engagement
Through private sector engagement MASAP facilitates demand-driven availability of Early Generation Seed (EGS) to seed producing SHF groups. This will improve SHFs access to affordable, quality seeds of small grain and legume and related services. Secure engagement of both the public and private sector and establish public-private partnerships (PPPs) to ensure the availability of EGS.
A2.1 Provide catalytic funding and incentives to develop and test business models. Identified intervention partners (private sector actors) will be assessed and become project partners to engage SHF groups through outgrower schemes/ contract farming. **Catalytic funding** given to intervention partners such as community-owned enterprises (COE), research institutions and/or agri-processors, will help them develop and test business models for seeds and commodities. Collaboration fostered between seed companies and processors will ensure that production is demand driven.
A2.2 Secure Breeders´ and pre-basic seed availability from CGIAR's and national breeding institutions. MASAP will collaborate with the public breeding system to promote promising varieties and develop contracts with the private sector to make popular varieties available. Seed market projections will help determine the volume of EGS needed in future depending on the resources and availability by the CGIAR's and national breeding institutions.
A2.3 Establish PPPs in EGS production and marketing. MASAP will facilitate the establishment of PPPs in sourcing and securing EGS to be used for certified seed production and marketing.
A2.4 Innovative business models and value chain mechanisms to address smallholder demands. Innovation platforms encourage horizontal sharing and learning among stakeholders.

A2.5 Strengthen connections between private seed companies, COEs and SHFs. The EGS will be multiplied through seed production entities and the last generation of certified seed will be disseminated to SHF in the regions. MASAP will engage with private seed industry actors and connect them with the SHF, their COEs and associations for up-and out scaling through concrete contracts.
A2.6 Strengthen connections between private sector agro-processors, COE and SHFs. MASAP will facilitate coordination between processors of small grain and legumes and SHF through establishment of contracts to produce commodities of a specific variety/ quality to satisfy market needs.
A2.7 Provide access to on-farm processing technologies. MASAP will provide SHF access to on-farm processing technologies to create added value (e.g. small-scale mechanisation, processing or innovation). **An innovation grant** will be set up with open calls for farmer groups and other smallholder value chain actors to access smaller sums for investing in their business, especially for women and youth.
A2.8 Strengthen seed value chain actors. MASAP will collaborate with the main seed value chain actors e.g. government (seed services, seed quality control and extension), plant quarantine and plant protection services.
Component 3: Policy engagement and action learning research
To support evidence-based policy changes through action research in agriculture and food policy to develop a more conducive enabling environment for effective seed system and value chain development for small grains and legumes.
A3.1 Promote inclusiveness in policy formulation for seed and food laws.. MASAP will promote policy inclusiveness through stakeholder dialogue and bring the formal and informal seed sector closer, as well as contribute to improved food laws.
A3.2 Facilitate an enabling environment related to seeds and commodities of small grains and legumes. MASAP will engage government policies with a positive effect on the small grains and legumes seed and commodity business environment. This will include promotion of regional harmonisation and trade within SADC and COMESA and support its implementation across member countries.
A3.3 Evidence-based advocacy supported for government investment. Improved seeds and sustainable production systems are vital for SHF to address increasing demands on the food sector. MASAP will facilitate the generation and promotion of evidence-based information that can be used for advocating on government investment priorities.
A3.4 Action research initiatives for small grains and legumes. MASAP will engage in action research with farmers and other key stakeholders to experiment with new technological approaches and adaptations to existing technologies with the ultimate aim to address seed sector bottlenecks in the two countries.
A3.5 Support dissemination of seed market information and quality requirements. MASAP will support relevant organisations and/ or existing systems in the production and dissemination of regular market information to SHFs in MASAP target districts. Youth will be engaged to connect farmers to markets using effective and efficient approaches and techniques. The detailed value chain will include a mapping of existing market information and digital trading systems and identify gaps.

5.3 Annex 4: Summary of achievements towards targets

(Adapted from 5th OR logframe)

Impact (Overall Goal)	**Impact Indicators**		**Baseline 2021**	**Yr 1 2022**	**Yr 2 2023**	**Target**
Strengthened seed value chains and increased utilisation of improved and diverse	1. Prevalence of moderate to severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)) AFS_TR1	Total Zimbabwe	71%	73%	73%	45%
		Total Zambia	65%	69.5%	69.5%	45%
	2. Number of beneficiary smallholder farmers (direct	Total Zimbabwe	0	0	278	8250

seed varieties of small grains and legumes contribute to resilient livelihoods of smallholders in Zimbabwe and Zambia	and indirect) for each target district with increased income following adoption of small grain and/or legume seed (as a result of services received)	Total Zambia	0	0	5285	25192
		Female Zimbabwe	0	0	142	4950
		Female Zambia	0	0	3929	13855
		Youth Zimbabwe	0	0	30	2062
		Youth Zambia	0	0	839	6298
Outcomes	**Outcome Indicators**		**Baseline 2021**	**Yr 1 2022**	**Yr 2 2023**	**Target**
Outcome 1: Smallholder farmers – in particular women, youth and other marginalised groups - have nutritious food and higher incomes.	1. Annual yield for specific crops (kg/ha) by small holder farmers supported	Total Zimbabwe	750kg/ha	675kg/ha	TBD	825Kg/ha
		Total Zambia	1050kg/ha	750kg/ha	TBD	1155Kg/ha
		Female Zimbabwe	450kg/ha	405Kg/ha	TBD	472.5 kg/ha
		Female Zambia	500kg/ha	450kg/ha	TBD	525kg/ha
		Youth Zimbabwe	400kg/ha	350Kg/ha	TBD	420kg/ha
		Youth Zambia	500kg/ha	400kg/ha	TBD	525kg/ha
	2. Number of COEs/associations identified registering annual Gross Profits (hence potentially explaining potential income increase of smallholder farmer members);	Total Zimbabwe	0*	0	0	8
		Total Zambia	0	0	0	8
	3. Number of Smallholder Farmers with increased access to markets and related services supported by MASAP productive partnerships with potential buyers)	Total Zimbabwe	0	0	2127	6987
		Total Zambia	0	0	21809	21334
		Female Zimbabwe	0	0	1680	2795
		Female Zambia	0	0	11022	7822
		Youth Zimbabwe	0	0	204	1164
		Youth Zambia	0	0	6632	3555
	4. Number of smallholder farmers (direct and indirect)	Total Zimbabwe	0*	635	3751	23288

	with access and utilising diverse and adapted seeds, planting materials and related services promoted through MASAP project activities.	Total Zambia	0	21724	24563	71112
		Female Zimbabwe	0	457	1786	13972
		Female Zambia	0	11333	11340	39111
		Youth Zimbabwe	0	113	126	5822
		Youth Zambia	0	7446	7450	17777
	5. Percentage/Extent of adoption amongst target smallholder farmers (numbers identified above) of target varieties of legumes and small grains compared to hybrid varieties/existing crop being used by smallholder farmers	Total Zimbabwe	0	0	0	60%
		Total Zambia	0	0	0	60%
		Female Zimbabwe	0	0	0	20%
		Female Zambia	0	0	0	20%
		Youth Zimbabwe	0	0	0	15%
		Youth Zambia	0	0	0	15%
Outcome 2: Sustainable and predictable availability of EGS, access to affordable quality small grain and legumes seed and related services by smallholder farmers through increased engagement of the private sector	1. Volume of EGS (Breeders´-, Pre-basic-, Basic/Foundation seed) produced by the public/private plant breeders, universities, CGIAR centres, for further multiplication by the Community Owned Enterprises/ Associations and contracted growers to meet the market demand for certified/standard grade seed by smallholder farmers in the targeted districts in Zimbabwe and Zambia	Total Zimbabwe	7.99MT	7.99MT	7.99MT	12.61MT
		Total Zambia	93.2MT	107.7 MT	107.7 MT	183.16MT
	2. Number of smallholder farmers engaged in seed production (of the target number) through Out Grower schemes, community owned enterprises or associations,	Total Zimbabwe	830	830	1238	1310
		Total Zambia	2031	3104	3957	4000
		Female Zimbabwe	500	500	866	786
		Female Zambia	725	1284	1843	1430
		Youth Zimbabwe	80	80	122	327

		Youth Zambia	508	843	976	1000
	3. Number of private sector value chain actors with improved outreach, strengthened business plans with specified strategies to reach women, youth and disadvantaged groups.	Total Zimbabwe	0	2	8	25
		Total Zambia	0	5	12	25
	4. Percentage increase in value of business generated by value chain players (financial services, Agricultural inputs suppliers, commodity distributors etc.);	Total Zimbabwe	0%	0%	0%	15%
		Total Zambia	0%	0%	0%	15%
Outcome 3: Gender and youth responsive enabling policy environment supportive of small grains and legumes sectors' needs and interests developed.	1. Number of policy/regulatory changes in agricultural and food security (including related to private sector plans), supportive of small grains and legumes sectors' needs and interests, that are developed, implemented and attributable to the project's evidence-based advocacy. (Attributable to MASAP)	Total Zimbabwe	0	0	0	6
		Total Zambia	0	0	0	6
	2. Number of these changes presented which have been favourable to women and youth.	Total Zimbabwe	0	0	0	4
		Total Zambia	0	0	0	4
	3. Number and success of multi-stakeholder policy engagement platforms (or similar) that facilitate substantive evidence-based exchanges between project stakeholders and policymakers.	Total Zimbabwe	2	2	3	5
		Total Zambia	0	0	2	5

5.4 Annex 5: Case studies

This section presents four case studies that were conducted during the review to show the impact of the project.

Ms. Prisca Phiri showing her harvest from last year

Prisca Phiri of Chipata, Zambia

Prisca Phiri resides in the Chidyela section of Kanjala Ward in Chipata. She became a member of the Vuka Vuka Women's Cooperative in 2022, a group consisting of 64 members focused on groundnut seed production. Prisca, like other community members, was engaged in farming groundnuts and other crops. However, she often sold her produce at a loss due to low market prices, despite the high costs of production.

Joining MASAP and Project Involvement

In 2022, Prisca and other cooperative members were introduced to the MASAP project by a Camp Officer from the Ministry of Agriculture, Mr. Machiku. MASAP aims to improve agricultural productivity through providing seeds and market access. Through the project, Prisca began producing groundnut seeds and selling them to the Zambia Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI).

In her first year with the project, she produced 350 kilograms of groundnut seed (seven 50-kg bags) and passed on 40 kilograms to a new farmer as part of the "pass-on-the-gift" initiative. She sold the remaining seed to ZARI at K20 per kilogram, making a profit. The favourable rains during that season contributed to her successful harvest. However, the following season (2023/2024) was marred by drought, and she harvested only 150 kilograms of groundnuts and 100 kilograms of cowpeas. Despite the lower yield, the prices were still fair at K30 per kilogram for groundnuts and K15 per kilogram for cowpeas.

Prisca cultivates groundnuts and cowpeas, receiving seeds as loans from MASAP through ZARI. In return, she passes on 10% of the seeds to a new farmer, continuing the cycle of support. Before joining MASAP, she had grown groundnuts, but the project provided her with improved seed varieties that increased her yield and income potential.

Impact of MASAP

Since joining the project, Prisca's life has improved significantly. One of the main benefits has been the assured market for her produce at favourable prices, as well as the consistent availability of quality seeds. The income generated has enabled her to meet her household’s basic needs, such as food, clothing, and school fees for her grandchildren.

Prisca Phiri displaying some of her recently acquired household goods

In addition, she has undergone business training, which has enhanced her skills in planning, record-keeping, and action planning. Her improved financial situation has allowed her to purchase household items, including a kitchen display unit and a solar system, moving her away from reliance on candles for light.

With the profits from her farming, Prisca has also acquired a 20 x 30 meter plot of land, where she plans to build two houses once the drought conditions improve. Furthermore, she invested in two pigs, which have since multiplied to 15, further contributing to her growing income.
Prisca noted, *"I have never held K12,000 in my hands before. After selling my produce, I was able to have this money, which enabled me to buy goods and land. I also bought two pigs, and now I have 15."*

Challenges, Solutions and Sustainability

Prisca's primary challenges include delays in receiving seeds and insufficient quantities to meet her full production capacity. Despite this, she remains optimistic, confident that her cooperative will continue to thrive even after the MASAP project ends, due to the profitability and stability of their business. The cooperative has a 12-year contract with MASAP, providing a steady source of seed and a guaranteed market.

Recommendations for Improvement

Prisca recommends that MASAP ensure the timely delivery of seeds and increase the size of the seed loan packages to enable farmers like her to expand their production and further grow their businesses.

Mpandi Kwangwa of Sioma, Zambia

Mpandi Kwangwa lives in the village of Silai in Kalongola Ward, Sioma District. She is a member of a large family of 12 members, including her husband, three young boys, and six other women. Mpandi's education was limited to Grade 2 due to various challenges, and her family primarily relies on agriculture for their livelihood. In recent years, Ms. Mpandi and her community have faced increasingly severe droughts, making it difficult to grow enough food to feed their families. While they once had abundant harvests and multiple granaries, today their granaries are empty due to poor rains. Access to seeds has also been a challenge, with government seed distributions often arriving late, making it impossible to plant in time for the rainy season.

The community traditionally grows crops like cassava, groundnuts, maize, millet, and beans. However, the drought has resulted in reduced harvests, leading to food insecurity. Additionally, elephants frequently raid their fields, further diminishing their yields. This year, when they already had little maize due to drought, the elephants destroyed whatever was left.

Mpandi Kwangwa showing her produce of groundnut seeds

Involvement with MASAP

Mpandi became involved in the MASAP project through her cooperative, which linked her to Acre Plus, a partner in the MASAP initiative. Through this project, she was introduced to groundnut farming, receiving training and seeds on a payback basis. She attended training sessions in Nangweshi, where she learned how to grow groundnuts, and after registering for the scheme, she was given seeds to plant.

Impact of the Project on Mpandi's Life

Although Mpandi's groundnut harvest was smaller than she hoped, due in part to damage from elephants, the MASAP project has helped her family. She managed to harvest enough groundnuts to sell a portion and use the money for household needs. She also set aside some seed for the next planting season. Groundnut farming has become a valuable source of income, enabling her to meet her family's basic needs, such as paying for school fees and ensuring food availability.

Ms. Mpandi sees only positive changes from the project, expressing gratitude for the seed support she received. Groundnuts have become an important part of her household's food supply and a source of income for other needs.

Challenges and Solutions

The two main challenges Mpandi faced during the project were drought and elephant raids. The lack of rainfall severely affected her crops, and the elephants destroyed what little remained. Unfortunately, there is little she can do about these challenges. Irrigation is not an option due to the lack of equipment and the distance from water sources. Ms. Mpandi and others in her community have repeatedly raised concerns about the elephants with their local Member of Parliament and District Commissioner, but no permanent solution has been implemented. Ms. Mpandi and her neighbours are unable to guard their fields at night because of the danger posed by the elephants, which are known to be aggressive.

Plans for the Future

Despite the difficulties, Ms. Mpandi is determined to continue growing groundnuts. She sees the crop as her only viable means of earning a living and plans to keep planting both for food and for seed. She hopes to sell groundnut seeds to others in her community who do not have access to seeds, further supporting her family's income.

Recommendations for Project Improvement

Ms. Mpandi wishes that the MASAP project could offer farming loans to help farmers like her expand their operations. She would like to plant more groundnuts but lacks the resources to do so. Additionally, she hopes to buy another ox to create a full yoke for ploughing, as she currently has only one ox and must share time with another farmer. This slows down her farming operations, but with her own team of oxen, she could increase her productivity.

While the drought has presented many challenges, Ms. Mpandi acknowledges that accessing groundnut seeds has become easier, thanks to MASAP. She is hopeful that with continued support, she and others in her community will be able to maintain their groundnut crops, sell some for income, and help other farmers by providing seeds. She encourages the project to continue supplying seeds, as it has made a big difference in her ability to secure a livelihood for her family.

Traditional grains seeds that are climate smart and perfect for the market

Mudzi district is in natural region 4 and 5 of Zimbabwe characterised by very low rainfall. Farmers there grow short season crops like sorghum, millets, groundnuts and cowpeas. There are no established seed suppliers for drought-tolerant traditional grains or legumes and, as a result, farmers recycle seed from the previous harvests. The recycled seed has lost its yield potential and drought tolerance characteristics. Furthermore, farmers grow for the open markets which are dominated by middlemen. As such, farmer incomes are low, and food insecurity threatens most communities. The 2023/24 season was a complete write-off for the entire communities except for few farmers like Gilbert Andiseni.

Andiseni, is a 47-year-old, lead farmer in Kamusori village, ward 5 in Mudzi district where he lives with his wife five children. He has been producing red sorghum seed for Delta Corporation and pearl millet seed for ARDA. When Gilbert joined MASAP in 2022/23 farming season, his family was using retained white seed sorghum seed which was low yielding and susceptible to dry weather. Furthermore, he was growing groundnuts and millets for the open market. MASAP introduced improved traditional grain seed and facilitated market linkages with commodity producers.

MASAP impacts

MASAP trains farmers in climate smart agriculture methods and improves their access to high quality traditional grains seed. The project also links commodity producers to secure markets. This helps improve yields, incomes and food security.

Gilbert was trained to practise water conservation agriculture though using tied ridges along and across planting lines. Gilbert received 8kg of improved, drought-tolerant white sorghum seed from a company called Mr Brands (a private sector company involved in buying farming produce and processing foods) through a contract farming agreement. Despite the devastating drought, Gilbert and his family harvested 450kg of white sorghum, 300kg of pearl millet and 600kg of red sorghum.

“As a lead farmer, I selected other farmers to form a group” noted Gilbert. “We received training in climate resilient agronomic practices, water harvesting and conservation, financial management, the intricacies of contract farming and group dynamics.”

The project introduced contract farming through Mr Brands. Gilbert planted 1.5 hectares with White Sorghum using the tied ridges method whereby water basins are created across the ridges. The method minimises water runoff. Gilbert also uses infiltration pits dug along the contour ridges. These fill with rainwater which infiltrates into the soil keeping the soil moist through dry spells. During land preparation the

family apply compost made from dry leaves and plant stover mixed with animal manure. This is applied to the crop fields in place of chemical fertiliser.

In the past season, Gilbert planted 0.8ha of pearl millet seed using similar water harvesting techniques, and he yielded 340kg despite the devastating drought. A further, 2ha of red sorghum was planted and yielded 600kg of seed.

Challenges encountered in the implementation of the project

Gilbert and his family encountered several challenges in the implementation of the project:

- Mr. Brands delivered the sorghum seed late, so the family failed to take advantage of the early rains and were forced to plant late in early January.
- Unlike the other two contractors- SeedCo and Delta who provide a full package input, Mr. Brands provided seed only. This negatively affected the yield potential of the crop.
- The 2022/23 season was characterized by poor rainfall distribution. The season was characterized by excessive rain in a short period of time and the rains stopped early.
- This affected the condition of our livestock, the source of draught power, during land preparation for the 2023/24 season. The family had to hire tractors, further putting pressure on our constrained resources.
- The family rely on hired threshers and have no control on the availability and timing of access to the service. This affected the moisture content of our produce, further reducing the yield.

We have overcome some of these challenges by selling some of our goats and access cash to purchase fertilisers and pay for services.

Despite these challenges Gilbert is optimistic about MASAP. “The project introduced commodity contract farming whereby Mr. Brands is my farming partner. They provide both inputs and assured market after harvest. Further, the contractor delivers the inputs and collects produce from farm gate. Gilbert noted “I will certainly continue to practise contract farming even after the life of the projected has ended.”

Other benefits cited include the creation of cohesive groups that support each other and enforce accountability on group members. “Each group member shares the responsibility of ensuring success of members and sharing of information. These groups shall persist after the end of the project” noted Gilbert.

Recommendations for the future from personal experiences

Gilbert recommends that the MASAP input package should be expanded to include fertiliser and pesticides which will enhance productivity.

Where practical, the project should help farmers in securing physical equipment that allows farmers to harvest rainwater and use it for domestic purposes or to irrigate crops.

Enhancing resilience through traditional grains seeds in Tsholotsho.

Tsholotsho is a hot, dry district that is only suitable for livestock production and the cultivation of small traditional grains and legumes. The community also engages in cross border due to its proximity to both Botswana and South Africa borders. Most households are led by older women since most men and youth have left for employment opportunities in these two countries. The major currency of exchange in Tsholotsho is the South African Rand.

Challenges before MASAP

Prior to the MASAP project farmers in Tsholotsho faced the following challenges:

- No dependable access to markets,
- No access to improved seed so low quality retained or recycled seed was used,
- Perennial water problems,
- Diminished incomes due to repeated establishment of maize and cotton
- The high temperatures, low rainfall and a short rainfall season was threatening food security,
- Persistent drought affected the quality and availability of grazing pastures for livestock.

Sithandazile Sibanda is a female smallholder farmer residing in Ward 2, over 80 kilometres from the Tsholotsho growth point. She lives with her husband and four children. Sithandazile is a seasoned grower of cotton, maize, pearl millet, red and white sorghum and groundnuts. MASAP has introduced Ingwebu Breweries and Buntu Foods to the district. The Sithandazile family have been contracted by Ingwebu to grow red sorghum. a short season variety that is also drought tolerant and resistant to birds' attack.

Sithandazile is the chairperson of the Sukumasenze Group and is responsible for recruiting farmers, engaging and negotiating contracts with Ingwebu, and coordinating training for group members. Sithandazile received training from both Ingwebu and Agritex relating to contract farming.

MASAP impacts

During the last two seasons, 2022/23 and 2023/24 seasons, Sithandazile was supplied with red sorghum seed adequate to plant 1 hectare of land. The contracted farmers use the Intwasa conservation agriculture method, of making planting basins for water conservation. Sithandazile's family dry plant some of the lands whilst other lands are planted with the early rains in line with Agritex recommendations. Sithandazile established one hectare of red sorghum during the 2022/23 season and harvested 540kg. During the 2023/24 season, she received a similar quantity of seed, but due to the devastating effects of the *El Nino* induced drought, the agricultural season was a complete write-off. *"We secured grain from our white sorghum and pearl millet that was adequate for own consumption"*, she said.

The community has witnessed an increased uptake of not only the drought tolerant seeds but also contract farming with Ingwebu, Tocek and Buntu Foods. From the proceeds of the 2022/23 season, Sithandazile was able to complete her main dwelling structure- a multiple room, brick under thatch building, which was a major achievement for her family.

Sithandazile Sibanda, her husband Qhubekani Dube and their 14 year old youngest son in front of the new main dwelling structure.

Challenges encountered in the implementation of the project

Sithandazile Sibanda and her family faced several challenges during the implementation of the project in the last two rainfall seasons:

- Ingwebu delivered the seed late in the first season-2022/23, thus forcing them to plant late in early January. This compromised the yield.
- During the 2023/24 season, the seed was delivered well on time.
- Although the 2022/23 season was a good season and she had a good harvest, her major difficulty was threshing the produce. It took the family nearly two months to thresh and winnow the produce because the area didn't have a thresher.
- Ingwebu only provides the seed but to other inputs. The 2023/24 crop was affected by web worm and failed to secure adequate pesticide to control the infestation.
- The 2023/24 season was a write off and she was unable to deliver any produce to the contractor. The drought decimated her crop and has left the family livestock in a poor condition. This is likely to affect land preparations for the ensuing season.

Despite the challenges MASAP has successfully introduced commodity contract farming in the area where Ingwebu and Buntu are off takers of commodity crops and Tocek has also been introduced to other wards to promote seed multiplication.

The contract package includes improved seed, farmer training. The latter included both agronomic aspects and the modalities of contract farming. This has been widely accepted by the communities. Access to both improved seed and secure markets is a major milestone for the farmers.

Although her group has not accessed any machinery from the project, they have some nearby groups that have benefited by receiving threshers. "The threshers are available for hire by 'a big producer' like me", said Sithandazile. The project has equipped Sithandazile with skills to lead and manage a commodity group made up of 22 members whose membership now includes the Village Head.

Recommendations for the future from personal experiences

Sithandazile has the following recommendations:

- The input packages should include fertiliser and pesticides to enhance productivity.
- The past drought has affected the condition of livestock, their source of draught power. This is likely to affect the level of preparedness for the coming season. MASAP could consider distributing more two-wheel tractors to address this.
- The distribution of threshers could also consider the level of productivity being exhibited by the different groups- higher productivity should be a qualifying criterion for receiving a thresher.

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5.6 Annex 6: Data collection tools

5.6.1.1 SDC Interview guide

Introduction Good day I am part of a team that has been contracted to carry out a midterm evaluation of the MASAP project. This activity will help to identify positive and any negative impacts of the project and give recommendations for improved future interventions and scale-up. We would appreciate your responses to our questions. Your responses will be kept completely confidential, and your name will not be recorded. If you agree to participate, you may refuse to answer certain questions, or you may stop participating at any time. Do you give us permission to conduct this interview? If so please sign the consent form
General information
Government department/ ministry
Job title
Relevance
How adaptable is the project to respond to shocks such as drought floods?
What new challenges have emerged to seed/ food/ markets or incomes that you think the project should be addressing?
Effectiveness
What are the main factors that make this project successful?
What are challenges are being faced by the project?
To what extent is the project effectively addressing HIV, young people, and gender?

Efficiency
How efficiently has the project been managed in terms of timely distribution of resources, finances, services?
How effective are its monitoring systems? To what extent do they provide sufficient information on project performance?
Coherence
How is the project linked with other interventions in SDC's portfolio?
Sustainability
What plans are in place to ensure sustainability of the project?
To what extent are they being implemented?
What challenges do you foresee for sustainability and how can they be addressed?

5.6.1.2 National Government representative

Introduction Good day I am part of a team that has been contracted to carry out a midterm evaluation of the MASAP project. This activity will help to identify positive and any negative impacts of the project and give recommendations for improved future interventions and scale-up. We would appreciate your responses to our questions. Your responses will be kept completely confidential, and your name will not be recorded. If you agree to participate, you may refuse to answer certain questions, or you may stop participating at any time. Do you give us permission to conduct this interview? If so please sign the consent form			
General information			
Government department/ ministry			
Job title		1. Male	2. Female
1. Please explain how you and your department has been involved in the MASAP project.			
Relevance			
2. Please explain how the MASAP project is helping to address some of the challenges facing the country and in the target districts.			
3. Are there any other challenges related to seed/ food/ markets or incomes that you think the project should be addressing?			
4. In what ways has the project improved the target communities' ability to cope with the impacts of climate change?			
5. In what ways did the project address specific challenges faced by women, young people and people living with HIV?			
Impact			
6. What would you identify as the main successes achieved by the project so far?			
7. Please explain any challenges that the project has faced in achieving its objectives.			
8.			
9. To what extent has the project had a positive influence on policy?			
10. Please describe any negative social, environmental or economic impacts from the project.			
Effectiveness			
11. Are there any challenges with the selected districts from a business or other point of view?			
12. To what extent has the project influenced the availability of seed and seed services to farmers in the community and country? (probe for services from government, private sector and other civil society organisations)			
?			
13. How could these services be improved and are there other services that should be introduced ?			
14.			
15. How well did the project respond to the recent drought and other shocks?			
16. What measures should be adopted to make the project more responsive to shocks in future?			
Efficiency			
17. How efficiently has the project been managed? (probe for timely distribution of resources, finances, services)			

18. How could management be improved in future?
Coherence
19. How well has the project worked with and complimented the government departments and ministries, private sector companies, NGOs and community groups?
20.
21. How well represented is the project in National stakeholder platforms and regional steering committees? How could this be improved?
Sustainability
22. Please explain which activities from the project are likely to continue after the project support has ended.
23. To what extent will communities continue to get access to improved seed, seed services, other support services and access to markets after the project has ended?
24. Do you think the project should be scaled up to other areas? If so which other areas would the project work well in?

5.6.1.3 Academic and research institutions guide

Introduction Good day I am part of a team that has been contracted to carry out a midterm evaluation of the MASAP project. This activity will help to identify positive and any negative impacts of the project and give recommendations for improved future interventions and scale-up. We would appreciate your responses to our questions. Your responses will be kept completely confidential, and your name will not be recorded. If you agree to participate, you may refuse to answer certain questions, or you may stop participating at any time. Do you give us permission to conduct this interview? If so please sign the consent form			
General information			
Institution/ organisation			
Job title		1. Male	2. Female
1. Please explain how you and your institution/ organisation has been involved in the MASAP project.			
2. To what extent has the project been able to develop evidence to support policy changes?			
3. To what extent has the project had a positive influence on policy?			
Relevance			
4. Please explain how the MASAP project is helping to address some of the challenges facing the country and in the target districts.			
5. Are there any other challenges related to seed/ food/ markets or incomes that you think the project should be addressing?			
Impact			
6. What would you identify as the main successes achieved by the project so far?			
7. Please explain any challenges that the project has faced in achieving its objectives.			
8. Please describe any negative social, environmental or economic impacts from the project.			
Effectiveness			
9. How well did the project respond to the recent drought and other shocks?			
10. What measures should be adopted to make the project more responsive to shocks in future?			
Coherence			
11. How well has the project worked with and complimented the other initiatives (government, NGO, private sector?)			
12. How well represented is the project in National stakeholder platforms and regional steering committees? How could this be improved?			
Sustainability			
13. Please explain which activities from the project are likely to continue after the project support has ended.			
14. Do you think the project should be scaled up to other areas? If so which other areas would the project work well in?			

5.6.1.4 District Government representatives and community leaders guide

Introduction Good day I am part of a team that has been contracted to carry out a mid- term evaluation of the MASAP project. This activity will help to identify positive and any negative impacts of the project and give recommendations for improved future interventions and scale-up. We would appreciate your responses to our questions. Your responses will be kept completely confidential, and your name will not be recorded. If you agree to participate, you may refuse to answer certain questions, or you may stop participating at any time. Do you give us permission to conduct this interview? If so please sign the consent form

General information			
Government department/ ministry			
Job title		1. Male	2. Female
1. Please explain how you or your department has been involved in the MASAP project.			
Relevance			
2. Please explain how the MASAP project is helping to address some of the challenges facing the country and in the target districts.			
3. Are there any other challenges related to seed/ food/ markets or incomes that you feel the project should be addressing?			
4. In what ways did the project address specific challenges faced by women, young people and people affected by HIV?			
Impact			
5. What would you identify as the main successes achieved by the project so far?			
6. Please explain any challenges that the project has faced in achieving its objectives.			
7. What factors have helped the project to be successful?			
8. To what extent has the project had a positive influence on policy?			
9. Please describe any negative social, environmental or economic impacts from the project.			
Effectiveness			
10. To what extent has the project influenced the availability of seed to farmers in the community and country? What are the key needs of the communities			
11. How has the project facilitated the establishment of effective community owned businesses? (**Probe** for effectiveness of innovation grants)			
12. Do you think the establishment of community owned enterprises is the best way to bring about rural economic development?			
13. What services have been offered to these businesses and are the services effective?			
14. Are there additional ways, if any, that these businesses can be better supported in future?			
15. To what extent do you think these businesses are/will be profitable?			
16. What different attributes do women compared to men bring to the successful running of businesses?			
17. Have there been any challenges arising within the community owned enterprises that are co-owned by men and women? If so, what are the solutions?			
18. How well did the project responded to economic shocks?			
19. What measures should be adopted to make the project more responsive to shocks in future?			
Efficiency			
20. How efficiently has the project been managed (**Probe** for timely distribution of resources, finances and services)?			
21. How could management be improved in future?			
Coherence			
22. How well has the project worked with the private sector and community groups?			
23. How well does the project compliment other projects in the country and the community (**Probe:** including private sector initiatives, government projects, NGO projects)?			
Sustainability			
24. How economically sustainable are the community-owned businesses that the project has helped to support?			
25. How will and to what extent will communities continue to get access to financial support, business support and markets after the project has ended?			

26. Do you think the project should be scaled up to other areas? If so which other areas would the project work well in?

5.6.1.5 Department responsible for youth guide

Introduction Good day I am part of a team that has been contracted to carry out a mid-term evaluation of the MASAP project. This activity will help to identify positive and any negative impacts of the project and give recommendations for improved future interventions and scale-up. We would appreciate your responses to our questions. Your responses will be kept completely confidential, and your name will not be recorded. If you agree to participate, you may refuse to answer certain questions, or you may stop participating at any time. Do you give us permission to conduct this interview? If so please sign the consent form					
General information					
District	1. Mudzi	2. Tsholotsho	3. Sioma	4. Sesheke	5. Chipata
Government department				1. Male	2. Female
1. Please explain how you or your department has been involved in the MASAP project.					
Relevance					
2. Please explain how the MASAP project is helping to address some of the challenges facing the country and in the target districts.					
3. Are there any other challenges related to seed/ food/ markets or incomes that you feel the project should be addressing?					
4. In what ways did the project address specific challenges faced by young people?					
Impact					
5. What would you identify as the main successes achieved by the project for young people so far? 6. Has the project changed the behaviours and attitudes of young people towards agriculture based economic activities? In what way?					
7. Please describe any negative social, environmental or economic impacts from the project.					
Effectiveness					
8. How has the project influenced young people's access to improved seed services and other services (such as business services, finances, markets etc)?					
9. How could young people's access to these services be improved in future?					
10. In what way did the project address challenges faced by people living with HIV?					
Coherence					
11. How well has the project worked with the government departments, community groups and others?					
12. How well does the project compliment other projects in the country and the community (including private sector initiatives, government projects, NGO projects)?					
Sustainability					
13. To what extent will the benefits of the project continue to be realised by young people after the project support has ended?					
14. What recommendations can you give for improvements in the project and scale-up?					

5.6.1.6 Private sector company (seed/ processing/ manufacture)

Introduction Good day I am part of a team that has been contracted to carry out amid- term evaluation of the MASAP project. This activity will help to identify positive and any negative impacts of the project and give recommendations for improved future interventions and scale-up. We would appreciate your responses to our questions. Your responses will be kept completely confidential, and your name will not be recorded. If you agree to participate, you may refuse to answer certain questions, or you may stop participating at any time. Do you give us permission to conduct this interview? If so please sign the consent form			
General information			
Name of Company			
Job title		1. Male	2. Female
1. Please explain how you or your company has been involved in the MASAP project. How is your position in the value chains structured? (Aggregation centres, mobile collection points, etc)			
Relevance			

2. Please explain how the MASAP project is helping to address some of the challenges the country and in the target districts. 3. Is your organisation satisfied with the district selection? Give reasons for your answer. 4. What needs are you meeting for the selected communities? 5. Has the project expanded your product offerings? How has it done so? 6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the project's approach?
7. Are there any other challenges related to seed/ food/ markets or incomes that you feel the project should be addressing?
8. In what ways has the project improved the target communities' ability to cope with the impacts of climate change?
Impact
9. What would you identify as the main successes achieved by the project so far?
10. What factors have helped the project to be successful?
11. How has the project benefitted your company? 12.
13. How many farmers have you reached since inception of the project?
14. Please explain any challenges that the project has faced in achieving its objectives.
15. Please describe any negative social, environmental or economic impacts from the project including to your business.
Effectiveness
16. To what extent has the project improved the profitability of your company? (Probe for expanding products, markets, financial support, business support) 17.
18. What is the gross turnover in US$ have you secured to date? (Broken down annually)
19. How effective have the innovation grants been to growing your business?
20. Are there any challenges with the cost sharing arrangements in project asset acquisition and how could this support be improved in future?
21. How well did the project respond to the recent drought and other shocks (such as economic shocks)?
22. What measures should be adopted to make the project more responsive to shocks in future?
Efficiency
23. How efficiently has the project been managed in terms of timely distribution of resources, finances, services? 24.
25. How could management of the project be improved in future?
Coherence
26. How well has the project worked with your company, the government and community groups?
27. How well does the project compliment other private sector initiatives in the country?
Sustainability
28. Please explain which activities from the project are likely to continue after the project support has ended
29. To what extent will the relationship between your company and the project farmer beneficiaries continue after the project has ended?
30. Do you think the project should be scaled up to other areas? If so which other areas would the project work well in? (Districts and reason for the suggested districts)

5.6.1.7 Focus Group Discussion guide

Introduction

Good day we are a team of independent researchers that have been contracted to carry out a mid-term evaluation of the MASAP project. This activity will help us to identify positive and any negative impacts of the project and give recommendations for improved future interventions and scale-up. We would appreciate your responses to our questions. Your responses will be kept completely confidential, and your name will not be recorded. If you agree to participate, you may refuse to answer certain questions, or you may stop participating at any time.

Do you give us permission to conduct this focus group? If so please sign the consent form

General information					
District	1. Mudzi	2. Tsholotsho	3. Sioma	4. Sesheke	5. Chipata

Type of FGD	1. Older Male	2. Younger male	3. Older female	4. Younger female
Type of group	Seed producers	Commodity producers	Processors	Other

1. Please explain how you have participated in the MASAP project and describe the function and activities of your group/ association.
Relevance
2. Please explain how the MASAP project is helping to address some of the challenges facing your community? (**Probe:** for access to improved seeds, markets, employment or participation in economic activities for both women and youth)
3. Are there any other challenges related to seed/ food or incomes that you feel the project should be addressing?
4. In what ways has the project improved the communities' ability to cope with the impacts of climate change?
Effectiveness
5. How has the project improved the incomes of the people and businesses involved?
6. How has the project helped farmers find secure markets for their products? (**Probe:** for sorghum, millet, cowpeas and groundnuts)?
7. How has the project changed what kinds of food products are available in the community?
8. In what ways has the project contributed to changing what people in the community eat?
9. How has the project influenced the availability of seed to farmers in the community?
10. How has the project influenced the availability of improved seed services and other services to farmers in the community? (probe for services from government, private sector and other civil society organisations)
11. In what ways has the project involved and benefitted women?
12. In what ways has the project involved and benefitted young people?
13. In what ways has the project involved and benefitted people living with HIV?
14. What more could be done through the project to benefit these groups?
Efficiency
15. How has the project been managed in terms of distribution of resources, finances, services? And maybe uptake of commodities
Impact
16. What would you identify as the main successes achieved by the project so far?
17. Please identify any challenges that the project has faced in achieving its objectives?
Coherence
18. Please explain how well the different project partners: work together? (Probe for relationships between CTDO/ NIRAS, Government departments and ministries, private sector companies and community groups)
19. How well does the MASAP project compliment other projects in the country and the community (**Probe** for community projects, private sector initiatives, government projects, NGO projects)
Sustainability
20. Please explain which activities from the project are likely to continue after the project support has ended.
21. To what extent will communities continue to get access to decent seed, seed services, other support services and access to markets after the project has ended?
22. Do you think the project should be scaled up to other areas? Which ones?

5.6.1.8 Story of Change guide

Good day I am part of a team that has been contracted to carry out amid- term evaluation of the MASAP project. This activity will help to identify positive and any negative impacts of the project and give recommendations for improved future interventions and scale-up. We would appreciate your responses to our questions. Do you give us permission to conduct this interview? If so please sign the consent form	
Name of interviewee/ group members	
Village	
Ward	
District	
Context 1. Please tell us a bit about yourself and your family?	
2. Please tell us what it is like living in this community and the problems that you face? (probe for agricultural challenges, seed availability, types of crops grown, access to nutritious food, climate change and other shocks)	
3. How did you become involved in the MASAP project?	
4. What activities have you been involved with in the project?	
5. How has the project changed your life and the lives of others in your community? (Probe for positive and negative changes).	
6. Tell us about any challenges that you have faced in implementing some of the project activities.	
7. How have you overcome these challenges?	
8. Which of the MASAP activities will you continue with in future and why?	
9. What improvements can you suggest for the project in future?	