



Best Practices and Lessons Learnt on Targeting and Selection



1. Introduction

Purpose Statement

Sharing best practices and lessons learned in the Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project (SACP) in Zimbabwe is crucial for improving project efficiency. By sharing insights and effective strategies, smallholder farmers and project stakeholders can streamline their processes, reducing waste and increasing productivity at all levels of the project.

The lessons learned from successes in one APG and cluster can be applied to others, helping to replicate successful outcomes and improve overall agricultural productivity and sustainability across the participating districts and wards. By discussing challenges and failures, stakeholders can avoid making the same mistakes, thereby saving time and resources.

Sharing SACP experiences can inspire innovative approaches and solutions to persistent challenges. Smallholder farmers and project stakeholders can leverage this knowledge to develop new project implementation techniques or approaches. Collaboration is also enhanced through promoting communication and knowledge exchange which fosters a sense of community empowerment and cooperation among stakeholders, leading to stronger partnerships and more coordinated efforts.

By focusing on what works, projects can be made more sustainable in the long term, ensuring continued benefits for the rural communities and better resilience against environmental changes and market fluctuations due to economic shocks and stresses.

Overall, sharing best practices and lessons learned serves as a catalyst for innovation, growth, and sustainable development in the agricultural sector.

Scope

The document focuses on the best practices and lessons learnt through the participatory beneficiary targeting, selection and registration process as enunciated in the SACP Implementation Manual.

2. Context and Background

Overview of the SACP

The Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project (SACP) is a six-year development project running from November 2021 to December 2027 financed jointly by the Government of Zimbabwe, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID). SACP supports the transformation of smallholder agriculture in Zimbabwe through private sector-led value chain development activities.

The Government of Zimbabwe, through the Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project seeks to transform smallholder agriculture and increase productivity as well as rural incomes within the National Agriculture Policy Framework 2018-2030 (NAPF) and NDS1. SACP is organizing smallholder farmers into well-governed, well-functioning and cohesive Agriculture Producer Groups (APGs) and clusters.

The project is geographically targeting five provinces; Mashonaland Central covering Mt Darwin; Muzarabani; Rushinga and Shamva Districts; Mashonaland East operating in Goromonzi; Murehwa; UMP and Mutoko Districts; Mashonaland West in Chegutu; Mhondoro-Ngezi; Sanyati and Zvimba districts and Matabeleland North covering Binga; Hwange; Lupane and Nkayi districts. In Midlands, the project is being implemented in Kwekwe and Chirumhanzu districts.



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The project is mobilizing smallholder farmers into APGs and Clusters to actively participate in profitable agricultural value chains and build long term market linkages with the VCLE. SACP is also developing smallholders' capacity in climate smart production, marketing, business skills, and financial literacy. The project is rehabilitating and/or developing climate proofed infrastructure to support value chain activities. The infrastructure being supported by the project include smallholder Irrigation schemes; last-mile feeder roads and community multipurpose water points where the Village Business Units are being set up.

SACP Beneficiary Categories

Category	Household type	Characteristics	SACP interventions	No of beneficiaries
A	Chronically poor and unable Chronically food insecure and dependent on social safety nets (e.g. cash transfers)	Poor households – little or no land No economically active people Typically, child or elderly-headed households Below the food poverty line Vulnerable to nutrition and climate change impacts	Nutrition-sensitive Interventions e.g. (Nutrition gardens and small ruminants) Community investments Collaborate with humanitarian organisations (e.g., WFP) GALS Infrastructure	10,940 (5,470 women)
B1	Chronically poor but able Often chronically food insecure but capable of becoming transitory food secure	Poor households with access to land or livestock and labour, and often involved in farming or livestock rearing and wage labour. Typically, 1 economically active person Lack cash and resources to purchase inputs and commodities. Below the total consumption poverty line	Infrastructure Empowerment & capacity development & skills e.g. Training and capacity building in CSA & agribusiness, business skills, diversification of production, access to markets, nutrition support to value chains where women are dominant e.g. horticulture GALS training & Nutrition-sensitive Interventions Promote farmer to farmer learning in extension Matching grants for APGs	16,400 (8,200 women)
B2	Transiently poor Transitory food insecure	Emerging smallholder farmers with land and labour but cash constrained and vulnerable to shocks. 2-3 economically active people Households can increase productivity to achieve food and income security and become engines of rural economic growth.	Marketing and technical skills Business training Marketing access (out-grower, contract farming) Equipment Nutrition Matching grants for APGs and micro-enterprises Contract framing Out-grower linkages to lucrative value- chains GALS Nutrition-sensitive Interventions	40,000 (20,000) women)
C	Self-sufficient Often food secure, with a risk of transitory food insecurity	Farmers with land and labour and the potential to enter into private sector market linkage arrangements and produce a saleable surplus. Typically, 3-4 economically active people Able to withstand shocks without external assistance.	Business expansion support New technologies to increase production Value addition Innovation to increase production and marketing of commodities Matching grants for APGs and micro-enterprises Out-grower linkages to lucrative value- chains Nutrition-sensitive Interventions	10,900 (5,450 women)
	Women	Limited decision making Limited access to means of production (land, inputs, capital, technology, seeds etc.) Heavy workload and time poverty limited access to finance, vulnerable to nutrition and climate change impact	Economic and social empowerment Improved decision making at HH and community levels Improved participation in APG, leadership skills reduced workload, improved access to finance Improved well-being and nutrition, resilience to shocks improved adoption of CSA Improved entrepreneurial skills	39,120 (included in A, B1, B2, C and youth)



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The SACP Targeting Methodology

The project's targeting approaches include community targeting and a mixture of self-targeting and menu-based measures. In order to ensure that intended beneficiaries are not excluded, self-targeting, direct-targeting, and geographic and community targeting are used in the different components of the project.

Geographical targeting

The geographical targeting approach is a viable way for resource allocation, especially in situations where a project does not have a national coverage, but focuses on geographic areas with high concentrations of vulnerable people. SACP is under implementation in five out of the country's ten provinces namely, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Midlands and Matabeleland North. In these provinces, SACP will engage in selected districts, as outlined in Table 4. The selection process at district level prioritized areas with (i) the highest incidence and prevalence of poverty, food and nutrition insecurity, (ii) accessibility to food trading corridors, and (iii) existing production clusters, with the highest potential for market potential and smallholder produce aggregation. In Table 4, the numbers of SACP supported smallholder farming households and the projected number of APGs in each target district are indicated

Table 1: Targeted beneficiaries, targeted geographic areas and APGs per district

Province	Targeted beneficiaries per province	APGs per province	Districts	APGs targeted per district	No. of Wards
Mashonaland Central	17600	180	Rushinga	45	25
			Muzarabani	45	14/19
			Mt Darwin	45	40
			Shamva	45	29
Mashonaland East	17600	180	Goromonzi	45	25
			Murehwa	45	28
			Mutoko	45	29
			UMP	45	17
Mashonaland West	17600	180	Chegutu	45	29
			Mhondoro Ngezi	45	9/16
			Zvimba	45	35
			Sanyati	45	18
Matabeleland North	17600	80	Hwange	45	17/20
			Binga	45	17/25
			Lupane	45	19/28
			Nkayi	45	19/30
Midlands	7840	180	Kwekwe	40	33
			Chirumanzu	40	25

Community Based Targeting

Community based targeting depends on decision-making structures at community level to allocate programme goods or services, effectively using the selection criteria defined in the project objectives. Targeted communities may contribute to defining these objectives through a participatory decision-making process. The criteria for selection are based on the community's subjective judgment of need or vulnerability. It also relies on the knowledge and understanding of the community's definition of poverty and community wealth ranking. Communities are encouraged to ensure that efforts are made to ensure inclusion of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups such as women, youth, disabled people and ethnic minorities



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Self-targeting

Self-targeting is about intended beneficiaries deciding on whether or not to participate in a given project. Self-targeting is achieved by providing services that especially respond to the priorities, assets and labour capacity of the identified target groups. The success of this strategy depends primarily on whether development activities have been designed with involvement of the intended beneficiaries, around their needs and livelihood constraints, and are perceived by them as relevant and affordable. Again, efforts have been made to ensure inclusion of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups such as women, youth, Persons with Disabilities and ethnic minorities.

Self-targeting is being used as follows:

APGs, SMSEs and VCLEs apply and respond to calls for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) by SACP. Interested APGs, MSMEs and VCLEs then develop business plans which are assessed and scored on the basis of predetermined criteria. A Business Development Service (BDS) provider will facilitate technical, financial literacy, governance, and business development training to interested APGs and MSMEs prior to developing business plans that will be submitted to financial institutions (FI). Value chains, which will be selected for SACP support, will be compatible with women, youth and other vulnerable groups' needs, and will focus on addressing food and nutrition security needs and promotion of value addition. In addition, priority is given to use of technologies that address identifiable women's labour constraints. The promotion of group approaches limits elite capture, as normally wealthier households are generally not interested in group activities.

Direct Targeting

Direct targeting involving community participation is applied when selecting APGs and MSMEs to benefit from services and/ or resources that are channelled to specific individuals or households. Direct targeting applies a quota system (50 per cent for women and 30 per cent for youth) for both participation in project activities and representation and leadership in APG management committees. To this end, women only and/ or youth only groups are given priority in the selection process. Approaches such as participatory wealth ranking involving targeted communities are used to rank community members into different wealth groups. In approving applications for Matching Grants support, SACP takes into consideration the number of female-headed households, youth and other disadvantaged groups to benefit from project support.

OTHER TARGETING AND SELECTION SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES

1. Ward Awareness Meetings

Initial mobilization of farmers by the Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project (SACP) began with invitations to all community members to attend ward level awareness meetings. These meetings, were aimed at creating awareness about the project among community members. Invitations to the community were extended through the use of posters created at local level by the extension officers. The posters were guided by a template produced by the Project Management Units and translated into the four indigenous languages spoken in the project areas. Posters were strategically placed at different points within the community, where they could easily be seen. These included community boreholes, dip tanks, local schools, clinics and council offices. The project also used existing ward structures through traditional leadership, local authority councilors and other extension officers.

1. Use of project brochures

During the meetings the project officers used project brochures to unpack the SACP operational areas, project financing, the structure of the project, target guidelines, informing farmers on how they could participate in the different value chains. There was emphasis on the categorization of beneficiaries, the quotas for women and youth as well as the need to include Persons with Disabilities in the project. These were distributed in hard copy, allowing farmers to access project information first-hand and guarding against elite capture

2. Radio Programmes

In order to further ensure that farmers have access to first-hand information and guard against elite capture, the project procured 16 radio slots. The slots were procured from community radio station, and where they were not available, the project used national radio stations. For 2024, the roll out of the programmes was made to coincide with running period for the expression of interest, providing valuable, accurate information for beneficiaries.

Selected project officers went on air to present on the different technical areas of the project using the different indigenous languages used in project areas. The programmes were broadcast on Twasumpuka Radio station using Tonga, a local language spoken in Binga District, while a national radio station, ZIFM was used broadcast in Ndebele, Shona and Nambya. The programme used a blend of officers who included the Project Management Unit, Provincial Project Implementation Units and project district extension officers.

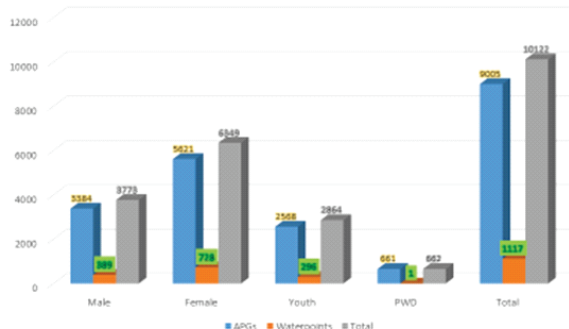
Overall Reach -awareness and sensitization meetings

Wards Reached	Males	Females	Male youths	Female youths	Total youths	TOTAL
152 in 2023	9723	15291	2200	4080	6280	25014
225 in 2024	11801	16008	1990	3304	5298	27809
417 SACP National Total	21524	31299	4190	7384	11578	52823



Progress on Targeting on APGs

Overall Reach for targeted beneficiaries



Project target	Current status
50% Female	62% Females
30% Youth	38 %Males
	28% Youth



SACP Beneficiary Targeting, Selection and Registration Process Flow





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5. Overarching Lessons Learned

I. Increased Community Ownership of the SACP interventions

The engagement of beneficiaries in the targeting, selection and registration process has fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility toward the SACP interventions by the participating communities. Communities feel they have invested in building the foundation for the project success and long-term sustainability.

II. Enhanced Relevance and Tailoring of the planned project activities

By involving beneficiaries, the project is ensuring that the planned activities are relevant to their needs and conditions. Insights from the community have led to better identification of the most vulnerable households, allowing for tailored support that fits local contexts including women, youth and PWD.

III. Increased Transparency and Fairness

A participatory approach promotes transparency in the decision-making process. When community members help identify beneficiaries, it reduces perceptions of favoritism or bias, enabling a sense of justice and fairness in the distribution of project resources such as the loans and grants for the APGs and MSEs.

IV. Building Relationships and Trust

Working collaboratively with the community builds trust between SACP and the beneficiaries. This relationship can facilitate future interactions and collaborations, enhancing community engagement and support.

V. Diverse Perspectives and Knowledge

Engaging a range of stakeholders through the whole government approach in the targeting process by SACP has brought in diverse perspectives and local knowledge. This will lead to development of innovative solutions for upgrading value chains and a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by different community members and socio-economic groups.

- It was noted that, in some instances, the process could disadvantage groups who failed to adequately package their application forms although they qualified to be beneficiaries.
- Groups which failed to qualify included those with low levels of education.
- In addition, the process could fail to adequately promote clusterisation considering that one group might score above pass mark in a single ward.
- On the other hand, the process promoted objective screening process for beneficiary identification since scoring and ranking is involved.
- Therefore, inclusion and exclusion errors related to subjectivity are minimized the same with elite capture.