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SAID Agriculture Evaluation Synthesis Report

Advancing Resilient, Diversified, and Market-Oriented Livelihoods for Vulnerable Communities: A Synthesis of TSA-Australia's Agriculture Programming in Africa's Climate-Impacted Agri-Food Systems

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List of Abbreviations

ACE- *Agriculture for Community Empowerment*
CA - *Conservation Agriculture*
CSA *- Climate-Smart Agriculture*
DTC- *Drought Tolerant Crops*
ECD *- Early Childhood Development*
FMNR *- Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration*
FTAI *– Fixed-Time Artificial Insemination*
GHG- *Green House Gases*
HH *- Household*
HRBA *- Human Rights-Based Approach*
IPM *- Integrated Pest Management*
KiWASH *- Karonga Integrated Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene*
LIFE *- Livelihood Improvement through Farmer Empowerment*
M&E *- Monitoring and Evaluation*
MHM *- Menstrual Hygiene Management*
MSETO-R *– Mseto Resilience WASH and Food Security*
MSD *– Market System Development*
NGO *- Non-Governmental Organization*
ODF *- Open Defecation Free*
OVCs *- Orphans and Vulnerable Children*
PWDs *- Participants with Disabilities*
RBA *- Rights-Based Approach*
RHoMIS *- Rural Household Multi-Indicator Survey*
RoC *- Rights of Children*
SAID *- Salvation Army Australia International Development*
SALP *- Sustainable Agriculture and Livestock Production*
SuWASHFS *- Sustainable Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene for Food Security*
TRTC *- Thika Resilience Training Center*
TSA *- The Salvation Army*
TT *- Tiyeni Tisamalirane*
VSLA *- Village Savings and Loan Association*
WASH *- Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene*

Executive Summary

Background and Methodology

This Agriculture Evaluation Synthesis examines eight select agricultural projects funded by the Salvation Army Australia International Development Department (SAID), implemented in Kenya (2 projects), Tanzania (1), and Malawi (5) over the past five years. These projects aimed to empower vulnerable communities by integrating agricultural interventions with Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA), children's rights programming, and WASH initiatives. The evaluation assesses their contributions to food and nutrition security, livelihoods, climate resilience, and social inclusion, while drawing lessons to enhance effectiveness of future programming.

Using a qualitative approach, project design, implementation, and evaluation documents were reviewed using Nvivo software. A key limitation was output-oriented reporting. Desk reviews were complemented by partner consultations and literature analysis to validate findings. Gendered food systems framework guided the analysis, focusing on projects' alignment and contributions to the local food systems' structure (agrifood value chains, food environments, and consumption behavior) as well as resulting outcomes.

Key Findings

Alignment with Food Systems Perspectives

The projects' designs demonstrated strong alignment with gendered food systems framework, prioritizing physical food access and, in some cases, economic access through VSLA-linked business opportunities and surplus produce sales. However, nutrition-sensitive outcomes—such as improved dietary diversity—were explicitly prioritized in only half of the projects (e.g., LIFE, KiWASH, MSETO-R). Contributions to food environments and consumption behavior components were under reported.

Agriculture and Livelihood Outcomes

The projects achieved notable immediate outcomes, including:

- Widespread adoption of Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices, such as conservation agriculture, tree planting and agroforestry, and kitchen gardening.
- Acquisition of climate-resilient livestock, particularly goats, to enhance household resilience.
- Strong female participation in VSLAs, underscoring equity focus on rural women.

These immediate outcomes contributed to intermediate gains, such as:

- Improved yields, ensuring food sufficiency and occasionally generating marketable surpluses.
- Capitalization of small agri-food businesses for income diversification and often enabling access to nutritious foods like meat and vegetables.

- Shifts toward equitable and positive gender norms enabling joint decisions in agricultural and income management, fairer sharing of labor, and recognition of women's contribution.

However, prospects were tempered by challenges, including climate variability, social norms, inadequate VSLA savings, and project limitations such as short durations, limited focus on nutrition, and sustainability concerns linked to direct delivery of market-based inputs and livestock.

Linkages Between WASH Outcomes and Food Systems

While WASH-specific outcomes were not explicitly designed to track cross-linkages with food systems outcomes, they revealed significant potential to enhance production of nutritious foods and food environments. Key contributions included:

- Direct benefits such as irrigation systems supporting vegetable production and livestock watering (e.g., MSETO-R and KiWASH projects).
- Time savings from reduced water collection burdens, which were reinvested in productive activities like farming and small businesses, particularly for women.
- Indirect contributions through access to safe water, improved hygiene, and reduced waterborne illnesses which enhanced food safety—an important SDG indicator for food environments.

These linkages underscore the potential of integrating WASH interventions more intentionally into food systems programming to amplify their impact on food security and resilience.

Food Systems Benefits for the Most Vulnerable Groups

Five projects demonstrated benefits for women, while two projects showed positive impacts for OVCs in Malawi, particularly through agriculture production, economic empowerment, and reduced caregiving burdens. However, in WASH projects, design gaps limited the intentional integration of nutrition benefits for children, framing feeding programs from kitchen gardens as spillovers rather than core outcomes.

Among three projects explicitly tracking disability inclusion in agriculture, only MSETO-R demonstrated a practical pathway by engaging PWDs through improvised kitchen gardens linked to rainwater harvesting tanks, emphasizing the need for on-the-ground innovation.

In the LIFE project, men disproportionately faced climate-induced migration, seeking wage labor in Mozambique during extreme weather events. Conservation Agriculture (CA) aimed to stabilize agricultural outputs and reduce reliance on migration as a coping mechanism.

Environmental Effects and Farmers' Resilience to Climate Variability

Project designs identified soil degradation, water and agrochemicals overuse, and deforestation as key environmental risks tied to agricultural practices. However, these risks were insufficiently monitored, as priority was placed on tracking the adoption of sustainable practices like CA.

Despite implementing CSA practices, farmers' resilience to increasing extreme climate events remained limited. This highlights the need for inclusive enhanced adaptation mechanisms, including:

- Tailored and timely climate information and agro-advisories, and scalable irrigation systems
- Crop/livestock insurance and social protection programs, and
- Livelihood diversification into off-farm and non-farm activities

Strengthening these measures can help bridge the gap between promoting sustainable practices and building climate-resilient livelihoods.

Sustainability

The projects demonstrated strong sustainability strategies, emphasizing public-sector integration and community-driven approaches, which fostered local ownership and embedded interventions within institutional frameworks. However, limited engagement with agri-based private-sector partnerships and farmer collective action highlighted gaps in sustaining agriculture and livestock interventions. Adopting a Market Systems Development (MSD) approach as an alternative to direct delivery of market-based solutions offers an opportunity to long-term sustainability and scalability.

Conclusions

Projects' baseline data indicates that most participant households were categorized as subsistence to pre-commercialization typologies. Pre-commercial households engaged with output markets only during surplus harvests. To facilitate transitions to commercialized agriculture, SAID programming should benchmark successful models while including off-farm diversification to mitigate climate-induced risks.

Comparative programs targeting pre-commercialization households align strongly with projects' strategies, including: pass-on programs like Heifer International's Passing-on-the-Gift, which fosters resource sharing (e.g., livestock, seeds, and knowledge); market systems approaches like USAID's AVCD project in Kenya, which bundled animal breeding and health services with value chain linkages to scale improved dairy breeds; and lead farmer models, such as the Village-Based Advisor model, used by FIPS-Africa and AGRA, to disseminate information and link farmers to markets.

Key features of these programs include increasing productivity through access to improved inputs, building business orientation via collective action and market linkages, addressing systemic barriers through multi-stakeholder platforms, and improving nutrition by promoting nutrient-dense foods. These approaches underscore the importance of integrating productivity, market development, and systemic change to support smallholder transitions.

Recommendations for Enhancing Effectiveness

1) **Strengthen Project Design Frameworks:** Develop robust, outcome-focused project designs, prioritizing nutrition-sensitive agriculture (NSA) outcomes, WASH-agriculture/food systems linkages, and consider a 6-month inception phase for contextualization interventions based on baseline findings.

2) **Adopt Targeted Segmentation for Tailored Models:** Use tools like opportunity space analysis and farmer typologies to design context-specific programming. Focus on value chain development in commercialization hotspots (e.g., ACE, SALP) and introduce

graduation models with timelines (e.g., 10-year transitions) to support transitions into commercialization.

3) **Enhance Evaluation Quality and Theories of Change:** Improve evaluation methodologies by aligning farmer surveys with qualitative techniques like outcome mapping. Incorporate longitudinal indicators to track resilience, stability, and programming cross-linkages. Regularly refine Theories of Change (ToC) with visual illustrations to enhance understanding and implementation.

4) **Integrate Market Systems Development (MSD):** Transition from direct delivery approaches to MSD models, fostering systemic changes by partnering with market-based providers of inputs and services.

5) **Promote Diversified Livelihood Strategies:** Broaden programming to include off-farm and non-farm activities, such as agri-food systems-linked entrepreneurship, emphasizing inclusion of marginalized groups. This dual approach enhances resilience and creates pathways for food systems transformation.

6) **Operationalize Rights-Based Approach (RBA) and Disability Inclusion:** Strengthen the application of RBA and disability inclusion by articulating their connection to food security and climate justice. Design interventions that address the specific needs and opportunities of PWDs.

7) **Leverage Collective Action for Systemic Change:** Integrate collective action into theories of change, supporting the evolution of market-oriented farmer groups into cooperatives or producer groups. Strengthen VSLA structures to scale business engagement and market linkages.

8) **Embed Environmental Resilience Strategies:** Incorporate climate adaptation measures, including agro-advisories, crop/livestock insurance, and social protection mechanisms, while monitoring environmental risks throughout project design and implementation.

9) **Facilitate Peer-to-Peer Learning among implementing partners and supporting territories:**

10) **Strengthen Gender and Social Inclusion:** Disaggregate data by sex, age, PWD status, and household types, and move beyond tracking participation to measure economic benefits, empowerment, and shifts in social norms. Use tools like WEAI/WELI to assess impacts comprehensively.

1. Background

The International Development Department of The Salvation Army Australia Territory (SAID) operates in over nine countries, supporting vulnerable communities to achieve their human rights and thrive economically, socially, and spiritually. In collaboration with TSA Implementing Territories, TSA Australia focuses on improving health and livelihoods across Africa, South Asia, the South Pacific, and East Asia. A key pillar of these efforts is a portfolio of agricultural projects addressing systemic barriers to food security, resilience, and community well-being. With investments exceeding USD 3.5 million, these interventions align with TSA Australia's Theory of Change (ToC) 2022–2024, emphasizing sustainable livelihoods, healthy and safe communities, and reduced vulnerability to exploitation.

SAID's approach is rooted in a human rights-based framework, emphasizing community participation, equity, and capacity building. By addressing systemic challenges with contextually appropriate interventions, the ToC underscores the interconnectedness of sustainable livelihoods, social inclusion, and resilience, all contributing to community health and well-being.

This evaluation synthesis supports TSA Australia's commitment to organizational learning and improving the effectiveness of development programming. It reviews agricultural projects implemented over the past five years, focusing on their outcomes for livelihoods, food and nutrition security, and resilience to environmental shocks. The evaluation also explores the sustainability of these outcomes and assesses the extent to which gender, disability, and social inclusion were effectively integrated.

Given the increasing impacts of climate change on agricultural systems, this evaluation is particularly timely. It highlights strategies to enhance resilience, such as climate-adaptive technologies and diversified livelihood opportunities, while exploring the potential benefits of combining agriculture with WASH and VSLA interventions.

This synthesis is the first of its kind for TSA globally, with findings expected to inform the development of an Agriculture Programming Guidance Paper and guide future strategic action. Lessons learned aim to strengthen TSA's agricultural portfolio and contribute to broader organizational learning, ensuring more sustainable and impactful interventions.

The report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** outlines the methodology, including the Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs), the analytical approach, data collection methods, and considerations for ethics and limitations.

- **Section 3** provides a characterization of the evaluated projects, focusing on their thematic areas, the mix of programming models, an initial analysis of alignment with the food systems framework, and a baseline characterization of participant households' livelihood activities.

- **Section 4** presents the findings, structured around KEQs 1–4. It provides insights into outcomes, environmental contributions, social inclusion, and sustainability.

- **Section 5** delivers a summary of the key findings, while Section 6 provides recommendations, specifically designed to address KEQ 5, focusing on ways to enhance future programming effectiveness.

Cross references from literature review have been integrated throughout all sections, where applicable.

2. Methodology

2.1 Scope and Key Evaluation Questions

This evaluation synthesized the outcomes of eight selected TSA-Australia-funded agricultural projects implemented over the past five years in Kenya, Tanzania, and Malawi (see section 3 for details). It focused on key areas including livelihoods, food and nutrition security, environmental resilience, and social inclusion, while also examining sustainability and spillover benefits. Guided by five Key Evaluation Questions (Box 1; see Annex 2 for detailed ToRs), the evaluation assessed the projects' impact on vulnerable populations, their contributions to environmental resilience, and opportunities to enhance effectiveness through stronger integration of programming models.

Box 1. Key Evaluation Questions

1. **Outcome-Level Changes**: Assess the changes in livelihoods, food, and nutrition security resulting from SAID-supported agricultural projects, comparing results with non-participants and national benchmarks, and examining the role of contextual factors in influencing outcomes.
2. **Environment and Resilience**: Evaluate how environmental processes, including climate variability, affected project outcomes, the projects' environmental impacts, and their influence on farmers' resilience to environmental shocks.
3. **Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups**: Examine the extent to which projects benefited vulnerable and marginalized populations, particularly focusing on gender, disability, and social inclusion, and assess how women, girls, and people with disabilities benefited from the interventions.
4. **Sustainability of Outcomes**: Determine the sustainability of changes supported by TSA Australia's agricultural projects, including the appropriateness of the graduation model, the sustainability of farmer livelihoods under climate change, and the extent of spillover benefits.
5. **Future Effectiveness**: Explore ways to enhance the effectiveness of TSA Australia's agricultural projects, including integrating agricultural activities with other interventions (e.g., WASH, VSLA), and improving attention to value chains, partnerships, and market linkages.

2.2 Analytical Approach and Methods

The evaluation primarily employed a qualitative approach, focusing on desk reviews of project documents, consultations with implementing partners, informant interviews with supporting territories, and a review of relevant literature. The evaluation was conducted between November 2024 and January 2025.

2.2.1 Food Systems Framework

To provide an overarching analytical lens, the food systems concept was utilized, leveraging the High-Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) Report on Food Systems and Nutrition (2017) definition. The gendered food systems framework, adapted by Njuki *et al* (2022), was chosen for its relevance to TSA Australia's focus on social inclusion in agriculture programming.

According to HLPE (2017), "A food system gathers all the elements (environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructure, institutions, etc.) and activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation, and consumption of food, and the outputs of these activities, including socioeconomic and environmental outcomes." Building on this, Njuki *et al.* (2022) identify gender as a critical lever influencing food systems drivers, components, and outcomes.

The framework categorizes food system drivers into five key domains: biophysical and environmental, technological and infrastructural, political and economic, sociocultural, and demographic. Resilience to shocks and stressors is emphasized as essential for transformation. The three core components of food systems—agrifood value chains, food environments, and consumption behaviors—are defined as functional pillars (see Figure1).

Agrifood value chains encompass food production, processing, distribution, storage, and marketing (Njuki *et al,* 2022). Indicators for food environments in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) include the affordability of nutritious diets relative to income levels, percentage of households accessing safe water services (SDG 6.1.1), and the prevalence of undernourishment (SDG 2.1.1) (Schneider *et al,* 2023). Indicators for consumption behavior include the prevalence of nutrition-sensitive agriculture programs, access to nutrition education and counseling, and the influence of local practices and norms on diet quality and coping strategies for food supply variability (Njuki *et al,* 2022; Schneider *et al,* 2023).

Resilient and equitable food systems aim to deliver outcomes such as improved dietary diversity, the empowerment of vulnerable groups, and economic and environmental benefits. Long-term resilience is measured by indicators such as food supply variability and price volatility (Njuki *et al,* 2022; Schneider *et al,* 2023). Monitoring and mitigating Green House Gases (GHG) is key environmental outcome.

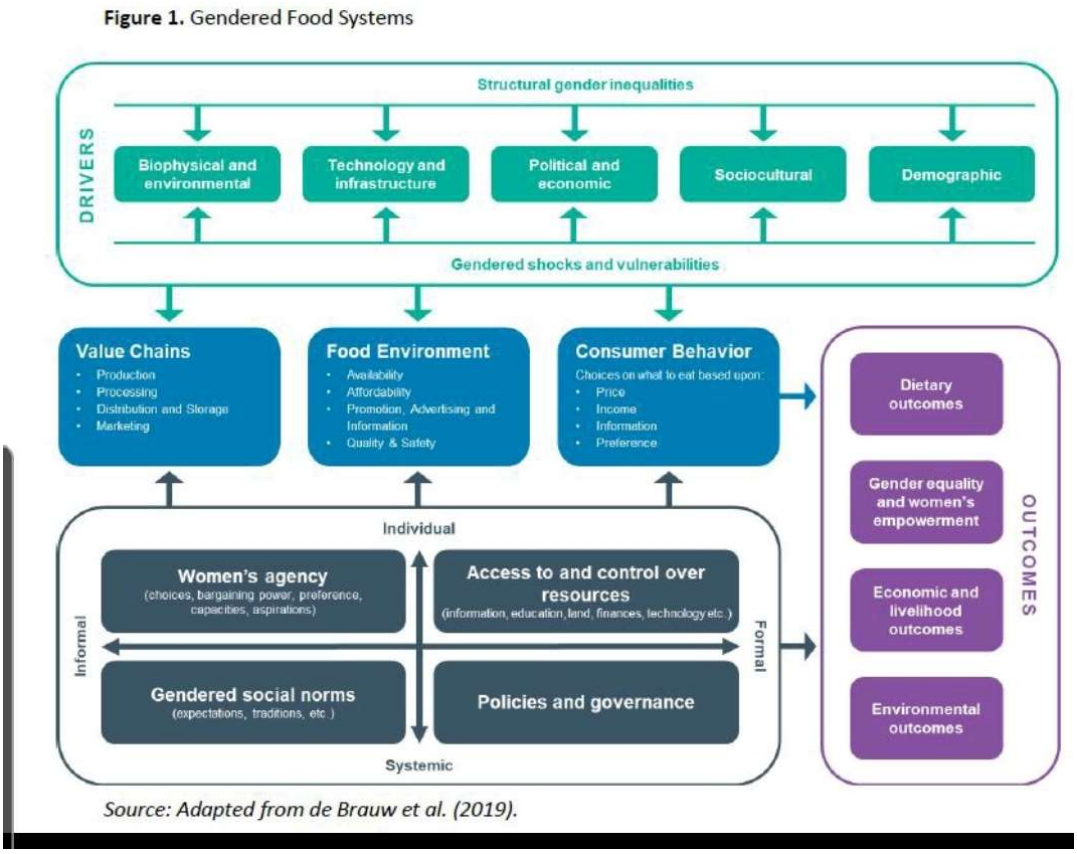

Figure 1. Gendered Food Systems Framework (Njuki et al, 2022)

2.2.2 Data Methods

Desk Review

The desk review utilized NVivo software for qualitative analysis, applying a codebook structured around the key evaluation questions as primary themes and food system aspects as sub-themes. This systematic approach combined deductive and inductive coding techniques to map outcomes and contributing factors. Reviewed documents included concept notes (8), project proposals (8), baseline studies (6), progress reports (26), evaluation reports (12), and TSA-Australia's Theory of Change (2022–2024) (See Annex 1).

Consultations and Validation

Virtual consultations were held with TSA implementing partners to discuss preliminary findings from project design documents and MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning) practices. For the three projects in Kenya and Tanzania, individual meetings (1.5 hours each) were conducted. In Malawi, due to internet challenges worsened by Cyclone Chido, a single consolidated session covered the five projects.

Two informant interviews with supporting territories provided additional insights and addressed project design and MEL issues identified during the desk review and partner consultations.

The process concluded with a joint validation meeting in January 2025, where participants reviewed main findings, engaged in sense-making, guiding formulation of actionable recommendations.

Literature Review

A review of secondary references triangulated findings and aligned evidence with programming models, thematic focus areas, and country contexts. Empirical studies on conservation agriculture, tree planting, and VSLA models were analyzed, alongside programming documents from similar projects, to provide comparative insights and enhance evaluation rigor.

2.3 Ethics

The evaluator assessed safeguarding risks across all evaluation activities and implemented mitigation strategies aligned with the approved risk assessment plan. These included completing an independent integrity check, undertaking ACFID safeguarding training, adhering to TSA's Code of Conduct, and following a secure data storage policy.

During consultations, core ethical principles were upheld, ensuring privacy, confidentiality, and informed consent while adopting a "do no harm" approach. Verbal consents were obtained from all participants before data collection, with clear communication on the evaluation's purpose, data usage, and participants' right to withdraw.

Secondary documents provided by TSA were anonymized to remove personal identifiers and managed securely per the data storage and retention policy. Project data was stored in password-protected folders with limited access and will be securely deleted within one week of final report approval.

These measures safeguarded participants' safety and dignity and maintained ethical standards throughout the evaluation process.

2.4 Limitations

The evaluation synthesis encountered several limitations that affected the depth, reliability, and rigor of its findings. These challenges primarily stemmed from gaps in the quality and consistency of evidence presented in the evaluation reports, which influenced the overall robustness of the analysis. The key limitations are outlined below:

Output-Oriented Reporting

Progress and evaluation reports tended to be output-oriented, driven by output-focused results frameworks. To address this limitation, deep inductive coding techniques were applied to identify and include inferences of outcomes, whether intended or occurring as spillover effects.

Anecdotal Evidence

Many reported outcomes relied on anecdotal evidence, as they were not supported by systematic inquiries. This limitation hindered the ability of the evaluation synthesis to address key evaluative questions, such as the scale of change in both breadth and depth, the social groups that benefited or did not, and the enablers and barriers influencing outcomes.

Survey Data Limitations and Methodological Gaps

Overreliance on Self-Reported Data and Long-Recall Periods: Farmer surveys lacked standardization across projects and evaluation phases (i.e., baseline-midterm-endline), and

heavily relied on farmer self-reporting with long recall periods (e.g., 12 months) for critical metrics like yields, profitability, household food insecurity, and dietary uptake. These methods increased the risks of recall bias and data inconsistencies.

Metrics such as yield and profitability could have been validated through more rigorous methods like crop cuts and gross margin analysis, ensuring greater data reliability. Similarly, food insecurity and nutrition assessments would have benefitted from adopting FAO-endorsed tools like the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) for standardized, validated data collection (Data4Diets, 2023).

To mitigate these challenges, standardized tools such as the Rural Household Multi-Indicator Survey (RHoMIS) could be adapted to improve consistency, accuracy, and comparability across projects and phases.

Low Explanatory Power of Evaluation Reports

In some cases, evaluation reports showed limited integration of qualitative and quantitative data, which reduced their analytical depth and weakened explanatory power. This gap often required evaluators to rely on inference to identify potential contributing factors to observed outcomes, risking speculation beyond the perspectives of evaluation participants.

Additionally, the use of qualitative-oriented methods, such as outcome mapping (OM) and outcome harvesting (OH), without complementary quantitative data, resulted in outcomes being reported largely in anecdotal terms. Another challenge to explanatory power was the inconsistency in tracking changes against targets or comparing findings to previous surveys, which hindered the ability to assess progress comprehensively.

3. Projects' Portfolio Description and Initial Analysis

This section provides an overview of the design features of the selected projects, examines their alignment with the food systems framework, and maps the baseline livelihood activities of targeted participants. Each analysis concludes with reflections on programming implications for enhanced future effectiveness.

3.1 Overview of Projects and Farmer Participant Reach

Eight projects from TSA Australia's agriculture portfolio were selected across Kenya (2 projects), Tanzania (1 project), and Malawi (5 projects). These initiatives aim to empower vulnerable communities to "actualize their human rights and prosper in their economic, social, and spiritual lives."

Aligned with TSA Australia's Theory of Change (ToC) (2022–2024), the projects contribute to intermediate outcomes on Sustainable livelihoods.

The projects are grouped into three main thematic areas (Table 1):

1. Agriculture and livestock-based livelihoods: Three projects (ACE, SALP, and LIFE).
2. WASH-focused projects with food security components: Three projects (SuWASHFS, KiWASH, and MSETO-R).
3. Children's rights: Two projects (TT-1 and TT-2) targeting orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) for comprehensive early childhood development.

The evaluated projects, implemented over an average of three years (except the five-year KiWASH and Mseto-R projects), were chosen for their agricultural focus. One pre-selected project, the Chicken Income Generating Activity (CIGA) in Kenya, was excluded due to its brief 12-month implementation.

Collective Scope and Reach:

- **Budget:** USD 3.5 million.
- **Participants:** Approximately 12,000 direct (farmer) participants reached with agricultural interventions—achieving 47% of targeted outreach. This is exclusive of participants reached with other interventions such as WASH and schools, which totaled 46,000.
- **Participant Distribution:** 70% of participants were reached through WASH projects, led primarily by MSETO-R (50% of total outreach), followed by agriculture-specific initiatives (24%).
- **Gender Equity:** 47–75% of participants were women, reflecting a strong equity focus on rural women.
- **Persons with Disabilities (PWDs):** Represented 7–9% of participants.
- **Average Reach per Project:** 1,500 farmers, signifying small-scale initiatives aimed at localized, rural livelihood challenges.

While proponents of impact at scale may critique these small-scale designs as less effective, TSA informants emphasized their niche programming approach that prioritizes the social

inclusion of hard-to-reach households. This reflects a tension between uniqueness and scalability in socially inclusive programming, as highlighted by Tavenner *et al* (2025). Their analysis suggests that small-scale, inclusive interventions often uncover, and address inequalities overlooked by larger initiatives. For further participant distribution details, see Figure 2.

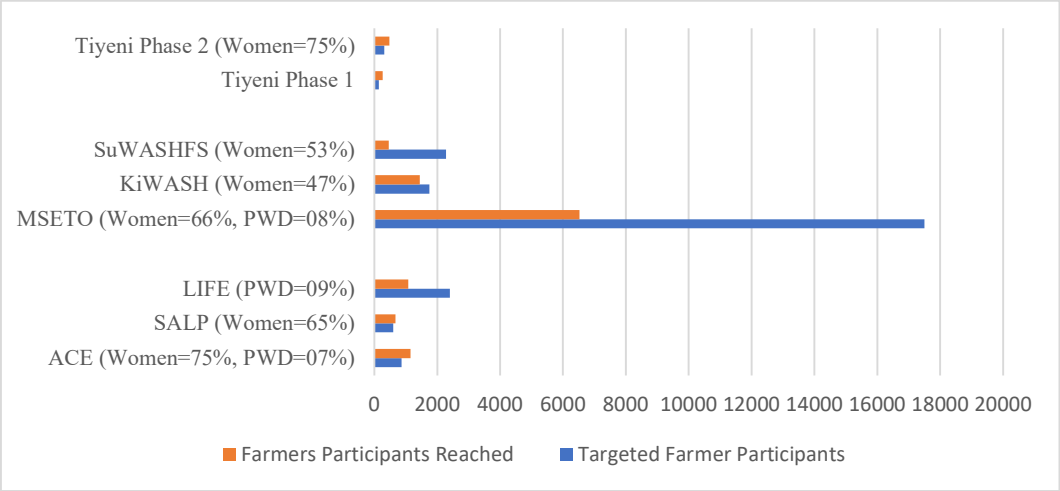

Figure 2. Distribution of Project Direct Farmer Participants Across Projects

3.2 Programming Models

Some programming models were consistently applied across all projects, while others were uniquely integrated:

- **VSLA Model:** Implemented in all projects with varied objectives and integration strategies.
    - In WASH projects (e.g., SuWASHFS and KiWASH), VSLAs supported borehole maintenance and water infrastructure sustainability.
    - In agriculture projects, VSLAs enhanced financial inclusion and economic resilience for farming households.
    - WASH and children's rights projects treated VSLAs as outputs, focusing on collective-level functionality, while agriculture projects positioned them as outcomes, incorporating farmer-level indicators to measure individual impacts beyond group-level functionality.
- **Conservation Agriculture (CA):** All projects incorporated Farming God's Way, emphasizing sustainable, climate-smart practices.
- **Social Inclusion:** All projects described commitments to social equity, focusing on women and disability inclusive agricultural systems.
- **Unique Approaches:**
    - **KiWASH:** Rights-based food security approach.
    - **MSETO-R** and **TT-2:** Focused on children's rights to food and nutrition.
    - **MSETO-R:** Integrated climate justice initiatives.

- **Community-Level Activities:** Some projects supported environmental restoration, enhancing long-term sustainability and resilience.

For an overview of the evaluated projects, including their codes, countries, thematic areas, and implementation periods, refer to Table 1.

Table 1. Details of Evaluated Projects:

Code Name	Country	Full Title	Thematic Area	Years
CP20-KYW/8361 ACE	Kenya	Agriculture and Community Empowerment	Agriculture	2021/24
CP20-TNZ/7415 SALP	Tanzania	Sustainable Agriculture and Livestock Production	Agriculture	2021/24
CP19-4157 LIFE	Malawi	Livelihood Improvement & Farmer Empowerment	Agriculture	2019/22
CP18-05/3562 Mseto R	Kenya	MSETO-Resilience	WASH	2019/24
CP18-09/5859 KiWASH	Malawi	Karonga Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	WASH	2019/24
CP1067 SuWASHFS	Malawi	Sustainable Water, Sanitation, and Food Security	WASH	2016/18
CP1274 TT-1	Malawi	Tiyeni Tisamalirane Phase 1	Children Rights	2018/20
CP20-MAL/8723 TT-2	Malawi	Tiyeni Tisamalirane Phase II	Children Rights	2021/24

3.3. Key Observations from Food Systems Framework Perspective

3.3.1 Alignment with Food Systems Components

Table 2 summarizes the project design features in relation to food systems outcomes and components. It includes intended outcomes if explicitly captured in the results framework, whether as indicators, outcome areas, or part of the project goal.

- **Agrifood Value Chains:** All projects planned to engage with agrifood value chain functions, either through subsistence or market-oriented production. Notably, four projects (ACE, SALP, LIFE, and MSETO-R) aimed to promote market-oriented food production, with ACE and MSETO-R in Kenya explicitly emphasizing the value chain approach. Most projects targeted both food crops and livestock, with maize as the predominant crop and goats and chickens as the most commonly targeted livestock. The ACE project stood out for its diverse focus, encompassing vegetables, fruits, pulses, and legumes, while large ruminants like cows received limited attention across the projects.

- **Food Environments:** Five projects incorporated elements addressing food environments. TT-1 and TT-2 specifically targeted child undernourishment among OVCs in their communities. The three WASH projects demonstrated potential indirect links to improved food quality and safety through enhanced access to safe water and improved hygiene. Additionally, KiWASH aimed to implement a Rights-Based

Approach (RBA) to food, focusing on monitoring the availability of key food items in markets and assessing the influence of policies on food accessibility.

- **Consumption Behavior:** Although all projects were centered on food security, only five exhibited characteristics of "nutrition-sensitive agriculture projects." LIFE and MSETO-R explicitly highlighted dietary diversity in their results frameworks, while ACE, TT-1, and TT-2 emphasized nutrition education and awareness as key components of their interventions.

Table 2. Summary of Projects' Design Features by Food Systems Outcomes and Components

Project Label	**Thematic Area**	**Anticipated Food Systems Outcomes**	**Anticipated Engagement by Food Systems Components.**		
			Agrifood Value Chains	**Food Environments**	**Consumption Behavior**
ACE	**Agriculture and Livestock**	- **Food Security**: Enhanced access to food (own/buy). - **Economic**: VSLAs and value chain participation. - **Social**: Disability and gender inclusivity. - **Environment**: Tree planting and FMNR.	-**Market-oriented production** (diverse crops and livestock such as goats, chicken, bees, and pigs).	-Proposes to address **malnutrition** among children	-Health and nutrition **education**.
SALP	**Agriculture and Livestock**	- **Food Security**: Improved crop yields and storage. - **Economic**: VSLAs and access to livestock markets.	-**Market-oriented production** (Improved livestock breeds such as goats, chicken, and cows).	-	-
LIFE	**Agriculture and Livestock**	-**Food security & diversity**. **-Economic:** VSLA and surplus produce sales.	-**Semi market-oriented production** (crops and livestock, particularly goats)	-	- Promoted diet diversity
MSETO-R	**WASH (Rainwater Harvesting)**	-**Food & diet security**. - **Economic**: Value chains, VSLAs, and business opportunities. - **Social**: PWDs inclusion. - **Environment**: Trees and climate justice initiatives.	-**Market-oriented production (**Crops and livestock like poultry, bees, pastoralism**)** -**Value addition**	-**Benefits of WASH** *(food safety and utilization).*	-Nutrition **education** & **counselling** - Influencing diets and **school feeding** programs
KiWASH	**WASH (Boreholes & Water Dams)**	- **Food Security & diets** - **Environment**: Community level restoration practices.	-**Production of diverse foods** (crops & chicken).	-**RBA to food** (Monitoring **availability** of	-

Project Label	Thematic Area	Anticipated Food Systems Outcomes	Anticipated Engagement by Food Systems Components.		
			Agrifood Value Chains	**Food Environments**	**Consumption Behavior**
		- **Social**: Gender equality and RBA to food.		food items in markets). -Potential **benefits of WASH**.	
SuWASHFS	**WASH (Boreholes)**	**-Food security**	**-Food production**	-Potential **benefits of WASH**	-
TT-1	**Children's Rights**	- **Food Security**: - **Economic**: Improved income through VSLAs. - **Social**: Improved care for OVCs.	**-Food production** by OVC households.	-Addressing child **malnutrition** in targeted communities	Nutrition **knowledge and awareness** among OVC caregivers.
TT-2	**Children's Rights**	- **Food Security**: **Economic**: VSLAs and business opportunities. - **Social**: Women's empowerment and OVC care.	Gender equitable **food production** (maize and goats).	-Addressing child **malnutrition** in targeted communities	- Tackling child malnutrition through improved **caregiver education.**

3.3.2 Alignment with Food Systems Outcomes

The project designs demonstrate a strong emphasis on improving food security, primarily by enhancing physical access to food, with economic access addressed in some cases through anticipated income from surplus produce sales and VSLA linkages. However, outcomes related to nutritional intake and dietary diversity were less common, explicitly highlighted by the LIFE, KiWASH, and MSETO-R projects. Furthermore, longitudinal indicators such as reduction in yield variability—important for tracking long-term resilience—were not prioritized.

Economic outcomes were evident across most projects, except in the WASH-focused SuWASHFS and KiWASH projects. These outcomes were achieved through pathways such as VSLA share-outs and loans, business opportunities, and income from surplus produce sales.

Social outcomes included improved gender equality across all projects, except TT-2, which specifically prioritized women's empowerment. Disability inclusion was explicitly integrated into the ACE and MSETO-R projects, while community-led social protection for OVCs was central to TT-1 and TT-2.

Environmental outcomes were common across agriculture, livestock, and WASH projects. These included farm-level practices such as tree planting, agroforestry, soil health improvement, and FMNR. Community-level restoration efforts were particularly explicit in MSETO-R, KiWASH, and SALP.

Retrospectively, the projects' designs demonstrate alignment with the food systems framework. However, in most cases, contributions to the food environments and consumption behavior components were not explicitly reflected in results frameworks or reports. Future programming

could benefit from integrating this framework during project design to ensure stronger alignment, maximize impact, and enhance reporting and learning.

3.4 Characterization of Participant Households by Livelihood Options

Though household livelihood data were not consistently collected across surveys, analysis of baseline data from five projects and endline data from the SALP project reveal a pattern of livelihood diversification. Livelihood options included farming, casual labor, small business, and limited reliance on salaried employment or remittances (Figure 3). Farming dominated in two core agriculture projects—ACE (96%) and SALP (96%)—as well as in the WASH and Food Security project KiWASH (91%). Predominantly focused on cropping systems, farming was supplemented by livestock in projects like ACE, SALP, and LIFE. Differences by gender and across project sites were evident.

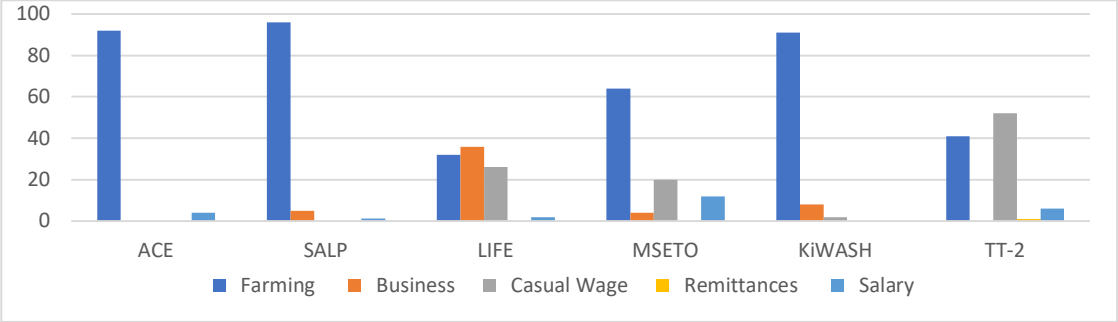

Figure 3. Distribution of Livelihood Options Pursued by Participant Households Across Projects

Gendered Livelihood Patterns: in the LIFE project, male participants reported higher reliance on crop sales (41% vs. 27% for women). Women reported more engagement in casual labor and small business compared to men (42% vs. 32%) and (24% vs. 22%), respectively.

Within Project Location Specific Trends:

- **In the LIFE project:**
    - Lilongwe participants were primarily engaged in business (74%) and farming (4%), while in Phalombe, farming (48%) and casual labor (36%) dominated.
    - Income sources in Phalombe were largely from casual labor (52%) and crop sales (38%), compared to Lilongwe, where crops (18%) and small businesses (16%) were more prominent. Livestock contributed minimally (2%) in Lilongwe.
- **In the MSETO-R project**:
    - **Taita Taveta:** Farming (64%) was the primary livelihood.
    - **Machakos:** Farming (35%) and business (16%) were prevalent.
    - **Kitui:** Casual labor (42%) was dominant.
    - **Isiolo/Samburu**: Casual labor (33%) led, with the highest reports of no income source (26%) compared to Taita (0%) and Kitui (7%).

Implications

These findings highlight the need for designing smallholder agriculture projects that are sensitive to location-specific and gendered livelihood differences. Applying the 'rural opportunity space' framework (IFAD, 2019) can provide a nuanced situation analysis of livelihood opportunities, accounting for differentials in market access and natural resource potential. This economic geography framework can be combined with food systems frameworks, such as that proposed by Njuki *et al* (2022), to analyze the interplay of local drivers, shocks, and vulnerabilities in shaping the structure and performance of food systems components (i.e., production and value chains, consumption behaviors) and outcomes (dietary, economic, environmental, social).

Potential project sites could be categorized based on their commercialization potential versus their agricultural productivity potential, following IFAD's opportunity space typologies. Within these opportunity spaces, households can be further segmented for better targeting. Typologies from Timu *et al* (2024), IFAD (2019), and AGRA (2017) can guide this segmentation. For example, baseline data suggests that most participant households fell into subsistence to pre-commercialization categories, except for the ACE project, which targeted commercialization-oriented households. Pre-commercial households engaged with output markets only when they realized surplus harvests.

Thus, SAID agriculture programming can benchmark against projects that focus on helping smallholder farming households transition from subsistence to pre-commercial to commercialized agriculture. However, given the precarity of climate-induced shocks, it is imperative to broaden the scope of these projects to include diversification into off-farm and non-farm options (Timu *et al,* 2024).

4. Main Findings

This section synthesizes outcome-level changes related to livelihoods, and food and nutrition security.

4.1 Overall Findings

The agriculture interventions across the eight projects achieved notable immediate outcomes (see Table 3), including:

- Widespread adoption of Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices (all projects).
- Increased livestock acquisition and production (six projects).
- Enhanced participation in VSLA) groups (7 projects).
- Integration of people with disabilities (PWDs) into kitchen gardening initiatives (1 project).

Intermediate outcomes included:

- Income diversification (seven projects).
- Enhanced access to nutritious food (five projects).
- Improved food access in all projects.
- Improved household gender relations (four projects).

While these outcomes demonstrate meaningful progress, endline evaluations revealed that their impacts on household food security, nutrition, incomes, savings, and women's empowerment were often modest and unstable.

Key enabling factors included:

- Effective farmer training.
- Visible benefits from simple, innovative farm practices.
- Active participation in VSLA groups.

Key barriers were:

- Climate variability.
- Entrenched social norms.
- Additionally, the average three-year implementation period was insufficient to fully monitor and realize the benefits of livestock acquisition and resilience of CSA practices.

Table 3. Distribution of Livelihood Outcomes Across Projects

Core Sector	Agriculture			WASH and Food Security			Children Rights	
Projects	ACE	SALP	LIFE	MSETO-R	KiWASH	SuWASHFS	TT-1	TT-2
Immediate Outcomes								
Adoption of CSA practices	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Acquisition of Livestock	●	●	●	●			●	●
Participation in VSLAs	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Integration of PWDs to Farming				●				

4.2 Immediate Outcomes: Agriculture and Livelihoods

4.2.1 Adoption of CSA Practices

All projects reported the adoption of key CSA practices (Table 4), including:

- Conservation agriculture techniques such as organic manuring, mulching, crop rotation, and minimum tillage.
- Agroforestry and micro-irrigation, implemented in three projects each.
- Establishment of kitchen gardens in two projects to ensure year-round vegetable production

More specialized natural resource management techniques, such as Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) and pest management, were less commonly observed, appearing in select projects like ACE and SALP.

Table 4. Distribution of CSA Practices Across Projects

Core Sectors	Agriculture			WASH and Food Security			Children Rights	
Projects	ACE	SALP	LIFE	MSETO-R	KiWASH	SuWASHFS	TT-1	TT-2
Outcomes Practices								
Conservation Agriculture	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Agroforestry/Tree planting	●			●		●		
Micro-Irrigation		●		●	●			
Kitchen Gardening				●	●			
FMNR	●	●						

Consistent farmer-level adoption data was not always available, limiting the ability to analyze critical trends such as re-adoption, dis-adoption, and key enabling factors. For instance, studies have shown that gender dynamics, access to extension services, availability of agricultural inputs, participation in farmer groups, and access to agricultural credit significantly influence the adoption of Conservation Agriculture (CA) in regions like Northern Tanzania (Selya *et al,* 2023) and Malawi (Chinseu *et al,* 2019).

Despite these data gaps, several notable trends in the uptake of Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices emerged across projects (Table 5):

Table 5. Farmer-Level CSA Adoption Trends

Practice	Overall Finding	Examples and comments
Conservation Agriculture (CA)	Conservation Agriculture was the most widely adopted CSA practice, with adoption rates increasing significantly. However, longitudinal data to show rates of re-adoption and dis-adoption would be useful.	- In the LIFE project, adoption rose from 7% at baseline to 67% at endline, highlighting the success of training. - In the ACE project, the endline survey reported an estimated 98% adoption, showcasing a strong emphasis on sustainable farming practices.
Kitchen Gardening	Kitchen gardening achieved notable uptake, particularly in households with water access.	- In the MSETO-R midterm survey, adoption was at 65%, with Machakos and Kitui leading at 87% and 79%, respectively (Endline survey did not provided updated data). - Interventions enabled households to maintain vegetable production during dry seasons, improving food security, dietary diversity, and income.
Agroforestry	Adoption of agroforestry practices was low, hindered by seedlings and implementation challenges.	- The ACE endline survey estimated uptake at just 1%. - In the SuWASHFS project, challenges included the limited availability of seedlings and poor timing of planting, limiting broader adoption. - Limited reporting on tree growth performance — specifically the distinction between tree planting and actual tree survival and growth —hindered a deeper understanding of the benefits that the chosen species could provide to local food systems (Vansant *et al,* 2024). This gap in data makes it challenging to assess the long-term contributions of tree-based interventions to food security, soil health, and community resilience.
Pest Management	Adoption of pest management practices was limited, reflecting gaps in training or accessibility.	- Only 12% of participants in the ACE project reported adopting pest management practices.
Irrigation Practices	Uptake of irrigation technologies, such as drip irrigation, was low across projects.	- Minimal reporting

4.2.2 Acquisition of Livestock Assets

Livestock acquisition has emerged as a significant livelihood-enhancing activity across multiple projects (Table 6). Goats were the most commonly acquired species, featured in five projects, followed by chickens, beekeeping, and pigs, each included in three projects. Goats

were particularly preferred due to their resilience to climate-induced forage scarcity. These acquisitions were facilitated through various mechanisms:

- Pass-on programs (SALP, LIFE, TT-2).
- County government support (MSETO-R).
- Independent purchases (ACE, TT-1).

Table 6. Distribution of Livestock Species and Practices Across Projects

Core Sectors	**Agriculture**			**WASH and Food Security**			**Children Rights**	
Projects	ACE	SALP	LIFE	MSETO-R	KiWASH	SuWASHFS	TT-1	TT-2
Livestock Species Acquired								
Small Ruminants (goats)	●	●	●				●	●
Poultry (chicken)	●	●		●				
Pigs	●						●	
Beekeeping	●			●	●			●
Cattle/Cows	●	●						
Transition from On-Farm								
Improved Livestock Practices								
Vaccination	●	●		●				
Breeding		●		●				
Knowledge	●	●		●				●
Improved Shelter		●		●				
Membership to Producer Groups		●		●				

In the ACE Project, households independently purchased livestock such as cows, pigs, goats, and poultry, demonstrating their agency in adopting income-generating practices. In TT-1, caregivers in Nguludi initiated piggery farming as a collective income-generating activity to support orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs). Starting with two pigs, the group successfully raised twelve by the close-out report, highlighting the economic viability of pigs due to their rapid reproduction and high returns. This success reportedly inspired the inclusion of a pass-on program in TT-2.

Pass-on programs aimed to enhance the population density of improved goats and other livestock. For example:

- By 2022, the LIFE Project distributed 800 goats to 400 families, increasing livestock density from 30% to 64% in Phalombe and 53% to 59% in Lilongwe. These goats provided meat, income, and organic manure, reducing households' reliance on maladaptive practices like charcoal production.
- The SALP Project achieved its livestock transfer targets by delivering 309 goats, 260 chickens, and 2 cows (to one group composed of 15 members), reaching 471 farmers (65% women). However, the program's full potential depends on completing the pass-on cycle and addressing challenges such as fodder scarcity and limited access to public veterinary services.

The MSETO-R Project exemplified multi-stakeholder collaboration in acquisition and practices:

- The County Government of Machakos distributed 140 chicks to 20 members of the Kiliku Rise and Shine Investor Group after poultry training sessions organized with the local livestock office.
- Exposure visits to TSA's Thika Resilience Training Center (TRTC) further enhanced participants' technical skills, creating opportunities for scaling poultry farming interventions.

Other benefits of livestock acquisition included adoption of improved practices such as:

- Breeding and Vaccination: These practices improved livestock health and productivity.
- Membership in Livestock Farmer Associations: Participants accessed collective resources and knowledge-sharing platforms.
- Improved Shelters for Livestock: Constructed particularly in SALP and MSETO-R as a condition to be fulfilled by recipients, these shelters contributed to better livestock management and productivity.

Gaps and Challenges:

- **Integration with WASH Projects:** WASH projects such as KiWASH and SuWASHFS in Malawi did not report direct livestock-related outcomes. However, free-ranging livestock managed by men were noted to damage conservation agriculture (CA) demonstration plots led by women, highlighting missed opportunities for better integration.
- **Animal-Sourced Foods (ASF):** Links between livestock production and household ASF consumption remained underexplored. For instance, in MSETO-R, households prioritized selling eggs and chickens for cash, limiting their dietary benefits. This underscores the need for interventions balancing income generation with nutritional improvements.
- **Standardization of Livestock Enumeration**: A lack of standardized methods for enumerating livestock ownership was noted. Adopting frameworks such as the Tropical Livestock Unit (TLU), which standardizes livestock weights across species (e.g., 1 cattle = 7 goats) (See https://rhomis.org). Alternatively, categorizing species into large ruminants, small ruminants, poultry could be used. This avoids issues like equating one chicken to one goat.

4.2.3 Participation in VSLA

VSLAs demonstrated strong membership and operational functionality across the evaluated projects, contributing to financial inclusion and community resilience.

Membership and Achievements:

- In the ACE evaluation, nearly 99.7% of surveyed participants reported membership in a VSLA group. However, some groups showed reluctance to transition from traditional merry-go-round schemes to the VSLA model.

- In the LIFE project, VSLA participation increased markedly, from 12.4% at baseline to 62% by the project's end.
- In TT-1, the 46 operational VSLAs exceeded initial targets, collectively saving over MK10 million.

While certain groups resisted adopting the VSLA format, others, such as those initially formed for value-chain commodity production (e.g., in the MSETO-R project), successfully transitioned into VSLAs. This underscores their adaptability to align with diverse community financial needs.

Despite these successes, VSLAs exhibited notable gender disparities, with women comprising over 75% of membership in most cases.

4.3 Intermediate Outcomes: Agriculture and Livelihoods

4.3.1 Income Diversification and Opportunities

Table 7 highlights that crops and livestock-based activities were pivotal income sources across five projects (ACE, SALP, LIFE, MSETO-R, and KiWASH).

CSA practices, including conservation agriculture (CA), water harvesting, and kitchen gardening, played a crucial role in mitigating climate-induced yield instability. These practices helped stabilize yields, with surplus production occasionally sold to generate additional income.

For instance:

- Surplus maize in KiWASH and pigeon peas in LIFE demonstrated how surplus outputs could balance food security with income generation.
- Kitchen gardening in MSETO-R facilitated sales during dry seasons, while reducing reliance on market purchases.

Table 7. Distribution of Income Opportunities by Category across Projects

Core Sectors	**Agriculture**			**WASH and Food Security**			**Children Rights**	
Projects	ACE	SALP	LIFE	MSETO-R	KiWASH	SuWASHFS	TT-1	TT-2
Income Source Category								
Cropping_Intensification	●		●	●	●			
Off-Farm_Food Business							●	●
Business_General		●	●	●	●		●	
Livestock_Production	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Transition from On-Farm				●				

The acquisition of climate-resilient livestock, such as goats and chickens, provided a stronger foundation for income stability and long-term sustainability. In TT-1 and TT-2, women leveraged VSLA financing to establish small businesses, including vending vegetables, dry fish, staples, and baked products. Additional activities like soap making and tree nurseries reflected the integration of WASH and agroforestry components in these projects.

While the economic viability (e.g., cost-benefit analysis, growth potential) and scalability of these emerging income opportunities remain uncertain, reliance on on-farm income has

steadily declined due to climate-induced yield instability. This trend underscores the increasing complexity of rural development programming and highlights the need for robust situational analyses to inform project ideation and design. Advanced tools such as IFAD's Opportunity Space Framework (Rural Development Report 2019) and household typologies by Timu *et al* (2024) offer valuable guidance for navigating these programming contexts.

However, findings from the evaluated projects reveal missed opportunities to align baseline studies with implementation strategies. While baseline studies successfully uncovered livelihood dynamics at project sites (as summarized in section 3), their insights were often underutilized during implementation. This limited the ability to:

- Adapt interventions to site specific livelihood opportunities and challenges.
- Revise results frameworks to better anticipate or track outcomes.

Integrating baseline insights into project design could ensure greater contextualization of interventions, resulting in more robust and measurable outcomes aligned with the realities of participant households.

4.3.2 Economic Contribution of VSLA Participation

Table 8 highlights the economic benefits of VSLA participation across projects, analyzed based on design features such as the integration of VSLAs into project outcome areas versus outputs, and the inclusion of outcome versus output indicators.

Projects with a robust VSLA outcome framework reported significantly greater member-level economic impacts compared to those with limited or no outcome indicators. This underscores the importance of intentional project design in maximizing the potential of VSLAs, particularly within the broader context of TSA Agriculture programming.

Impact on Households

VSLAs contributed to enhanced livelihood outcomes by:

- Financing crop production (three projects).
- Supporting livestock acquisition and production (two projects).
- Enabling food purchases and small business ventures (two projects each).

These benefits were more pronounced in projects where VSLAs were integrated as key outcome areas. In contrast, projects that treated VSLAs only as outputs often lacked member-level outcome indicators, reflecting a design oversight that limited their ability to comprehensively measure, and report impacts on household livelihoods.

Table 8. Distribution of VSLA Member Benefits Across Projects

Core Sectors	**Agriculture/ Livestock**			**WASH and Food Security**			**Children Rights**	
Projects	ACE	SALP	LIFE	MSETO	KiWASH	SuWASHFS	TT-1	TT-2
At design, VSLA is outcome Area?	✓	✓	✓	*X (Output)*	*X (Output)*	*X (Output)*	✓	*X (Output)*
Outcome indicators on VSLA?	✓	✓	✓	*No*	*No*	*No*	*No*	*No*
Member level Outcome indicator?	✓	✓	✓	*No*	*No*	*No*	*No*	*No*
Member Benefit by Category								
Financed Crop Production		●	●				●	
Purchased Food		●					●	
Financed Food Businesses		●					●	
Financed Livestock Production		●					●	
Supported OVCs							●	
Financed WPC Activities					●			
Financed Business in General			●					
Other Findings								
Share-outs/loans are Inadequate	●	●	●			●		
Financial Literacy & External Linkages are needed.	●	●		●		●		

Social Contributions

Beyond member economic gains, VSLAs pooled resources to support community-driven initiatives, such as aiding orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) or maintaining critical infrastructure like boreholes, reflecting their integral role in community development. In the TT-2 project, VSLAs provided school uniforms for 56.1% of orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs).

Empowerment Outcomes

At the individual level, VSLAs empowered rural women, enabling them to invest in semi-commercial farming and off-farm businesses. Support for persons with disabilities (PWDs) to engage in agriculture further showcased the inclusivity and transformative potential of VSLAs. For example, the Kawethei PWD group highlighted how legal recognition, business training and access to roof rainwater harvesting tanks shifted members from idleness to productivity (e.g., engaging in tree nurseries, kitchen gardening, and soap-making), fostering economic and social empowerment.

Limitations and Challenges

Despite these successes, several limitations restricted the transformative prospects of VSLAs:

- **Financial Constraints**: Modest savings and share-out amounts limited financial flexibility across projects. In the KiWASH project, while the number of VSLA groups mobilized reached 230% of target, the total savings achieved represented only 29% of the target, highlighting a significant gap in per-group savings performance. Similarly, in the LIFE project, average annual savings per member amounted to approximately USD 45, and in the ACE project, 69% of members earned only USD 40–160 per cycle in share-out amounts. These figures underscore the insufficiency of savings to address substantial household expenses.
- **Lack of Formal Financial Linkages**: Limited access to external capital restricted scaling opportunities. This challenge was evident across four projects.
- **Operational Gaps**: Deficiencies in business skills, vocational training, and financial literacy among members weakened the capacity of VSLAs to address systemic financial needs comprehensively.

Overall, VSLAs have demonstrated significant potential to enhance household incomes and savings, but their transformative impact is constrained by structural limitations such as inadequate savings, limited access to external financial linkages, and gaps in vocational and financial literacy. Addressing these challenges through external funding mechanisms and capacity-building initiatives is essential to unlock their full potential.

While empirical studies consistently highlight the positive impacts of VSLA participation for members compared to non-members, evaluations of their broader livelihood impacts often yield mixed results (CARE International, 2019; Ksoll *et al*, 2013; Brannen & Sheehan-Connor, 2016; Agyapong *et al*, 2024). These findings point to structural challenges within VSLA groups, such as the need for deeper integration into financial systems, and variability in addressing local socioeconomic and environmental contexts.

To start these challenges, programs ought to consider more ambitious outcomes that go beyond basic internal savings and credit mechanisms. Integrating strategies such as financial literacy training, external linkages for innovative financing, value chain integration, and household gender approaches can unlock the full potential of VSLAs and enhance their long-term sustainability (Brannen & Sheehan-Connor, 2016; CARE International, 2019; Agyapong *et al*, 2024).

Additionally, incorporating spiritual-based programming presents an overlooked opportunity to strengthen the social capital of VSLA groups. As demonstrated by faith-based poverty reduction programs in Uganda, grounding interventions in shared values and theological resources can foster community trust, self-worth, and a sense of agency among participants. The Church and Community Mobilization (CCM) framework, for instance, has been instrumental in empowering rural communities through holistic transformation, addressing material, social, and spiritual dimensions of poverty (Copestake *et al*, 2019). By integrating these approaches, faith-based initiatives create a unique space for addressing both structural and emotional dimensions of poverty, aligning development goals with cultural and spiritual values.

In conclusion, while VSLAs exhibit significant potential for rural development, achieving their transformative impact requires intentional program design that incorporates systemic solutions, complementary interventions, and culturally relevant approaches, including faith-based

programming. These strategies ensure that VSLAs can effectively address the systemic financial and social barriers faced by their members.

4.3.3 Improvements in Household Food Access and Nutrition

All projects reported improvements in food access, with five projects specifically noting enhanced nutritional intake (Table 9). However, these gains varied across households, project phases, and seasonal yield fluctuations. Projects with a primary agriculture focus generally showed stronger impacts on food access and nutrition compared to WASH-centered initiatives, which had limited direct effects in these areas.

Table 9. Distribution of Food Consumption and Nutritional Intake Outcomes Across Projects

Core Sectors	**Agriculture**			**WASH and Food Security**			**Children Rights**	
Projects	ACE	SALP	LIFE	MSETO-R	KiWASH	SuWASHFS	TT-1	TT-2
Improved Access								
Food in General	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Nutritious Food Due to…								
Kitchen_Gardens				●				
Off-Farm_Food_Business							●	●
Purchasing Ability							●	
Surplus_Production	●		●				●	

In the SALP project, 47% of participants reported increased maize yields, doubling from 5 to 10–20 bags per hectare due to adoption of CA, pest reduction and improved storage practices. Similarly, in the LIFE project, whole grain availability increased from 26.5% at baseline to 46.9% at endline, reducing the pressure for seasonal migration. This was particularly evident among husbands, who previously sought wage labor in neighboring Mozambique. As one woman explained during a focus group discussion:

> *Now I have food throughout the year. My husband is not going to Mozambique to look for piece work. We all work together in the field. In the past, a woman worked in the maize field while the husband was moving up and down fetching food. It was hard, I remember. We could not go to church and pray. How can you pray when you have no food, children are crying and are sick? But with training received from this project, our story is different. We have food throughout the year. We attend the church. I also have good maize field this year. You know we had delayed rains and drought this year. I can tell you; my maize field is doing well. I will harvest. I should say, all of us with Foundation for Farming field we have good crop. Let us go to my maize field and appreciate what I am telling you now (*LIFE Endline Evaluation Report, 2022)

Despite these successes, persistent food insecurity remained evident. In the TT-1 project, only 38.1% of households had sufficient food year-round, while 93% of orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) households in the TT-2 project experienced annual food shortages, with maize yields lasting just 3–4 months. Nutritional outcomes were further constrained by reliance on exotic foods over nutrient-rich indigenous varieties, undermining the potential of agricultural interventions to fully address food insecurity.

Climate variability posed significant challenges, particularly in Malawi. For example, cyclone Ana reduced yields by 10–25% in the LIFE project and 30–35% in the TT-2 project during the 2021/2022 season. Severe floods and droughts similarly reversed early gains in the KiWASH project, while droughts devastated vegetable gardens in Kitui and led to livestock losses in Isiolo and Samburu under the MSETO-R project. Other barriers included delays and biases in seed distribution, perceived poor-quality seeds (noted in ACE, KiWASH, SuWASHFS, SALP), and pest outbreaks (reported in ACE, SuWASHFS, and LIFE projects). Despite acquiring knowledge of improved agricultural practices, farmers often struggled to sustain food production under adverse climatic conditions. As one farmer noted during an FGD:

> *We really have enough knowledge for us to harvest enough food since we are now able to follow conservation agriculture practices, but in 2022-2023 growing season climate change affected us badly that we stayed for a month and half without rains, and our crops dried up even though we did mulching, but in the past 2 years before the disaster came we were able to harvest a lot of maize and even selling the surplus using the methods we learnt but this year we were just unfortunate.* (Endline Evaluation KiWASH 2023)

These challenges underscore the vulnerability of agricultural gains to external stressors and highlight uneven uptake of interventions across project areas. Table 10 below is a highlight of the main specific food and nutritional intake outcomes.

Table 10. Specific Outcomes in Food Access and Nutritional Intake

Outcome	Key Findings	Project Examples
Dietary Diversity and Nutritional Intake	Modest gains in five projects, with notable contributions from nutrient-dense foods (ACE) and kitchen gardens (MSETO-R). Nutrition education improved food choices, but adoption depended on resource availability.	**ACE**: reports increased consumption of fruits, vegetables, and proteins. **MSETO-R**: Kitchen gardens provided regular access to fresh vegetables. **LIFE**: households consumed pigeon peas during good harvest seasons but often prioritized selling them for cash needs.
Food Availability and Stability	Improved agricultural practices increased food availability, reducing lean-season shortages. Whole grain availability improved significantly, reducing climate-induced male outmigration for wage labor.	**TT-1**: Demo plot maize yields rose from 619.5 kg (2018/19) to 664.65 kg (2019/20). **LIFE**: Whole grain availability rose from 26.5% to 46.9% at endline.
Economic Contributions	Off-farm income and VSLAs supported economic access to food through improved purchasing power.	**TT-1**: VSLA linked off-farm businesses enhanced ability to purchase meat for OVC households.
Resilience Through Kitchen Gardening	Year-round vegetable production enhanced resilience to shortage, especially during droughts.	**MSETO-R**: Water harvesting supported more regular vegetable production, benefiting women and PWD households like in **Kyumbuni PWD** and **Kawethei DSHG**.

4.4 Changes in Gender Relations

Four projects— ACE, SALP, KiWASH, and TT-2 — reported significant changes in gender relations within households and communities. Key changes included increased participation of women in household productive decisions, particularly in agricultural production, such as land use, with 93% and 84% of women respondents in the endline surveys for KiWASH and SALP, respectively. Women also gained a stronger role in household budgeting, as observed in projects like SALP.

Other notable shifts included a fairer division of household labor and domestic chores, reduced spousal conflicts, and greater involvement of women in community leadership roles, such as in Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) and community project committees.

Enabling factors for these changes included targeted gender trainings that involved both spouses, as well as the economic empowerment of women through VSLAs. By contributing to household needs, women gained more value and recognition within their families compared to when they were entirely dependent on their husbands as sole breadwinners.

While these outcomes suggest progress toward more equitable and positive gender norms, the degree of change varied depending on localized cultural norms and individual household dynamics, with some husbands displaying residual resistance to shifting roles.

4.5 Contextual Factors Affecting Livelihood Outcomes

Table 11 below summarizes the key contextual factors influencing livelihood outcomes across the evaluated projects. These factors are grouped into enabling conditions, barriers, gaps, and opportunities to provide a comprehensive overview. Particular attention is given to aspects directly affecting the adoption of climate-smart agriculture and livestock practices, income diversification, VSLA activities, and food and nutrition outcomes.

Table 11. Contextual Factor Affecting Livelihood Outcomes

Category	Outcomes	Details and Examples
Enabling Factors	**CSA and Livestock Practices**	- Easy to implement practices like mulching, minimum tillage, and composting (e.g., SuWASHFS, TT-1, ACE). - Integration of cultural and spiritual values (e.g., "Farming God's Way") enhanced community acceptance. - Partnerships with public extension officers and NGOs ensured sustainability.
	Income Diversification and VSLA Contributions	-VSLAs empowered women for small business and agricultural investments (e.g., MSETO-R). -Improved access to water reduced labor burdens and saved time for increased productivity.
	Food and Nutrition Outcomes	-Kitchen gardens improved dietary diversity (e.g., MSETO-R). -Collaborative efforts delivered nutrition education and knowledge.

Barring Factors	**CSA and Livestock Practices**	-Cultural resistance to livestock reduction among pastoralists (e.g., MSETO-R). -Resource constraints like limited labor and water access (e.g., ACE, SALP). -Delayed input distribution (e.g., SuWASHFS) and misaligned interventions (e.g., choice of chicken breeds in SALP).
	Income Diversification	-Men's limited participation in VSLAs reduced household-wide benefits (e.g., KiWASH, SALP). - Lack of vocational skills hindered diversification (LIFE, SALP).
	Food and Nutrition Constraints	- Climate variability (e.g., droughts, floods) disrupted yields (e.g., LIFE, TT-2, MSETO-R). - Rising food prices and competing financial priorities limited nutrition investments (e.g., Malawi projects).
Gaps	**Monitoring and Support**	- Limited monitoring of off-farm livelihoods restricted insights on scalability. - Insufficient public funding for nutrition program follow-ups reduced long-term impact.
	Market Integration	- Poor alignment/direct delivery of CSA input subsidies with market systems limited opportunities for sustainability and scaling (e.g., SALP).
Opportunities	**Market Systems Development**	- Develop market linkages for CSA practices and emerging value chains.
		- Promote vocational training for high-impact non-farm activities.
	Scaling Nutrition Interventions	- Expand irrigation systems for year-round kitchen gardening. - Foster partnerships to address funding gaps in nutrition extension.
	Gender-Equitable Targeting	- Increase male participation in VSLAs to enhance household financial planning. - Address training and input access disparities for women-headed households.

4.6 WASH Outcomes and Linkages to Food Systems

This section highlights the immediate and intermediate WASH outcomes achieved across projects and their connections to food systems aspects, including contributions to food components access and outcomes. It summarizes findings from sanitation, hygiene, and water access interventions, focusing on their influence on household livelihoods, food and nutrition. Gaps and opportunities for enhancing these linkages through integrated programming and market-driven approaches are also discussed.

4.6.1 Sanitation and Hygiene Outcomes

Three projects—MSETO-R, SuWASHFS, and KiWASH—demonstrated both progress and persistent gaps in household sanitation and hygiene. Even in non-WASH projects like ACE, integrating sanitation awareness into farmer meetings improved household practices, underscoring the potential for linking sanitation promotion with agriculture and nutrition programming to enhance food safety outcomes.

Key Findings:

- **Limited Sanitation Adoption**: Permanent toilet adoption remained low. For instance:
    - In SuWASHFS, only 5% of households had permanent toilets, with most relying on flood-prone pit latrines.
    - In KiWASH, while 82% of households had toilets, only 29% met recommended standards.
    - MSETO-R faced similar challenges in drought-prone areas like Kitui.
- **Open Defecation Free (ODF) Status**: Progress varied:
    - In KiWASH, 96% of households had basic facilities but relied on non-durable latrines.
    - MSETO-R increased ODF status from 4% to 30% in Manyatta Zebra through targeted awareness efforts.
- **Handwashing Practices**: Significant gains included 54% of households in KiWASH with basic handwashing facilities. However, gender norms constrained progress, as maintaining tippy taps was considered a woman's responsibility.

Innovations and Challenges: Collaborations with organizations like UNICEF enhanced sanitation campaigns, but challenges such as floods, affordability constraints, and cultural norms persisted. Promising efforts included sanitation marketing to engage masonry artisans in designing affordable, durable toilet slabs, highlighting the potential of market systems development (MSD) approaches to improve infrastructure sustainability.

4.6.2 Access to Safe Water

Four projects—MSETO-R, SuWASHFS, KiWASH, and LIFE—reported significant progress in improving access to safe water through infrastructure development, community-based management, and capacity building. However, explicit linkages between water access and food systems outcomes were often absent in project designs.

Key Findings:

- **Improved Water Access**:
    - KiWASH surpassed targets, with 91% of households accessing safe water within 500 meters.
    - SuWASHFS improved access for 57 communities, benefiting 14,250 people, with 67% relying on boreholes.
    - The LIFE project revealed disparities between Phalombe and Lilongwe districts, with Phalombe outperforming in borehole and tap access.

- **Rainwater Harvesting**:
    - MSETO-R introduced cost-shared water tanks (1,000–3,200 liters), benefiting 889 households (25% for PWDs). However, understanding scalability for inclusive irrigated production systems remains unexplored.

Infrastructure Sustainability and Opportunities:

- **Disparities and Maintenance Issues**:
    - KiWASH lacked provisions for livestock in water point designs, leaving key user needs unmet.
    - Challenges like vandalism, technical failures, and limited spare part availability further undermined sustainability.
- **Community Dynamics**: Misaligned expectations about maintenance responsibilities weakened water point management committees.
- **Scaling Irrigated Production Systems**: Leveraging borehole infrastructure and rainwater harvesting to support irrigation hotspots could enhance integrated food production systems, particularly in regions with high agricultural potential.
- **Capacity Building**: Training water committees improved maintenance skills, reinforcing infrastructure functionality.

4.6.3 Linkages Between WASH Outcomes and Food Systems

The evaluation identified both direct and indirect linkages between WASH outcomes and food system improvements, highlighting potential pathways for more intentional programming (Table 12).

Table 12. Summary Analysis of Linkages Between WASH Outcomes and Food and Nutrition

Linkage	Food System Aspects	Examples
1. Improved Access to Water	**Crop production**	• In the **MSETO-R** project, harvested rainwater supported kitchen gardens, ensuring year-round vegetable supply that improved nutrition.
	Livestock production	• In **KiWASH**, boreholes indirectly improved livestock watering, though design gaps for livestock access remain.
	School Feeding Programs	• In **MSETO-R**, roof-harvested water in schools supported kitchen gardens, providing **nutritious meals** for students.
2. Time Saved	**Food Production or Economic Activities**	• In **MSETO-R**, women reinvested saved time into kitchen gardens or small businesses, enhancing food security. • **KiWASH** saved women 1–2 hours daily, which was likely redirected to farming, as 90% of households relied on agriculture.

3. Reduced Disease Burden	**Nutritional absorption**	• **SuWASHFS** and **KiWASH** reported reduced diarrhea cases, inferring better **nutrient absorption** in children due to improved health.
4. Enhanced Food Hygiene	**Food Safety**	• No direct references were found to infer contributions to improved food hygiene or safety.

WASH interventions have shown significant potential to enhance food systems outcomes. However, fully leveraging these linkages requires more integrated designs, addressing gaps like infrastructure sustainability, livestock needs, and systematic connections to nutrition and food security objectives.

4.7 Food Systems Outcomes Experienced by the Most Vulnerable Groups

A review of individual-level outcomes identifies children (all projects except SALP and ACE), women (five projects), persons with disabilities (PWDs) (in the MSETO-R project), and men (one project) as key vulnerable groups benefiting from agriculture interventions.

In the LIFE project, men were disproportionately affected by climate-induced migration, often seeking wage labor across the border in Mozambique during extreme climatic events that disrupted agricultural production. The adoption of Conservation Agriculture (CA) was expected to alleviate this burden by stabilizing agricultural outputs. The outcomes for children, women, and PWDs are detailed below.

4.7.1 Children

Six projects—five in Malawi and MSETO-R in Kenya—reported intermediate-level outcome changes for children, focusing on improvements in education, health, sanitation, and rights-based agency. These projects targeted specific vulnerable subgroups, including:

- Children with disabilities (four projects)
- Girls (three projects)
- Orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) (three projects)

While these interventions successfully demonstrated vulnerability targeting, they lacked intentional linkages to food systems components and outcomes during the design phase. As a result, any benefits to food systems were indirect or arose as spillover effects rather than being explicitly integrated into project goals.

Key Contributions to Education, Health, and Nutrition

Improved Education and Learning Opportunities:

- **TT-1**: Supported 1,808 children, including OVCs and children with disabilities, by providing educational materials, reducing stigma, and ensuring a 50:50 gender parity.
- **TT-2**: Established eight Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers focusing on holistic development, improving transition to primary education and reducing dropout risks.

Enhanced Sanitation and Hygiene:

Projects like KiWASH, SuWASHFS, and MSETO-R improved WASH facilities with inclusive features, such as ramps and stools for children with disabilities, menstrual hygiene management (MHM) systems for girls. Private MHM rooms with waste disposal systems reduced school absences for girls, directly supporting their education and well-being.

Improved Health and Nutrition:

Access to safe water in schools through boreholes and rainwater tanks (e.g., MSETO-R), enabled school feeding programs, improving health and learning outcomes. In SuWASHFS, reduced waterborne illnesses enhanced nutrition absorption and schooling attendance. School kitchen gardening in MSETO-R provided practical learning experiences and food availability, creating tangible links to food systems and nutritional outcomes.

Opportunities for Strengthening Food Systems Integration

Scaling School Feeding and Gardening Initiatives:

Incorporating kitchen gardening into schools could enhance food availability while influencing consumption behavior by linking improved child nutrition into local food systems.

Institutionalizing Support Mechanisms:

Engaging local governments to formalize funding and policies for WASH infrastructure linked to feeding programs would ensure sustainability while achieving scale.

4.7.2 Women

Five projects—MSETO-R, SuWASHFS, TT-1, KiWASH, and TT-2—reported significant benefits for rural women, including economic empowerment, leadership opportunities, reduced burdens in caregiving and domestic chores, and increased participation in sustainable agriculture.

These outcomes highlight the potential of gender-sensitive approaches to transform food systems while also exposing persistent systemic barriers to gender equity that require targeted interventions to achieve long-term and meaningful change.

Key Contributions to Food Systems Outcomes

Economic Empowerment Through Food Systems Businesses (and Wages):

Women were associated with income-generating activities such as irrigated kitchen gardening (MSETO-R) and small-scale businesses (TT-1), including selling vegetables, beans, and dried fish. VSLAs provided access to financial resources for agricultural inputs and livestock production. However, in the LIFE project, men tended to control income from crop sales as women engaged in small businesses and (agricultural) casual labor, suggesting context specific differences.

Leadership and Decision-Making Roles:

Projects like KiWASH promoted women in leadership roles in WASH committees, while TT-2 showed that 79% of women self-reported improved participation in household income decisions, and 84% influenced land use and planting choices. These roles enhanced women's agency in household and agricultural resource management, aligning with governance within food systems.

Health and Reduced Caregiving Burdens:

Improved water and sanitation access (e.g., MSETO-R, SuWASHFS, and KiWASH) reduced caregiving and domestic chores burdens, allowing women to redirect time to productive agricultural and entrepreneurial activities. In SuWASHFS, boreholes alleviated waterborne diseases, while clean water sources in KiWASH improved household health outcomes, essential for food utilization and nutrition security.

Participation in Sustainable Agricultural Practices:

Women contributed to sustainable agriculture through watershed management, agroforestry, and conservation agriculture (KiWASH). Training initiatives (MSETO-R) empowered women to adopt resilient practices, like improved bean farming, fostering food system resilience and inspiring community-wide adoption.

Design and Implementation Factors Enabling and Constraining Outcomes

While the projects demonstrated strong commitments to addressing gender and social inclusion, greater emphasis on systemic-level changes and male engagement could have been made stronger. By linking gender equity efforts with food systems components, the projects could have significantly enhanced their transformative potential. See table 13 below for a summary of design and implementation factors enabling and barring outcomes.

Table 13. Key Enablers and Barriers to Women's Outcomes in Project Design and Implementation

Aspect	Design Observations	Implementation Observations
Strengths	-Gender-sensitive project designs (e.g., SuWASHFS' 70% female committee representation, TT-1's Gender Transformative Approach/GTA) to challenge norms. - Inclusion of VSLAs and WASH interventions to address immediate needs (e.g., SuWASHFS, TT-2). - Targeting vulnerable groups like women in OVC households, widows, and single mothers in TT-1 and TT-2.	- Women's leadership in WASH and livestock committees (e.g., KiWASH, SALP). - Economic empowerment through VSLAs, enabling women's investments in agriculture and businesses (e.g., TT-1).
Weaknesses	- Limited focus on systemic issues like land and livestock ownership (e.g., SALP, KiWASH), broader financial access, and division of labor. - Lack of explicit linkages between gender equity and food systems outcomes, such as value chain participation or commercialization opportunities.	- Robust frameworks for measuring gender impact beyond participation, such as empowerment and social norms shifts, were rarely applied, with only TT-2 utilizing tools like the Project-based Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (Pro-WEAI).
Missed Opportunities	- Limited male engagement in gender initiatives, reinforcing traditional roles and reducing household-level impacts (e.g., KiWASH, SALP).	- Risk of overburdening women by adding project responsibilities to existing caregiving and household tasks (e.g., ACE).

	- Few efforts to institutionalize gains through formal policies or collaborations with government stakeholders.	- Absence of robust gender-disaggregated metrics to evaluate household and community-level outcomes.
Recommendations	- Expand gender-sensitive training and dialogue for both men and women to promote equitable norms in decision-making in agriculture, household management, and financial planning. - Expanding the design of VSLAs to include male participation and broader financial networks.	- Embedding food systems integration into gender-focused interventions, such as supporting women's access to agricultural value chains and market systems. - Improve data collection with gender-specific metrics to comprehensively evaluate the impacts of gender inclusion on food systems outcomes.

4.2.3 Participants with Disabilities

Among the evaluated projects, only MSETO-R reported tangible outcomes in supporting participants with disabilities (PWDs). This was achieved through innovative interventions, such as enabling their participation in kitchen gardening by improvising disability friendly irrigation systems and access to rainwater harvesting tanks.

While all projects articulated commitments to inclusivity and targeting PWDs, most fell short of translating these commitments into actionable interventions. Beyond mapping the prevalence of PWD cases within targeted households, there was a lack of identification of practical opportunities to address the specific needs and potential contributions of PWDs.

This gap underscores the disconnect between inclusive policy intentions and on-the-ground implementation, highlighting the need for stronger focus and innovative strategies in future project designs to fully integrate PWDs into development outcomes.

4.8 Environmental Processes and Effects

A review of environmental risks outlined in project design proposals reveals multifaceted challenges related to farmer-level resource management, agricultural intensification, and community-level natural resource use. These challenges are concentrated in six key risk areas, closely linked to agricultural practices and their environmental footprint (Table 14).

Table 14. Agriculture-Related Environmental Risks as Identified in the Project Designs

Risk Area	Cause	Examples	Impact
1. Soil Degradation and Erosion	Traditional farming practices like monocropping, slash-and-burn clearing, and lack of crop rotation deplete soil nutrients and heighten erosion risks.	SALP Project: Repetitive cultivation of the same crops left soils bare and nutrient-poor, reducing their regenerative potential.	Undermines agricultural productivity, creating a cycle of declining yields and unsustainable farming.

Risk Area	Cause	Examples	Impact
2. Water Resource Contamination and Overexploitation	Mismanaged water extraction and insufficient waste management threaten groundwater and surface water quality.	SuWASHFS Project: Improper borehole sealing and poor drainage at communal points risked contaminating groundwater. ACE Project: Overuse of streams and shallow wells for irrigation threatened water sustainability.	Declines in water availability and quality, jeopardizing agricultural viability and human health.
3. Deforestation and Vegetation Loss	Unsustainable activities like tree cutting for kraal construction or charcoal burning degrade vegetation and ecosystems.	LIFE Project: Tree felling for livestock kraals stressed vegetation, exacerbating erosion and habitat loss. MSETO-R Project: Charcoal burning driven by survival needs degrading local ecosystems.	Disrupts ecological balance, accelerates erosion, and reduces climate resilience, especially in drought-prone areas.
4. Pollution and Waste Mismanagement	Poor agricultural practices and ineffective wastewater management contaminate nearby ecosystems.	SuWASHFS Project: Fertilizer runoff risked polluting water sources. SuWASHFS Project: Stagnant water at poorly drained communal water points increased mosquito breeding, raising malaria risks.	Degrades water quality, disrupts aquatic ecosystems, and increases disease prevalence.
5. Climate Variability and Resource Strain	Dependence on rainfall and limited water conservation measures increases vulnerability to droughts and floods.	SALP Project: Insufficient rainfall threatened agricultural outputs despite conservation practices. LIFE Project: Water-intensive agriculture risks exacerbating scarcity in drought-prone regions.	Intensifies resource shortages, threatens food security, and increases competition over limited resources.
6. Inadequate Environmental Monitoring and Enforcement	Limited research and weak enforcement mechanisms undermine sustainable resource use.	KiWASH Project: Poor oversight in borehole construction led to unregulated water extraction and low-yield boreholes.	Perpetuates unsustainable practices, compounding environmental degradation and threatening project viability.

While projects emphasized the adoption of Conservation Agriculture (CA) and other sustainable practices, monitoring systems often failed to capture the full extent of environmental risks. This created blind spots in assessing unintended consequences, such as soil degradation, water overuse, or biodiversity loss.

This oversight highlights a critical tension between promoting agricultural innovations and managing their broader ecological impacts. Addressing this gap requires:

1. Robust tracking mechanisms to assess environmental risks and unintended outcomes.
2. Deeper integration of environmental safeguards into project strategies to balance productivity with ecological sustainability.

4.9 Sustainability

4.9.1 Sustainability Strategies

Table 15 highlights the primary sustainability strategies employed across the projects, demonstrating a strong emphasis on public-sector integration (8/8 projects) and community-driven approaches (7/8 projects). These strategies successfully embedded projects within existing institutional frameworks and fostered local ownership, reinforcing their long-term viability.

However, the limited integration of agri-based private-sector partnerships and farmer-focused collective action represents a critical gap in sustaining agriculture and livestock interventions. This underscores the opportunity to adopt an MSD approach from project inception, ensuring interventions are inclusive, scalable, and aligned with market-driven solutions to address long-term sustainability challenges.

Farmer experiences across these projects highlight their vulnerability to climate-induced shocks, further emphasizing the need for embedding climate-resilient strategies into sustainability efforts. Potential market-oriented solutions include:

- Water-efficient irrigation systems,
- Climate-informed advisories including drought-tolerant crop (DTCs) varieties, and crop and livestock insurance
- Value-added processing for agricultural produce.

These solutions not only mitigate climate risks but also align with the market systems approach to foster scalability and sustainability.

Additionally, promoting off-farm and non-farm income-generating activities would complement these efforts, enhancing economic resilience and reducing reliance on unstable agricultural outputs. Together, these measures create a more holistic and sustainable framework for improving livelihoods, particularly in the face of environmental and economic challenges.

Table 15. Summary Analysis of Main Sustainability Strategies

Sustainability Strategy	Summary Findings	No. of Projects
Public-Sector Integration	Collaborative efforts with district agricultural offices, schools, and other public institutions were critical to embedding projects within formal frameworks. However, significant gaps, such as inconsistent financial support (e.g., MSETO-R and KiWASH projects), high extension agent-to-farmer ratios, and infrequent access to veterinarians (e.g., SALP), limited sustainability. Coordination challenges between TSA and local governments, as seen in the TT-1 project, further hindered success. The RBA	8/8

Sustainability Strategy	Summary Findings	No. of Projects
	approach also lacked adequate follow-up, as it did not effectively monitor duty bearers' obligations.	
Community-Driven Strategies	Empowered, gender-inclusive committees like water point committees and VSLAs fostered strong local ownership, supporting operations, maintenance, and monitoring. Volunteer-led initiatives, including caregiver clubs, mobilized resources efficiently without added costs, while integrating VSLAs into committees provided essential financing for community-driven activities. Although these efforts were not directly focused on collective action in agriculture, they illustrate untapped potential, especially if coupled with the culture of peer-to-peer knowledge exchange among farmers.	7/8
Economic Mechanisms	VSLAs played a vital role in boosting financial resilience for agricultural investments and small food business ventures managed by women. However, inconsistent savings and limited capital hindered their scalability. For example, in **TT-1**, expanded VSLAs helped finance agricultural inputs and small businesses while supporting children's welfare baskets. To replicate such outcomes in agriculture, addressing capital limitations through external financial linkages or matching grants could amplify these mechanisms' impact on farm productivity and food systems.	5/7
Private-Sector Partnerships	Three projects sought to establish private-sector linkages: SuWASHFS aimed to stimulate a local supply chain for borehole maintenance spare parts and services; KiWASH worked with local artisans to innovate affordable and durable toilet slabs to promote permanent toilet adoption through sanitation marketing; and SALP partnered with AgDevCo to connect farmers with banks and NGOs for training and advisory services. These experiences can be replicated to stimulate MSD-oriented agriculture interventions.	3/7
Faith-Based Engagement/TSA Corps	Though the local TSA Corps officers were identified as an important institution to play long term follow-up role, insights indicated need for more preparation to institutionalize this expectation, such as by formulating MOUs and recognition corps as key actors even in the results frameworks.	4/7

4.10 Spillovers of Projects' Outcomes

The evaluated projects demonstrated significant spillover effects, including the replication of promising practices, strengthened social cohesion, and broader recognition. These impacts extended beyond the indirect beneficiaries, creating ripple effects that influenced community dynamics, institutional frameworks, and agricultural practices.

Importantly, these spillovers underscore the potential for scaling sustainable food systems interventions and amplifying their impacts in future initiatives (Table 16). By leveraging these

outcomes, future programming can strategically expand community reach, enhance institutional alignment, and promote sustainable agricultural innovations across diverse contexts.

Table 16. Summary of Spillover Effects

Spillover Effect	Summary Finding	Example
Replication and Expansion of food systems Interventions	Projects inspired neighboring communities and non-participants to replicate successful food systems practices	• In Kenya, the success of kitchen gardens and under the MSETO-R project motivated other families to adopt similar practices, even without direct participation. • Farmers who implemented Foundation for Farming (FfF) techniques in Malawi became role models, prompting others to adopt the same methods after observing improved crop resilience during dry spells.
Improved Social Cohesion and Community Led Social Protection	Projects fostered community-based social protection initiatives addressing nutritional outcomes for OVCs.	• Community-led support for OVCs increased, with resource mobilization aimed at improving food and nutritional security for OVC households.
Institutional and Policy Recognition	Some projects gained recognition in broader institutional and policy frameworks, though links to food systems outcomes remain unclear.	• MSETO-R's inclusive approach earned recognition from Kenya's Ministry of Education, resulting in the replication of practices like tree planting and hygiene initiatives in other schools. However, no direct influence on school feeding programs was noted.
WASH outcomes with Food Systems Spillovers	WASH projects contributed indirectly to food production and utilization outcomes.	• Improved hygiene awareness reduced waterborne diseases and saved time previously spent fetching water, indirectly improving nutritional absorption, food safety, and productive engagement.
Economic Multiplier Effects	Economic benefits from project interventions created indirect impacts on agricultural productivity.	• Skills in manure-making and sustainable gardening practices were applied beyond project zones, boosting broader agricultural productivity.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Alignment with Food Systems Perspectives

In retrospect, the projects' designs exhibited strong alignment with food systems perspectives, focusing on physical access to food and, in some cases, economic access through surplus produce sales and VSLA-linked business opportunities. However, nutritional intake and dietary diversity were explicitly prioritized in only a few projects, such as LIFE, KiWASH, and MSETO-R. Gaps included the lack of longitudinal indicators for climate-induced yield variability and insufficient emphasis on food environments and consumption behavior within results frameworks.

Social outcomes featured gender equality, women's empowerment, and disability inclusion, while environmental outcomes spanned practices like tree planting, agroforestry, soil health improvement, and community-level restoration, with notable contributions from MSETO-R, KiWASH, and SALP. Future programming should integrate the food systems framework more proactively during project design to enhance alignment, impact, and learning.

5.2 Targeting and Livelihood Transitions

Baseline data suggests that most participant households fell into subsistence to pre-commercialization typologies, except for the ACE project, which targeted commercialization-oriented households. Pre-commercial households only engaged with output markets when they realized surplus harvests.

To support household transitions from subsistence to commercialized agriculture, SAID programming can benchmark against successful models. Given the climate-induced risks, broadening project scope to include off-farm and non-farm diversification is critical (Timu *et al*, 2024).

5.3 Outcomes: Advancing Resilient, Diversified, and Market-Oriented Livelihoods.

The projects demonstrated contributions to household resilience, particularly through climate-smart agriculture and livestock production practices, improving food security, income, and asset accumulation. However, households in most projects often pursued off-farm livelihoods (e.g., wage labor, small businesses), which lacked adequate focus in project design and monitoring. Additionally, these informal livelihood opportunities are vulnerable to shocks and poor labor conditions.

Future programming should integrate on-farm activities with diversified livelihood options, prioritizing Market Systems Development (MSD) to incentivize local actors and promote sustainability.

An MSD approach stives to make markets work for the many poor and disadvantaged groups, by identifying root causes, working with and through market actors to develop and implement market-based, technically sound and politically feasible solutions to address constraints (Adapted from synthesis review of DFAT's Market Systems Development Initiatives (Bob Warner and Donna Loveridge, 2019)

5.4 Strategic Lessons from Comparative Programs

Comparative interventions targeting pre-commercialization households revealed alignment with:

- **Pass-on programs:** Heifer International's flagship Passing-on-the gift approach aims to lift communities out of poverty through shared resources (e.g., livestock, seeds, and knowledge).

- **Market systems approaches**, such as USAID's AVCD project in Kenya, bundling animal breeding and health services with value chain linkages. This USAID Feed the Future Accelerated Value Chain Development (AVCD) project in Kenya targeted dairy pre-commercialization counties, using a market systems approach to bundle Fixed-Time Artificial Insemination (FTAI) with animal health services and advisories. This approach sought to scale the density of improved dairy breeds by including subsidized mass inseminations and vaccinations to stimulate demand and foster networks of private providers offering breeding and animal health services (ILRI Outcome Study 2021).

- **Lead farmer models**: Other programs supporting farmers transitioning into commercial production systems have adopted lead farmer models to disseminate information, aggregate demand and supply of inputs, and link producers to output markets. A notable example is the Village-Based Advisor model employed by organizations like FIPS-Africa, Farm-Africa, and AGRA.

Key features of these pre-commercialization programs are:

- **Increasing Productivity:** Facilitating access to and adoption of improved inputs and productivity-enhancing technologies while improving access to extension and advisory services.
- **Building Business and Market Orientation**: Increasing participation in collective action (e.g., farmer groups, common interest groups, VSLA groups) to enhance output market linkages, financing farm-level and community-level investments (e.g., aggregation and processing infrastructure and operations).
- **Addressing Systemic Barriers**: Using local multi-stakeholder platforms to tackle systemic challenges, including market and institutional challenges and socio-cultural factors such as gender norms.
- **Improving Nutrition**: Promoting knowledge and use of nutrient-dense foods to enhance dietary adequacy.

5.5. Project Design and MEL Practices

The projects' ideation processes demonstrated a commendable commitment to participatory and bottom-up engagements, reflecting a strong understanding of local challenges, opportunities, and priorities. However, critical gaps emerged in translating these participatory

insights into robust project design elements and effective monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) practices. These gaps—outlined below and validated during project-specific consultation meetings—highlight missed opportunities to optimize project outcomes and effectively report their impact (see Box 2).

Despite a solid foundation in community-driven processes, several limitations in situation analysis, project design, and MEL practices impeded the projects' ability to fully realize their objectives. Key issues included:

- Limited use of local data to map livelihood dynamics and inform tailored interventions.
- Inconsistent integration of identified issues into design frameworks.
- Underutilized baselines, despite their ability to provide insightful quantitative data on livelihoods.

Additionally, weaknesses in indicator selection, insufficient focus on social inclusion metrics, and inconsistencies in evaluation approaches constrained the projects' capacity to deliver comprehensive evidence of progress and sustainability.

Box 2. Summary of Design Gaps

1) **Situation Analysis**:
   - Limited use of local data and analytics especially on livelihood options to enable a more nuanced characterization of the opportunity space, informing better tailoring of interventions.

2) **Design of Project Elements**:
   - Gaps in systematically translating situation analysis findings into project design elements, including:
     - Strategic selection of outcome areas and outputs.
     - Judicious identification of outputs per outcome area.
     - Weaknesses in indicator selection, particularly in balancing:
       - Output vs. outcome indicators.
       - Indicators tracking changes at different levels and types of actors (beyond households, such as farmer or VSLA groups, market actors, duty bearers, school management, TSA corps officers).
       - Integrated indicators to monitor interlinkages between components (e.g., WASH and food security/nutrition).
       - Longitudinal indicators to track outcome stability (e.g., resilience to climate variability through seasonal yield analysis).
   - Insufficient policy of disaggregating data by sex, disability status, age, and household arrangements to reinforce social inclusion commitments. Additionally, the absence of gender-sensitive indicators beyond participation limited the ability to measure benefits, empowerment and shifts in social norms.

3) **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Practices**:
   - Baseline studies were underutilized for refining interventions and results frameworks at inception, compounding the challenge highlighted in point 1 above. According to the consultation meetings, it was not clear the extent that adjustments can be made once project documents have been approved by SAID, other Supporting Territories and International Headquarters.
   - Evaluations inconsistently compared outcome-level changes against baseline or midterm values, and in some cases, lacked clear evidence of change, its magnitude, or direction.

- Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings was limited, often failing to present a cohesive narrative of project contributions. Outcome mapping methodologies did not adequately complement quantitative analyses.

4) **Implications**: These gaps resulted in reporting that was primarily focused on outputs, with outcomes often described in anecdotal terms rather than being supported by systematic inquiry. Addressing these limitations through stronger design frameworks, improved M&E practices, and deeper integration of data methodologies would enhance the ability to capture and demonstrate the projects' contributions to sustainable livelihoods, food security, and community resilience.

6. Recommendations

This section addresses key evaluation question six, presenting actionable recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of TSA Australia's agricultural projects. These recommendations emphasize opportunities for integrating agricultural activities with WASH and VSLA interventions, strengthening value chains, fostering public-private partnerships and market linkages, and promoting peer-to-peer learning. Gender and social inclusion are central to these recommendations to ensure equitable and sustainable outcomes.

1. **Strengthen Project Design Frameworks for Outcome-Focused Models**
   Develop robust project designs that are based on a systematic translation of situation analyses into context-specific, food systems focused outcome models:

   a. Integrate locally derived quantitative data alongside the current practice of qualitative needs assessment to enable adaptive and context-specific designs that track intermediate outcomes in right holders' livelihoods and conditions, changes in market systems, and duty bearers' practices.
   b. Structure situation analyses using the food systems frameworks, focusing on key drivers of (under) performance, influence of shocks and stressors, the structure and functioning of the key components (agrifood value chains, food environments, and consumption behavior) and outcomes.
   c. Incorporate Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture (NSA) Outcomes: project designs should reflect nutrition-sensitive agriculture (NSA) programming by incorporating outcomes such as improved access to better diets, improved nutrition knowledge, behavior communication campaigns (BCC) to promote sustainable dietary improvements.
   d. Strengthen Agriculture-WASH Integration:
      i. Projects with a WASH component should intentionally track linkages between food outcomes and WASH interventions to highlight their interdependence.
      ii. Conversely, agriculture projects could integrate WASH-related awareness and education activities to improve food environments, addressing hygiene and water safety as critical enablers of food security.
   e. Select outcome indicators and data tools to maximize tracking and reporting. For example, VSLA outcomes can be tracked at 3 levels:
      i. Internal performance at the collective level (e.g., membership, savings, loans disbursed, contributions to social inclusion such embedding of knowledge-exchange, financial literacy and gender household approaches. This can be achieved by collecting administrative data from VSLAs, which is relatively low-cost compared to household surveys.
      ii. Member and household level benefits (e.g., value and benefits of share-outs and loans, changes in household gender norms, and financial literacy effects)
      iii. External linkages and their benefits (e.g., access to innovative financing).
   f. Use validated tools such as RHoMIS to address household level data challenges, including
      i. Assessing household food insecurity and dietary diversity,
      ii. Measuring participation in collective action and markets,
      iii. Tracking households' engagement in off-farm businesses and income diversification.

g. Consider a 6-month inception phase, to allow for better contextualization of interventions and revision or (re)definition of results framework, as may be necessary.

2. **Adopt Targeted Segmentation for Tailored Models**:
   Use tools such as opportunity space analysis, farmer typologies, and food systems frameworks (e.g., differences in drivers) to design context-specific permutation of programming models.
   a. Focus on value chain development in commercialization hotspots (e.g., ACE, SALP) and diversification strategies in areas with pronounced livelihood vulnerabilities.
   b. Include the idea of project phases to pilot graduation models based on anticipated transition pathways in livelihoods. The Malawi team recommended a 10-year span for transitioning subsistence smallholders into commercial typology. A similar timeframe is recommended by Timu *et al,* 2024).
   c. Expand livelihood interventions to include agri-entrepreneurship development, vocational training, and artisanal production, particularly for PWDs, women, and youth.

3. **Enhance Evaluation Quality and Integration:**
   a. Improve evaluation methodologies by aligning farmer surveys with qualitative techniques like outcome mapping to enhance the explanatory power of findings.
   b. Incorporate longitudinal and integrated indicators to track stability, resilience, and cross-linkages across programming models.
   c. Use these indicators to identify evidence hotspots, such as the contributions of cross-program linkages to food systems outcomes, thereby strengthening the evidence base for effective approaches.
   d. Promote the formulation and continuous refinement of Theories of Change (ToC), incorporating diagrammatic illustrations to facilitate deeper understanding and internalization among project teams.

4. **Integrate Market Systems Development (MSD):** Shift from direct delivery of subsidies to MSD approaches to strengthen local markets and incentivize systemic changes. Establish partnerships with market-based providers of inputs and services to embed value chain integration and scalable business models.

5. **Promote Diversified Livelihood Strategies:**

   a. Broaden programming to include agrifood systems-linked entrepreneurship development, artisanal production, and vocational training, with a particular emphasis on creating opportunities for PWDs, women, and youth. These initiatives not only promote inclusion but also address livelihood vulnerabilities by equipping marginalized groups with critical skills for economic resilience.
   b. This approach aligns with Kabasa *et al,* (2015), who emphasize the urgent need to cultivate a critical mass of food entrepreneurs to drive agri-food system transformation in Africa. Evidence from projects like TT-1 suggest off-farm and non-farm activities, such as small business ventures supported by VSLAs, can effectively complement agricultural productivity.

c. By combining technical capacity-building with economic diversification, this dual approach offers a scalable model for enhancing resilience and creating pathways to food systems transformation.

6. **Operationalize Rights-Based Approach and Disability Inclusion:**

   a. Clarify and strengthen the application of RBA (including climate justice) and disability inclusion in agriculture and food systems programming.
   b. Clearly articulate the nexus between RBA, disability inclusion, and food security to guide targeted interventions.

7. **Leverage Collective Action for Systemic Change:**

   a. Recognize collective action as a catalyst for systemic and normative change.
   b. Integrate collective action into theories of change to support the evolution of market-oriented farmer groups into cooperatives or producer groups. Strengthen existing structures like VSLAs to foster scalable business engagement and market linkages (refer to practical guides like Resource Book for Facilitators).

8. **Integrate Environmental Resilience Strategies:** Embed climate adaptation measures such as agro-advisories, crop and livestock insurance, and social protection mechanisms into programming. Monitor environmental risks at project design and implementation stages.

9. **Facilitate Peer-to-Peer Learning within TSA-Australia projects**:

   a. Establish structured mechanisms for peer-to-peer learning among implementing partners.

   b. Share best practices and innovative solutions, such as engaging PWDs in kitchen gardening (MSETO-R) or employing market systems approaches for sanitation marketing (SuWASHFS).

   c. Prioritize learning topics like MSD/value chain approaches, PWD engagement, and RBA in livelihood programming to build collective capacity and accelerate scaling.

10. **Strengthen Gender and Social Inclusion:**
    a. Implement stronger data disaggregation by sex, age, PWD status, and household types to track systemic marginalizations and opportunities.
    b. Move beyond tracking participation to measure economic benefits, empowerment, and shifts toward equitable and positive social norms.
    c. Use tools like Women Empowerment in Agriculture/Livestock Index (WEAI/WELI) (e.g., as used in TT-2 evaluation) to assess impact comprehensively.
    d. Other approaches include leveraging:
       i. Local radio programming to disseminate climate advisories while promoting equitable household gender norms for adopting CSA technologies like DTCs (see Bullock *et al,* 2023 and Bullock and Katothya, 2023).

ii. VSLA groups to pilot gender-transformative approaches by encouraging joint membership by spouses and integrating activities such as gender dialogues and financial literacy. Lessons from Ethiopia's *VESA* (VSLA equivalent) model highlight how embedding social protection elements within savings groups can enhance gender transformation and resilience in climate adaptation (see Bullock *et al,* 2024).

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Pro-WEAI

Annexes

Annex 1. Salvation Army International Development: Theory of Change

Introduction

Salvation Army International Development (SAID) is a department of The Salvation Army Australia Territory that seeks a world restored by the love of Christ, living in dignity and filled with hope. SAID works globally in target countries to empower vulnerable communities to achieve their basic human rights.

The purpose of SAID's Theory of Change is to make explicit how SAID understands the change process and the intended higher-level changes that SAID expects will result from its work (Figure 1). The Theory of Change will support the development and implementation of a targeted programming portfolio to increase organisational impact. The Theory of Change will inform SAID's strategic decision-making, organisational planning, effectiveness measurement and learning, risk management and communications.

This document describes SAID's Theory of Change. It describes the long-term change SAID is trying to achieve, *what* SAID will do to achieve long term change and *how* SAID will approach its work to achieve this long-term change. This is a living document. In using this document, SAID will test assumptions and update it as lessons are learned. Through this process, SAID will strive to refine its understanding of the change process in order to become an increasingly effective development actor.

The SAID Strategic Action Plan 2021-2024 describes how this theory of change will be operationalised in the coming years. In line with the SAID Strategic Action Plan 2021-2024, SAID works in the Africa, South Asia, and South Pacific and East Asia Zones with a focus on three thematic areas, which include vulnerability (including Child Rights), Health and Livelihoods.

SAID's Theory of Change

Ultimate outcomes

SAID's vision is a world restored by the love of Christ, living in dignity and filled with hope. To achieve this vision, vulnerable communities must increasingly experience their full human rights and prosper in their economic, social and spiritual lives.

Intermediate outcomes

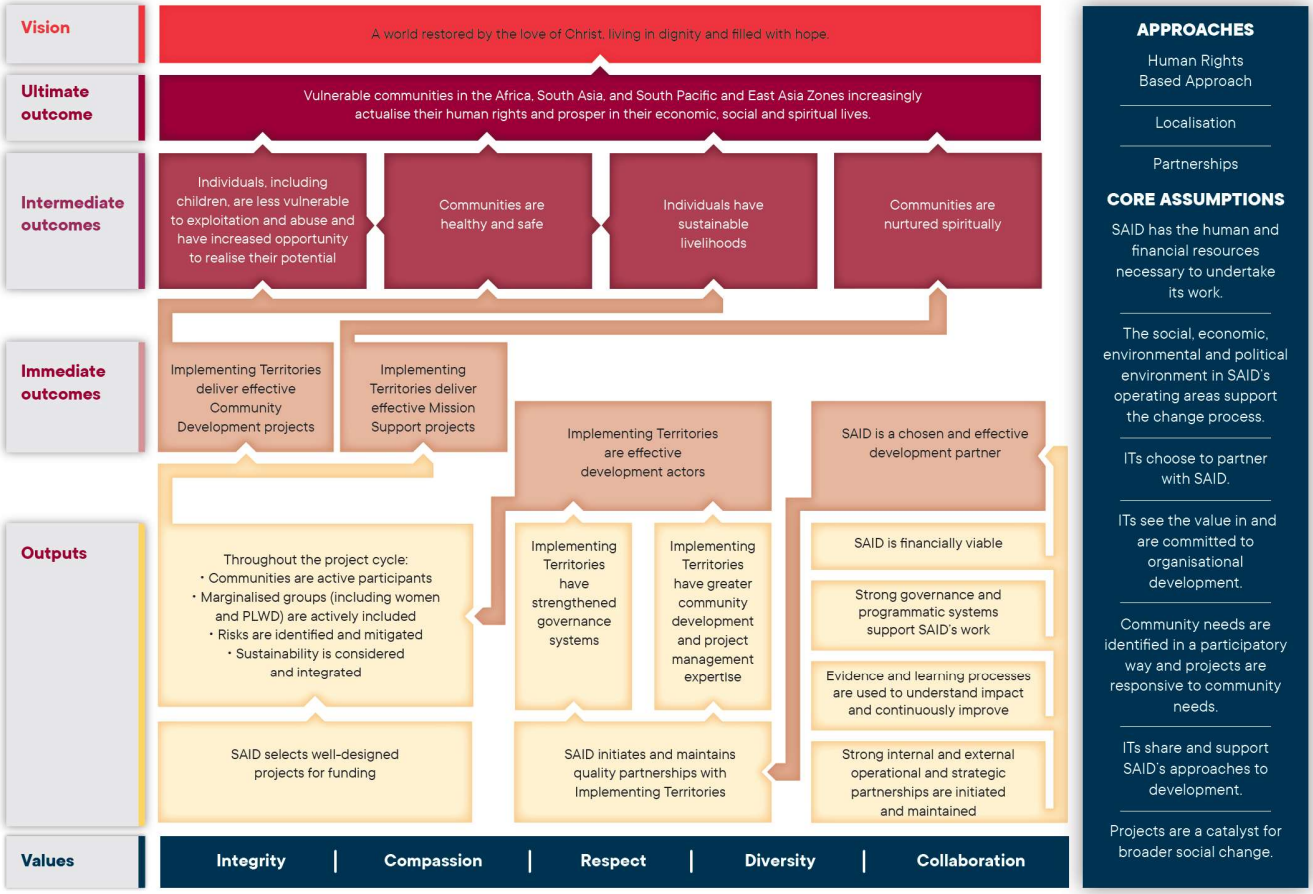
For vulnerable communities to prosper, communities must be healthy and safe; individuals must have sustainable livelihoods; individuals (including children) must be less vulnerable to exploitation and abuse and have increased opportunity to realise their potential; and communities must be nurtured spiritually. These are captured as intermediate outcomes in SAID's Theory of Change. These intermediate outcomes are elaborated in more detail below:

> ***Communities are healthy and safe*** *(SDGs 1, 2, 3 & 6):* Physical and mental health are a human right and foundational to economic and social prospering. When individuals are healthy and safe, they experience safety and dignity, increased resilience and a higher quality of life.

Specific areas of intervention to achieve this outcome are likely to include Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), nutrition and food security, health education, vaccinations and disease prevention.

Individuals have sustainable livelihoods *(SDGs 4, 8 & 10):* When individuals have ongoing access to the resources they need to survive, they experience purpose, satisfaction and independence. When individuals have access to a sustainable livelihood, they make productive contributions to the community. Access to a sustainable livelihood is often enabled through quality education.

Specific areas of intervention to achieve this outcome are likely to include income generating activities, access to community-based savings and loans mechanisms, childhood and adult education and building financial capacity.



Individuals, including children, are less vulnerable to exploitation and abuse and have increased opportunity to realise their potential *(SDGs 4, 5 & 16)*: Exploitation and abuse is a human rights violation, and preventing and responding to such abuses enables adults and children to prosper. Achieving this outcome would be characterised by individuals experiencing inclusion and belonging, freedom of choice and the opportunity to realise their potential. When children experience their full human rights, they are safe and secure, have a high quality of life and opportunity to pursue the life that they want.

Specific areas of intervention to achieve this outcome are likely to include modern slavery and anti-human trafficking, sexual exploitation, gender-based violence and child rights. In addition, SAID is a child-safe organisation and safeguarding children and vulnerable adults must be considered in all projects, regardless of the thematic area.

Communities are nurtured spiritually*:* The Salvation Army sees poverty as a breakdown of relationships between people, financial systems, the ecological environment and with God. The Salvation Army believes in an integrated mission that supports individuals and communities in tackling poverty by helping them rebuild these relationships. The Salvation Army believes that it is through the cross that relationships with God, self, others and all of creation are restored.

SAID will contribute to the spiritual growth of communities through funding Mission Support projects that equip local expressions of TSA to deliver the mission of The Salvation Army. Specific areas of intervention to achieve this outcome may include Officer trainings, Corp building construction and/or renovations, and Officer livelihood support, but will differ depending on the needs and resources of the implementing territories.

As demonstrated by the arrows between the intermediate outcomes, SAID believes that the outcomes reinforce each other. For example, evidence shows that strong social relations and networks (individuals have increased opportunity to realise their potential) and job security (sustainable livelihoods) contribute to improved health and wellbeing.[1]

Immediate Outcomes and Outputs

The intermediate outcomes will be achieved through ***Implementing Territories delivering effective Community Development and Mission Support projects***. Projects are effective when they achieve the desired long-term changes for the relevant people. The OECD Evaluation Criteria provide SAID with a normative framework to determine the value of its projects. SAID considers and incorporates the following principles throughout the project cycle, from design through to final evaluation: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact.[2]

To promote the implementation of effective projects, SAID will support partners to actively consider and address several key areas throughout the project cycle:

- **Communities are active participants**: This means that the people targeted to benefit from a project will participate in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the intervention. SAID will encourage partners to move beyond community consultation towards community inclusion and empowerment.
- **Marginalised groups (including women and PLWD) are actively included**: Recognising that the benefits of development interventions are often not equitably shared among all without proactive inclusion strategies, SAID will encourage and

[1] Wilkinson, R & Marmot, M (eds.) 2003, *Social Determinants of Health: The Solid Facts,* 2nd edn, World Health Organisation, Copenhagen. Available at: https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/98438/e81384.pdf

[2] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development n.d., *Evaluation Criteria*, available at: https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm

support partners to actively include marginalised groups in all stages of the project cycle. At a minimum, this includes women and girls and people living with a disability but may include other marginalised groups specific to the intervention context.

- **Risks are identified and mitigated:** Undertaking a thorough risk assessment during project design and implementing risk mitigation strategies during project implementation reduces the risk of harm to project participants, the implementing partner and SAID. A project risk assessment should, at a minimum, consider child safeguarding, preventing sexual exploitation abuse and harassment (PSEAH), environmental, fraud, financial and social risks.
- **Sustainability is considered and integrated:** SAID is committed to supporting projects that are likely to provide lasting benefits to target participants beyond the funding cycle. A focus on sustainability promotes ongoing self-reliance and requires active consideration of the financial, social, institutional and environmental capacities and systems needed to continue project activities once funding ends.

SAID uses a rigorous appraisal process to ensure that projects are well-designed, and SAID will only fund projects that align with the SAID Strategic Action Plan and Theory of Change. A well-designed project considers all of the above areas and is informed by evidence. A well-designed project clearly describes a theory of change, and includes a realistic budget, logframe and risk assessment.

For projects to be effective, Implementing Territories must themselves be ***effective development actors***. Implementing Territories will be effective when they have strong governance systems (including policies, processes and systems) and great community development and project management expertise.

To support the increasing effectiveness of implementing territories as development actors, ***SAID must be a chosen and effective development partner***. This means that SAID must be financially viable with a sustainable and sufficient income base. SAID must have strong governance and programmatic systems to support its work, which will be guided by the ACFID Code of Conduct and DFAT accreditation standards. SAID must use evidence and learning processes to understand the impact it is contributing to (or not) and continuously improve. SAID must also initiate and maintain strong internal and external operational and strategic partnerships.

How SAID will achieve long-term change

SAID's approach to community development is characterized by a human rights-based approach, commitment to localization and partnerships.

Human Rights Based Approach: SAID recognizes and believes that human rights are a precondition for successful, equitable and sustainable development. Drawing on human rights principles and standards, SAID aims to fulfil the principles of the international human rights legal statements in development activities. The following principles are promoted as part of a human rights-based approach: participation, accountability and transparency, non-discrimination and equality, and empowerment and capacity development.

Localization: SAID recognizes that local development actors are best placed to achieve appropriate and sustainable change due to their local knowledge. SAID is committed to

development work that is led by local stakeholders to ensure that all development efforts support local priorities. SAID is committed to working in partnership with implementing territories to strengthen their organisational policies and practices so that ultimately community development can continue without the support of SAID.

***Partnerships**:* SAID believes that it will achieve more relevant and effective change working in partnership than in isolation. SAID strives for partnerships that are characterized by clear expectations and a common understanding, particularly related to cultural and contextual issues.

SAID works in partnership with other The Salvation Army (TSA) Implementing and Supporting Territories/Commands and International Headquarters to implement community development and mission support projects. SAID collaborates with other TSA territories through the European International Development Forum (EIDF+) and Communities of Practice to contribute to improved quality of international development work in TSA and maintain a coordinated approach. SAID also works with Australian NGOs, for example through the Church Agency Network, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Australian Council for International Development.

Central to SAID's approach are its values, which include:

- **Integrity** – Being honest and accountable in all we do
- **Compassion** – Hearing and responding to pain with love
- **Respect** – Affirming the worth and capacity of all people
- **Diversity** – Embracing difference as a gift
- **Collaboration** – Creating partnerships in mission

Assumptions

Several assumptions underpin SAID's Theory of Change, which are outside of SAID's control. If these assumptions do not hold true, SAID will not achieve the expected ultimate outcomes. As such, assumptions require close monitoring.

The following high-level assumptions are made:

- SAID has the human and financial resources necessary to undertake its work.
- The social, economic, environmental and political environment in SAID's operating areas support the change process.
- Implementing Territories share and support SAID's approaches to development.
- Implementing Territories choose to partner with SAID.
- Implementing Territories see the value in and are committed to organisational development, for example implementing the learnings from trainings to improve their organisational systems.
- Projects are a catalyst for broader social change.
- Community needs are identified in a participatory way and projects are responsive to community needs.

Annex 2. Terms of Reference for Evaluation Synthesis Report (Agriculture)

The Salvation Army Australia Territory

1. Background

The Salvation Army (TSA) is an international Christian organization operating in over 130 countries. TSA is a branch of the Christian church and is registered with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent and incorporated with the United Nations as an NGO.

TSA Australia partners with TSA Implementing Territories to support "vulnerable communities in the Africa, South Asia and South Pacific and East Asia Zones to actualise their human rights and prosper in their economic, social and spiritual lives". As outlined by the TSA Australia Theory of Change 2022-2024 (attached), TSA Australia will achieve this when the following intermediate outcomes are achieved:

- Individuals have sustainable livelihoods
- Communities are healthy and safe
- Individuals, including children, are less vulnerable to exploitation and abuse and have increased opportunity to realise their potential

One of the main approaches to improving health and livelihoods in TSA Australia's portfolio is through agricultural projects, and currently TSA Australia is investing more than USD 4 million in projects with an agricultural focus. TSA Australia is seeking to undertake an evaluation synthesis to generate learnings that will contribute to the increased effectiveness and value-for-money of agricultural projects.

The evaluation synthesis will identify strengths and areas for strengthening across TSA Australia's portfolio of agriculture projects to inform the design of new agricultural projects in the next TSA Australia Strategic Action period. In addition, as climate change increases the frequency and severity of weather events, this evaluation synthesis will identify strategies to maintain valuable development outcomes in the context of increased climate risk and significant uncertainty.

This evaluation is one of the first of its kind in TSA globally, and the learnings will be shared widely within the organization.

2. Description of Assignment

2.1 Purpose

The primary purpose of the evaluation synthesis is to promote learning and collective reflection, with a view to improving TSA's development effectiveness. The evaluation synthesis will generate lessons learned, identify good practices, and make recommendations that will strengthen the design and implementation of agriculture projects in The Salvation Army.

2.1 Intended Users

- TSA AUS – the evaluation synthesis will inform the development of an Agriculture Programming Guidance Paper
- Other TSA stakeholders, including implementing territory, supporting territory and IHQ partners.

2.3. Scope of work

It is expected that the evaluation will focus on examining the effectiveness of agricultural projects in TSA-Australia's project portfolio. It will provide answers to the key evaluation questions outlined below. The focus will be on TSA-Australia funded agriculture projects over the past five years. See Appendix 1 for a list of projects and the documentation available to include in the evaluation synthesis.

2.4. Key Evaluation questions

The evaluation must answer the below evaluation questions:

1. What outcome-level changes have resulted from SAID-supported agricultural projects (including changes related to livelihoods, and food and nutrition security)? How do these results compare to those who did not participate in the project and national averages/targets? What was the role of context in achieving project outcomes?
2. How did environmental processes (including climate variability) affect the achievement of project outcomes? How did the projects affect the environment? How have the projects influenced the resilience of farmers to environmental shocks?
3. To what extent did the project benefit the most vulnerable and marginalised people? How effectively was gender, disability and social inclusion addressed in project design and implementation? In what ways did women and girls and people living with a disability benefit (or not) from TSA Australia's agricultural projects? (TSA Australia Key learning question)
4. How sustainable is the change that TSA Australia's agricultural projects are contributing to (TSA Australia Key learning question)? Are farmer's livelihoods sustainable in the context of climate change? Is the graduation model appropriate? Are the projects contributing to spillover benefits?
5. How could TSA Australia's agricultural projects be more effective in future? This question should consider the programming models, including combining agricultural activities with other interventions, such as WASH and/or VSLA, and the attention given to value chains, public and private partnerships, and market linkages in projects.

2.5 Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation synthesis will be completed by an agricultural expert who will review the project evaluations using their expertise and experience.

Approach: The evaluation synthesis will be primarily desk-based and use qualitative methods to synthesize findings from completed evaluation reports and relevant secondary sources. Primary data collection methods can be employed if necessary. The focus will be on lessons learned to enhance the development effectiveness of future similar projects.

Data collection:

- Desk review of project documentation, including design documents, evaluation reports and periodic progress reports, as well as relevant secondary literature (including quality academic literature). The evaluator is expected to collect, filter, categorize and organize

the information to facilitate a clear and strong analysis and identify any issues that need further exploration through primary data sources.

- If necessary, interviews (key informant interviews or focus group discussions) of TSA staff, relevant stakeholders or agricultural specialists. ‘

Data Analysis: Findings must be nuanced, validated and triangulated. Where possible, data must be disaggregated by gender and disability status in the report. An analytical framework and national targets/data should be used to examine program effectiveness.

Reporting: The evaluator is expected to provide an inception report, draft evaluation report and final evaluation report that documents findings and recommendations.

Ethics: The evaluator is expected to apply ethical evaluation principles, including (but not limited to) participant privacy and confidentiality, informed consent and do no harm, and describe how these principles will be applied throughout the evaluation process in the inception report.

3. Deliverables

3.1 Key Deliverables – requirements and schedule

Deliverable	**Due Date**
Inception report - Clarifies the evaluator’s understanding of the TOR - Explains how the evaluation questions will be answered (including proposed data collection and analysis methods) and work plan - The inception report is to be sent directly from the evaluator to the following personnel: Zoe Hillig zoe.hillig@salvationarmy.org.au	8th November 2024
Draft Evaluation report - 30 pages maximum (plus annexes) - Including the following headings as a minimum 1.Executive Summary 2.Summary and categorisation of projects included in the review 3.Purpose & Methodology (including limitations and ethical considerations) 4.Findings a) Aggregated Outcomes b) Environmental Processes and Climate Change c) Gender, Disability and Social Inclusion d) Sustainability e) Effectiveness of TSA’s Agricultural Programming Models 5.Recommendations 6.Annexes a) evaluation TOR b) data collection tools - The draft evaluation report is to be sent directly from the evaluator to the project manager via e-mail (contact details below)	6th December 2024

Presentation and verification of evaluation findings - Key findings are to be presented to project stakeholders for verification before the evaluation report is finalised	13th December 2024
Raw data - Raw data in Excel format - Transcripts of interviews and Focus Group Discussions	10th January 2025
Final Evaluation report (plus other dissemination products as described) - TSA comments and feedback incorporated - Publishable for internal use as well as dissemination to stakeholders including key funders. - One-page infographic summary of key findings - PowerPoint presentation summarising evaluation	10th January 2025

3.2. Duration of the assignment

The consultant is expected to submit the deliverables to TSA within 70 calendar days from the day of signing of the contract.

4. Intellectual Property

All information pertaining to this project that is digital and project documents among others belonging to TSA, which the Consultant may come into contact with in the performance of his/her, duties under this consultancy shall remain the property of TSA who shall have exclusive rights over their use. Except for purposes of this assignment, the information shall not be disclosed to the public nor used in whatever form without written permission of TSA in line with the national and International Copyright Laws applicable.

5. Remuneration

The Consultancy firm's payment shall be based on the financial proposal developed for this consultancy and agreed with TSA.

Payment to the consultant will be in 2 instalments:

- 40% 1st instalment after acceptance of draft report
- 60% 2nd instalment on acceptance by TSA and Support partners of the final evaluation report and dissemination products

6. Required expertise and qualification

The Evaluator shall have the following expertise and qualification:

- Minimum academic qualification of a Master's degree in a field(s) related to agriculture, international development, community development from a recognized university;
- A minimum of ten years' experience of research, monitoring and evaluation of agricultural and community development projects
- Demonstrated experience working in East Africa;
- Fluent in English;
- Excellent written and verbal communication, including report writing skills;
- Excellent ability to build strong relationships with clients and other stakeholders, responds positively to feedback and provides timely responses to queries;

- The evaluator/evaluation team will be required to adhere to safeguarding standards required by TSA AUS, including undertaking a one-hour online training and signing a Code of Conduct.

7. Application Procedure:

Interested applicants who meet the required expertise and qualifications and with the right personal attributes are invited to complete and submit the following:

- A Technical Proposal responding to the TOR, including a work plan and methodology outline
- Detailed Financial proposal (in USD)
- A brief description of the Evaluator, outlining recent experience in similar assignments (three assignments over the past four years) with references
- An up-to-date CV of all key evaluation team members (and outlining their orle on the team).

All applications should be sent to zoe.hillig@salvationarmy.org.au (Program Effectiveness Coordinator, The Salvation Army Australia Territory) by 20th September 2024.

Annex 3. Projects and data available

Implementing Territory	Project Code and Name	Documentation Available
Kenya East Territory	CP18-05/3562 Mseto Resilience WASH and Food Security Project	• Project design documents: proposal, logframe, budget, risk assessment • Baseline • Mid-term evaluation and End-term evaluation • 6 monthly narrative and financial reports
Kenya West Territory	CP20-KYW/8361 Agriculture for Community Empowerment (ACE)	• Project design documents: proposal, logframe, budget, risk assessment • Baseline • End-term evaluation • 6 monthly narrative and financial reports
Kenya West Territory	CP18-02/8040 Chicken Income Generating Activities (CIGA)	• Project design documents: proposal, logframe, budget • Completion report
Malawi Territory	CP1067 Sustainable WASH and Food Security Project in Karonga District	• End-term evaluation • Completion report
Malawi Territory	CP19-MAL/4157 Livelihood Improvement and Farmers Empowerment Project (LIFE)	• Project design documents: proposal, logframe, budget, risk assessment • Baseline • End-term evaluation • 6 monthly narrative and financial reports
Malawi Territory	CP18-09/5859 Karonga Integrated WASH Project (KiWASH)	• Project design documents: proposal, logframe, budget, risk assessment • Baseline • Mid-term evaluation • End-term evaluation • 6 monthly narrative and financial reports
Malawi Territory	CP20-MAL/8723 Tiyeni Tisamalirane Phase II	• Project design documents: proposal, logframe, budget, risk assessment • Baseline • Combined mid/end-term evaluation • 6 monthly narrative and financial reports
Malawi Territory	CP1274 Tiyeni Tisamalirane: Let's take care of one another	• Project design documents: proposal, logframe, budget • End-term evaluation • Completion report
Tanzania Territory	CP20-TNZ/7415 Sustainable Agriculture and Livestock Project (SALP)	• Project design documents: proposal, logframe, budget, risk assessment • Baseline • Mid-term evaluation • End-term evaluation • 6 monthly narrative and financial reports