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Farmer-to-Farmer Program
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Southern Africa Impact Assessment/Case Studies of selected Farmer to Farmer Hosts

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Table of Content

Executive Summary	4
Mozambique	4
Malawi	4
Malawi	4
I. Introduction.....	5
II. Mozambican Case Studies in the Southern Africa Region	8
1. Association Kuchanda Kuguta Dombe	8
1.1 Background:.....	8
1.2. Précis of Initial Assessment: (OCAT)	8
1.3. Volunteer visits discussed with hosts	9
1.4. Hosts comment to the evaluators on general volunteer impact:	9
1.5. Quantifiable Impact of a host visit identified by the evaluators	11
2. Caritas de Manica	12
2.1. Background:.....	12
2.2. Précis of Initial Assessment: (OCAT).....	12
2.3. Volunteers visits discussed with hosts.....	12
2.4. Hosts comment to the evaluators on general volunteer impact.....	13
2.5. Quantifiable Impact of a host visit identified by the evaluators.....	13
3. Sementes Nazara Yapera	15
3.1. Background:.....	15
3.2. Précis of Initial Assessment: (OCAT).....	15
3.3. Volunteers' visits discussed with hosts	15
3.4. Hosts comment to the evaluators on general volunteer impact.....	15
3.5. Quantifiable Impact of a host visit identified by the evaluators.....	15
III. Malawian Case Studies	17
1. Kamwando Cooperative	17
1.1. Background.....	17
1.2. Précis of the initial assessment (OCAT).....	17
1.3. Volunteers visits discussed with Hosts.....	17
1.4. Hosts comment to the evaluators on general volunteer impact	17

1.5.	Quantifiable Impact of a host visit identified by the evaluators.....	18
2.	Ndatani Investments	19
2.1.	Background.....	19
2.2.	Précis of the initial assessment (OCAT).....	19
2.3.	Volunteers visits discussed with Hosts.....	19
2.4.	Hosts comment to the evaluators on general volunteer impact.....	19
2.5.	Quantifiable Impact of a host visit identified by the evaluators.....	20
3.	Saju Agro-dealers.....	21
3.1.	Background.....	21
3.2.	Précis of the initial assessment (OCAT).....	21
3.3.	Volunteers visits discussed with Hosts.....	21
3.4.	Hosts comment to the evaluators on general volunteer impact.....	22
3.5.	Quantifiable Impact of a host visit identified by the evaluators.....	22
IV.	Conclusions from the Southern African visits.....	23

Executive Summary

This report was commissioned to highlight quantifiable impact from the five years of the Farmer-to-Farmer program in Malawi and Mozambique in Southern Africa. Angola was not visited due to the difficulties in travel and expense.

Mozambique is a country showing strong growth in recent years and this growth can be seen in the new infrastructure, such as roads. Although the cities show strong improvements, capacity in rural areas is starting from a very low base. Some of the hosts that were visited had seen improvements in their livelihoods in recent years, but others still lacked basic literacy and knowledge to improve their lives. Mozambique was contrasted by Malawi, a very poor country, with recent politic upheavals. In the rural areas there seemed to be basic knowledge of agriculture and literacy that will allow for rural growth, if the right private sector policies are implemented.

Excerpts of quantifiable impact initiated by the volunteer program and identified by the evaluator in Southern African are provided below.

Mozambique

*The investment of 200,000 USD by a USAID project into the small community of Cantandica in Mozambique (Sementes **Nazara Yaperá**) has the potential to provide as a source of quality seed for a large number of farmers in the region. The open pollinated maize seed with a maturity of 85 days being offered has the advantage of extending planting times and improving yields in low rainfall years. F2F volunteer work with this company has allowed the company to report realistic company projections and targets to shareholders and grant providers*

Malawi

In Mchinji, Kamwando cooperative sales have increased from 300,000 MWK to 3,000,000 MWK during the period of CNFA interventions. The cooperative has obtained a certificate of health for its vegetable oils from the Malawian bureau of standard as a direct result of a volunteer's input. This certificate allowed the cooperative to expand its sales to urban areas

Malawi

Since the development of the strategic plan and reporting systems by a Farmer-to-Farmer volunteer, Saju Agro-Dealers has opened a new branch with the employment of two trained sales assistants. The company now employs five personnel. As a consequence of volunteer help, the company has now been financed by Micro Enterprise Africa with a 10% 3-year convertible loan stock of MWK 3.5 million. In the difficult financial situation in Malawi, Saju has managed to secure a 30 day credit line with a distributor, Chemical and Marketing, due to its reporting systems provided by a volunteer. In addition, Saju has registered with the Seed Traders Association of Malawi and participated in the 2012/13 farm input subsidy program

I. Introduction

The John Ogonowski and Doug Bereuter Farmer-to-Farmer (F2F) Program is a five year, \$7.5 million activity funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This report presents the results of an impact assessment of selected F2F hosts in East Africa, encompassing Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. The F2F Program works closely with USAID Missions, local organizations and the private sector to generate rapid, sustained economic growth in the agricultural sector through short-term technical assistance provided by US volunteers. In addition, the F2F Program works to increase the American public's understanding of international development issues and programs by providing opportunity for people-to-people interaction in agricultural development activities. Volunteers are provided along targeted value chains and support farmer cooperatives, agro-processors, and financial institutions. Industry associations adopt new technologies, develop market linkages, improve production practices and develop local capacity.

Country	Value Chains
Mozambique	Grains
	Horticulture
	Oilseeds
Malawi	Grains
	Oilseeds
	Horticulture

Following CNFA discussions with USAID, the following value chains were prioritized in each country in the Southern African Region.

CNFA started their implementation of the regional program in 2008. The implementation contract concludes in September 2013.

Map of the location of the hosts visited by the evaluation team

<https://mapsengine.google.com/map/edit?mid=zw2E7Rx4Bwa0.kmF6RIZZn6mw>

Methodology followed to assess the impact of selected hosts in the Southern African Region.

The evaluator travelled to Southern Africa for three week during August 2013 to assess the impact of the program in the region following a methodology, which was similar to the work done previously in the East African Region.

The evaluator was given the task of assessing the impact of a group of volunteers on specific hosts that have been chosen by CNFA country directors based on the following criteria:

Hosts that have really benefited from volunteer assistance and can be considered as success stories

Hosts that can show some indicators for sales generated, profits increased (quantifiable successes)

Hosts that impacted a relatively large number of beneficiaries

On average, in this region the evaluator looked at three of the hosts in any defined country.

Given the time constraints, it must be noted that this is a sample of the above criteria and not the total number.

The evaluator has been given a terms of reference which is annexed to this report as a guide to his work. However regular contact with CNFA head office staff during these visits has help to clarify the format and structure of this report.

In principle, the mode of action of the evaluators has been to visit with the country director on arrival to discuss the logistics of the visits, and assess all current documentation on the chosen hosts.

The evaluators specifically looked at the initial assessment of the hosts called the Organisation Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT) (sample annexed) and then tracked the assignments to a snapshot of specific achievements of the host that can be related to volunteers input at the time of the evaluator's visit.

The evaluators would then travel in most cases without country CNFA staff to interview the selected hosts. The methodology of the interviews was to discuss the general and current state of the host from an agribusiness perspective and understand, if any, their businesses' development over the past four years. From this information, the interviews then concentrated to see if there was a relationship between that development and the volunteer assignments. In addition, questions were asked of the host to see if there have been other influences that have improved their business which do not relate to the volunteers' work but have been an additional catalyst to their development.

Capacity building in specific volunteer input areas has also been looked at as well as the way these improvements have contributed to the sustainable development of the specific hosts.

However, it must be noted, rather than define individual input, the evaluators and this report looks at the contribution of the volunteers as a whole to the success of a hosts development.

At the end of each country visit, the evaluators have met again with the country director in their offices to interview him/her on their impressions of the host visited and to give the country director a debriefing on their findings.

II. Mozambican Case Studies in the Southern Africa Region



1. Association Kuchanda Kuguta Dombe

1.1 Background:

The Kuchanda Kuguta Association of Dombe started as an association in 2008 with the help of ADIPSA, a local NGO. In 2011 ADIPSA terminated their involvement with the association. CLUSA, another NGO who was also working with the association, continued its support to this association, guiding and facilitating the association's marketing and sales efforts. An introduction of the association to WFP was one of CLUSA's successes.

The association now provides 132 tonnes/season of maize to the UN organisation. In addition, CLUSA found specific marketing contacts for the association in towns such as Chimoio, Inchope, and Sussendenga.

CNFA volunteer intervention started in 2011. At that time, a third project the USAID AgriFuturo was also helping with development of this association that comprised 35 clubs that grow maize, sesame, beans, and small amounts of soya and sunflower. These clubs were the local hubs for a total of 1,439 members in 2011. At that time, AgriFuturo believed with the management of the association that Kuchanda Kuguta Dombe should change its status from association to a cooperative. An Agri Futuro advisor was actively working with the association at the time of the volunteer visits to make this transition. In 2012 the association officially changed its status to a cooperative.

Unfortunately, this change does not seem to have affected the structure of the association on the ground and it appears from many of the reports that financial or even production information has been difficult to uncover.

1.2. Précis of Initial Assessment: (OCAT)

With an initial OCAT score of 1.88 Kuchanda Kuguta needed robust attention across all aspects of its operations. With very low scores in financial and business understanding, it was deemed the most critical, with particular technical support needed to help the smooth transition of association into a new cooperative format and to create a strategic vision with the cooperative.

1.3. Volunteer visits discussed with hosts

Kuchanda Kuguta Dombe Association			
Assignment	Volunteer	Dates	SOW
1	Bill Nichols	9 th to 28 th April 2011	Strategic Business Plan Development
2	Alan Blair	8 th to 25 th Sept 2011	Cooperative Development.

1.4. Hosts comment to the evaluators on general volunteer impact:

The evaluator and translator visited the Dombe association (Kuchanda Kuguta Dombe) on the August 20th, 2013 at their offices. Present at the meeting were seven members of the association/cooperative with their president and the meeting was held close to their storage and office building acquired with a 90% grant of approximately 50,000 USD in early 2011. The evaluator estimated the capacity of the maize storage to be approximately 50 tons of bagged maize. Discussions with the group focused on the present situation of the association/cooperative in Dombe, what had been achieved, and if the volunteer recommendations had been implemented. In simple terms we were told that the overall membership had dropped from 1439 to 1435. As the evaluator was not getting any realistic answers to general questions and because of the abundance of donors involved with the cooperative, it was decided to limit the discussion to examining the volunteer impact from the volunteer specific recommendations. A number of other NGOs and projects were working with this host and therefore, it would have been difficult to attribute impact without focus.

First Volunteer Recommended:

The association/cooperative should focus only on a few crops: This recommendation has been implemented as the cooperative only purchases two crops; sesame and maize.

The cooperative should look to provide high value added to its product: The only added value that the cooperative might justify is its sales of premium maize to WFP.

The cooperative facilitates input supply to its members: The cooperative does have an input shop but only supplies sesame seed provided by a buyer.

The cooperative should supply loan assistance, but there was no loan assistance to their farmers

The cooperative should revise its election cycle so that only 1/3 of the board stands for election at one time. Not implemented.

Marketing and sales actions that include recommendations that that WFP contract should be developed and more buyers identified have been explored; however, storage for improved pricing appeared to not have been financed.

Training on business basics and agronomy continue to be provided by the cooperative. However, it was mentioned that the end of their existing funding from Agri Futuro might limit their ability to continue this service.

Another recommendation from the volunteer was that staff and management such as a general manager, book keeper and warehouse keeper were needed and this had not been implemented. The only permanent staff presently employed was the night guard who was employed at the time of the volunteer's visit.

Finally, the use of mobile phones to improve market information to members had not been practiced. A business plan was also provided by the first volunteer and the president was asked if they were using the plan. He mentioned that it was difficult but he still had the plan somewhere.

Second Volunteer's Recommended

Build on the information that was learned and shared during the business and strategic plan development training prior to this assignment by volunteer Bill Nichols. A cooperative business plan must be developed. This is something that will require outside assistance.

This advice has not been implemented

The cooperative leaders should continue to work closely with AgriFUTURO in developing the necessary legal documents to officially become a cooperative in Mozambique.

The cooperative leaders have tried to continue to work with Agri Futuro

The current association leaders should work closely with and take the advice of AgriFUTURO advisor, Endro Mbetsa. He will be instrumental in providing leadership to the association in the transition to a cooperative and will be very valuable in providing business and technical crop production advice to the association in the near term.

This advice was followed up by the Agri Futura advisor

The trained cooperative leaders should develop a simple plan to keep the members of the association informed concerning the transition from association to cooperative.

No action taken

The cooperative should develop a timeline for moving forward with some definite deadlines for when certain things are to be accomplished. The association leaders must realize that this process will take some time and that they personally must be committed to the process and the cooperative.

No action taken

Currently, the association should explore and act on ways to create immediate income from their investment in the warehouse.

Apart from grading for WFP, which in fact was taken place outside the storage building, no activity seemed to have been implemented. One participant in the meeting commented that the storage had cost them too much money.

A short term plan should be developed to generate some income for the association. They need this business experience and also to show they can generate income. This could come through dues, the sale of inputs or the marketing of crops.

This idea of generating income was discussed in detail with the participants in the meeting. The evaluator could not identify any activities that seemed to generate income.

The association leaders must work to have a better understanding of the current association finances. Currently, there is limited bookkeeping. To become a cooperative, a much more comprehensive set of financial records must be developed and maintained and understood by the leaders.

No implementation of this issue. The unpaid treasurer of the cooperative was responsible for financials which the President of the cooperative said were available monthly, but not available to the evaluator

The leaders should develop a short list of short-term goals to create more member benefits and pay down the department on the warehouse. This could include rental of warehouse space to other organizations.

Nothing was done on this issue apart from a comment that a buyer might be using some storage. However, it was impossible to obtain information on the financial arrangement

Product sold by cooperative	2008-2009	2009-2010	2012-2013
Sesame	373 tons	71 tons	42 tons
Maize	No figures	No figures	132 tonnes
Sunflower	No figures	0.6 tonnes	No purchases

These figures are unreliable but perhaps are a reflection of the state of this cooperative. Someone might be making a profit from its new storage and contracts, but this does not include the members. No dividends are paid to members and no premium price or benefits are paid to members apart from perhaps some training, which is likely to stop soon due to the withdrawal of donor funds.

In general, the evaluator cannot attribute any impact to the volunteers' efforts, as the majority of their recommendations have not been implemented.

1.5. Quantifiable Impact of a host visit identified by the evaluators

It appears this cooperative exists solely because the NGOs and donor projects deem its existence to be required. It is clear its members do not see its marketing or input function to be attractive and are selling the majority of their product to outside traders. No quantifiable impact of volunteers was found by the evaluator

2. Caritas de Manica

2.1. Background:

This NGO based in Manica in Beira corridor and close to the Zimbabwean border was started and funded in 1998 by the Catholic Church. At that time, the staff was working with 20 families in the Manica area to implement a project with the primary goal of improving the nutrition of the families. The aim of the NGO was to train families to produce agricultural produce from their farms that would allow their families to have three nutritious meals a day. Having reached that target, the families are now helped in many areas such as learning to continue to farm in one place, rather than moving to another area when the natural fertility of soil is depleted by poor farming practices and they are taught to look at farming as a business. In 2006, they distributed their first batch of farm animals to 150 farm families. Mixed farming was seen as the best approach to improve soil and allow the recipient to diversify their farming. By the time the CNFA volunteers started to help this organization in 2011, the NGO was working with approximately 250 families. Many of these families had reached the first food security goal but were now being educated in farming as a business or improving farming practices.

The average farm size for the focus families is 1.5 hectares and the NGO families are up to 35km from the town of Manica. The Catholic Church continues to be the NGO's sole source of funding, allowing the organization to employ 14 people from management, accounting and field staff.

2.2. Précis of Initial Assessment: (OCAT)

Carita de Manica received an initial high OCAT score of 3.3. With its lowest scores of 3.0 and 2.5, management practices were cited as needing focused technical assistance. Key weakness identified were the technical knowledge of its staff and their reliance on one source of funding.

2.3. Volunteers visits discussed with hosts

Carita de Manica			
Assignment	Volunteer	Dates	SOW
1	Jerome Heurertz	14 th to Aug 28 th 2011	Business plan development
2	Charlene Nash	14 th to Aug 28 th 2011	Soil conversation
3	Jim Worstell	5 th to Dec 18 th 2012	Training in project management and fundraising
4	Charlene Nash	May 31 st to June 11 th 2013	Food processing and conservation
5	Betty Nash	May 31 st to June 11 th 2013	Food safety and sanitation

2.4. Hosts comment to the evaluators on general volunteer impact

Carita Manica was visited by the evaluator on the August 21st, 2013 and was met by four employees of the organization; the manager, chief field officer, field officer and general administration assistant. The evaluator was told that the organization had been identified by CNFA staff and after discussions with them, the need for specific help to transmit improved practices in farming as a business and improved soil conservation techniques to its members were priorities for the NGO. Therefore, the first volunteer was requested and provided his services in mid-2011.

Unfortunately, it was not apparent from the conversations with the NGO representative present whether the first volunteer had trained the staff to create a business plan for the NGO itself, or had trained farm families in simple business planning. It seemed that little was remembered by the NGO of this volunteer's visit.

The second volunteer who had trained a number of farm families in soil conservation was well remembered. Not only had she trained farmers, but also NGO staff, and used her training techniques to continue training farmers in simple techniques such as double digging. This way of improving soil structure had not been used by the farm families.

Senior field staff explained that the majority of farmers were now using this practice as farmers had seen improved yield. Other ways of creating compost to maintain soil qualities were also covered by this training.

With the increasing interest from farm families, and little increase of funding, it was clear in 2012 that the NGO needed to be more efficient with its use of resources and the monitoring of its activities. Caritas applied to CNFA for a project management and fundraising volunteer. This expertise was provided in late 2012.

The volunteer provided the NGO with training on how to structure their work and provided some ideas on collecting data that would allow themselves to monitor their work. Project management was clearly covered, but with the focus on input control rather than output monitoring. The main monitor of their work is the Catholic bishop of the diocese. He checks inputs, visits and input deliverables, but does not appear to ask for outputs.

Therefore, output monitoring is still minimal and this leads to little information/success that can be used for fundraising.

This area of the volunteer's scope had only been touched on due to lack of time, but it is clear that the NGO now requires further funds or will need to limit the farm families. This can be done by graduating existing families or limiting the uptake of those requesting help.

However, opportunities to diversify its funding sources do exist and the evaluator recommends that a volunteer should be found with the specific task of developing the NGO's capacity to develop its own success stories that are derived from reliable monitoring data. In addition, the volunteer should develop a prospectus for the NGO and actively promote the Caritas activities to the relevant donors. Although this idea was very much appreciated by the management of the NGO, before arranging this volunteer, CNFA do needs to meet with the bishop to clarify if he would be happy for the NGO to diversify its funding and would not reduce his input.

Food processing and food safety and sanitation volunteers that arrived in May 2013 were requested for two reasons; first, to train families on preserving food for their own use and also to look at added value sales. It appeared from the discussion that a range of opportunities were covered, from developing organic sales to supermarkets to storage of certain foods. It is a little early to identify impact from these volunteer inputs.

2.5. Quantifiable Impact of a host visit identified by the evaluators

The main indicators of the NGO's success that can be noted are 80% of all farmer families serviced by Caritas have the resources to eat three meals a day. Since the CNFA volunteer interventions, the NGO has increased its coverage from 250 farm families to 500 farm families. This can partly be attributed to CNFA volunteer work.

3. Sementes Nazara Yapera

3.1. Background:

Sementes "Nazara Yapera" ("Hunger is finished") has a short history as a company, but its managers and owners Peter and Elizabeth Waziweyi have a long experience in the area of Cantanda and in the seed business. Having settled in the region of Cantandica in 1992 during the war, Elizabeth and Peter cleared and developed a farm producing maize and seed maize. This experience led to Peter being involved with a large regional seed company. Peter and Elizabeth have built up their own business activities again by developing diverse activities such as transport repair, nursery supplies, a maize mill and continued growing of open pollinated maize seeds. It is clear that their characters and business style needed some business structure/systems with all these activities, and in 2011, the first volunteer was dispatched to this company.

3.2. Précis of Initial Assessment: (OCAT)

Sementes Nazara Yapera received an initial OCAT score of 2.6. Human resources and management structure were considered strong positives for the cooperative. With a score of 2.0, management practices and financial reporting were deemed as weaknesses, and particular attention was needed for improving the company's profitability potential.

3.3. Volunteers' visits discussed with hosts

Sementes Nazara Yapera			
Assignment	Volunteer	Dates	SOW
1	Richard Lewis	3 rd to July 22 nd 2011	Business Plan Development
2	David Stevens	14 th January to 2 nd February 2013	Development of a financial control plan

3.4. Hosts comment to the evaluators on general volunteer impact

The evaluator met the husband and wife host in Cantandica on the 21st of August. Then, on the same day, travelled back to meet her husband, Peter, in Comino. The evaluators were given the view of Elizabeth on the volunteers input first. However, the report of the volunteers work varied little from Peter's opinion. The hosts had had the input of two volunteers. The first was of little help but the second was a star that had provided the host with a clear path to understanding the real working relationship that should exist between a company and its directors. In this case, the star was the Waziweyi family. The second volunteer had also trained the daughter and son-in-law in accounting systems. This was vital information for the company as it was able to obtain a grant for a new building and machinery that will allow the production of treated clean seed to maize out growers in the region.

In addition, this investment helped the family concentrate their effort on their core business, where their real expertise lies.

3.5. Quantifiable Impact of a host visit identified by the evaluators

The main quantifiable impact that could be identified by the evaluator was the investment of 200,000 USD by a USAID project into the small community of Cantandica. This investment has the potential to serve as a source of quality seed for a large number of farmers in the region. The open pollinated maize seed with a maturity of 85 days being offered has the advantage of extending planting times and improving yields in low rainfall years. F2F volunteer work with this company has allowed the company to report realistic projections and targets.

III. Malawian Case Studies

1. Kamwando Cooperative

1.1. Background

Kamwando started in 2004 as a food club with 153 members. In 2008, it qualified to receive support from JICA in the form of technical assistance (TA). This TA led the food club to be reformed as a cooperative in 2009. 21 members brought shares in the new cooperative and in 2009 it had created a vision to produce cooking oil for the region of Mchinji.

In 2010, the cooperative started producing cooking oil from soya, groundnuts and sunflower. In the first year of production, it produced and sold oil at a value of 300,000 MWK (2,000 USD at the time). CNFA started its work at the cooperative in association with JICA in 2011.

1.2. Précis of the initial assessment (OCAT)

Kamwando Cooperative had an overall score of 3.2 which represents a fairly high level of competence. No score on this baseline indicates any major deficiency. Their lowest score, in human resources and governance, was 3.0.

1.3. Volunteers visits discussed with Hosts

Kamwendo Cooking Oil Cooperative Volunteer Table			
Assignment	Volunteer	Dates	SOW
1	Helen Dolph	11 th to Aug 28 th 2011	Business Management
2	Bruce Dolph	11 th to Aug 28 th 2011	Accounting and Book Keeping
3	Helen Dolph	Aug 19 th to Sept 1 st 2012	Book Keeping
4	Joan Lowell	Sept, 2012	Marketing and Marketing Research
5	Gretchen Hopley	Nov 26 th to Dec 9 th , 2012	Marketing
6	Cliff Wener	Mar 11 th to Mar 24 th 2013	Quality Control and Sanitation

1.4. Hosts comment to the evaluators on general volunteer impact

This small cooperative in the west of the country was visited at its offices by the evaluator on the 26th of August. Present at the meeting were the chairman M Zembeni, the secretary and treasurer of the organization. The host commented that CNFA volunteers in general had

helped the cooperative transition from JICA support that finished in late 2011, and had helped management in key areas of their business. The book keeping work completed with the group had put in place simple systems that had allowed the cooperative leadership to understand the need to price their production and pay members with records.

The marketing help had been invaluable as they had expanded their production of cooking oil but also defining their core market in the region. They had been trained in farm-to-fork marketing but at the time, the main constraint to expanding the business was registration of the product with the Malawian bureau of standards.

In addition, the rise in the cost of groundnut had made it necessary to look at expanding their purchasing of sunflower. At the time of the evaluator's visit, the cooperative was processing 80% of its oil from sunflower seed and only 20% from groundnut. The management, understanding its market and its cost of production, had allowed the cooperative to adapt from groundnut oil to sunflower oil production even when most of its members produced mainly groundnut. The Chairman said they could not be sustainable in their present situation if they had continued with the groundnut oil production.

The last volunteer had helped the cooperative obtain all important certificates from the Malawian bureau of standards. This allowed the cooperative to expand its sales to the Lilongwe market for sunflower oil and where premiums might be possible to make the groundnut oil a profitable product.

With this in mind and the limited sunflower that is available in this groundnut growing area, it is recommended that an agricultural volunteer is found who can help with the development of a groundnut, sunflower intercropping system for the cooperative members. It is not clear from the members if this type of intercropping can be profitable.

1.5. Quantifiable Impact of a host visit identified by the evaluators

Cooperative sales have increased from 300,000 MK to 3,000,000 Mk during the period of CNFA interventions. The cooperative has obtained a certificate of health for its oil from the Malawian bureau of standard as a direct result of a volunteer's input.

2. Ndatani Investments

2.1. Background

This company started in 2006 with a grant of 22,000 USD as part of a USDA Land O'Lakes project investment in the dairy businesses in Malawi. The owners of the company were trained and started their business producing a dairy cow urea "lick." This product still remains, but in 2007, they expanded into producing feed mash for dairy cows. In 2009, the company received a grant from the United States Development Fund (USDF). This grant was split in two lots; 100,000 USD for equipment and 250,000 USD for technical assistance. CNFA started its volunteer assistance in 2010.

2.2. Précis of the initial assessment (OCAT)

Ndatani Investment overall OCAT score was 2.65 with particularly low scores of 1.5 and 2.0 for financial reporting and financial systems respectively. It must be noted that this OCAT system was not designed to score on technical capacity. In addition, with these low scores it is difficult to identify where the USDF technical assistance had been effective.

2.3. Volunteers visits discussed with Hosts

Ndatani Investments Volunteer Table			
Assignment	Volunteer	Dates	SOW
1	Rick Johnson	10 th to Mar 30 th 2010	Feed Formulation (Dairy)
2	Sharma Pillilamari	Mar 19 th to April 4 th 2011	Peanut Butter Refinement
3	Velma Gwishiri	7 th to Sept 22 nd 2011	Financial Accounting and Management
4	Helen Dolph	3 rd to April 22 nd 2012	Cost Accounting
5	Roy Chapin	3 rd to June 21 st , 2013	Feed Formulation (Poultry)

2.4. Hosts comment to the evaluators on general volunteer impact

The evaluator travelled to this host on the 27th of August and met with Isaac Kazanga, the managing director of the company. When interviewed, the host stressed the positive impact that the technical inputs of two consultants on feed formulation had had.

First, the dairy feed formulation expert had allowed the host to develop a more effective use of existing raw materials. The company had been provided with a list of all relevant crops and their nutritional values. Discussion had taken place to identify different raw materials in different seasons and their effect on both quality of milk and volumes. The managing director

suggested that this information had helped the company provide a dairy mash more economically, but still allowing farmers to produce an average of 17 liters of milk/day/lactation. This mash used with the urea lick had also improved lactation periods and reduced calf and cow mortality.

The next volunteer had worked with the company on their groundnut processing, but due to health standards and other commitments the product had been dropped.

As the OCAT suggested, the company required financial systems and reporting. The next two volunteers worked with management to develop and implement these skills. When asked who had received these trainings, it was clarified that their present accountant was the managing director's son who had graduated from a UK university in business and accounting. The evaluator then met the accountant who believed he had benefited from the volunteer training and now the required systems were in place.

The final and most recent volunteer to visit the company was particularly praised for his work. Although physically constrained, the volunteer had provided the company with training and software to develop feed rations for broiler and layer chickens. The managing director mentioned that this market was normally very lucrative. He did suggest that the larger producers of feed were controlling the market as they had invested in the whole value chain and could move profitability from one level to another as the market demanded. He also mentioned that the investment in raw material storage with the cash flow to stock was vital to profitability in the Malawian context. Overall, it was clear that the host was very happy with the volunteer's input.

2.5. Quantifiable Impact of a host visit identified by the evaluators

The direct support of a volunteer had helped the company more effectively formulate the dairy mash and still maintain the yield increase for dairy farmers to 17 litres/day/cow/lactation from 7 litres/cow/day. In addition, the managing director confirmed that sales of the dairy mash increased by 25%

A volunteer had given the company the technical capacity to diversify into chicken feeds which had help the company's profitability and sustainability

The financial systems provided by a volunteer had helped the company rationalize its accounts

3. Saju Agro-dealers



3.1. Background

Saju Agro-dealers is a new business started at the end of 2011. Its managing director, however, had experience working for another private company. Due to redundancy, he decided to start this farmer input supply business. The company had employed a knowledgeable agronomist who had given the business technical knowledge and some initial contacts with farmers. The company sells a range of products ranging from pre and post-harvest pesticides, fungicides, herbicides to grain and horticultural seeds and fertilizers and small tools.

3.2. Précis of the initial assessment (OCAT)

Saju Agro-dealers received an overall OCAT score of 3.25. The financial report was given a very low score of 1.0 followed by 2.0 in management practices.

3.3. Volunteers visits discussed with Hosts

Saju Agrodealers Volunteer Table			
Assignment	Volunteer	Dates	SOW
1	David Stevens	15 th to June 30 th 2012	Operating Strategy Plan Development
2	Cliff Ruder	Aug 24 th to 8 th Sept 2012	Proposal Development

3.4. Hosts comment to the evaluators on general volunteer impact

Julius Kamanga, the managing director of Saju Agro dealers, was interviewed in CNFA offices in Lilongwe on the 29th of August. He brought a very detailed June 2013 monthly report. The monthly report included sales broken down between its two branches, cost of sales, gross profit operating expenses and therefore, operating profit. An expansion plan was included in addition to a human resource report. This was a very professional report for this size of business.

The volunteer's work was discussed with Julius, reporting that support from Farmer-to -- Farmer has had a significant and positive impact on Saju's growth and expansion.

The first volunteer had helped his business by providing him with the skills to develop his business and report his progress in a professional manner. The operational strategy and reporting systems provided by the volunteer was still being used as a guide for management, and in the opinion of the MD, had contributed to the increased sales of the company.

The second volunteer had developed a specific proposal with the company. The proposal looked at the development of a machinery contracting arm that the MD suggested would help farmers save money. Julius hoped that the money saved by these mechanized farmers would be used on inputs that they presently could not afford. The proposal for funds to start the machinery sales was still awaiting finance.

3.5. Quantifiable Impact of a host visit identified by the evaluators

Since the development of the strategic plan and reporting systems, the company has opened a new branch with the employment of two sales assistants who have been trained. The company now employs five personnel.

As a consequence of volunteer help, the company has now been financed by Micro Enterprise Africa with a 10% 3-year convertible loan stock of MWK 3.5 million. In the difficult financial situation in Malawi, Saju has managed to secure a 30-day credit line with a distributor, Chemical and Marketing, due to its reporting systems.

In addition, Saju has registered with the Seed Traders Association of Malawi and participated in the 2012/13 farm input subsidy program.

IV. Conclusions from the Southern African visits

In general, the evaluators were very impressed with the organisation of volunteer input and specific host impact in this region. Therefore, the suggestions from various sources below are seen as refinements to a successful program.

There are a number of general issues that were identified by the evaluator during his visits that might make it easier to identify real/relative impact of volunteers in the future as well as monitor knowledge gained by receipts.

The issue of baselines of host capacity and the specific improvements as part of a package of volunteer inputs could be look at. The OCAT is presently used to assess governance and management topics, but does not assess the technical skills of the host. In addition, the OCAT itself is not updated by F2F staff, as volunteers provide input to the host.

It is recommended that the OCAT system is upgraded to a full management tool for F2F staff. Good M+E of operational work in the field is vital to identifying successful assignments.

The system should include a grading of different technical capacity, as well as the existing governance and business management, and should be computerised so that it can be updated following each volunteer visit. A reporting and grading system should be standardised so that each country director and his staff have clear guidelines for its completion.

The present system of evaluation of a hosts' performance assumes that the volunteer gives recommendations for implementation for each visit. These recommendations are implemented and the impact of the recommendations is noted. This system does not take into account the knowledge that is acquired by a host. At present, F2F management waits for a certain time (perhaps six months) to see if that particular input has been implemented. If the host has implemented the recommendations, then it is assumed that the host has moved forward. However, if a skill is not implemented within a certain time, it is assumed that the knowledge is lost and the host has failed in their end of the F2F bargain, thus receiving no further help.

In many cases in the East and Southern Africa context, it may be useful to create a standard package of tried and tested measures/volunteer inputs that suit a certain level of host. This package of knowledge would allow and require for more immediate evaluation and monitoring at each stage to show that the host has acquired the skills that will improve their circumstances. Implementation will naturally come when their businesses allows it.

During our evaluation, the hosts' constant response was that they wished to learn and that they appreciated the knowledge that was provided. These hosts had all understood that F2F was not a donor of goods or grants.

The evaluators met several volunteers during their travels and interviewed them on their experiences. One of the questions always asked was: how many assignments have you done and how effective were you on your first assignment? The answer was that on their first assignment, they were not effective. This issue was borne out by hosts and country directors. A cadre of professional volunteers is the way to get value for money transference of

knowledge and impact. If the objective of providing services to recipients has to be compromised by other requirements, then it is the evaluator's recommendation that new volunteers are buddied with experienced volunteers at the end of their assignments so that they can learn from each other. In-country experience cannot be substituted by home office back up.

Another way of maintaining and disseminating the knowledge of visiting volunteers would be the development of a relationship with a local consultancy company. If a volunteer is imparting knowledge that the said local consultancy company would be interested in, they could counterpart the volunteer with the agreement that they will help with another host needing similar training in the future.

Finally, on this issue, one poor volunteer can affect the F2F country reputation more than ten good ones. This was borne out by host interviews carried out by the evaluators.

Issues directly relating to discussions with the country directors: All wanted more resources to follow up with hosts. All believed that a volunteer doing two assignments or multiple hosts was more efficient. Defining assignments on the basis of air travel seemed very inefficient to them. They all suggested that experienced volunteers could often do 28 days in-country or between adjacent countries without returning to the US and this should be defined as two assignments. Saving made from these arrangements would provide the funds for better follow-up with the hosts.

Country directors also suggested that working with other USAID projects and donors often created confusion with their hosts. Also, F2F became a convenient excuse for other project inactivity or lack of achievement. Country directors suggested that F2F could be the catalyst for business to seek finance from donors, but this should not be done at the behest of a particular project, rather at the request of a host.

However, to help small business, the country director said they did need professional help to identify/obtain detailed information on such things as the real availability of different types of finance. They hoped in the future there would be budget to contract services that could, for example, detail and update the source of bank finance and its real likely rates and requirements. Sources of grants and the detailed requirements of the grant programs would be useful as well.

Country directors' views on cost share were interesting. They believed that the percentage cost share should be directly related to the host turnover. A small cooperative paying the same percentage for a volunteer as a large company was not realistic. In fact, the variance was happening, but it needed formalizing.

Finally, possible F2F should maintain its technical focus higher up in the agribusiness value chain. This focus must be justified more clearly in terms of real beneficiaries. Work that improves a company's capacity to purchase more raw material from farmers must be defined at the outset. It was noted that interventions higher in the value chain did have a positive effect on those within the value chain, but there were some cases where an individual company's success was not benefiting others.