



WFP Integrated Approach for Resilience Zimbabwe Northern Districts Feasibility Assessment

GCF Proposal Inputs - July 2017



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List of Abbreviations

3PA	Three Pronged Approach	OSZPR	Asset Creation and Livelihoods Unit
ACDI/VOCA	Agricultural Cooperative Development International and Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance	P4P	Purchase for Progress
CBPP	Community Based Participatory Planning	PAC	Productive Asset Creation
CTDO	Community Technology Development Organization	PRIZE	Promoting Recovery in Zimbabwe
CO	Country Office	R4	R4 Rural Resilience Initiative
CP	Cooperating Partner	SDC	Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency
ENTERPRIZE	Ensuring Nutrition, Transforming and Empowering Rural Farmers and Promoting Resilience in Zimbabwe	SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
FACHIG	Farmers' Association of Community self-help Investment Groups	SLP	Seasonal Livelihood Programming
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation	TNS	Technoserve
FFA	Food Assistance for Assets	VAM	Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping
FLA	Field Level Agreement	WFP	World Food Programme
GCF	Green Climate Fund	WII	Weather Index Insurance
GMB	Grain Marketing Board	WVI	World Vision International
HQ	WFP Headquarters		
ICA	Integrated Context Analysis		
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics		
ISAL	Internal Savings and Loans Group		
LFSP	Livelihoods, Food and Security Programme		
LSA	Lean Season Assistance		
MFI	Micro Finance Institution		
NDA	National Designated Authority		
NFI	Non-Food-Items		
OSZIR	Climate and Disaster Risk Reduction Programmes Unit		

Executive Summary

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Climate change is already having an impact on the food and nutrition security of the most vulnerable, and Zimbabwe makes no exception. Zimbabwe is already witnessing the effects of climate change on the food and nutrition security of the most vulnerable. Increasingly erratic rainfall, prolonged dry spells, and an overall decrease in rainfall across the country are having adverse impacts on the already vulnerable smallholders dependent on rainfed farming, who represent almost 70% of the population. As a result of the El-Niño-induced drought in 2015-2016 the number of food insecure people in the country quadrupled, reaching 4.1 million, out of a population of 15.6 million.

In this context, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) Regional Office for Southern Africa has provided to the WFP Country Office (CO) funds to implement an integrated approach, combining Food Assistance for Assets (FFA), micro-insurance, savings, market access and conservation agriculture, starting from the Masvingo District (Masvingo Province) in the southern part of Zimbabwe. In parallel, the WFP CO has engaged in a process with the multi-billion-dollar Green Climate Fund (GCF) and with the Government National Designated Authority, to submit a proposal which could provide much needed additional funding to complement the existing SDC resources and expand the integrated approach further.

As a result, a joint assessment by R4 Rural Resilience (R4) team from the Climate and Disaster Risk Reduction Unit (OSZIR) and by the Asset Creation and Livelihoods unit (OSZPR) has been commissioned by the country office to identify the viability of project scale up in two additional districts. This report provides the major findings from the assessment mission in Mount Darwin and Rushinga districts, as well as from additional research and secondary data analysis. The key take-aways of the report will be used by WFP CO and HQ staff to develop a GCF proposal, with the aim of receiving funding during 2018.

DISTRICTS ASSESSMENT

Mount Darwin and Rushinga Districts in Mashonaland Central Province are located in the northwestern part of the country. The two districts were chosen for the feasibility assessment based on a series of criteria refined through the accumulated experience with the previous missions in the south, and in particular on the level of food insecurity, the agro-ecological characteristics of the districts (with zone V being excluded), vulnerability to climate shocks such as droughts and floods, the potential for further agricultural development for dryland farming, especially in combination with small grains introduction and conservation agriculture adoption, and finally the existence of FFA activities in the area.

During the mission, meetings with stakeholders and farmers were focused only on the lower valley area of Mount Darwin (zone IV), and in two wards in zone IV of Rushinga, all of which were wards where FFA has been implemented. Although soils were reported as generally more favourable (fertile) in Mount Darwin lower valley than in Rushinga, it is very apparent that rainfall in the lower valley of Mount Darwin and most of Rushinga is generally challenging for dryland crop production. However, in Rushinga average rainfall is slightly above 650 mm, while in the lower valley of Mt. Darwin it is less than 450mm. High temperatures of the Mount Darwin lower valley area could be an additional agro-climatic challenge for agricultural (especially crop) production in the valley.

Given that there are clear trends in climate change in both districts, evidenced by experience of later start to effective planting rains (typically changed from mid or late November, to nearer Christmas), as well as typically dry spells soon after the effective rains, it is very clear that cropping adaptation is necessary away from maize

(which is sensitive to dry spells and to water stress, especially at flowering). In Rushinga it is notable that for rainfed farming, two measures have already started to be adopted. First, there has been a strong move to small grains (sorghum, millet, pearl millet and cowpeas). Secondly, farmers have partially adopted conservation agriculture, which has benefits in the longer term of soil moisture conservation. As far as agricultural extension is concerned, in both districts Agritex staff are finding challenges in supporting farmers due to lack of funds and means of transport.

Livestock are an important part of extensive farming in both districts. Goats are regarded as a commercial option for farmers. Cattle are not regarded as a commercial option, but act as a reservoir of wealth. Stakeholders pointed out that if proper attention was given to cattle fattening, herds could be managed to provide regular income flow.

The situation regarding access to markets, agricultural inputs and credit is similar across the areas visited in the two districts. Farmers stated the huge challenges in selling their produce and, even if they manage to do so, they run the risk of being shortchanged by private dealers, not being able to access cash, or not being paid at all, in the case of GMB. Seeds for crops are usually retained and not purchased, while there is a limited use of fertilizers. Interestingly, it was noted that there is an increased use of fertilizer in case conservation agriculture is applied. Farmers have no access to formal financial institutions: savings and credit are limited to informal Internal Savings and Loans groups (ISALs).

In both districts Lean Season Assistance (LSA) has been carried out since at least 2014. However, FFA activities are currently being implemented only in Rushinga, thanks to a strong cooperating partner such as Community Technology Development Organization (CTDO). The situation in Mount Darwin is different, as no FFA has been implemented since 2014, and the capacity of World Vision International (WVI) seems more limited. The approach to FFA activities in both districts and for both partners is similar, with a strong reliance on “quick-wins” solutions that increase water supply, such as weirs and dams, combined with nutrition gardens, with less emphasis on soil and water conservation structures encompassing the whole watershed and also dryland farming areas. The approach is also characterized by one-year interventions, instead of a multi-year investment in a specific community, which aims at creating a critical mass of assets and trainings that would give farmers more chances for long-lasting resilience.

PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

It is proposed that Rushinga offers a more favourable set of circumstances for an integrated approach intervention than the lower valley area of Mount Darwin. An important factor is the lesser challenge of designing Weather Index Insurance (WII) in Rushinga, the better opportunities to build on existing trends in agricultural practices. Presence of a strong CP will support planning and implementation.

In order to achieve long-lasting resilience objectives, an “integrated risk management approach” is essential, as no single intervention is likely to be successful. The integrated approach is likely to be successful when adapted to the country, district and ward context, and there is no specific restriction on the type and number of different components that might be integrated to pursue resilience outcomes. Besides FFA, micro-insurance, savings and credit, which have represented the cornerstone of the R4 in other contexts, examples of additional activities that could be integrated are conservation agriculture, the introduction of drought resistant and appropriate crop types and varieties, and the strengthening of the existing district agricultural extension system.

Regarding FFA, increased attention could also be given to activities geared towards strengthening livestock production/marketing. The approach to FFA activities should shift also from a one-year intervention to a multi-

year one (minimum three-year focus on a single community). On the market access component, further discussions are needed with the P4P team on how to better align market access interventions with the integrated approach.

In case a development of an integrated approach in northern Zimbabwe will go beyond the assessment phase and into the design and planning phase, a series of activities will need to be carried out, including:

- Definition of the areas of intervention and caseload within Rushinga district, taking into account WFP's priorities for implementation in the upcoming seasons, availability of and linkage to partners and existing initiatives in Rushinga district, and Government priorities. This will require that Community Based Participatory Planning exercises (CBPPs) and calls for proposals for FFA are undertaken. For the moment, a sample implementation schedule is provided (see table 3 on p. 32), taking into account also the caseload and timelines for implementation in Masvingo district. The table also provides suggestions on which activities could be funded under a GCF proposal, to be complementary to the existing SDC funds in Masvingo.
- Definition of the key components and linkages of the programme, and their set up, considering the availability and willingness of partners at national and local level and defined entry points.
- Creation of the relevant indexes for WII. The development of indices in Rushinga can benefit from the procurement process being already undertaken for insurance implementation in Masvingo.

I. Background and Rationale

Climate change is already impacting on all the four dimensions of food security: food availability, food accessibility, food utilization and food system stability¹. While the effects of climate change on food security will be felt globally, food insecure households, living in fragile and degraded areas and depending on rainfed agriculture or pastoralism, will be those most heavily impacted. As climate change is increasing the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods, the most vulnerable communities will bear the highest costs, as they are not well equipped to this increasing risk environment, and will resort to negative coping strategies, such as selling productive assets, trapping them into food insecurity and poverty cycles. Climate change is definitely a challenge in view of achieving the objective of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2: ending hunger, achieve food security and promote sustainable agriculture.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has a long-standing track-record of interventions aiming at reducing disaster risks for the most food insecure and vulnerable through its Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) programme. FFA aims to achieve two objectives. In the short term, food assistance improves the food and nutrition security of vulnerable households by providing immediate access to food at times of shocks. In the longer term, the assets created through conditional transfers contribute to community resilience by building/rehabilitating household and/or community assets, and contributing to restore a natural resource base². More than 10 million food insecure and vulnerable people benefited from WFP's FFA programmes across 52 countries, in 2015 alone.

New tools and approaches to face the increasing challenge that climate change poses on food security are also being introduced by WFP. For example, in the past few years, through the R4 Rural Resilience Initiative (R4), the organization has accumulated considerable experience in weather index insurance (WII) as an instrument to mitigate risks for communities in the event of covariate shocks³. Most importantly, WFP has recognized that improving the resilience of food insecure and vulnerable communities does not only mean creating new tools, but also better designing and integrating existing ones, including those carried out by development partners, which is in line with SDG 17 on strengthening partnerships. Besides FFA and insurance, examples of activities that can be linked together to achieve better resilience results include as well the promotion of savings facilities for smallholder farmers, linking them to formal credit institutions and, most notably, improving access to markets through one of WFP's flagship programmes: Purchase for Progress (P4P).

Recognizing the validity of WFP's approach in Zimbabwe, as well as taking stock of the positive results of R4 in Malawi and Zambia, the Zimbabwe Country Office (CO) has already obtained funding from the Swiss Development and Cooperation agency (SDC) for designing and implementing an integrated approach in the country, linking asset creation, micro-insurance, savings, market access and conservation agriculture, starting from the Masvingo District (Masvingo Province) in the south.

In parallel, the CO has engaged in a process with the multi-billion-dollar Green Climate Fund (GCF) and with the Government focal point in Zimbabwe, to submit a proposal which could provide much needed additional funding to complement the existing SDC resources and expand the integrated approach further.

¹ FAO (2008), *Climate Change and Food Security, a Framework Document*, available at: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/15538-079b31d45081fe9c3dbc6ff34de4807e4.pdf>

² For further information on FFA, please refer to WFP's Food Assistance for Assets for Zero Hunger and Resilient Livelihoods Guidance Manual, available at: http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/manual_guide_proced/wfp285227.zip

³ WII is mentioned in the 2014-2017 Strategic plan under Strategic Objective One: Save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies as well as under Strategic Objective Three: Reduce risk and enable people, communities and countries to meet their own food and nutrition needs. See WFP: Strategic Plan 2014-2017, available at: <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/eb/wfpdoc062522.pdf>

As a result, a joint assessment by R4 team from the Climate and Disaster Risk Reduction Unit (OSZIR) and by the Asset Creation and Livelihoods unit (OSZPR) has been commissioned by the country office to identify the viability of project scale up in two additional districts. The assessment took place between the 26th and the 30th of June 2017, following the below guidelines, and this report represents its main output. The full agenda of the mission is available in Annex I.

Table 1: Assessment Characteristics, purposes, areas of analysis and methodology.

Component	Purpose	Areas of Analysis	Methodology
<i>Northern Districts Assessment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Map out existing needs and priorities - Determine suitability of FFA and selected R4 activities (micro-insurance and savings) in 2 districts - Pre-identify project areas and targeted participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate and Food Security Risk Analysis - Livelihoods and Seasonality Analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of secondary data - Key informant interviews - Programme site visits - Community consultations
<i>Programmatic Recommendations/Assessment report writing.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consolidate the information gathered - Elaborate on how FFA and other components will potentially respond to the local context and leverage existing efforts - Define entry points for integrated approach components 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seasonal programming Analysis - Own capacity assessment - Index feasibility assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key informant interviews - Multi-stakeholder consultations

The report provides the major findings from the mission as well as from limited additional research and secondary data analysis. The key take-aways of the report will be used by CO and HQ staff to develop a GCF proposal, with the aim of receiving funding during 2018.

Following this introduction, in Section Two the document will provide a more in-depth overview of the selection process for the assessment districts, and most importantly of the findings of the assessment in those areas. Section Three summarizes the key findings and introduces the final district selection and broad programmatic features in Section Four. Within Section Four an overview of the next steps and key suggestions for GCF funding is also provided.

2. Northern Districts Assessment

a. District Selection

The selection of the districts where to carry out the additional assessment for the expansion of an integrated approach in Zimbabwe through GCF funds was influenced by the discussions held by WFP staff in Harare with the Zimbabwe Ministry of the Environment, which acts as the focal point for GCF in the country, or the National Designated Authority (NDA). The NDA was clear in stating that there should have been more balancing in terms of directing climate change and food security resources within different areas in the country, and asked WFP to focus as well on districts in the Northern area of the country, in addition to the already selected district of Masvingo.

This did not represent a challenge for WFP, as the organisation is already active in some of the Northern Districts, where there are considerable levels of food insecurity. Five districts were identified, thanks to the Integrated Context Analysis (ICA- see figure below) as possible candidates for the quick assessment: Gokwe North (in the North West), Mbire, Mount Darwin, Rushinga, and Mudzi (in the North East).

The districts have been classified according to a series of criteria to help the team understand whether there could be entry points for an integrated approach (see Table I). From this preliminary analysis, which focused mostly on agro-ecological characteristics, recurrence of shocks, and availability of partners, it became clear that Mount Darwin and Rushinga were the areas more conducive for such an assessment. In the sections below an overview of the districts, as well as the findings from the assessment is provided.

Key general information on the Districts has been taken from WFP's District Profiles, which represent a remarkable source of data and information in the country. District Profiles have been developed by the Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping (VAM) unit in Harare.

Figure I: Matrix of food insecurity and risk, and national level zoning of ICA areas

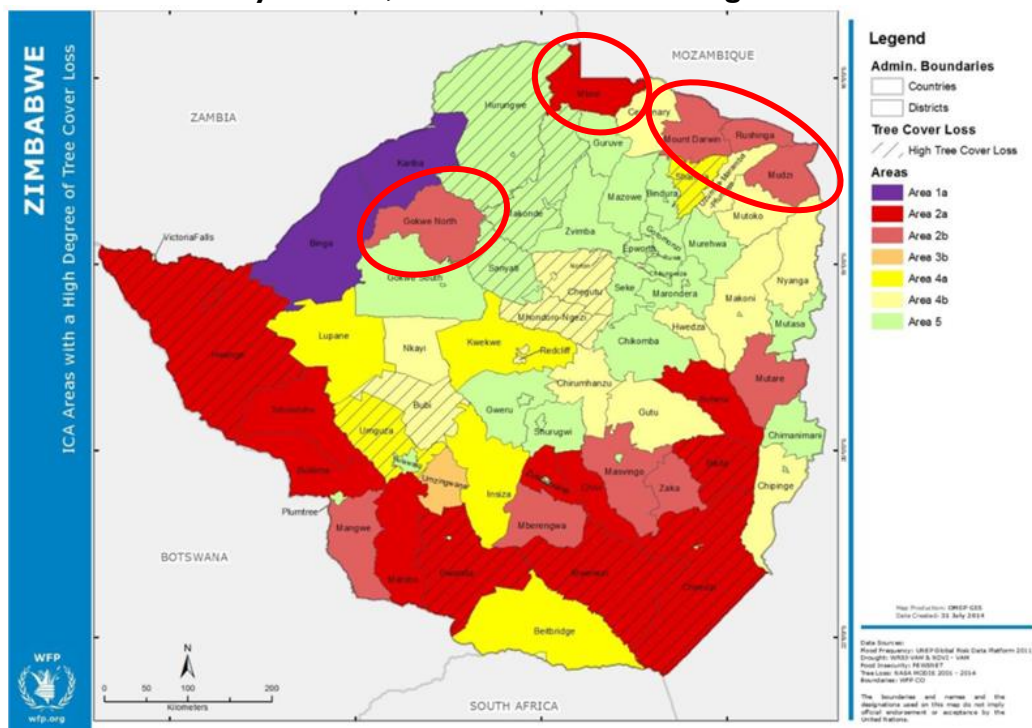


Table 2: Criteria for district selection

Criteria	Rushinga	Mount Darwin	Mudzi	Gokwe North	Mbire
Agro-ecological zones.	Region IV: Some agricultural production can take place but it is extensive and to some extent susceptible to weather elements (semi-arid).	Region II: Suitable for intensive agriculture/prime area; Region III: semi-intensive; Region IV: Some agricultural production can take place but it is extensive and to some extent susceptible to weather elements (semi-arid).	Region IV: Some agricultural production can take place but it is extensive and to some extent susceptible to weather elements (semi-arid).	Region III: semi-intensive; Region IV: Some agricultural production can take place but it is extensive and to some extent susceptible to weather elements (semi-arid).	Region IV: Some agricultural production can take place but it is extensive and to some extent susceptible to weather elements (semi-arid).
Vulnerability to climate shocks such as droughts and floods.	Drought: Medium risk; Dry spell: High risk; Flood: Low risk	Drought: Medium; Dry spell: Medium; Flood: Low	Drought: Medium; Dry spell: High; Flood: Low	Drought: Medium; Dry spell: Medium; Flood: Low	Drought: Medium; Dry spell: High; Flood: High
Active or potential conservation agriculture, with presence of extension agents.	Potential conservation agriculture; WFP implemented small grains project in 2014/2015 season, Government Extension officers present at ward level.	Potential conservation agriculture; Government Extension officers present at ward level.	Potential conservation agriculture; WFP implemented small grains project in 2014/2015 season, Government Extension officers present at ward level.	Potential conservation agriculture; WFP implemented small grains project in 2014/2015 season, Government Extension officers present at ward level.	Potential conservation agriculture; Government Extension officers present at ward level.
Diversified agricultural potential including promotion of small grains.	Suitable for small grains although the district is prone to prolonged mid-season dry spells. Small grains already being grown in the district by some households.	Regions 3 and 4 suitable for small grains although region IV prone to prolonged mid-season dry spells. Small grains already being grown in the district by some households.	Suitable for small grains although the district is prone to prolonged mid-season dry spells. Small grains already being grown in the district by some households.	Suitable for small grains although regions 4 and 5 prone to prolonged mid-season dry spells. Small grains already being grown in the district by some wards.	Suitable for small grains although the district is prone to prolonged mid-season dry spells. Small grains already being grown in the district by some households.
FFA activities implemented in the district.	Yes -currently being implemented-	Yes - implemented up to 2014-	Yes - currently being implemented	Yes- implemented in the past	Yes- currently being implemented
FFA partner organisation(s).	Strong-Community Technology Development Organization (CTDO).	Average- First time engagement with Africacare; World Vision International has experience in the area.	Strong- World Vision.	In the past, WFP worked with Africacare and Save the children.	Strong- Lower Guruwe Development Association.
Presence of farmer groups/co-operatives.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Opportunity for marketing outlets development	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Analyses available.	District profiles; SLP.	District profiles; SLP and CBPPs to be carried out this year.	District profiles; SLP available.	Only district profiles.	District profiles; SLP; CBPPs in limited wards.

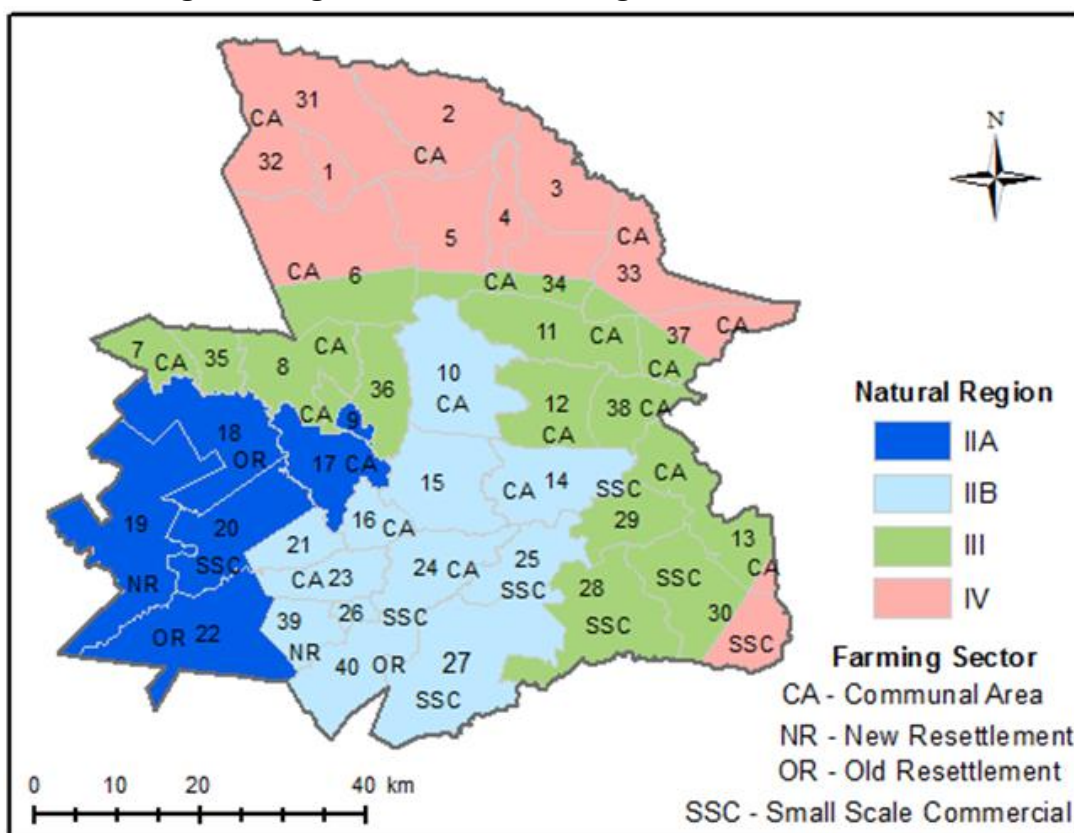
b. Mount Darwin

Mt Darwin is divided into 2 distinct parts, upper and lower Mount Darwin (part of the Zambezi valley). Poverty is a feature in both parts although it's more pronounced in the valley. The main source of livelihood in the district is subsistence farming, both food and cash crops. Cotton production used to be vibrant to such a time when there was a drop in international cotton prices which affected local prices as well. A few households still depend on cotton for livelihoods. The second main source of livelihood is artisan mining which supports a number of households. The upper part of the district has a lot of potential for intensive agriculture although there is need for investments in affordable technologies that improve agriculture production.

The district lies in four agro ecological regions i.e. region IIA, IIB, III and IV. The upper part of the district has predominantly sandy loam soils which are suitable for tobacco production. Dande valley (lower Mount Darwin) is dominated by clay loam soils which are inherently fertile cotton and sorghum production are characteristic in this part of the district.

Stunting is the main challenge estimated at 32% compared to the national average of 27%. Stunting reduction initiatives are required to address the issue of stunting.

Figure 2: Mount Darwin agro-ecological zones and farming characteristics



District Level Meetings

Crops cultivated and livestock.

In terms of production areas, due to the characteristics of the agro-ecological zones, farmers in the Lower Valley (agro-ecological zone 4) are encouraged to produce small grains (sorghum, finger millet), while cotton production has been reduced drastically due to the fall in market prices related to competition from abroad.

Maize, sunflower, cowpeas, groundnuts are also produced across the district. Livestock production is also widespread in the Lower Valley, but there could be ample room for improvement to make it more economically profitable. A change of mentality would be needed as animal fattening is rarely carried out to increase their value for selling. Selling of animals is also done only as a last resort, as they provide social status, or they are otherwise sold when they are too old.

Tobacco production in the district is concentrated in resettlement areas and at small scale commercial level farming. Production is widespread and it exacerbates land degradation as farmers cut down trees for drying and heat curing of the leaves. Illegal gold mining also contributes to land degradation and possible siltation of dams. Overall, deforestation rates are high in Mount Darwin. Where tobacco is dominant it is also exacerbating food security and nutrition problems.

Conservation agriculture is locally and partially practiced in the district, despite the promotion efforts carried out in the last 2-3 years. Problems associated with labour intensity and not immediate gains in yield seems to be the biggest obstacles for its adoption.

Shortage and lack of uptake of agricultural inputs is a problem in the district, with most smallholder farmers not utilizing any fertilizers, and limited adoption of improved seeds except where specific programmes exist.

Agricultural Extension

Agricultural extension workers seem to be stretched across the district, with a maximum of 3 staff per ward only. There seems to be a difference also across the district, with Upper Mount Darwin (south of the district) having better access to extension and agricultural-related information, while in Lower Mount Darwin (or Lower Valley, north of the district) the situation is different. This is also due to the fact that fewer Agritex workers are available in the north and they are also constrained in terms of transport means and fuel. Only 20% of Agritex workers have motorbikes in the district. The southern part of the district is also characterized by lower productivity.

There have been remarks regarding lack of advice on agricultural practice and meteorological services, including best time to plough/farm and markets. Agritex workers have created an informal web for agricultural information through mobile phones, also using social media, but this type of information has limited penetration.

Markets

Access to markets is a big challenge in the district, in particular for smallholder farmers producing small grains. Regarding infrastructure, there is a gap in aggregation points to gather production. The lack of efficient farmers' organisations or commodity associations does not help the aggregation process too. The national Grain Marketing Board (GMB) is not well functioning and farmers often experience considerable delays in receiving payment for their produce (up to 1 year). An ICRISAT project is active in the district, carrying out contract farming at favourable rates for farmers for groundnuts, as well as a seed multiplication project. Livestock marketing is also a challenge, which has repercussions especially in areas where agriculture is marginal and reliance on pastoralism is higher, as in the lower valley.

Value chains and value additions processes are almost non-existent and, together with market access, represent some of the key livelihoods obstacles in the district.

Savings and Credit

Savings and access to credit facilities are problematic in the district, as in most of rural Zimbabwe. Access to credit facilities for most of the farmers is limited, and it is also coupled by low financial literacy. For those who can access formal credit, there are sometimes problems in repaying loans, due to over-borrowing. Overall, it

seems also that farmers are less able to save than before, as most of their income goes into expenditures. Credit provision is also stymied by lack of willingness from farmers to save in banks, due to lack of trust. Liquidity is a challenge, which does not provide any incentive for farmers to keep money in the banks. The only way for farmers to save and obtain credit is through Internal Savings and Lending Groups (ISALs), which are widespread. Stakeholders at district level also mention a lack of a national legal framework conducive for investments.

Insurance Market

The low levels of financial education also impact on all types of insurance penetration, from simpler models such as car insurance, to more complex arrangements such as crop insurance. The insurance market in the district is mostly linked to funeral insurance, as well as health insurance for the few members of the middle class. Agricultural insurance is only used for tobacco farming, and the Econet/Ecofarmer package of services is also present in the area.

Humanitarian and Development Programmes

The DFID-funded Livelihoods, Food and Security Programme (LFSP) has been implemented across 29 wards since 2014 in the district by a World Vision International-led consortium of different NGOs, called ENTERPRIZE (Ensuring Nutrition, Transforming and Empowering Rural Farmers and Promoting Resilience in Zimbabwe)⁴. The project The activities focus on providing drought-resistant crops (sorghum and cowpeas), providing storage, and improve value chains and markets. Fodder production demos, breed improvement and fattening activities were also introduced in the Lower Valley area. In the Upper Mount Darwin area, crop demos were set up, as well as promotion of sesame and groundnut production in commercial plots. Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) and Steward Bank have also supported farmers producing sugar beans, groundnuts, and cowpeas with facilitated access credit and by aggregating sellers to sell to a single source. The project also included a component on ISALs' strengthening. The ISALs working best are connected to MFIs, which provide credit through the off taker. The partners in the consortium are Mercy Corps, ICRISAT and the Farmers' Association of Community self-help Investment Groups (FACHIG).

WFP has carried out FFA activities in Mount Darwin until 2014, with World Vision International (WVI) as the main Cooperating Partner (CP). The assets created across the district included weirs, dams, nutrition gardens, fishponds, livestock water points, and dip tanks. Since 2014, WFP has been active in the area by providing Lean Season Assistance to communities.

Health

During the meeting were also highlighted some health related issues, such as continuous outbreaks of malaria in the Lower Valley, coupled with lack of mosquito nets and antimalarial medications; as well as HIV-related problems in Upper Mount Darwin, especially around mining areas.

⁴ See: For more information see: <https://lfspzim.com/what-is-lfsp/background/projects/better-technical-support-to-farmers/> and: <https://foodsecurity.ngoaidmap.org/projects/14201>

Community Consultations

Hode Weir and Nutrition Garden

The community is located in Ward 34, which comprises both Lower and Upper Valley areas. The community is situated in the Lower Valley, in agro-ecological zone 4.

Crops cultivated and livestock.

Besides the nutrition garden activities, focusing on vegetables, in dryland farming areas households plant millet, sorghum, groundnuts, sunflowers, cowpeas, and maize. The landholding size varies between 2 to 10 ha. Agricultural conditions in rainfed plots are difficult. Fertilizers are not used for the crops, as the soil is deemed very fertile. The main constraining factor is rainfall. Farmers stated that the 2016-2017 season, which has brought record-high rains, has been exceptional and the best one in 12 years. 2008 was also seen as a very bad year, together with 2009. All other years from 2007 were considered average. Farmers are witnessing also shifts in the rainy seasons, with seasons starting later, ending earlier, and with longer dry spells in the middle.

Thanks to the latest rains, farmers have been able to produce surpluses. One farmer stated that households on average have produced 50kg of sorghum, 330kg of shelled groundnuts, and 200kg of maize. The most regular source of income in the area, in addition to the nutrition garden, is represented by small livestock trade, such as chickens or goats. People also engage in brick making (US\$ 35/1,000 bricks), as well as casual labour.

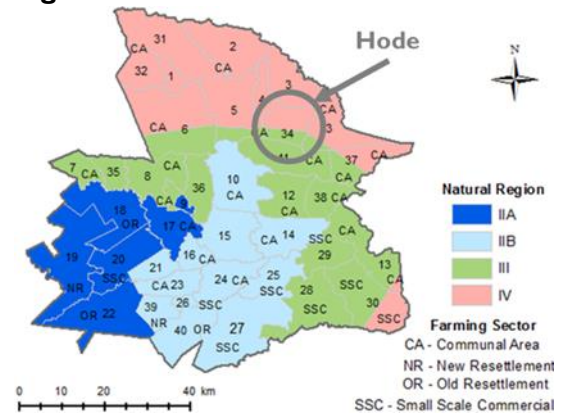
Markets

As sketched out during District-level meetings, market access is a problem, with farmers even resorting to barter trade of commodities. Farmers also complain that agro-dealers are taking advantage of them, and offering them very low prices. If they had good postharvest facilities, they could also wait for selling production once the prices increase again. The GMB has good prices, but payments are made with long delays. A further issue raised was that the large volume of surplus in the last year has resulted in a lack of interested buyers and low prices, so farmers have not been able to benefit in terms of cash income.

Savings and Credit

No one in the community is able to access formal credit from financial institutions. Besides the nutrition garden funds (see Box below), 3 ISALs exist in the village, each one composed of ten members. ISAL members contribute US\$ 5-10 per month to the communal fund.

Figure 3: Hode Location



Box 1: Hode Weir and Nutrition Garden Assets in Detail

The assets were built in the 2013-2014 season by 120 households coming from the nearby 4 villages, who have a total population of 700 households. 25 households worked on the nutrition garden, while the remaining 95 focused on the construction of the weir. World Vision was WFP's CP on this site.

Nutrition Garden

The total area of the nutrition garden is 2,996 m². 29 households own 4 beds to cultivate vegetable each. Vegetables planted include butternuts, cucumbers, onions, and tomatoes. The community has an agreement with a nearby school to provide daily vegetable supply, in order to have a stable market outlet. The value of production per month for each individual is at around US\$ 100/month. Some of the funds and part of the agricultural produce are also provided to a common pool in order to help community members in times of crisis. Also, the common funds can be also used as a lending facility, with a 20% interest rates for every US\$ 20 borrowed.



Image 1: Hode Nutrition Garden



Image 2: Hode Weir

Weir

The weir in Hode reaches a maximum depth of 4.5 metres. Besides being used to provide water through a gravity fed system to the nutrition garden located below, the weir is used by the population of the nearby villages to provide water to their livestock. Animals access the water from upstream. Although the water level is now satisfactory, the community has highlighted issues in terms of soil erosion leading to siltation due to livestock grazing around the catchment area.

The weir has been at full capacity since February 2017. It had filled up originally in 2014, but due to the El-Niño related droughts it decreased its capacity substantially since 2015, and dried up in 2016. Households have been without water from the weir for a total of 3 months. However, they were able to keep irrigating the nutrition garden by digging a shallow well on the weir surface. Thanks to the ability of producing when no one else could, they were able to obtain higher prices from their production.

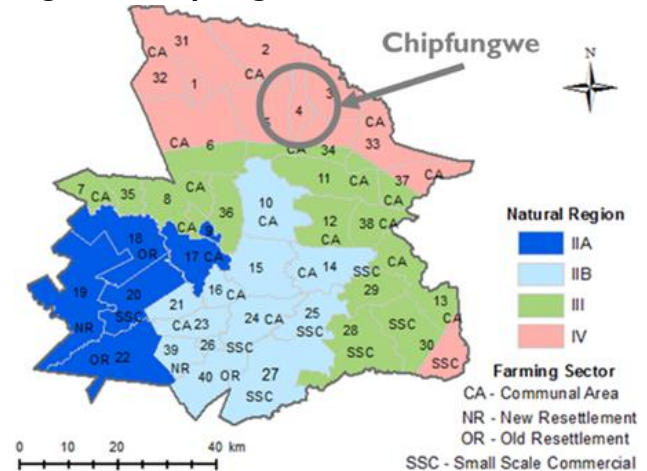
Chipfungwe Weir and Nutrition Garden

The site is located in Ward 4, in agro-ecological zone 4.

Crops cultivated and livestock.

Communities mentioned increased heat in the last few seasons, as well as insufficient rains. As flagged in Hode, the rainy season is characterized by a late start, with rains beginning in December, instead of in November, and lasting only 1.5 months. These conditions have decreased the window of applicability for maize and now farmers only use short cycle varieties for planting, both for maize and small grains, and often need to re-plant during the season. In addition, they complain that birds (quelea) are a problem for small grains, that there is an increased occurrence of pests, and that stronger winds are affecting both crop production and their houses.

Figure 4: Chipfungwe location



Box 2: Chipfungwe Weir and Nutrition Garden Assets in Detail

Like the FFA activities in Hode, they were carried out in 2013-2014 by World Vision. The construction of the weir and the preparatory work for the nutrition garden involved 140 households. 40 households were then supposed to be benefiting from the nutrition garden, but the water from the weir never reached it due to design problems, and nothing has been grown so far in the garden. This happened before WFP reinforced its engineering standards at CO level, by employing engineers to oversee CP's activities. The weir level has always been high, except during the 2015-2016 season. However, the water is not being used for any purpose right now.



Image 3: Weir in Chipfungwe



Image 4: Nutrition Garden site, not currently in use

For the farmers in Chipfungwe 2017 had been a much better year in terms of production compared to 2015 and 2016, but due to excessive rains and an army worm outbreak, only 10% of the people in the community were able to sell surplus, while only 60% of the entire population in the villages can be considered food secure. 2014 was indicated by farmers as the last good year since 2007, 2008 and 2009 were not good ones, while in all the others years farmers managed to have some surplus.

Regarding agricultural practices, usually farmers do not purchase new seeds, but they recycle them from their own production. Farmers are not applying conservation agriculture in the field, and they actually mentioned that tractors, especially for ripping, would make a difference in their conservation agricultural practices. Rainwater harvesting was also flagged as an opportunity for them.

Markets, Savings and Credit

Market constraints are considerable. Farmers have been waiting for more than a year to be paid by GMB, and as a consequence they lost confidence in it. The community has been included in the ENTERPRIZE programme and they sell as an organised group, but at low prices. There is not access to formal credit in the community.

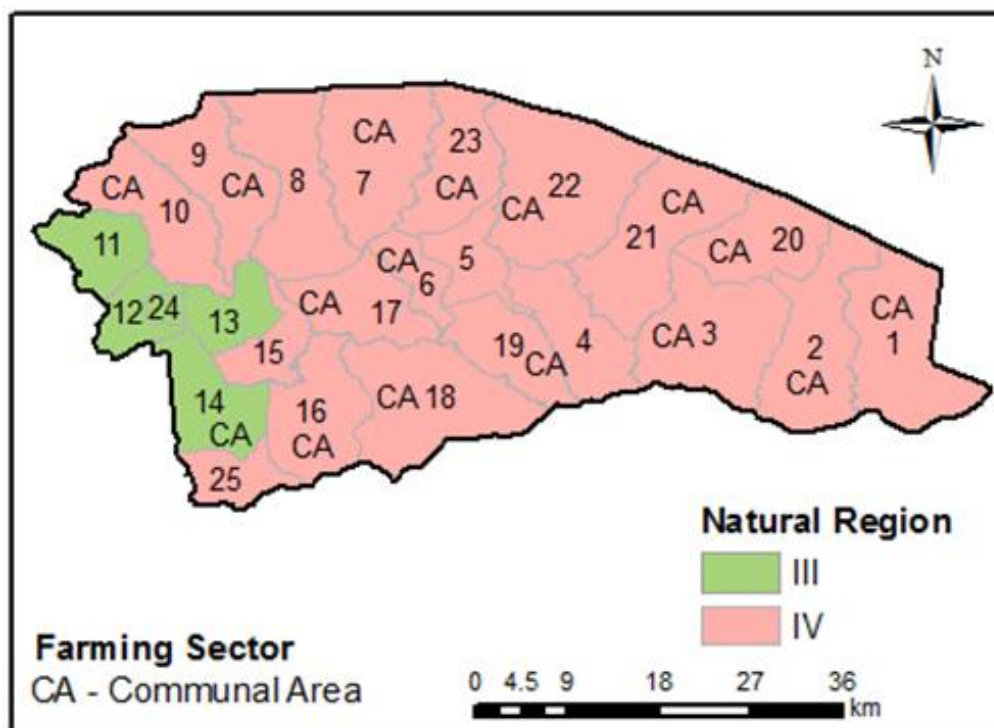
c. Rushinga

The livelihoods of people of Rushinga are agro-based, main crops are maize and cotton. Other sources of livelihood include selling fish from neighbouring Mozambique and gold panning. In 2015 poverty levels in the constituency were estimated at 84.2%, compared to the national rural average of 76%.

Rushinga district lies in agro ecological Natural Region 4 with some parts in region 3 (wards, 11, 12 and 13). Natural region 4 covers 93% of the district while region 3 covers only 7%. The whole district is composed of communal farming.

Stunting is the nutrition challenge in the district at 33% above the national average of 27%. There is need for a collaborative approach in addressing the stunting challenge.

Figure 5: Rushinga agro-ecological zones and farming characteristics



District Level Meetings

Crops and livestock.

Agriculture in the district is carried out for self-sufficiency and limited surplus production. In agro-ecological zone 4, which represents the majority of the district, the district is characterized by a rainfall below 650mm per

year, and by a later start of the rainy season. Sorghum and millet are the most widespread crops. Maize is grown mostly in zone 3. As witnessed also in Mount Darwin, rains tend to start later (at Christmas time instead of in early December), and finish earlier, at around February. Dry spells, which can affect small grains as well, also characterize the period between the end of December and the beginning of January. Replanting, especially in zone 4, is common. It was mentioned that in 2016 farmers have replanted three times (first maize, then sorghum, and finally cowpeas). Dry spells and droughts are the single biggest causes of food insecurity in the district.

Due to agro-climatic conditions in zone 4, livestock is very important and represents the foundation of farmers' livelihoods, as well as a reserve for bad years, as cattle are usually sold at critical times and they act as funds of last resort.

Lack of value chain development in agricultural production is seen as a missed opportunity to improve incomes and livelihoods, as well as the lack of improved farming methods, that could better the quality of produce.

Access to water is a problem both for agriculture and for human consumption. Stakeholders mentioned the need to have boreholes/shallow wells next to newly built/rehabilitated dams or weirs, in order to provide safe access to water. Increasing the level of dams was also seen as a solution to increase water availability, but this might go beyond WFP's mandate and capabilities, as it might require much bigger investments in terms of Non-Food-Items (NFIs).

Conservation agriculture is much more widespread in Rushinga than in Mount Darwin. Agritex has carried out a substantive sensitization effort across the years, and it is estimated that around 40-50% of farmers are adopting it, at least partially. It has been highlighted that farmers carrying out conservation agriculture actually buy more fertilizer than others, and have more confidence that they will have less chance of losing the investment. As far as seeds are concerned, farmers mostly retain their seed for the next agricultural season and do not purchase new ones.

Agricultural Extension

Agritex current availability of resources is seen as a challenge to continue providing support to smallholders in the area. As seen in Mount Darwin, lack of means of transport and resources for fuel is seriously hampering their capacity.

One specific area that Agritex staff has highlighted as highly needed in the area, and with possible high demand from farmers is soil and water conservation. In the past some efforts were exerted in this area, and farmers were eager to replicate the techniques, with some of them still maintaining contour ridges. However, there are no soil and water conservation programmes in the areas, and farming practices are more likely to lead to soil erosion, and also posing a threat to the siltation of dams/weirs.

Markets

The market situation is similar to the one described in Mount Darwin. Although the government has set up some buying points across the district, stakeholders complain that farmers are short-changed by agrodealers and middle-men, who are the ones actually reaping the benefits of the production. Low prices were seen as the main culprit for the problems of the farmers. There are no farmers' associations geared towards facilitating access to markets and gathering production from smallholders. Farmers need to sell individually, and consequently lose the bargaining power of a more coordinated approach. Even if the agricultural season is good, lack of markets does not allow farmers to reap its benefits.

Post-harvest losses are also usually very relevant, due to the spread of pests, substandard storage facilities, and post harvesting methods, such as lack of moisture or pest controls. In discussions with Agritex staff, it was

pointed out that cowpeas have the potential for value chain addition and market expansion, although currently there is no market for such crop.

The same also applies to livestock, although, since animals are seen as “cash reserves”, the lack of an entrepreneurial mentality in cattle rearing, breed improvement, fattening, and selling also contributes to low revenues in this field.

Savings and Credit

There is no access for farmers to formal credit facilities. Only one bank is present on the territory of the District, in Rushinga town. Interest rates are too high for farmers, who are also experiencing liquidity problems. Banks are also requesting flats, houses, or buildings as collateral, and farmers do not have such assets usually.

Insurance Market

Similar low level of penetration of insurance as in Mount Darwin is also the case for Rushinga.

Humanitarian and Development Programmes

During both the 2015 and 2016 seasons WFP has been active in the district with FFA, together with its main partner, the Community Technology Development Organization (CTDO). FFA has supported 11 communities setting up weir dams, nutrition gardens, dip tanks, and irrigations schemes, thanks to the support of USAID, the Government of Japan, and the Government of Zimbabwe. More communities are going to be targeted this year through FFA. WFP has partnered with CTDO as well on the distribution of Lean Season Assistance (LSA) between July 2016 and March 2017, reaching more than 35,000 beneficiaries.

Community Consultations

Manyeredzi Weir and Nutrition Garden

The site is located in ward 17, in agricultural zone 4.

Crops cultivated and livestock.

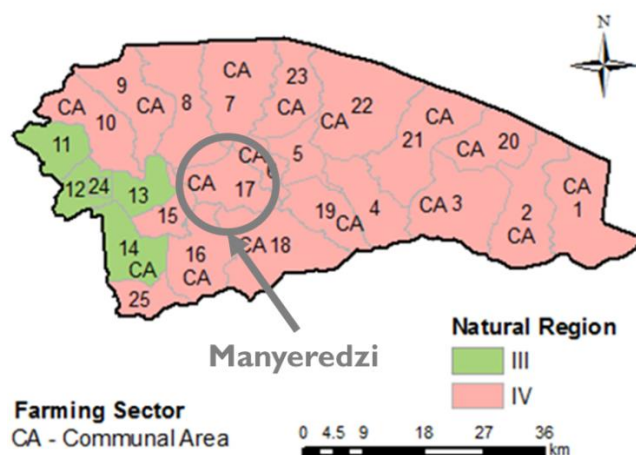
In the dryland farming areas of the community the major crops being grown are sorghum, pearl millet, cowpeas, maize, and cotton. Maize agriculture seems less and less viable due to the same phenomena witnessed in Mount Darwin: shortened rainy seasons and longer dry spells.

Both in 2015 and 2016, farmers actually planted twice, but did not manage to get any crop. Eventually they planted cowpeas, and managed to get some limited production. 2017 has been a good year, and they produced some surplus. The communities produce considerable amounts of cowpeas, but due to market problems they are not able to sell them anywhere.

Farmers are involved in conservation agriculture work. Despite it being extremely time consuming, they are able to see the benefits of it, and they no longer need any convincing. Farmers carry out some cultivations such as field preparation for conservation agriculture in groups, going from one plot to another, in order to overcome the labour intensity challenges.

Livestock is an important part of the livelihoods of the communities in this area, although it is estimated that 20% of the population no longer has any livestock due to the El-Niño drought from last year. Just like in Mount Darwin, livestock rearing is still not seen as a commercial activity, and no specific efforts are carried out on

Figure 6: Manyeredzi location



fattening and selling the heads when they can be valued the most. The absence of a functioning livestock market also has an influence on such practices.

Markets

The absence of functioning markets for both crop and livestock production is one of the key overall challenges for the population in the area. Farmers sell their crop produce individually. The community mentions the same problems with the GMB in terms of delayed payments. The poor situation of markets, which might have deteriorated compared to the past years, has highlighted a need for improved storage facilities at household level.

Savings and Credit

ISALs are the only source of savings in the community. Their establishment has also been possible thanks to the FFA interventions.

Box 3: Manyeredzi Weir and Nutrition Garden Assets in Detail

CTDO and WFP have started working in this site in 2015, when the weir and nutrition garden were first built. In 2016 the weir was raised further, to increase its capacity. 420 households were involved in the construction of both assets. In addition to the asset construction CTDO has set up Income Generating Activities (IGAs) such as beekeeping and fishery establishment. Health, nutrition, conservation agriculture and marketing training have also been provided to the community.

Nutrition Garden

The total area of the nutrition garden is one hectare. 70 households are working on and benefiting from the nutrition garden. Each household can work on 12 beds of 10 m² each. Farmers plant the same crops at the same time to coordinated production and also to be more effective with pest control. Fumigations are done at once, to avoid spreading of pests. Farmers sell their surplus produce to schools and hospitals, and they usually do so as a group.



Image 5: Manyeredzi Weir



Image 6: Nutrition Garden

Weir

The weir has a maximum capacity of 55,000 m³, and it is 5.5 metres deep. The back flow of the dam stretches back upstream for 800 m. Besides providing water to the nutrition garden, the dam is used as a water source for livestock.

Haruma Weir and Nutrition Garden

The site is located in ward 16, in agricultural zone 4.

Crops cultivated and livestock.

Households grow in their dryland farming areas mostly maize, sorghum, finger millet, cowpeas, groundnuts, and bambara nuts. Some also grow cotton, and to a lesser extent tobacco, as cash crops. Maize seeds are either purchased in shops or provided by a government programme. For sorghum, WFP provided households last year with a special variety, through a focused programme. For the other crops, farmers use retained seeds.

In the past few years farmers had to go through several plantings every season. For example, in 2014-15, there have been three plantings, and eventually some sorghum was produced. In 2015-16, due to El-Niño, there was no production at all. Other bad years among the past decade were 2008 and 2012. The past year, as in all the other areas examined, has been a good one.

The increasingly erratic nature of the rainy seasons has made it more and more difficult for farmers to grow maize, but there seems to be less problem with small grains. As a result, farmers think that small grains, together with cowpeas and groundnuts, are the most suitable crops to be grown in the area.

Regarding the risks related to agriculture, farmers mentioned a series of pests, such as armyworms, crickets and grasshoppers, as well as birds and baboons. Lack of access to inputs, such as fertilizers is seen as a challenge too.

As in the other ward examined, farmers carry out conservation agriculture, and they do so mostly in groups, usually in September/October, before the start of the rainy season.

A very little amount of farmers is involved in cattle fattening, as livestock, and in particular cattle, are only sold as a last resort to obtain much needed cash. Much more could be done to improve livestock value, including fattening, better protection from diseases, the establishment of dip tanks, and improved support from livestock extension agents.

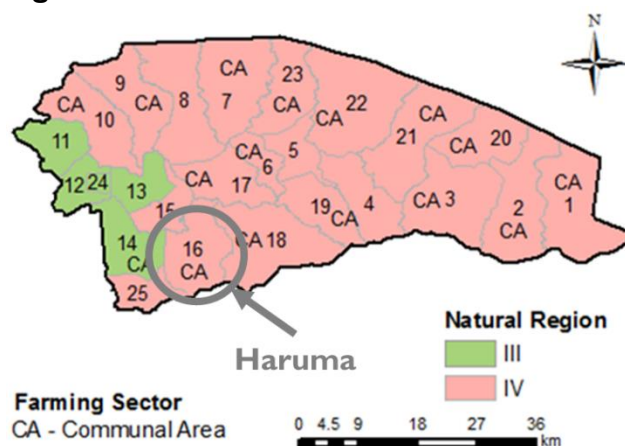
Markets

Market problems are similar, but farmers in Haruma also complained about the lack of liquidity, since too many agrodealers pay through Econet, and it becomes difficult to cash in the money due to lack of proximity to a payment point. None of the farmers interviewed have sold any produce to the GMB, due to their problems in paying back.

Savings and Credit

ISALs are present in the communities, including the one set up through the nutrition garden.

Figure 7: Haruma location



Box 4: Haruma Weir and Nutrition Garden Assets in Detail

The weir had been originally built in 2012-2014, through the PRIZE recovery programme by ACDI/VOCA. In 2015, through FFA, WFP and CTDO mobilised 220 households to raise the level of the weir of an additional metre, while 270 households worked for the creation of a nutrition garden downstream.

Nutrition Garden

The total area of the nutrition garden is one hectare, including as well a fishpond that is currently under construction. 120 households benefit from the garden, and have a total of 80 m² of land available (8 beds). Households use the produce from the garden both for their own consumption as well as for selling. Income from the nutrition garden can be considerable, as farmers pointed out that they can get as much as US\$ 30/month for the vegetables, and US\$ 80/month for the tomatoes. A lot of the production goes to the nearby school, which also has some plots used for education of the children in the garden. Every month each farmer gives US\$ 0.5 to a common pot used to buy pesticides and cover normal expenses. They also make a separate ad-hoc contribution of US\$ 1 to purchase seeds and cement. The nutrition garden group has also established an ISAL, which has a 20% interest rate to borrowers.



Image 7: Weir in Haruma



Image 8: The Nutrition Garden

Weir

The weir has a maximum capacity of 38,000 m³, with a height of 6 m. Besides providing water for the nutrition garden, the weir is used for livestock, benefiting 625 households from the surrounding villages. Women also use the water to wash clothes nearby.

3. Commentary on the two districts

The following section is based both on interviews with stakeholders and with farmers during the field mission, and on a review of secondary sources, notably the recent SLP for Rushinga (August 2016) and District Risk Profiles for Mount Darwin and Rushinga. The assessment, which focuses on the Districts' climate and agricultural systems, expands on the information available before the mission (summarized in Table 1).

The official measuring station of the Zimbabwe Meteorological Service for both Mount Darwin and Rushinga is located at Mount Darwin. Although Agritex record rainfall and temperature data in Rushinga, and in both districts raingauges are located at ward level, no request to access data has been made during this assessment.

The rainfall data in Table 3 relate to all wards of each district. Although the data seem to indicate similar rainfall between the districts, the diversity of agro-ecological zones in Mount Darwin can mask significant differences between the upper valley and lower valley areas of Mount Darwin. The District Profile for Mount Darwin states that the rainfall in IIA ranges from 700-1050 mm per annum, IIB as 561-754, III at 650-750 and IV (in the lower valley) at "below 450mm". The 2015-16 El Nino year was described as the worst year in the last 10, and the most recent 2016-17 as the most favourable rainfall.

For Rushinga, as noted the district is much more uniform, albeit mainly in agro-ecological zone IV. The District Profile states that the average rainfall for the district is 650mm (although noting that the Mount Darwin station is used as a reference station for Rushinga). This would seem consistent with the satellite rainfall estimates of 674mm averaged over the district. From the above, we infer that the majority of Rushinga district receives more favourable rainfall than that in the lower valley area of Mount Darwin, but less than the more productive southern wards of Mount Darwin.

During the mission, meetings with stakeholders and farmers were focused only on the lower valley area of Mount Darwin (zone IV), and in two wards in zone IV of Rushinga, all of which were wards where FFA has been implemented. Although soils were reported as generally more favourable (fertile) in Mount Darwin lower valley than in Rushinga, it is very apparent that rainfall in the lower valley of Mount Darwin and most of Rushinga is generally challenging for dryland crop production. A more exact agro-meteorological comparison would need also to consider temperatures (which influence evapotranspiration) and soil characteristics, but it appeared that Rushinga communities were meeting the challenges of adaptation more actively, through partial adoption of conservation agriculture and embracing small grains. High temperatures of the Mount Darwin lower valley area could be an additional agro-climatic challenge for agricultural (especially crop) production in the valley.

It should be noted that apart from some discussion with the district stakeholders, no meetings were held with farmers in the more favourable production areas of the southern wards of Mount Darwin. However, in making a comparison between the lower valley area of Mount Darwin and the areas visited in Rushinga, it seemed that there was more potential for innovative implementation of integrated resilience building interventions in Rushinga than in the lower valley areas of Mount Darwin. Although in both districts Agritex staff are finding challenges in supporting farmers due to lack of funds and means of transport, in Rushinga communities were already embracing conservation agriculture, and the introduction of improved sorghum seeds by WFP was adopted successfully. Finally, although food insecure communities are also present in the more favourable southern wards in Mount Darwin, the more widespread food security problems of communities in Rushinga agro-ecological zone IV, higher land degradation rates, and the absence of small scale commercial farming seem to provide a more solid entry point for WFP's intervention there.

Table 3: Summary of key features of the two districts

Feature (source)	Mount Darwin	Rushinga
Population (ICA, 2014)	219,717	70,548
Livelihoods	Highveld Prime Communal. Mount Darwin is more diverse in its livelihoods, reflecting markedly different agricultural potential between the northern lower valley area (classified as northern Zambesi Valley Communal), and the southern wards (see section 2).	Greater Mudzi Communal.
ICA Categories	2B (Medium Natural Shocks Recurrence and Medium Food Insecurity)	2B (Medium Natural Shocks Recurrence and Medium Food Insecurity)
Food insecurity (District profiles)	Estimated at 17.6%	Estimated at 17.1%
Natural regions:	IIA, IIB, III and IV	97% category IV, 7% category III
Long Term Average Annual Rainfall (WFP VAM data visualization tool⁵)	677mm (average for the district)	674mm (average for the district)
July 2015 – June 2016	458mm	401mm
July 2016 – June 2017	803mm	811mm
Landholding	Communal, New Resettlement, Old Resettlement and Small Scale Commercial	Communal
Agricultural systems	A wide range of cropping exists, with higher intensity cash and food crops in the south and a narrower range of small grains and predominance of livestock in the lower valley. Cash crops: tobacco and cotton. Commercial livestock rearing opportunities to be exploited.	A more limited variety of cropping systems with small grains predominating and extensive livestock (cattle and goats). Cash crops: tobacco and cotton. Commercial livestock rearing opportunities to be exploited.
Access to Markets (field assessment)	Considerable challenges in selling production, obtaining fair prices, and accessing cash/being paid.	
Savings and Credit (field assessment)	No access to formal microfinance institutions for smallholders. The sole sources for savings and credit are represented by ISALs.	
Access to inputs (field assessment)	Limited/no use of purchased seeds. No use of fertilizer in dryland farming.	Limited/no use of purchased seeds. Limited use of fertilizer when conservation agriculture is carried out.
Agriculture Extension Services and Conservation Agriculture (field assessment)	Agritex experiencing challenges in reaching wards within the district due to lack of transport/funds. Conservation agriculture not widespread.	Agritex experiencing challenges in reaching wards within the district due to lack of transport/funds. High conservation agriculture adoption rates.
Land and forest degradation (ICA)	Low	Medium
Poverty rate (district profiles)	80.6%;	81.9%
Relief/Development Programmes	LSA	LSA, PAC/FFA
FFA/PAC Partners	WVI	CTDO, strong partner

⁵ Available at: http://dataviz.vam.wfp.org/seasonal_explorer/rainfall_vegetation/visualizations

Given that there are clear trends in climate change in both districts, evidenced by experience of later start to effective planting rains (typically changed from mid or late November, to nearer Christmas), as well as typically dry spells soon after the effective rains, it is very clear that cropping adaptation is necessary away from maize (which is sensitive to dry spells and to water stress, especially at flowering). In Rushinga it is notable that for rainfed farming, two measures have already started to be adopted. First, there has been a strong move to small grains (sorghum, millet, pearl millet and cowpeas). Secondly, farmers have partially adopted conservation agriculture, which has benefits in the longer term of soil moisture conservation. Combined, these two changes have strong benefits for food security. If there were stronger guaranteed market outlets for specified small grains linked to known prices, farmers indicated that they would rapidly adopt the crops and invest in higher productivity.

Livestock are an important part of extensive farming in both districts. Goats are regarded as a commercial option for farmers. Cattle are not regarded as a commercial option, but act as a reservoir of wealth. Stakeholders pointed out that if proper attention was given to cattle fattening, herds could be managed to provide regular income flow.

The situation regarding access to markets, agricultural inputs and credit is similar across all the wards visited in the two districts. Farmers stated the huge challenges in selling their produce and, even if they manage to do so, they run the risk of being shortchanged by private dealers, not being able to access cash, or not being paid at all, in the case of GMB. Seeds for crops are usually retained and not purchased, while there is a limited use of fertilizers. Interestingly, it was noted that there is an increased use of fertilizer in case conservation agriculture is applied. Farmers have no access to formal financial institutions: savings and credit are limited to informal ISALs.

In both districts LSA has been carried out since at least 2014. However, FFA activities are currently being implemented only in Rushinga, thanks to a strong cooperating partner such as CTDO. The situation in Mount Darwin is different, as no FFA has been implemented since 2014, and the capacity of WVI seems more limited. The approach to FFA activities in both districts and for both partners is similar, with a strong reliance on “quick-wins” solutions that increase water supply, such as weirs and dams, combined with nutrition gardens, with less emphasis on soil and water conservation structures encompassing the whole watershed and also dryland farming areas. The approach is also characterized by one-year interventions, instead of a multi-year investment in a specific community, which aims at creating a critical mass of assets and trainings that would give farmers more chances for long-lasting resilience.

4. Programmatic Recommendations and Next Steps

Based on the evidence and the analysis carried out so far, this chapter will start by providing an advice on where the integrated approach should be carried out between the two district of Rushinga and Mount Darwin. This chapter will then discuss the programmatic opportunities for such an approach.

In deriving these recommendations, it was evident that findings for an integrated approach in Masvingo, carried out during the previous assessment phase, are quite similar to those in the northern districts. This reflects that the climate and farming systems are similar, including the dependence on rainfed agriculture, the fairly unfavourable production locations in agro-ecological zone IV, and the experiences so far in both north and south of successful FFA activities linked to weirs and nutrition gardens. In this respect, the programmatic approach in the south has been to create a focus for community intervention initially on proven asset building through irrigation development, leading in subsequent years to an extension into surrounding rainfed agricultural resilience building, through soil and water management with conservation agriculture, and addressing specific constraints faced by rainfed communities, notably access to market. This approach is possible under a multi-year programme, which has not so far been the case for single-year FFA interventions.

a. Geographical targeting

It is proposed that Rushinga offers a more favourable set of circumstances for an integrated approach intervention than the lower valley area of Mount Darwin. An important factor is the lesser challenge of designing Weather Index Insurance (WII) in Rushinga, the better opportunities to build on existing trends in agricultural practices. Presence of a strong CP will support planning and implementation.

Another consideration was whether the more climatically favourable southern wards of Mount Darwin could be a location for the integrated approach, particularly wards in the communal areas of natural regions III or IIB. These were not considered during the mission partly as they were not selected by partners for the visits, but also because those areas are could be less appropriate to target than the most vulnerable part of the district where FFA has been implemented, in the lower valley. Nevertheless, those areas could be “easier” for insurance design purposes and could offer easier development of financial services, credit development and access to markets. These could be considered in more detail in future, noting that there remains a high level of poverty and food insecurity in most wards of Mount Darwin district, according to the district profile. For the moment however, the characteristics of the Rushinga implementation areas make them more of a priority for a WFP intervention.

Further discussions with partners and stakeholders in Rushinga, as well as the District Administrator, the spread of existing WFP LSA and FFA/PAC will also be fundamental to select intervention areas. In particular, carrying out multi-year Community Based Participatory Plannings (CBPP) will be crucial to improve the effectiveness of the approach, starting from the FFA component. Similarly, developing linkages with P4P for market offtake of specific food crops need to be investigated.

b. Entry Points and Characteristics of an Integrated approach

In order to achieve long-lasting resilience objectives, an “integrated risk management approach” is essential, as no single intervention is likely to be successful. The integrated approach is likely to be successful when adapted to the country, district and ward context, and there is no specific restriction on the type and number of different

components that might be integrated to pursue resilience outcomes. Besides FFA, micro-insurance, savings and credit, which have represented the cornerstone of the R4 Rural Resilience Initiative in other contexts, examples of additional activities that could be integrated are conservation agriculture, the introduction of drought resistant and appropriate crop types and varieties, and the strengthening of the existing district agricultural extension system.

It is important to ensure, within any specific selected district, that there are good opportunities for improved resilience including productivity improvements. This may be difficult to achieve if chronic food insecurity cannot be addressed due to constraints of the location or lack of opportunities. Specific considerations on opportunities for the integrated approach components in Rushinga are presented below:

I. Asset creation:

- Access to improved water resources (where not currently available) for households including on development of small scale vegetable production, and water for livestock is generally a pre-requisite to food and income resilience.
- Given the success of nutrition gardens and aquaculture found in Mount Darwin and Rushinga districts, similar to Masvingo Province, as well as it is obvious that this type of intervention, where water storage and income generating activities assets such as weirs and fish ponds are initially built through FFA, lead to a very viable and sustainable ongoing food and income production for the specific members and for the wider community. Irrigation areas provide drought resilience even if households are principally involved in rainfed agriculture. In addition, although relatively small numbers of ongoing beneficiaries are members of these schemes, it is evident that the benefit in terms of nutrition, income and diversification (and community organisation) spreads far into the villages where the projects are located, as was noted both in northern districts as well as Masvingo. Further, the organisation of households into collective activities, both in building the asset and subsequently operating nutrition gardens or fishponds, is a powerful benefit in rolling out the extension of the integrated approach into surrounding rainfed villages.
- While further asset building in the immediate surroundings of the existing projects sites would not appear to be needed in the Rushinga projects visited, similar opportunities where there are water storage options on rivers or streams could be considered in different wards/communities. where specific weirs or other irrigation systems can be implemented due to geographic and topographic characteristics. A similar concentration or layering of assets should be repeated with vegetable gardens, wash basins, latrines, and water tanks. This layering of multiple assets at one location seems to bring about livelihood improvements more quickly⁶.
- There is a need to find asset building entry points which could allow the project to be implemented in rainfed agricultural areas in Rushinga. The identification of specific labour based activities (for either village/community asset, or household asset creation) could initially be for water provision and storage through soil and water conservation activities, allowing household level vegetable production. Secondly, the programme could be extended to the rainfed production areas of surrounding villages, through strengthening of conservation agriculture and promotion of small grains, with improved seeds. Finally, additional interventions to improve the overall management of the watershed could also be envisioned, such as area closure, tree planting, and interventions to reduce soil degradation.

⁶ WFP Assessment of the gender contribution of FFA: Country Study Report: The potential of Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) to empower women and improve women's nutrition in Mwenezi District, Zimbabwe. Draft, 2016.

- Instead of a one-year implementation timeline, the project should promote a multi-year focus on the same sites to maximize FFA outcomes and benefits. Other key characteristics to ensure maximum FFA impacts will be followed.
- Conservation Agriculture is practiced widely in Zimbabwe over a long period, and is recognized as one of the best strategies to improve resilience of households against drought. This was very evident in meetings with farmers in Rushinga, who have been reducing reliance on maize, and concentrating on small grain production, as well as adopting CA, with many farmers recognizing clear benefits. However, CA is only partially adopted, due to labour constraints as well in a lack of incentive due to poor market opportunities for selling of surpluses. Entry points where asset building could be linked to CA (including promotion of small grains) is as relevant in Rushinga as was the case in Masvingo Province. Lessons from R4 in Zambia, where there is no FFA and where the R4 programme is working on direct CA implementation, can be incorporated but would be easiest to consider where linked to an existing CA initiative.
- Since post-harvest storage is one weak link in the food security often overlooked, due to high post-harvest losses of grains, and poor storage conditions prohibiting holding grains for either food security purposes or to allow sale later, when market prices are higher. Asset creation could consider community structures, such as a small warehouse, or at household level, to improve traditional structures. This would also be in line with the storage improvements envisioned by the Zimbabwe Country Strategic Programme.
- A further consideration both in designing an integrated programme in Rushinga, as well as considerations for FFA, is that livestock forms an extremely important part of the farming system. Goat production is important to households both for subsistence and for sale. However, cattle are not treated as a commercial opportunity and are maintained for their wealth and as a reserve, and for social status. The team were advised that there were opportunities for more formal cattle fattening, through improved fodder management and development of markets.
- Finally, it should be taken seriously into account the possibility for WFP to provide support to Agritex staff in terms of their ability to reach project locations. The donation of motorbikes and funding to purchase fuel to Agritex ward-level focal points can represent a minimum investment that could reap substantial rewards in terms of improved agricultural guidance and support for smallholders, and strengthen the benefits of possible FFA activities.

2. Savings:

- Creating ISALs, or strengthening of existing ones, is the most obvious and straightforward intervention, and is an integral and important part of resilience building. The integrated approach should promote the sound introduction and management of village savings and loans, and specific training of the role of savings to manage contingencies and minor shocks. In Rushinga ISALs exist, but could be further strengthened
- Graduation to formal savings institutions is part of progression towards self-sufficiency, and financial inclusion, and could represent a possible longer term process within communities, after informal savings groups have been established and have taken root. In Rushinga there is negligible use by farmers of formal savings institutions, even though deposit takers exist in the district.

3. Insurance:

- Insurance is the most complex of the integrated approach components to design and implement. Both Mount Darwin's lower valley zone, and Rushinga's climate, is challenging for the introduction of WII. Both areas are experiencing increasingly erratic rainfall within a season (such as later start of season, dry

spells after planting, and earlier end of season), as well as variability between seasons. However, Rushinga is slightly less challenging than Mount Darwin lower valley, since average rainfall is slightly higher, and high temperatures and evapotranspiration may be slightly less extreme, due to higher elevations. Given the challenge of finding an acceptable balance between payout frequency, and premium rate in “high risk” locations, there is a clear preference towards Rushinga. Whilst index parameters (triggers, exits etc...) can be adjusted to achieve a target premium rate (for example, 15% to 20% rate), the danger is that farmers still experience crop failure or serious yield shortfall, and there is a small or zero payout in all but the most severe years. Generally, a payout frequency (partial or full payouts) once every 4-6 years is a guideline in order to maintain premium affordability.

- Insurance requires the “right” project situation. Hence, strong linkage of WII with drought resistant crops and cropping practices, linked to good education, is needed to minimise the potential for basis risk. The overall components of the project should allow that small grains, of the right maturity length and improved seeds, are grown under conservation agriculture conditions, and where the right extension advice is available. Complementary to achieving this is that the farmer has incentive to follow recommended practices, through confirmed market outlets and pricing, as well as access to the right inputs (and possibly credit). Under these circumstances, “crop failure” should be restricted to only the most severe drought years (for example, El Niño years), for which insurance could intervene.
- It is extremely important to emphasise that insurance as a “stand alone” instrument will not support farmers faced with very difficult constraints and growing conditions in these northern districts. It can only add value as a “supporting financial instrument” to other programme measures which can provide physical resilience building, and allow increased agricultural productivity and profitability. This implies linkage to a programme or a value chain addressing these constraints and offering farmers a genuine opportunity for income generation.
- There is room for innovation in index design. Indices in the four existing R4 countries are based on satellite rainfall estimates and early and late season insurance windows. Each is context specific and all options including rain gauge WII and possibly area yield index will be considered during detailed insurance design. Undoubtedly the exact type of “erratic” rainfall (late start of season, timing and duration of dry spells, early end of season etc...) needs to be properly understood within the specific farming system. Then, for example for small grains, if planting is recommended with first meaningful rains, and there is crop failure and replanting is recommended, this should be reinforced by contingency planning and by insurance to allow that short season seeds are available and affordable, since replanting is becoming a norm rather than an exception. Contingency planning for replanting following germination failure with appropriate crops, such as cowpeas, is recognized as a very important strategy to provide some production even in the most adverse years. Building the right soil and water management to the recommended cropping practices allows for prudent risk-taking, and better food security outcomes.

4. Prudent risk taking, access to credit, and access to markets:

- Crowding in responsible credit providers (and relevant agricultural inputs) should occur with the creation of the productive farming opportunities outlined above.
- This has been the case in Zambia, where the most important single element in opening up access to finance was the establishment of a market outlet for a cash crop - cowpeas – thanks to WFP’s P4P programme.
- Establishing market offtake to a value chain was one of the most important messages from farmers as a key constraint they face. Meetings with farmers and with Agritex indicated that farmers are very responsive to change their cropping practices if a market offering a stable price and selling outlet can be

confirmed. Linked to an integrated approach, facilitating market outlets such as P4P could be a powerful addition to the other components. Establishing market outlets for livestock (particularly cattle meat) is also relevant to overall considerations in developing cattle farming to a more commercial enterprise.

- Further discussions are needed with the P4P team on how to better align market access interventions with the integrated approach.
- Linked to access to credit is the need for financial literacy training, which spans both borrowing, saving, and the role of insurance.

c. Implementation, linkages and partnerships

Given the short time of the assessment and for follow-up research, it has not been possible to carefully select all the possible partners on the ground, but only to identify the possible FFA cooperating partner in Rushinga: CTDO. Additional partners will need to be found at a later stage, especially for the access to market component, as no local champion as Zimbabwe Super Seeds had been singled out in the district.

In Rushinga province, WFP operations are carried out from the CO, as there is no Sub Office in the area. In case the project will be implemented, partnerships with other institutions will be regulated through Field Level Agreements (FLAs), in the case of NGO partners, or through specific MoUs, in case of UN agencies or Government partners.

d. Next Steps

In case a development of an integrated approach in northern Zimbabwe will go beyond the assessment phase and into the design and planning phase, a series of activities will need to be carried out, including:

- Definition of the areas of intervention and caseload within Rushinga district, taking into account WFP's priorities for implementation in the upcoming seasons, availability of and linkage to partners and existing initiatives in Rushinga district, and Government priorities. This will require that CBPPs and calls for proposals for FFA are undertaken. For the moment, a sample implementation schedule is provided in the following page, taking into account also the caseload and timelines for implementation in Masvingo district. The table also provides suggestions on which activities could be funded under a GCF proposal, to be complementary to the existing SDC funds for Masvingo.
- Definition of the key components and linkages of the programme, and their set up, considering the availability and willingness of partners at national and local level and defined entry points.
- Creation of the relevant indexes for WII. The development of indices in Rushinga can benefit from the procurement process being already undertaken for insurance implementation in Masvingo.

Annex I: Agenda

Stakeholder	Date	Time	Participants
District Administration- Mount Darwin	Monday 26	11:00 – 13:00	District Administrator, Agritex, Veterinary, Ministry of Youth Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment(MYIE), ministry of Health and Child Care(MoHCC), Ministry of Small to Medium Enterprise and Development (SMECD), Ministry of Womens Affairs Gender and Community Development (WGCD), District Development Fund (DDF), ZB Bank, Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare (MOPLSW), Zimbabwe Statistical Agency (ZimStat), Environmental Management Agency (EMA); Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Services (ZPCS), Local Government Public Works and National Housing (LGNHPW), Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MOPSE), Enterprise, Grain Marketing Board, Meteorological Office, Agribank, NGO Partners (Caritas, FACHIG, World Vision). p
AGRITEX- Mount Darwin	Monday 26	14:00 – 15:30	Mr. Patrick Tsikirai.
World Vision- Mount Darwin	Monday 26	16:00 – 17:00	Mr. Albert Muraisa, and Mr. Denhum Gava
Visit to Mt. Darwin FFA site 1- Hode Weir and Nutrition Garden	Tuesday 27	9:00 – 13:00	Visit of the FFA site. Discussion with communities, including FFA Nutrition Garden beneficiaries. Accompanied by local Agritex officers and World Vision.
Visit to Mt. Darwin FFA site 2- Chipfungwe Weir	Tuesday 27	14:00 – 17:00	Visit of the FFA site. Discussion with communities, including former FFA beneficiaries. Accompanied by local Agritex officers and World Vision.
District Administration and Stakeholders- Rushinga	Wednesday 28	9:00 – 11:00	District Administrator, Agritex, NGO Partners (CTDO), DDF, IBAC Agro-dealer, Agribank, Public Works, Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs, ZimStat, Public Service Commission (PSC), Social Welfare, Women Affairs.
AGRITEX- Rushinga	Wednesday 28	11:00 – 12:30	Mr. Luke Mupambwa.
Visit to Rushinga FFA site 1- Nyanhikiti Weir and Nutrition Garden	Wednesday 28	14:30 – 17:00	Visit of the FFA site. Discussion with communities, including former FFA beneficiaries. Accompanied by local Agritex officers and CTDO.
Visit to Rushinga FFA site 2- Manyeredzi Weir and Nutrition Garden	Thursday 29	9:00 – 14:00	Visit of the FFA site. Discussion with communities, including former FFA beneficiaries. Accompanied by local Agritex officers and CTDO.
WFP CO	Friday 30	8:15 – 9:00	Discussion with Lorna Born, WFP Intern, on Ward Selection in Masvingo and Masvingo and analysis of agrometeorological characteristics.
WFP CO	Friday 30	9:00 – 9:45	Debriefing with WFP Country Director, Mr. Eddie Rowe.
Technoserve (TNS)	Friday 30	10:00 – 11:30	Discussion with Chipu Chipudla, Program Manager, Technoserve; Mupangi Sithole, and Tinashe Nyahwedegwe

WFP CO

Friday 30

12:00 –
13:00

Meeting with Benjamin Maingire, Procurement Officer.