



IN BRIEF



FINAL EVALUATION OF THE 'SAFE MARKETS PROJECT, EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH SAFE, RESILIENT, GENDER RESPONSIVE FOOD MARKETS AND SYSTEMS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN ZIMBABWE'.

Project description

The project aimed to **empower vulnerable women marketers for recovery and build resilience from socio economic shocks** through promoting effective participation in safe, inclusive and violence free markets as last mile food distributors.

The joint Programme (UN Women, UNDP and ILO) was funded by MPTF COVID-19 Recovery Fund. The project was implemented between 2020-2022, in Harare province (Mbare, Hatcliffe and Highfields) with a budget of USD 848,908.

Evaluation overview

The evaluation serves to assess progress towards achievement of goals and objectives of the project at national level against the standard evaluation principles of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and outcome since its inception in 2020.

Key achievements

- The project addressed multiple challenges that included women's limited access to protected marketplaces by construction of safe market infrastructure that protected produce from being damaged by weather.

- The project contributed towards improving women's involvement in market-oriented leadership structures in their community. However, the evaluation could not obtain information on the actual quantitative composition of leadership structures.

Conclusions

RELEVANCE

- The project prioritized the participation of women in food markets as 80% of the beneficiaries were women.
- The project is in line with Zimbabwe's National Development Strategy 1, which has a thrust to empower women.
- The project was highly relevant as women who were supported reported that the project addressed multiple challenges that included their limited access to safe and clean marketplaces.

SUSTAINABILITY

- The project partnered with the City of Harare, and this provided scope for outcomes to be sustained beyond the implementation phase.
- Men who participated in FGDs highlighted that they informally share information on gender-based violence with other men in the markets who were not part of the training. This contributed towards improving knowledge on and transforming attitudes towards gender-based violence.

EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

- The project exceeded targets for the number of women working in established safe markets, the number of action plans implemented by women trained in transformative leadership to increase their influence in decision making structures within markets and relevant institutions, and the number of women's engagements with key decision makers.
- There were however lost opportunities to enhance efficiency mostly because of delays in setting up some of the infrastructure for the safe markets due to COVID -19 lock downs and movement restrictions which meant contractors could not easily procure materials needed for construction.

IMPACT, GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

- The project contributed towards improving the sensitivity of local markets to women's needs and compliance with occupational health and safety.
- There was a 24 percent increase in the proportion of women marketers that reported that they had access to some form of financial security instruments such as loans and grants.

Lessons learned

The evaluation identified the following lessons with significance beyond the program:

- 1** **Beneficiary consultation** is fundamental in infrastructure project designs. Market users appreciated support with market stalls.

- 2** **Procurement within emergency** require a sound balance between meeting deadlines and guaranteeing quality workmanship. The project needed to ensure infrastructure was in place as quickly as possible.

- 3** The evaluation documented that a key success enabler for the project was **integrating hardware and software components** in project design.

- 4** There is strong appetite for **technical support aimed at entrepreneurial growth within the informal sector**. Traders within the informal sector are highly willing to be involved in projects that build their competencies around business development, Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and utilization of technology.

- 5** **Multiparter intervention design** is fundamental towards delivery of technically sound interventions. Project success was based on the design which prioritized collaboration between different entities including the City of Harare, ILO, UNDP, UN Women and CSOs.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Future similar projects should explore possibility of including a **micro-finance fund** which is managed by microfinance institutions but focusing on women being supported under the project.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Prioritize **engagement of different power holders** within the ecosystem related to the safe markets project. This contributes towards ensuring harmony during implementation.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

There should be **strong user engagement** in processes of designing infrastructure to be utilized by beneficiaries.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Design interventions and allocate timelines that **take cognizance of the practical realities** of seeking approvals, procurement, and construction.