

EVALUATION
“EFFECTIVENESS, EQUITY AND
RELEVANCE”
OF THE
Zimbabwe Council of Churches
Nation Building and Protection
Program
2019 – 2021

SUPPORTED BY
ACT FOR PEACE
AUSTRALIA

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BASIC INFORMATION

PROJECT TITLE	“Leadership Development for Better and Accountable Governance”
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ACRONYMS

COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
EFZ	Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe
FGDs	Focus Group Discussion
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
LEFS	Local Ecumenical Fellowships
MDC A	Movement of Democratic Change Alliance
MPs	Member of Parliament
MoHCC	Ministry of Health and Child Care
NDS1	National Development Strategy
OECD_DAC	Organization of European Cooperation and Development
RDC	Rural District Councils
UDACIZA	Union for Development of the Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe
USA	United States of America
USD	United States Dollar
VIDCO	Village Development Committee
VOA	Voice of America news
WHO	World Health Organization
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZCBC	Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Council
ZCC	Zimbabwe Council of Churches
ZIMVAC	Zimbabwe Vulnerabilities Assessment Committee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Praticas Consulting Group, an independent consultancy engaged by Act for Peace, conducted an evaluation of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) nation building and protection program. The evaluation used a mixed methods approach which collected qualitative and quantitative data from both primary and secondary sources. The evaluation approaches included a desk review of project documents including monitoring reports and any data used to measure project performance. The evaluation process included field work, where the team collected data from the program participants and stakeholders. The evaluation data was collated, analyzed and conclusions were made. The key evaluation questions were on the program's effectiveness, identifying the program analysis of effectiveness involves taking account of the relative importance of the objectives or results. The evaluation aggregated effectiveness according to the OECD_DAC Criteria. To appreciate the wider scope of effectiveness the evaluation interrogated the program relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, accountability and sustainability. The evaluation focused on the project delivery during 1 July 2019 until the time of data. The study sampled the communities and participants in the Midlands, Manicaland, Masvingo, Mashonaland East and Matabeleland Provinces as stipulated in the ToRs. The study made attempts at influencing the mobilization of person with disabilities yet still their participation was limited.

THE METHODOLOGY AND THE PARTICIPATION

DATA COLLECTION

An extensive review of related project documents was conducted. The documents include the project proposal, the Log frame, annual and quarterly reports. The wide review provided insights into the evaluation questions. Primary data was collected using key informant interviews (KIIs), structured questionnaires and focus group discussions (FGDs). A total of 20 KIIs were conducted with various stakeholders which included ZCC staff, board members, government departments, community leaders and religious leaders. Seven FGDs were conducted, these were disaggregated by sex and program components. Structured Questionnaires were administered to 121 for community members trained in child protection and safeguarding, 130 for the smallholder farmers and peri urban poor and 70 for the church leaders. 70% of the survey respondents were female. 10 Semi structured interviews were conducted targeting recipients of the IEC materials produced and distributed by the program, six of these were female and four were male. Eight women and three men with disabilities participated as respondents during the evaluation.

THE SAMPLING STRATEGY, DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

The evaluation purposely targeted all the project participants at a national, provincial and district level. The participants were the government stakeholders at district level, CSO network members and church leaders at a national level, community members in targeted districts and wards, smallholder farmers in the targeted districts and wards and ZCC program team. These formed the population. The evaluation then stratified participants by program component, allocated number of participants per ward. The evaluation used digital tools and all its data was managed electronically. The main data management software was Solstice. This is a digital software which enabled the evaluation to share

digital tools with enumerators and digital links with some of the respondents. To analyse qualitative data the evaluation used Content Thematic Analysis.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The lead consultant and the research assistants who included the enumerators and note taker(s) were bound by Praticas Consulting Group Code of Conduct which specifies expected behaviors around protection and safeguarding of respondents and research subjects.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

The evaluation was conducted physically and the challenge was to ensure adherence to MoHCC and WHO guidelines on COVID-19. This was restrictive and posed a management challenge especially in Goromonzi where many program participants convened and the evaluation team had to screen according to the sampling strategy and list. The other limitation was that the evaluation could not engage with users of the ZCC social media platforms. The platforms are Facebook, twitter and you-tube. These social media platforms by design do not reveal the identity particulars of the users and this made it impossible for the evaluation team to administer a questions or conduct interviews with this particular group. The social media platform set up could not allow for direct interaction with the participants. Interaction would have required “befriending” or “following” for the Facebook and twitter users respectively.

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS AFFECTING PROGRAM

As assumed in the project design, the political atmosphere did not create any undesirable impediments to the smooth flow of the program progression. The political environment remained relatively calm and without any dramatic developments. The political decisions around COVID-19 lock restrictions were cause for concern. The hyperinflation that has characterized the Zimbabwean economy continued to escalate unabated. The dramatic changes in the exchange rate for the local currency and the USA dollar had a negative effect on the lives of the program participants. These are commonly engaged in some form of petty trading and currency exchange rates do affect their businesses. Most of the ZCC program participants, especially those in the urban and peri urban location rely on daily incomes. The nexus between the COVID-19 lock down restrictions and the hyperinflation had a negative impact on the targeted program participants.

FINDINGS

PROJECT RELEVANCE

It is apparent from the desk review that the project objectives are still valid. The project sought to promote engagement and networking with stakeholders and communities including regarding peacebuilding dialogues and improved awareness and knowledge of protection issues. The project activities are aligned to the broader national strategies and plans such as the National Development Strategy number one (NDS1). The need for protection is also important in current situation where we have the COVID-19 pandemic and its lock down restrictions. The desk review revealed that children are at heightened risk of abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic.

THE PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

The feedback from project participants all pointed at positive outcomes. The program had an effect on women and youth position. This is a positive result and the consequences at both community and household levels are positive. The most significant unexpected outcome was the immediate absorption of trained women and men into community managed child protection mechanism. The program sought to empower women and men but program saw these absorbed into the local institutions. The livelihood diversification efforts were appropriate for the targeted rural and peri urban communities. These have access to land and rely on small-scale farming for their livelihoods. The conservation agriculture technology was also appropriate, as it is low input in its approach. The national building dialogue initiatives were appropriate in a country with a stark political divide.

PROGRAM OVERALL PERFORMANCE

PROJECT OUTPUTS	TARGET	ACHIEVED
Social media utilization	300,000	4,426,448 (these are either likes , comments or re-post and not necessarily persons)
Church leaders trained	100	100
Leaders engaged	70	40
Policy dialogues	3	3
Training of ZCC staff , board and stakeholders	70	50
Community members trained in child protection and safeguarding	500	443
IEC material produced and distributed	70	50
Urban and peri urban poor trained in livelihoods diversification	250	285
Rural smallholder farmers trained in livelihoods diversification	400	397

Overall, the program performed fairly well and met most of its targeted outputs. It is also evident that the project managed to process the inputs into outputs and outcomes are currently presenting and evolving across all the project components. The program saw more women trained in livelihood diversification and child protection and safeguarding. More than 60% of the people trained were women and 60% of them were youthful and between the ages of 19 and 35 years. The evaluation picked an overlay of interventions, where program components had intersections in terms of participants. The project overlaid child protection and other components of the programs such as livelihood diversification. The desk review established that approximately 50% of the community members trained in livelihood diversification were also trained in child protection.

PROGRAM'S ECONOMIC AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

An analysis of the program investment reveal that the project was efficient in its delivery. The analysis concluded that the program had economic efficiency. The program received a total approved budget of \$132,218.69USD. Due to exchange rates gains an actual income of \$ 139,039.79USD. The program invested a total of \$128,299.54USD and had a balance of \$10,740.25. The acquittals were processed on time and reconciliations were prepared on a monthly basis. The project was efficient as it was able to adapt despite the COVID-19 challenges. The project was able to meet its targets and the outcomes were realized.

THE PROGRAM'S SUSTAINABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The program employed an effective mobilization and selection strategy. There was evidence of participatory identification and selection of program participants and this fostered sustainability. The program intentionally collaborated with government departments in all its components. There was also an intentional effort at involving community existing structures and leadership in all the components. This promoted linkages of all the program components with permanent community and government structures. As much as the evaluation had a focus on effectiveness, the study explored the program's effectiveness towards accountability. The ZCC program utilized the toll free facility to serve as a complaints and response mechanism for its participants. The facility was open and allowed for communities to report sensitive issues which they may not be comfortable to report directly to staff.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation concludes that the ZCC implemented program is relevant and is still responding to the current needs of the targeted participants. The context from inception has changed significantly though the current political situation is turning out to be dramatic and the need for nation building and policy dialogues is imperative. The program is coherent at both internal and external levels. The program dovetails with ZCC strategic mission and objectives. The activities did feed into the organization's strategic pursuits. The program also aligned closely with national models and plans. The activities are in line with the essence of the NDS1. The livelihood technologies promoted by the project are also in line with the government Pfumvudza/Intwasa model. The model is a climate smart initiative aimed at promoting increased crop production by rural and urban and peri urban farmers. The protection and safe guarding initiatives resonate well with rights based programming and promotes safe spaces for women and children participation in development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation recommends to ZCC that the organisation come up with effective strategies for intentional identification, mobilization and selection of PwDs into its project activities. Further training on child protection, safeguarding, PSEA and GBV to various levels of stakeholders, starting with government extension officers who can cascade the training, community leadership and program participants is recommended. This will further clarify the concepts of safeguarding and protection. The design of an M&E infrastructure which involves the project participants and stakeholders in tracking and documenting program progress is highly recommended.

The evaluation recommends that Act for Peace support ZCC to enhance its monitoring and documentation mechanisms. Training and capacity building through conducting community visioning with participants and capacity building refresher on outcome harvesting with ZCC staff. The program could do with a strengthened monitoring and evaluation system. The starting point is support around review of some of the indicators and data collection for these – for example training of ZCC staff and board and also attendance rate at network.