



SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

Food Assistance for Assets: Building climate resilience for food security and nutrition in Masvingo, Zimbabwe

In 1989, community members from Ward 18 of Masvingo Rural district submitted a proposal for a dam to the Masvingo District Council. This represented the first of several unsuccessful attempts by the community to build a dam as a means to improve their resilience to recurrent droughts that have become more severe in recent years as a result of climate change. In November 2017, during a Community Based Participatory Planning (CBPP) exercise, a weir was once again identified as the primary intervention that could contribute to addressing food insecurity and strengthening resilience to climate shocks, such as droughts.

Construction of the long awaited Njovo weir began in May 2018 as part of a broader multi-layered Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) project and was completed by November 2018 with the technical support of local NGO Aquaculture Zimbabwe. To prevent the siltation of the wetland upstream that feeds into the weir, a series of check dams were implemented between the culvert and the wetland. Sand traps were also built inside the wetlands to minimize erosion and 600m of perimeter fencing was implemented to protect the weir from animals and humans. The increased water availability made possible by the weir allowed for the implementation of a community nutrition garden with horticulture

Key achievements:

The Njovo weir has successfully ensured water availability to the inhabitants of Ward 18 in the face of recurring droughts. In January 2020, despite a severe drought that lasted from the start of the agricultural season (March 2019) to the middle of the agricultural season (December 2019), the weir was more than 75% full of water.

The Njovo garden, made possible by the weir, has allowed for a plentiful harvest despite a severe drought, used for both household consumption needs and also allowing for income generation through the selling of vegetables.

Healthy wetlands are key to ensuring the weir sustainably receives and holds an inflow of water throughout the year. Sand traps have been implemented to protect a wetland upstream from the weir from erosion and check dams have been implemented between the culvert and wetlands to minimize siltation. In 2019, the Ward was asked to host National Wetland Day in recognition of the environmental gains that have been realized in the area.

Gender mainstreaming in FFA programming

WFP actively mainstreamed gender throughout the Njovo project including by ensuring that women were represented in all decision-making committees, by providing leadership trainings to build the confidence of women in taking on management roles, and through gender awareness campaigns and trainings on such themes as anti-sexual and gender-based violence, gender equality, and gender roles.

activities commencing in November 2019. Additional water management activities undertaken as part of the Njovo project included the construction of a water harvesting system, which collects runoff water from a nearby rock mountain and guides the water to a tank that supplies the local school promoting the home-grown school feeding initiative, and a drainage ditch to stabilize an access road near the school. Beekeeping, poultry rearing, and fish farming activities were also introduced allowing for additional sources of food and income for participating households. Starting in June 2020, to further support improved food security and nutrition while also minimizing opportunities for the spread of the coronavirus, household-level activities were implemented, including trainings on keyhole garden construction, conservation agriculture (Intwasa/Pfumvudza) for dryland farming, compost making, building fuel efficient stoves, and tree planting. In an effort to enhance the sustainability and impact of the Njovo FFA project, participants received trainings on asset management, wetland management, financial management—led by NGO partner SNV—and gender, focusing on such themes as anti-sexual and gender-based violence, gender equality, and gender roles.

In addition to FFA programming, participating farmers from Ward 18 have received farm inputs, including sorghum seeds, cow pea seeds and fertilizer, and were trained to form farmer associations to improve their marketing prospects as part of the Small Agriculture Market Support programme (SAMS). They have also benefitted from savings and lending schemes and weather index insurance—insuring crops, such as sorghum, against weather related losses—as part of a R4 Rural Resilience programme.

Before the intervention



After the intervention



Key achievements (contd.):

500 households (benefiting 2099 individuals, 60% of which were women) participated in the weir construction intervention and received 50kg of cereals, 10kg of pulses and 3.75kg of oil for six months during three FFA cycles. They also received cash assistance during the weir implementation period.

The same 500 households are also participating in the Intwasa/Pfumvudza intervention. To date, 250 Ha have been prepared for planting using the Intwasa/Pfumvudza technique.

There are 120 community garden plot holders; 60 beekeeping project beneficiaries; 120 poultry project beneficiaries.

The production and marketing committee estimates that between January and August 2020 they made ZW 117,000.0, USD 323 in sales of vegetables harvested from the nutrition garden. On average, households participating in the Njovo FFA project have seen their income increase US\$5.00 per month from vegetable, fish, chicken and egg sales.

Participating households have seen their nutrition improved as a result of the increased availability and diversity of foods.

World Food Programme
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"We have been hit by persistent droughts in recent years and have struggled to construct the weir due to resource constraints but the coming of WFP and their transformative support is appreciated" – Mrs. Rhoda Makase, FFA programme participant from Ward 18, Masvingo.

PROGRAMME IMPACT

By January 2019, the impact of the Njovo intervention on the resilience and food security of programme participants was already observable. Despite an agricultural season marked by poor and erratic rainfall, Ward 18 community members enjoyed a plentiful harvest of vegetables from the Njovo garden, which they were able to use for household consumption, improving household-level nutrition by ensuring a more diverse diet, as well as to sell at local markets, allowing for increased income.

The environmental benefits made possible by the Njovo weir project have also been significant. Beyond ensuring that the weir sustainably receives and holds an inflow of water throughout the year, efforts to protect wetlands upstream have contributed to the preservation of a dense forest and canopy. In February 2019, the ward was asked to host National Wetland Day in recognition of the environmental gains that have been realized in the area.

Mrs. Rhoda Makase who lives in Ward 18 and participated in the Njovo weir and garden project explains that since the implementation of FFA activities in her ward, she and her neighbours have seen their fortunes change. She estimates that she earns an average of \$25 a month from selling surplus vegetables, chicken and eggs, allowing her to purchase basic needs like soap and to pay for school fees for her children's education—her 18-year-old twin boys are currently attending lower sixth at a local high school. Mrs. Makase now has a stabilized income and is not afraid of borrowing from the village savings group as she is sure she will be able to pay back her debts. She has huge plans to expand the scope of her business; She hopes to one day build her own personal hen houses like the one in the community garden and eventually lift herself out of poverty. She is confident that with all the marketing and book-keeping skills she has acquired through the trainings she received her business will flourish.

"We have been hit by persistent droughts in recent years and have struggled to construct the weir due to resource constraints but the coming of WFP and their transformative support is appreciated," states Mrs. Makase. She goes on to assert that since participating in the Njovo weir project she no longer feels dejected and can now stand tall and speak with confidence.

On the next page – Top Left: Mrs. Rhoda Makase in front of her keyhole garden holding a bag of food provided by WFP - **Top right (above):** a community member holds fresh fish retrieved from the Njovo weir - **Top right (below):** a water harvesting tank that collects runoff water from a nearby rock mountain and guides the water to a tank which supplies the local school promoting the home-grown school feeding initiative - **Bottom:** Satellite imagery from WFP's Asset Impact Monitoring System (AIMS) captures the site before (2018) and after the construction of the Njovo weir (2020)
Photos by WFP / Astro Tshuma, WFP / Sikhumbuzo Moyo & AQZ / Beven Lameck

