

C.A.R.D.Z.

Canadian Agricultural Relief and Development in Zimbabwe



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Executive Summary

Having held the record of the highest inflation rate in the worldⁱ, Zimbabwe is struggling to develop sustainable solutions to its multifaceted problems. Food security is one of the most pressing issues faced by the population today, with high levels of malnutrition and a perennial risk of famine.ⁱⁱ Food shortages are aggravated by persistent droughts, unused arable land, and a lack of knowledge of appropriate farming practices to cope with harsh weather conditions.

Our project seeks to address the issues behind Zimbabwe's food shortages by providing long-term solutions through training and collaboration. Using funds from Global Affairs Canada, Canadian Agriculture Relief and Development in Zimbabwe (CARDZ) aims to connect local Zimbabwean and Canadian farmers to share best practices and farming techniques that address Zimbabwe's distinct circumstances. CARDZ will facilitate farmer-to-farmer learning and host workshops between the Canadian NGO SeedChange and the Zimbabwe Smallholder Organic Farmers Forum (ZIMSOFF) through the Manicaland Agroecology School. The school will engage local farmers, youth, and women, ensuring the participation of the most vulnerable groups in accordance with Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP). It will engage members of the rural community and improve farming practices at local levels to establish sustainable food security.

Objectives

The Project

The Canadian Agricultural Relief and Development in Zimbabwe (CARDZ) programme is a two-and-a-half-year initiative aimed at redressing food insecurity and malnutrition in Zimbabwe by developing an agroecology school and empowering smallholder farmers. Half of Zimbabwe's population is food insecure, and acute malnutrition continues to rise.ⁱⁱⁱ The current government has pledged ZWL\$1.9 billion to the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Climate and Rural Resettlement, but its history of corruption and mismanagement of resources is cause for concern.^{iv} CARDZ provides a learning environment that offers sustainable smallholder agricultural practices as a local solution to climate crises and food scarcity.

Key objectives:

- Foster self-sufficiency in rural areas;
- Promote gender equality;
- Reduce food insecurity and malnutrition;
- Cultivate robust farmer-to-farmer networks;
- And disseminate sustainable and ecological agricultural practices.

Stakeholders & Partners

Global Affairs Canada: GAC will be the donor of the aid money (CAD\$20 million) and will administer the project along with SeedChange. GAC will be responsible for coordination of the

NGO partners and the relevant Zimbabwean authorities. GAC will also be prevalent in every step of the evaluation process, with a view towards contributing towards a more just, inclusive and sustainable world. The evaluation timeline will include preparatory criteria development and consultation, impact and needs assessments, and formal project evaluation and analysis. In addition, this project is aligned with GAC's priority of eradicating poverty and alleviating suffering in humanitarian crises.^v

SeedChange: SeedChange is a Canadian NGO that partners with family farmers and like-minded nonprofit organizations to facilitate the development of tailored agricultural projects. These projects are aimed at combating the high levels of poverty experienced by nearly one billion family farmers.^{vi} Examples of their contributions include the sharing and breeding of new seeds, the restoration of degraded arable lands and soil, launching of enterprises and cooperatives to increase farmer incomes, and the dissemination of knowledge and technical expertise (with an emphasis on women and Indigenous farmers). SeedChange has completed projects in Burkina Faso, Mali, Ethiopia and Somalia, meaning it has an established continental presence that will facilitate easier entry.^{vii}

ZIMSOFF: The Zimbabwe Smallholder Organic Farmers Forum is a non-profit organization whose mission statement is to influence policies and public awareness of agroecology and smallholder farmers' rights. ZIMSOFF seeks to improve the livelihoods of organized and empowered farmers in the nation by practicing sustainable and viable ecological agriculture. It comprises four geographical clusters, including the Eastern Cluster which covers Manicaland, and has over 19,000 members. The Manicaland cluster consists of 2,000 members and is led by farmer Norman Chibememe.^{viii} They too have a focus on women farmers (particularly those in rural areas), working towards economic empowerment and increased leadership.

Shashe Agroecology School: The Shashe school promotes farmer-to-farmer training and knowledge exchange both vertically and horizontally. It works with ZIMSOFF's central cluster, with members organizing "look and learn" visits, group meetings, workshops and seed fairs to achieve its goals.

Pre-Project Risk Assessment

Pre-Conditions

Zimbabwe currently faces a severe food shortage and extreme hyperinflation, which risks total economic collapse.^{ix} Corrupt governance, environmental stress, and the COVID-19 crisis are exacerbating the challenges faced by the state.^x Accusations of government corruption abound, with the country scoring low on World Governance Indicators related to corruption and transparency.^{xi}

Sporadic episodes of government violence against opposition forces and protests have occurred. Rural-urban tensions persist, with the majority of the rural population supporting the government and the majority of the urban population supporting the opposition.^{xii}

There are over 5.5 million people in rural Zimbabwe currently at risk of starvation. 48% of Zimbabwe's population is under the age of 18, and child poverty rates in rural areas have reached over 70%.^{xiii}

COVID-19: As of April 3, 2020, Zimbabwe has confirmed 9 new cases of COVID-19 and 1 death.^{xiv} Botswana and South Africa have taken measures to close their borders with Zimbabwe.^{xv} These measures are likely to intensify the economic crisis and increase food shortages. The already strained Zimbabwean health system is now facing a shortage of supplies to respond to COVID-19, causing a strike by doctors and other medical professionals.^{xvi} The Jack Ma and Alibaba foundation provided a number of medical supplies to Zimbabwe through the African Union.^{xvii} As of March 23, 2020, Zimbabwe instituted a number of preventative measures including the ban of non-essential travel, entertainment and recreational activities, and public gatherings (of more than 50 people).^{xviii} They have also limited the number of hospital visits to one per day.^{xix}

Location

The project will be located in the province of Manicaland in Eastern Zimbabwe. The province is facing a 71 % poverty prevalence.^{xx} The province's economy is already reliant on agriculture; existing infrastructure and experienced farmers provide for a better opportunity for the success of the project, increasing the potential to boost the economy and make use of vacant arable land.^{xxi} Manicaland borders Mozambique, providing an opportunity for international trade.

The project's initial starting point will be within the Mutasa district, with the potential for expansion into neighboring districts. The province is 98.3% rural, and the majority of the economy is agro-based.^{xxii} There are both large commercial farmlands and small locally owned farmlands within the district.^{xxiii} Cultivating sustainable farming practices that will permit farmers to produce consistent crop yields despite regular droughts will help boost the economy of the district and improve food security.

Timing

Considering that the government of Zimbabwe has banned all non-essential travel (excluding cargo) and has committed to close all borders to non-residents, the proposed project cannot begin until border restrictions are lifted and/or loosened. COVID-19's impact on Zimbabwe's infrastructure and economy will likely have a significant impact on the project's ability to launch.

Political Context

Corruption within government is still a widespread issue in Zimbabwe, although it is considered to be improving because of its recent elections in 2018.^{xxiv} Currently, Zimbabwe is ranked 158th

on the Global Corruption Rating.^{xxv} Corruption remains a problem in Eastern Zimbabwe, and in Manicaland specifically. For example, the Anglican Bishop of Manicaland, Erik Ruwoma, was arrested in January 2020 for pocketing a \$700,000 USD loan he had taken out to build a school.^{xxvi} We must remain mindful of this widespread corruption when creating and implementing our funding structure.

Canada has a robust trading relationship with Zimbabwe worth about \$17.4 million dollars (\$12.3 million in Canadian exports and \$5.1 million in Zimbabwean imports).^{xxvii} The largest Canadian export to Zimbabwe is vegetables and the largest import is minerals.^{xxviii} Canada invests predominantly in Zimbabwe's mining sector and provides targeted humanitarian assistance.^{xxix} For example, Canada donated \$1.5 million in aid when Zimbabwe was hit by cyclones Idai and Kenneth in 2019.^{xxx} Canada also donated \$3 million dollars in aid to the World Food Programme in an effort to lift 55,000 Zimbabweans out of hunger in March 2020.^{xxxi} The fairly stable flow of aid from Canada to Zimbabwe indicates that the trade relationship between the two countries is unlikely to affect the project's implementation because Canada appears to have a vested interest in Zimbabwe's economic success.

Opportunities

The pre-existing operations of the Shashe Agroecology School working in conjunction with ZIMSOFF's central cluster provides a feasible entry point for CARDZ.^{xxxii} The strong agricultural traditions already practiced in Manicaland can be leveraged by GAC and SeedChange to minimize delays in start-up and administration. SeedChange can focus exclusively on helping to fill gaps in technical expertise plaguing both of the aforementioned organizations, as they have successfully completed similar projects in other African nations.^{xxxiii}

Other Salient Factors Affecting The Impact Of The Conflict On The Project

Economic Conditions/Hyperinflation: As of November 2019, Zimbabwe was experiencing an annual inflation of 490%.^{xxxiv} This is one of the highest inflation rates in the world, and is a dangerous repetition of the extreme hyperinflation the country faced from 2006 to 2008 (where inflation was 156.9%).^{xxxv} The rapid increase in inflation, in conjunction with increases in fuel costs, have resulted in lower crop yields.^{xxxvi}

Given the economic consequences associated with hyperinflation of this level, it is important to consider possible solutions for mitigating losses to agricultural production and to ensure continued development through aid. During the round of hyperinflation in the late 2000's, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) launched a "Productive Sector Facility" in 2008 to support productive sectors of the economy.^{xxxvii} Agriculture received the greatest share of the fund. This included subsidization through loans as well as the provision of goods and equipment. In particular, 12% of total seed provision, as well as five combine harvesters, were given to farmers in Manicaland.^{xxxviii}

One issue became that farmers would opt for instant gratification by selling their seed on the black market, as opposed to maintaining it for the long-term stability of their crop output.

Similarly, when the RBZ subsidized fuel usage, farmers again preferred to sell it on the black market.^{xxxix} While we can't affect the country's fiscal stimulus choices nor macroeconomic policy, our project partners should attempt to minimize negative outcomes like this by maintaining surveillance and continued oversight. In addition, the provision of seeds and other agricultural products should be done with a view to long-term development and self-sustainability of farmers after the project is first delivered.

Post-Project Impacts

CARDZ can reduce the likelihood of an outbreak of conflict in Zimbabwe by:

Increasing food security

Once known as the breadbasket of Africa, Zimbabwe's agricultural sector today struggles to feed its population: 27% of its children have stunted growth, approximately half the population will suffer food insecurity in 2020's lean season^{xi} and less than 10% of children between the ages of 6-24 months consume the minimal acceptable diet.^{xlii} The Manicaland Agroecology School will facilitate farmer-to-farmer training by hosting information seminars, demonstrations, workshops and seed fairs where participants can share their successful methods and techniques with farmers from across Zimbabwe. Seed exchanges are a fundamental component of food security, as indigenous seeds have shown to be more resilient to drought and disease than genetically modified seeds (GMOs), and are significantly less expensive.^{xliii} Cultivating a network of communication and knowledge exchange will strengthen farmers' capacity to overcome the arid weather and natural disasters that frequently bedevil the country and confront the government's consistently lackluster efforts to deliver basic services.

Educating the next generation of farmers

The School will empower all members of its farming community. The youth will be allocated a section of the communal garden where they may experiment with the production of a variety of crops. Innovative and sustainable practices such as contouring, multiple cropping and mulching will be inculcated at a young age by the male and female farmers in the community, as well as the specialists from SeedChange and ZIMSOF. Thus, the next generation of farmers will be better equipped to surmount the increasingly numerous challenges climate changes poses to agricultural production. In addition, the Sashe Agroecology School has shown that surplus produce has been sold in nearby markets to fund activities for the younger members in the community.^{xliiii}

Reducing the costs of farming

Zimbabwe's economic troubles and lamentable infrastructure have created a significant challenge for farmers to procure agricultural products such as pesticides, herbicides, chemical fertilizer, etc. Agroecology, however, promotes low-cost local alternatives. Moreover, scientific studies have demonstrated that agroecological farming methods outperform the use of chemical fertilizers in crop production, especially in agriculturally unfavorable regions.^{xliiv} In conjunction with the aforementioned seed fairs, the Manicaland Agroecology School cultivates an extensive

and robust network of farmers, which, in turn, limits their dependence on unreliable and unpredictable markets.

Expanding gender equality

It has been estimated that if women were given the same opportunities in the agriculture sector as men, they could increase productivity on their farms by 20% to 30%.^{xlv} In Zimbabwe, women make up 70% of the agricultural labor force. Female heads of households, however, remain poorer than their male counterparts and under the poverty line.^{xlvi} Rather than neglect the opportunities these women have to offer their country and communities, the Manicaland Agroecology School will elevate these women to leadership roles and expand their land rights. These efforts will augment the agricultural supply chain, as well as alleviate rural poverty.

Operational Decisions and Monitoring

Limitations

The current COVID-19 crisis will delay the preparatory phase of CARDZ by at least four months. In addition, Zimbabwe's ineffectual methods of delivering even basic social services to its citizens—particularly its rural communities—and its faltering economy will be greatly exacerbated by the COVID-19 virus. If, as a result, Zimbabweans grow increasingly dependent on subsistence farming, smallholder farmers will be potential targets of violence, as they supply the majority of Zimbabwe's domestically produced food.^{xlvii} An agreement with the United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) has been arranged so that CARDZ personnel will be evacuated expeditiously, should hostilities erupt. A portion of the budget (5%) will be allocated to this contingency plan.

Timeline

Phase 1: Preparatory Phase (1 Year) [25% of Budget]

- *Coordination:* Establish a network of communication between facilitators from SeedChange, smallholder farmers from the Shashe Agroecology School and Norman Chibememe, ZIMSOFF's farmer leader in Manicaland.
- *Education:* Exchange knowledge and expertise by conducting a season-long training session that will include all aforementioned parties. Facilitators from SeedChange will undergo the same look and learn exercises as the farmers they will eventually train.
- *Integration:* Synthesize the results of the preliminary training session with an extensive outreach to the targeted communities of the pilot project.

Phase 2: Implementation Phase (1 Year) [50% of Budget]

- *Training:* Inculcate in the smallholder farmers the best practices of agroecology and prepare them to disseminate their expertise amongst farmers within and beyond their communities.

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- *Inclusion:* Incorporate local women into each echelon of the Manicaland Agroecology School structure, thereby ensuring that they occupy positions from the grassroots to the national level of Zimbabwe's agricultural sector.
 - *Monitoring:* Maintain regular reporting of the project's performance so as to measure its efficacy and to make adjustments accordingly.

Phase 3: Assessment Phase (6 Months) [20% of Budget]

- *Impact:* Collate the progress reports taken throughout the first two years of the project and review the aggregated findings.
- *Expansion:* Correct for deficiencies in the project and explore prospective regions for the development of a second agroecology school.

Contingency Plan [5% of Budget]

- Emergency evacuation of personnel with UNDSS support.

Evaluation

Development Phase

Before the project commences in Manicaland, a formal call for proposal (CFP) shall be completed by SeedChange (with consultation from ZIMSOFF and Shashe Agroecology School) and be submitted to Global Affairs Canada (GAC) prior to any release of funds. The CFP will include a detailed explanation of how it meets the criterion outlined in Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), as well as the indicators and timeline to be used for formal evaluation of the project. The proposal is to be circulated to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Department for Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) for indicator and GBA+ feedback.

After CFP approval by GAC, baselines for the project evaluation indicators are to be established through consultations and fact-finding missions with ZIMSOFF. Additional evaluation indicators to incorporate into the project if deemed necessary. Consultations are also to be conducted with Zimbabwean facilitators at Shashe Agroecology School to determine best agroecology teaching practices in the region. Additionally, a four-person team from Global Affairs Canada will conduct a needs assessment in Manicaland prior to official commencement of the program. A gender consultant will be included within this four-person team and will be actively involved in community consultations.

During the Project

Assessments are to be completed on an ongoing basis by SeedChange, in collaboration with Global Affairs, on the implementation of the project and its adherence to GBA+. At the 6-month mark, an internal assessment is to be conducted collaboratively by SeedChange, ZIMSOFF, and the Shashe Agroecology School to identify initial challenges and the potential need for operational changes. Active inclusion and participation of ZIMSOFF and the Shashe

Agroecology School in this assessment process is critical in order to ensure local participation, expertise, and feedback, as well as to build capacity for future Zimbabwean-led evaluation processes.

After the Project

After the first year, a 6-month formal evaluation of the project is to be completed by a GAC evaluation team to conduct an impact assessment and determine the following:

- 1) **Overall Effectiveness of the project.** Impact will be measured in part through perceived changes in agricultural health and diversity of the region, impact on the regional population through a reduction in observed food insecurity, poverty rate, level of chronic malnutrition, percentage of arable land, seed diversity, income level per capita of farmers involved in the program, female participation rate in the program, as well as the number of workshops and learning sessions held (sex-disaggregated) as part of the capacity-building component. Feedback from Manicaland residents will also be factored into the evaluation process.
- 2) **Demonstrated capacity level of ZIMSOF** to fully administer the project. This assessment is critical in order to successfully accomplish the long-term objective of establishing a fully locally administered project.
- 3) **Potential for expansion** into additional regions through the construction of an additional agroecology school (region TBD).

The findings of this impact assessment will be shared internally, after which, a communication strategy will be developed to translate the findings to the public.

Evaluation Timeline

Pre-Preparatory Phase		Preparatory Phase (1 yr.)		Implementation Phase (1 yr.)				Assessment Phase (6 months)	Post-Assessment Phase
CFP Process and Approval (Including FIAP approved gender criteria)	Consultation with Agriculture, Agri-Food Canada and WAGE	Consultation and fact-finding mission with Shashe Agroecology School, SeedChange, and ZIMSOFF on set of indicators for evaluation.	baselines for the project evaluation indicators are to be established and format for ongoing impact assessment to be agreed upon by all partners.	SeedChange Impact Assessment #1	Internal Assessment conducted by SeedChange, ZIMSOFF, and Shashe Agroecology School.	SeedChange Impact Assessment #2	SeedChange Impact Assessment #3	GAC Evaluation Team conducts formal evaluation of the project.	Deliverable: GAC -produced Impact Assessment, including recommendations on the viability of expansion for the project.
GAC Evaluation Team hired for post-project impact Assessment		Manicaland needs assessment conducted by GAC Evaluation Team.		Operational changes made, if needed and reported back to GAC.		Deliverable: Internal Impact Assessment Report to be distributed to all partners, including its findings and any (potential) changes to the project as a result.	Check in with ZIMSOFF to discuss capacity building and areas of need.	Data from evaluation indicators collected and analyzed	Transition plan begins development in collaboration with ZIMSOFF and SeedChange
								Capacity assessment of ZIMSOFF partners carried out	
								Consultations and evaluation for potential expansion take place.	

Sustainability/Continuity

At the end of the 18 months (including 6-month formal evaluation phase) an impact assessment will be given by the GAC evaluation team on the demonstrated capacity for transfer of the project. This assessment will be the basis for a transition plan, to be developed by all of the partnering organizations. This transition plan will work towards achieving the ultimate objective – a complete transfer of the project over to ZIMSOFF, led by local expertise, and supported through ongoing SeedChange training. If the project is proven to be effective, there is a potential for replication to other regions, furthering local capacity and ownership of community-led initiatives. Continuation of funding past the initial period is to be determined on an ongoing basis by Global Affairs Canada until the project can reach full financial sustainability in its administration.

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