 

**USAID/Zimbabwe Knowledge Summit: Lessons Learned**

Case Study #2: Management of Community Assets

*The following is a hypothetical story developed by synthesizing specific and general information about C/FFA and VS&L programs. This story is followed by targeted questions intended to stimulate discussions around present challenges in food security related programs.*

Themes Discussed:

* Baseline assessments and data collection
* Cash/Food for Assets (C/FFA)
* Village Savings & Loans groups

# ABC Development:

ABC Development, an international development agency, funded an emergency food security program for the most drought-stricken districts in Zimbabwe. The need for relief was very high in the program areas, so the first priority was to decrease food insecurity (short term) rather than increasing food security (long term) for the target population.

ABC Development successfully contracted with local implementing partners (IPs) to begin relief rapidly, and they drastically reduced food insecurity over the project period. In the rush to address the immediate food insecurity challenges, however, ABC Development did not establish baseline measures and the IPs were not collecting data during the implementation of the program.

After the completion of the first objective of its food security program, ABC Development decided to implement a more comprehensive food security program aimed at increased mid-term and long-term food security objectives using a cash or food for assets (C/FFA) strategy combined with social protection strategies, such as encouraging saving and lending within communities.

While IPs facilitated creation of a variety of community assets, utilization of these assets and their maintenance after the project were not established. Because asset creation was being bankrolled by distribution of cash or food, only sites where IPs selected had rehabilitated assets while similar sites remained dilapidated even if no external materials were needed for the repairs.

Throughout the second stage of ABC Development’s food security project, the IPs were diligent in collecting the data required by ABC Development. However, the data were never analyzed by ABC Development headquarters or at least results not shared with IPs.

Village Savings and Loan (VS&L) groups were considered to be a very successful component of the program. VS&L groups motivated by the program were considerably successful in increasing the savings of participants and thereby increasing resiliency. Some VS&L groups cashed out their savings to purchase food during peak hunger seasons and lent money to pay children’s school fees. ABC Development’s implementing partners noticed that the ISAL groups were mostly temporary, but that new ones continually arose.

Many women stated that VS&L groups were a way to gain respect among men and women in the community; VS&Ls were, therefore, popular among women.

## Discussion Questions:

1. While baseline measures and data collection procedures for immediate relief and services may be difficult to implement, how will the lack of baseline measurements impact similar programs in the future?
2. While C/FFA projects are popular when the cash or food payments are being distributed, there seems to be confusion regarding responsibility for the assets upon their completion. What are some strategies that can eliminate such confusion?
3. In what ways could the lack of data analysis affect the assessment of programmatic outcomes?
4. How can the C/FFA model be used to promote community mobilization for collective action?