



## < Independent Final Evaluation of the Empowerment for Women and Youth Project (E4WAY) in Zimbabwe – Independent End of Project Evaluation >

### QUICK FACTS

**Countries:** Zimbabwe

**Evaluation date:** 01 June 2022

**Evaluation type:** Project

**Evaluation timing:** Final

**Administrative Office:** [Country Office Harare](#)

- Technical Office: Country Office Harare, [Decent Work Team for Eastern and Southern Africa and Enterprises Department-HQ](#)

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**DC Symbol:** [ZWE/16/01/BAD](#)

**Donor(s) & budget:** **US\$18,700**

*Key Words:* Women empowerment, youth empowerment, Market systems development, enterprise development, anchor enterprises



## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

### Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The Empowerment for Women and Youth Project (E4WAY) is a partnership between the ILO and the Government of Zimbabwe as part of the broader Youth and Women Empowerment (YWEP) project funded by the African Development Bank (AfDB). The main objective of the E4WAY project is the creation employment opportunities and improvement of incomes for women and youth in target Districts.

The specific objectives of the project are:

- Promoting value addition for mopane worm, honey and horticulture produce to address the dual problem of post-harvest losses and low prices during the harvesting period which results from temporary oversupply and the short shelf-life of the products; and
- Development of an artisanal gold mining enterprise to support improvement of incomes of women involved in this activity whose economic benefits are currently trapped by large-scale mining companies with gold ore possessing facilities.

E4WAY supports the establishment of Anchor Processing Enterprises (AEs) to strengthen the efficiency of four targeted value chains (mopane worm, honey, horticulture, and gold milling). The intervention promotes value addition and better performance of local enterprises and cooperatives to leverage economies of scale by supplying inputs to the AE on a continuous and competitive basis. This model is based on the Market Systems Development (MSD) approach to address the core challenges of post-harvest losses, market-information asymmetry affecting rural producers and limited access to agricultural support systems.

E4WAY is implemented in four districts of Beitbridge, Guruve, Lupane, and Mutoko. Implementation began in March 2017 for an initial three years up to December 2020. It was expected to end in December 2021, however, was further extended by another eighteen months until 30 June 2022 to allow implementation of outstanding activities, such as the establishment of the Guruve Gold Milling Plant.

	<p>The initial budget for the E4WAY project was US\$2,771,813, which was later increased to US\$3,271,813.</p> <p>At the time of the evaluation only two AEs of the three were operational, horticulture processing in Mutoko and mopane worm processing in Beitbridge. In Lupane, work had begun to support honey production and processing.</p>
<p><b>Present situation of the project</b></p>	<p>The project is still under implementation, after having been extended twice, until 30 June 2022.</p>
<p><b>Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation</b></p>	<p>This final evaluation seeks to assess the extent to which the project was able to facilitate economic empowerment of youth and women with a specific focus on its ability to create inclusive markets for women and youths. The evaluation covers the period from inception until 30 August 2021.</p> <p>It was framed according to the six key evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence and strategic fit, validity of design, progress and effectiveness, efficiency, effectiveness of management arrangements, and impact orientation and sustainability. A seventh criteria of “General” reviewed the extent to which recommendations of the Mid Term Review have been implemented.</p> <p>The main clients of the evaluation included: (1) Government of Zimbabwe<sup>1</sup>; (2) Tripartite Partners; (3) District level (Horticultural Farmers, Beekeepers and Artisanal and Small-Scale Miners and their respective business associations); (4) Implementer (ILO, CO-Harare, project team); (5) Backstopping offices and units (Technical backstopping offices (ILO DWT-Pretoria, ROAF) and ILO Enterprises Department (HQ)); and (6) Development partner (African Development Bank (AfDB)).</p>
<p><b>Methodology of evaluation</b></p>	<p>The evaluation adopted a theory based cross-sectional design using mixed methods approaches. Qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions with beneficiaries and key informant</p>

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED), Ministry Youth, Sports, Arts and Recreation (MoYSAR), Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprise Development (MoWACSMED), Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (MoPSLSW), and Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing (MoLGPWNH)



interviews with key institutions involved in the project. Quantitative data was collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included self-completed structured questionnaires completed by institutional stakeholders while secondary sources were the project quarterly and annual reports to the Africa Development bank, other key process documents of the project and outputs/learnings from the project.

Overall, the evaluation approach was guided by United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidelines and principles and ILO's Evaluation Framework and Strategy.

Limitations of the evaluation included: (1) challenges with connectivity, especially at district level meant longer calls or completion of an interview in more than one instance. This frustrated respondents in some cases; (2) the evaluation physical data collection was delayed by one and a half months due to COVID-19 restrictions that made it impossible to travel; and (3) reporting also coincided with the fourth wave of COVID-19 in Zimbabwe with both evaluation team members and their families contracting the virus. This led to further delays in the finalisation of the report.

## MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

**Relevance, coherence and strategic fit:** The E4WAY project directly responded to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) number 5 and 8 which aim for gender equality and decent work and economic growth respectively. By targeting women, the project was highly inclusive of women and aimed at achieving gender equality. However, the focus needs to go beyond the number of women covered but also address strategic needs in areas such as issues of gender relations/roles among couple relationships. An increase in income maybe linked to an increase in gender-based violence cases. There are also issues of expanding women's participation in the value chains as it was noted women's confidence to engage with formal enterprises is low. Youth engagement needed to be improved with a clear youth engagement strategy. Despite recognition by the project on the need for disability inclusiveness, the project interventions



remained largely exclusive of persons with disabilities. The project responded to restrictions brought by COVID-19 mitigation measures by making trainings online. However, limited access to internet and related equipment made access by beneficiaries problematic.

**Validity of design:** The outputs and outcomes were largely consistent with the envisaged Theory of Change. The Theory of Change (ToC) is clear, but several underpinning assumptions have not held making the envisaged logic unlikely to be realised unless there are significant changes in the implementation approach to manage them. These assumptions include: (1) *AEs will find a viable market for value added products;* (2) *Because producers are willing to sell to the AE, production will increase with increased demand for raw materials from the AE;* (3) *Producers and AEs will implement OSH and minimum wages;* and (4) *The Government at district level will support the AEs through continued monitoring and provide social overhead-capital such as powerlines and transformers.* The envisaged outputs and outcomes of the project were ambitious given the timeframe for the project was too short to achieve the envisaged changes and there was insufficient investment in working capital for the AEs to operate at optimum level. Working through stakeholders in each district was commendable as it built ownership of the project. However, the project required a project officer present at each site to support all stakeholders and activities until operations of the AEs were stabilised. Also, the absence of the district-level Government's social overhead-capital meant an increase in the cost of establishing AEs. Nonetheless, using the AE to anchor value chain development was an appropriate approach and can be considered a promising practice for rural economic development.

**Progress and Effectiveness:** At the time of the evaluation the AEs were still at their infancy, and therefore envisaged targets were far from being achieved. The project targeted to create 5,000 long-term jobs in the target communities but only managed 341 jobs at the time of reporting. Majority of the jobs (176) were in construction works at the three project sites in Beitbridge, Mutoko and Guruve. The failure to meet the target by the time of the evaluation is partly due to the project establishing only two of the four planned AEs in Mutoko and Beitbridge. Of the two, operations in Mutoko and Beitbridge had

been subdued. However, the project had progressed well on output indicators despite the myriad of challenges it faced including those brought about by travel restrictions because of COVID-19.

Women and youth in Mutoko confirmed that the AE had brought in a better market for their produce, even though it meant moving from receiving cash to bank transfers whose delay affected their production cycles. They no longer had to travel 200km to the market where they also faced risks of gender-based violence (GBV), coupled with challenges of childcare. The project has been instrumental in imparting technical and business skills to women and youth through the Start Your Business (SYB) training, as well as governance training (for board-function preparation). Further, the project was successful in facilitating the active participation and involvement of women in running the AEs thereby promoting women's empowerment and gender equality. There were positive unintended effects. Electricity connections to AE were benefiting surrounding communities. Water access was improved for those in Beitbridge as they could access water from the AE, an important additional benefit given the project's focus on women's empowerment.

**Efficiency:** There were several delays in the project launch that consequently affected the implementation of all project activities. Therefore, the intervention's cost effectiveness cannot be measured in the immediate term as the AEs are still at infancy. In the long-term, as AEs increase production, and begin to offer services to more primary producers, the number of beneficiaries is set to expand given that the project design is meant to stimulate value chain performance.

**Effectiveness of Management arrangements:** There was appreciation of the management and technical capabilities of the ILO to manage a project of this complexity. The ILO country office received significant support from all ILO technical support and backstopping offices. The governance arrangements were adequate and contributed to effective partnerships and coordination. Relationships with stakeholders were strong and led to their significant material and human resource contribution to the project.





The project established and utilised the Results Monitoring and Measurement System (RMMS) which was complemented by other measures to enhance monitoring and decision making. However, the project team was significantly understaffed for the efficient management of the project.

**Impact Orientation and Sustainability:** The project influenced a number of improvements in the lives of the target beneficiaries. The incomes of the beneficiaries improved as a result of beneficiation and access to better markets created by the project. Gainful employment opportunities for women and youths was another improvement brought by the project through jobs created by the AEs and related value chains. Women’s empowerment was made possible as more of them became skilled and actively involved in not owning the enterprises but contributing to the running of the businesses. In that regard, the project aligned well with SDGs 5 and 8 on gender equality and women empowerment, and decent work and economic growth respectively.

## RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

### Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** Future projects that target women need to invest in partner sessions, where applicable, on gender relations to enhance couple communication and planning. There is need to ensure such empowerment contributes to enhancing gender relations to avoid Intimate Partner Violence.

**Recommendation 2:** In the future, there is need for a deliberate youth promotion strategy to enhance youth participation in all the value chains of the Anchor Enterprise to enable the project to fulfil its objectives.

**Recommendation 3:** In the future there is need for a district wide approach that engages all district stakeholders to develop a sustainability plan for mopane worm. Traditional leaders should be a key part of the engagement process to strengthen traditional natural resource governance systems.

**Recommendation 4:** For future interventions in the context of disruptions caused by pandemics or other natural disasters the future plans need to consider building in contingency budgets to cover some elements of virtual/remote interventions that may include electronic



devices and internet access to facilitate continual implementation of trainings, meetings and related activities during similar disasters

**Recommendation 5:** There is need to immediately consider working capital needs of AEs.

**Recommendation 6:** There is need to establish partnerships with relevant extension services (and development organisations working on supporting producers) to strengthen provision of extension support to producers to increase production of targeted raw materials.

**Recommendation 7:** There is need for future project to review the assumptions underpinning the theory of change and make the necessary adjustments or changes in implementation in a timely manner to ensure that the assumptions remain valid.

**Recommendation 8:** It is important to include a full-time project officer in each district to fully support similar projects.

**Recommendation 9:** In future projects, the M&E framework should 1) ensure all outputs of the project are being measured by the indicators and data is collected by the tools; 2) consider the establishment of matrices of AE performance that can guide decisions by the district focal persons and the AE board; and 3) train the stakeholders on the use and interpretation of such matrices.

**Recommendation 10:** There is need for each AE to develop an equipment back-up plan and ensure a pool of trained technicians to support maintenance of the processing equipment.

**Recommendation 11:** Future procurement should include twinning an international supplier with a local engineering firm that will undertake all maintenance support of the processing equipment to avoid downtime.

**Recommendation 12:** Similar project requires a sustainability plan that involve all stakeholders and is discussed jointly from the start of the project

**Main lessons learned and good practices**

Adapting project activities in periods of restrictions due to a pandemic

**Lesson 1:** While the idea of offering **online trainings and meetings** was the only available and effective option given the COVID-19 context, such solutions **are inherently exclusive of marginalized populations who do not have access to the platforms.**





**Lesson 2: Adaptations for quicker decision making in the context of a fast-changing pandemic context is important.** Delayed decision making, owing to the project's complex decision-making structure which had multiple levels such as TWG, PSC and the Donor, can mean serious losses on the enterprise.

**Lesson 3: Sufficient time (at least five years) is required to support the operationalisation and effectiveness of the Anchor Enterprise model for value chain development.**

**Lesson 4: There is need for adequate investment in working capital to ensure the AE operates at scale.** This working capital should be sufficient to meet 12 months of operating costs. Further, provision of social overhead capital such as power lines and transformers are key when establishing AEs. The absence of such key infrastructure creates increased project costs.

**Lesson 5: The success of the AE is premised on stakeholder ownership and leadership at the district and national levels, but these need adequate capacity to manage and oversee an enterprise of the scale of the AE.** This includes capacity in the following areas: 1) entrepreneurship; 2) interpretation of financial statements; and 3) operating a manufacturing business.

**Lesson 6: Effective oversight and management of the AE need to be supported by matrices that provide adequate information to district and national-level stakeholders on the performance of the AE and value chain development.**

**Lesson 7: It is not enough to focus on operational aspects of the Anchor Enterprise. Similar attention, and at scale, should be provided to ensuring establishment of sustainable supply chains.** The project should explore partnerships that enhance its ability to do so.

**Lesson 8: The significance of the AE model in rural communities makes it very susceptible to political interference.** The AE model invests in building medium sized enterprise in rural economies where such an enterprise may represent the largest investment.



This makes it prone to political interference as was the case with the E4WAY although its significance was whittled down due the active project structures at the district level.