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What did we find out?

Some of our findings are not that surprising, and similar findings are well documented in other water programmes. However, it is still satisfying to know in the communities where we worked, that **provision of clean water and WASH facilities decreased the incidence of disease**. In fact in one of the communities, respondents were not able to recall when the last case of diarrhoea was reported.

Another finding that was not surprising, but we are pleased to report is that the irrigation schemes and provision of boreholes has **saved time within communities, especially for women**. Women reported that before the projects they spent about two hours a day collecting water and that they were now spending about 20 minutes on the same task. Both men and women reported walking less distances for water for both consumption and irrigation.

Walking less distances to water their crops was because communities moved their cultivated land closer to their homes, where pumped irrigation was provided. They don't need to farm land close to the water source any more. Moving their fields from the riverbanks has meant that **erosion on these riverbanks has been slowed or stopped**. This, in turn, has slowed the rate of siltation in the river.

We learned that **participants were earning money from farming as a direct result** of the irrigation project. In Bindangombe, the community has only experienced one growing season, but the respondents still reported earning money, and are expecting an increase in income in coming seasons. In Kufandada, with two growing seasons of experience, respondents reported using the money to **improve their livelihoods; investing in their families' education and health, in agriculture and purchasing household assets**.

To ensure sustainability of the projects, part of the initiative focussed on giving communities some control over their own resources. To this end community members were **trained in irrigation infrastructure maintenance**, and were mobilised to form Water Management Committees. The follow-up study showed us that the **Water Management Committees were working and were generally representative of the communities**. About a third of the members of the various committees are women.

Respondents mentioned leaking pipes and irrigation nozzles, as well as the fact that some sprays did not reach the furthest reaches of the plots. In many cases, these issues were because of minor repair or maintenance jobs that needed to be performed. From this we learned that **we need to give more support to capacity building for maintenance** and help communities realise their potential in this area.

In both projects multiple partners were involved; regulatory authorities, private sector companies and the communities themselves. We found out that **project success depends heavily on each partner performing their job well**, and that one factor which positively influences this is ongoing and regular communication. Regular, better communication between all the parties could have resulted in the project outcomes being achieved more quickly, possibly increasing the impact.

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What did we learn?

We learned that the livelihoods approach works. Access to water can translate into income and livelihoods and dignity and hope. We learned that by providing an opportunity for people to pay for their water allows them to take charge of its use and distribution.



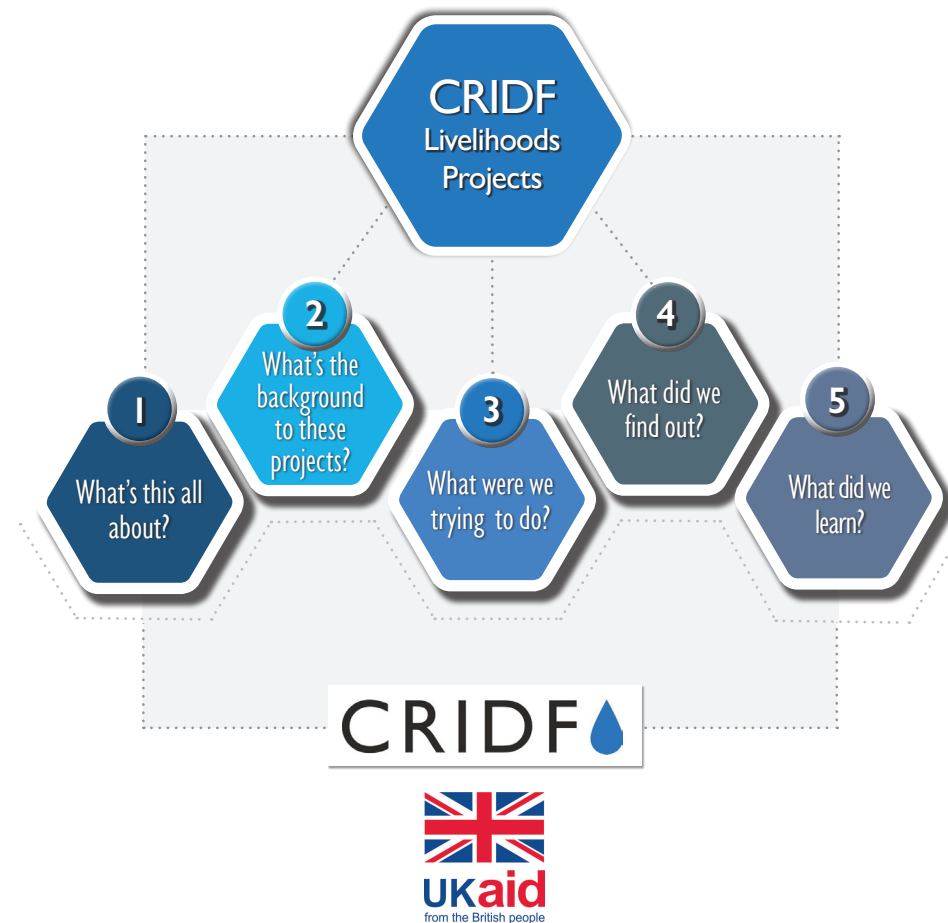
We learned that although, at the time of installation, they are more expensive to install, **solar powered schemes are more successful in a livelihoods model** than projects tied to the national grid. The reasons for this appear straightforward; as beneficiaries are establishing their livelihoods, any drain on their scarce financial resources hampers their income generation. Paying power bills before being generating an income increases the debt burden of communities. Solar powered pumps and irrigation may require a set of maintenance skills, but they do not require beneficiaries to pay ongoing power bills.

Community members where we worked were enthusiastic participants in the projects. They have taken ownership of the irrigation schemes and are managing these through representative committees. However, we learned that we cannot take this for granted and **need to ensure that community capacity is enhanced** for a range of skills including, management, finances, planning and maintenance. These projects are also an **opportunity to promote and encourage an increase in women's participation** by giving them increased voice and agency.

In summary, by implementing this project we have:

- Saved people time that used to be spent fetching water
- Cut the incidence of waterborne disease in the community.
- Slowed or stopped river bank erosion.
- Provided a source of income for community members, by linking them to inputs and markets.
- Empowered community members to have a say in the operation of their own irrigation scheme.
- Allowed community members to invest in their own families and futures.
- Contributed to the two communities' climate resilience.

To read more: www.cridf.net/livelihoods-projects





What's this all about?

Climate change affects rainfall and temperature patterns. These changes severely impact communities that are dependent on subsistence agriculture. To ensure an adequate water supply for their crops and to ease their own labour burden many communities are planting closer and closer to water sources. In many cases this leads to increased riverbank erosion and river siltation. This

affects the community's future water supply, exacerbating the poverty cycle.

CRIDF wanted to change this, and so looked to providing abstraction, pumping and irrigation infrastructure to allow communities to farm away from the riverbanks.

But how could communities, who were reliant on subsistence agriculture, pay for the pumped water and for the powering of the water pumps? How could they pay for pump, pipe and irrigation maintenance?

Our solution linked the communities with an agro processing company to provide seed, advice and market access for the harvested crops. This contract farming would allow the communities to earn while farming, and to pay for water and infrastructure maintenance.



What's the background to these projects?

The Kufandada River Protection and Irrigation Scheme is located in Bikita District, some 95 km east of Masvingo, Zimbabwe. The project aimed to benefit about 120 subsistence farmers and the 40 bed Bikita Rural hospital.

The Bindangombe Irrigation Scheme is located in Chivi District, about 50 km south of Masvingo, Zimbabwe. The initial project at Bindangombe aimed to benefit 300 farmers.

The projects were to demonstrate that a livelihoods approach to providing water access would work and would contribute to increasing communities' resilience to climate change.



What were we trying to do?

The projects were designed to provide a sustainable, clean water source using a livelihood solution to poverty stricken communities. We wanted to find out if the projects worked and to what extent the projects have allowed these communities to prosper, partially through paying for the water services provided.

As always, there were certain limitations to our study. Budgetary and time restrictions did not allow us to do any type of study over a length of time, so we were heavily dependent on self-reported perceptions of stakeholders.

In addition to interviewing members of the community we also interviewed members of partner institutions in the programme. Unfortunately some of these respondents were new to the institutions and so were not able to speak authoritatively about the initiative.

To some extent we have managed to triangulate the fieldwork findings with project documentation. For the sake of clarity and accuracy we also presented our early findings to the Project Implementation Team at CRIDF, and were able to clarify a number of issues as a result of this presentation.

