



NER-Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) Report 2025 Dedza

GIZ & Self-Help Africa – Dedza Nutrition Emergency
Response (Oct-Dec 2024)



giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



**Self Help
AFRICA**

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1.0 Background

Malnutrition remains a pressing challenge in Malawi, particularly during the lean season when food availability and access become severely constrained. The **2024 Nutrition-Sensitive Lean Season Response** in Malawi (under the BMZ Drought Response in Southern Africa, implemented by GIZ and Self-Help-Africa SHA) aimed to mitigate these challenges by providing targeted support to households with acutely malnourished children. The intervention focused on both immediate relief and long-term resilience-building, ensuring that affected households had access to essential food supplies while also strengthening their agricultural capacity.

Under this program, each targeted household received:

- **MWK 95,200 in cash transfers** through mobile money to enhance purchasing power and dietary diversity.
- **Agricultural inputs** including cassava, soya, groundnuts, and inoculants, aimed at improving household food production and nutrition.
- **Training on Good Agricultural Practices / Climate Smart Agriculture**
- **Nutrition Counselling** with a focus on infant and young child feeding practices

The Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) survey aimed to evaluate:

1. **The effectiveness of cash transfers and agricultural inputs** in improving food security.
2. **Beneficiary satisfaction** with the support provided.
3. **Challenges faced during the implementation and utilization** of the assistance.
4. **Recommendations for future emergency responses** to enhance efficiency and impact.

By analyzing the results of this PDM, GIZ (mainly represented through-FNSP), SHA, the Dedza District Council and their partners seek to improve future emergency response strategies, ensuring that interventions remain responsive, impactful, and aligned with the needs of vulnerable communities.

2.0 Assessment Overview

The assessment targeted a total population of 1,324 households, with a sample size of 149 households selected through random purposive sampling. This approach ensured representation of diverse household experiences, balancing feasibility and statistical reliability to capture meaningful trends and insights. The sample was geographically distributed, with 70% (104 households) from TA Kaphuka and 30% (45 households) from TA Kachindamoto aligned with the overall distribution of beneficiaries from each Traditional Authority.

The assessment was conducted between February 3–5, 2025, with 149 respondents providing insights into the effectiveness of the intervention. Data was collected using a combination of household surveys and focus group discussions (FGDs). The

surveys were conducted through Kobo Toolbox, using structured questionnaires administered via one-on-one interviews. In addition, three Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were held: one high-level discussion with the District Nutrition Coordination Committee (DNCC), Self-Help Africa (SHA), and other key stakeholders, and two community FGDs with beneficiaries—one per TA (Kaphuka and Kachindamoto).

By integrating random purposive sampling with mixed-method data collection, the assessment ensured a comprehensive evaluation of the intervention. The combination of quantitative survey data and qualitative insights from FGDs provided a well-rounded understanding of the program's impact on targeted households.

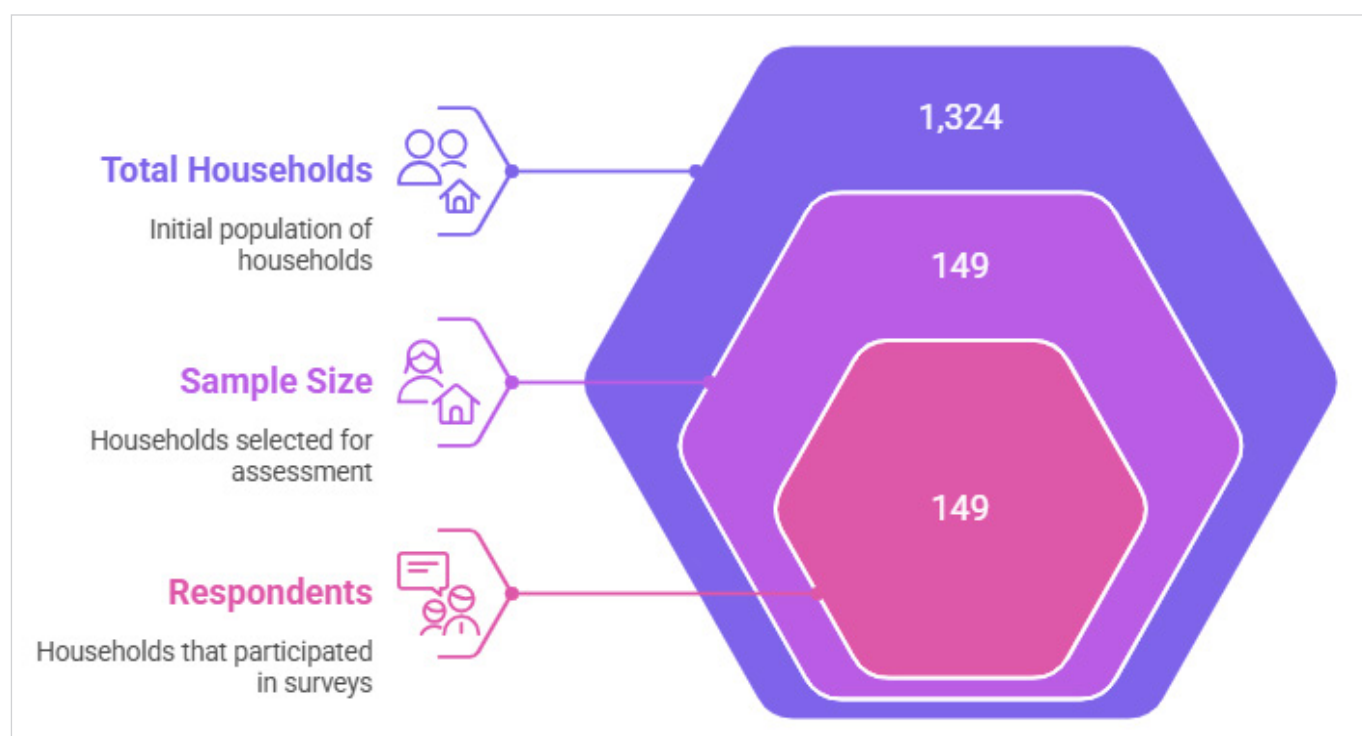


Figure 1: Assessment Overview

3.0 Key Findings

3.1 Overview

100% of respondents confirmed receipt of the cash, 90.6% received agricultural and 72.5% of the

respondents attended Practices (GAP) & Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) Trainings.

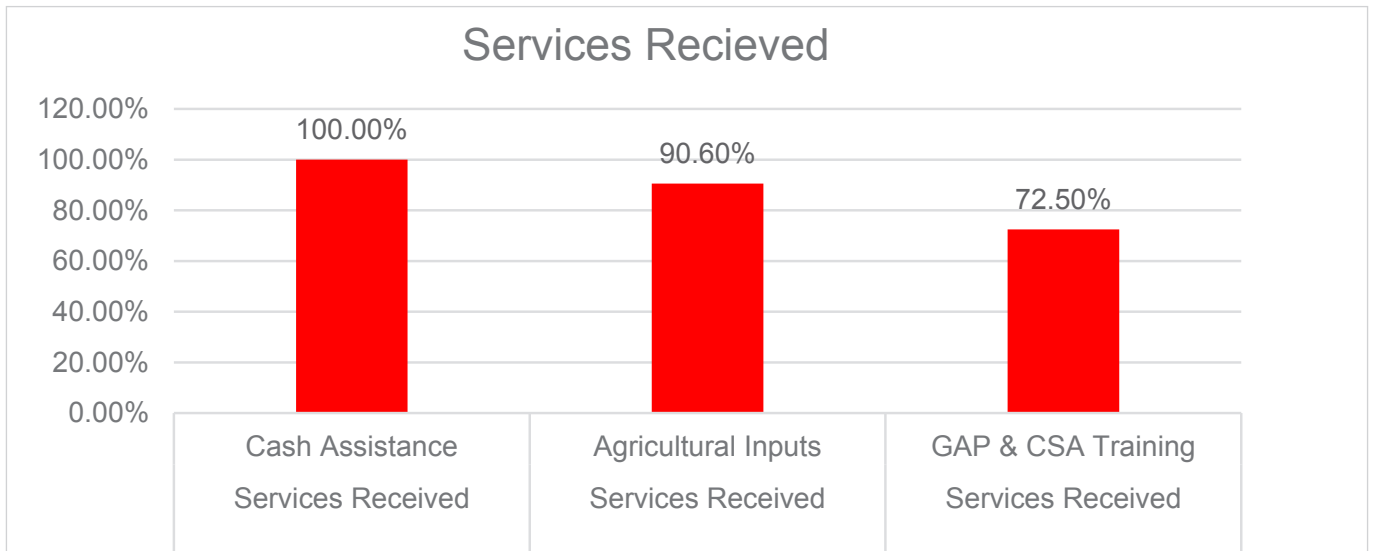


Figure 2: Type of service received

As 100% should have received inputs and trainings, GIZ and SHA will need to verify these cases with distribution/handover files and training attendance records.

Counseling by HSAs during monthly U5 clinics was

more widely received, with 84% of households benefiting from these sessions between October and December 2024. Only 16% did not receive any counseling, indicating that the majority had access to important health and nutritional guidance during this period.

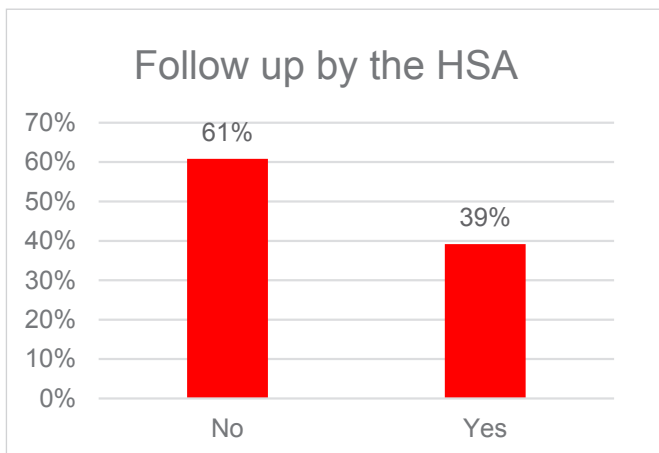


Figure 3: Follow up by HSA

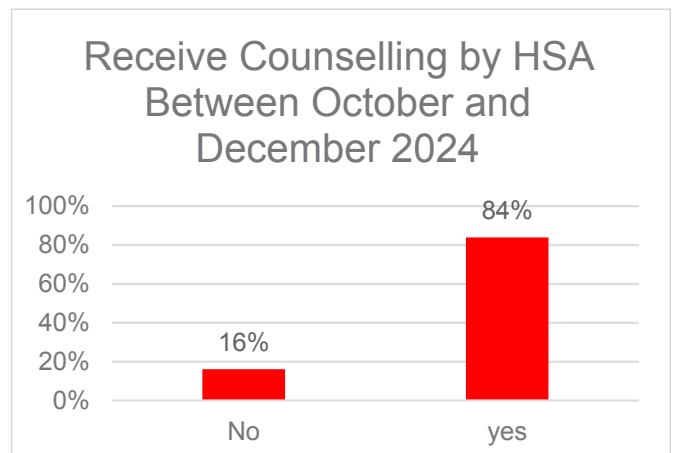


Figure 4: Counselling by HSA

A significant proportion of households, 61%, reported not receiving follow-up support from Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs), while 39% did receive follow-ups. This suggests a gap in continued engagement, which could impact on the sustained adoption of recommended health and nutrition practices.

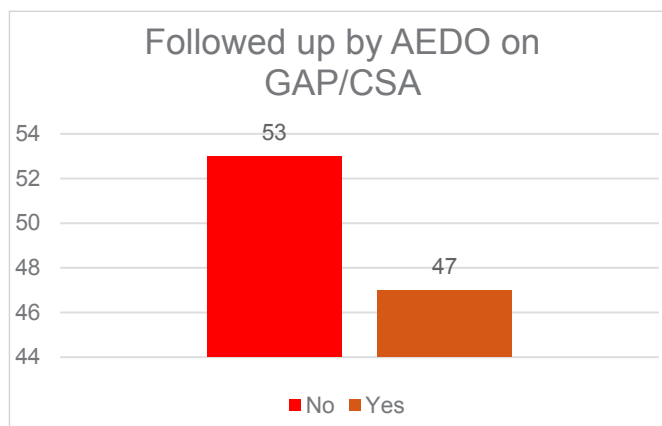


Figure 5: Follow ups AEDO

Follow-up support from Agricultural Extension Development Officers (AEDOs) on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) was relatively balanced, with 47% of households confirming they received follow-ups, while 53% did not. This suggests that nearly half of the targeted households had additional support in improving their agricultural practices, though gaps in coverage remain.

3.2 Social economic status

3.2.1 Source of income

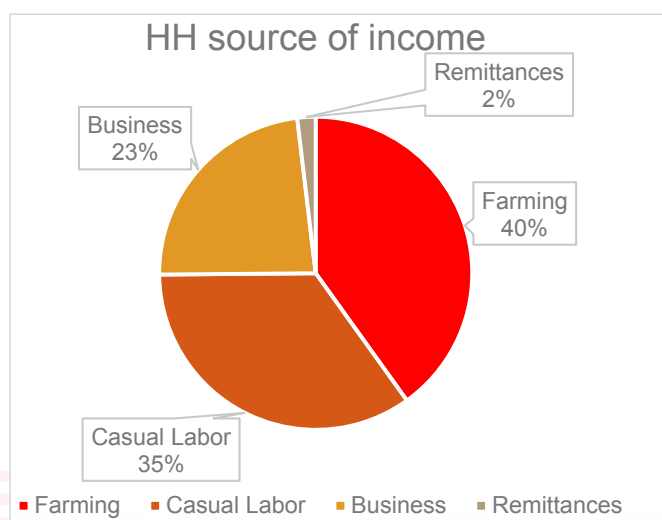
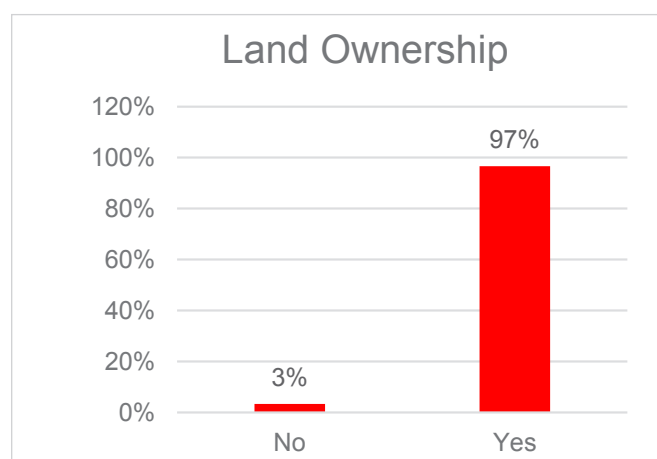
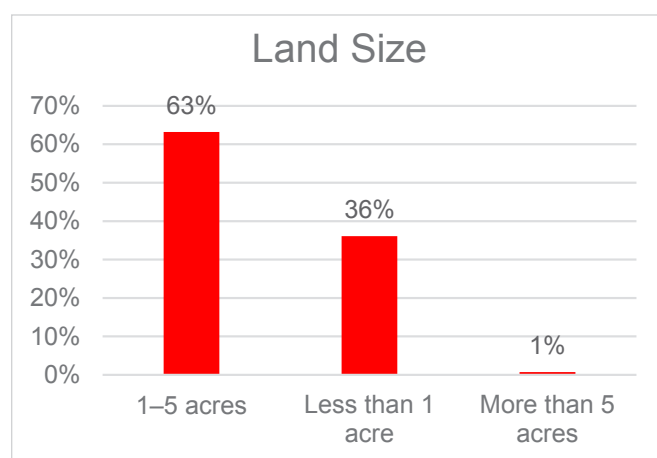


Figure 6: Source of income

The primary sources of income for households highlight four key income streams: farming, casual labor, business, and remittances (gifts). The largest proportion (40%) of households rely on farming as their main source of income, followed closely by casual labor (35%), indicating a strong dependence on agriculture and informal employment. Business activities account for 23% of household income, showing a significant engagement in small-scale trade and entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, remittances make up only 2%, suggesting limited external financial support.

3.2.2 Land ownership and Land size



Land ownership is widespread among respondents, with 97% reporting that they own land, while only 3% do not. This indicates that access to land is generally not a major challenge for most households.

In terms of land size, the majority (63%) have holdings ranging between 1 to 5 acres, which aligns with typical smallholder farming practices.

A significant portion (36%) own less than 1 acre, potentially limiting agricultural output and food security. Only 1% have landholdings exceeding

5 acres, suggesting that large-scale farming is uncommon within the surveyed group.

3.3 Cash Assistance usage



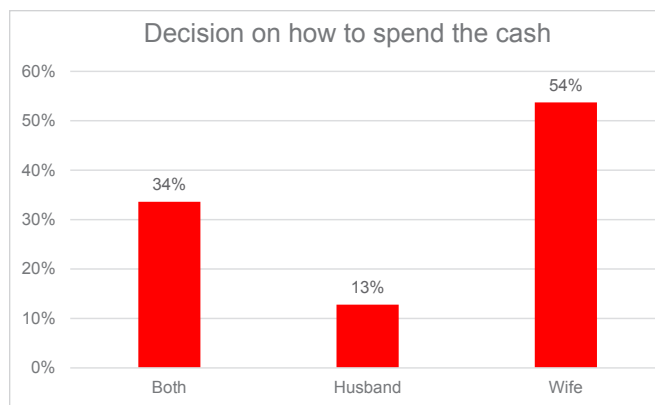
Picture 1: Focus Group Discussion with beneficiaries in TA Kaphuka

“Although others envied us for receiving cash, it was painful because we did not receive it out of choice, but because our children were malnourished. It was heartbreaking to see them in such a condition, but we had no food.” From our FGDs.

3.3.1 Synopsis

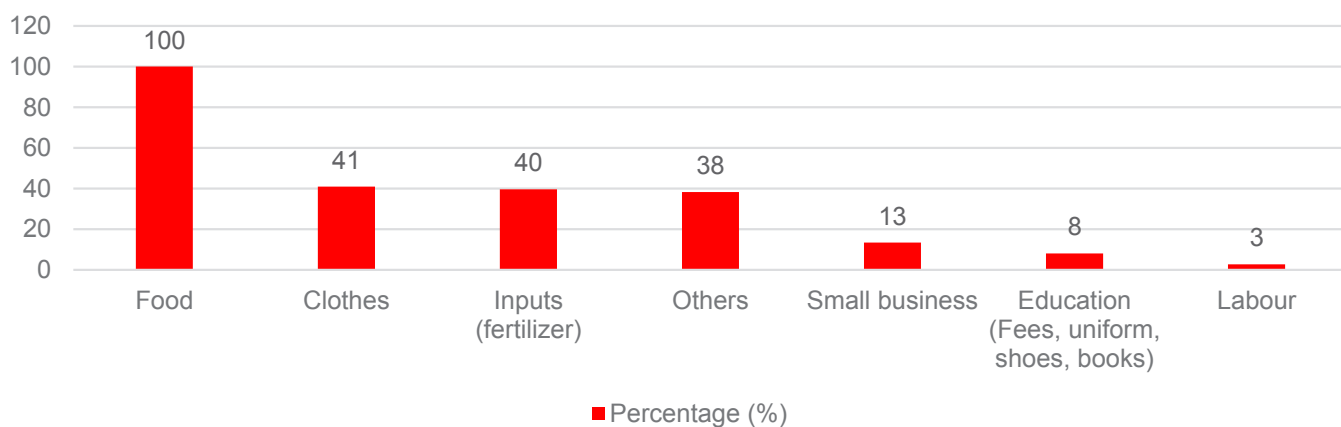
The analysis explores how households utilized cash assistance, with a primary focus on food security, essential needs, and income-generating activities. It examines spending priorities, the variety of foods consumed, and the impact on dietary diversity. The findings provide insights into household decision-making, highlighting the role of cash assistance in improving nutrition and overall well-being.

3.3.2 Who has decided how the cash should be spent?



Wives made most financial decisions at 54%, while both spouses decide together in 34% of households. Husbands independently decide in only 13% of cases, indicating that women play a dominant role in household financial decision-making around the cash assistance received.

How did you spend the cash

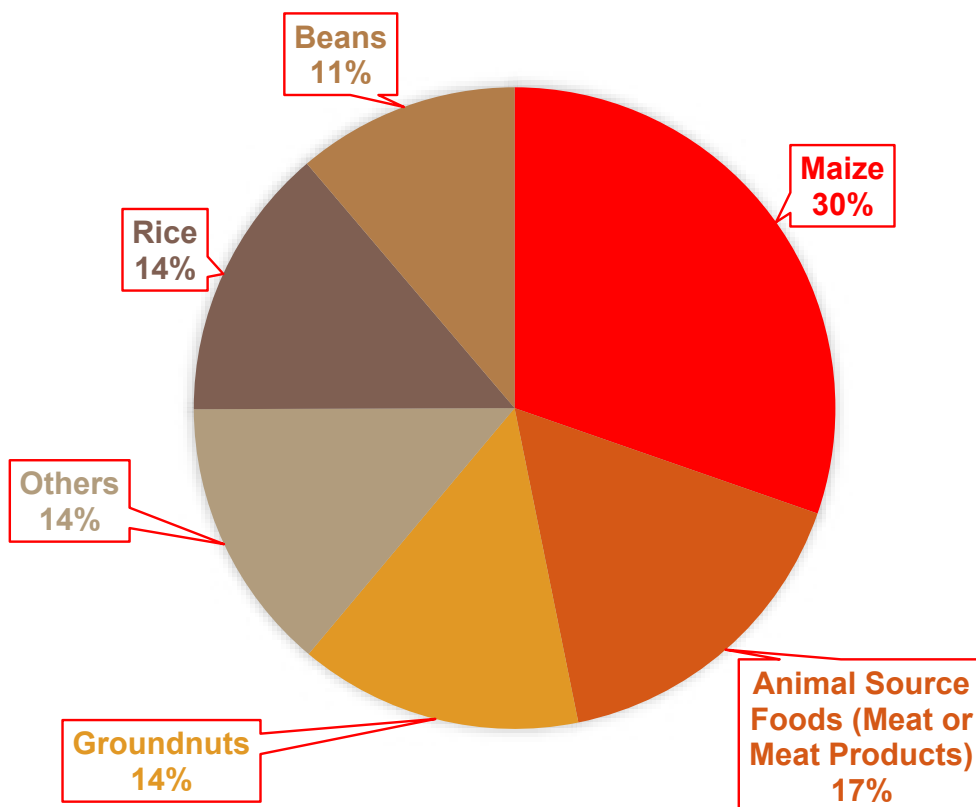


All respondents (100%) prioritized spending their cash assistance on food, underscoring its fundamental role in household sustenance. Clothing and agricultural inputs, such as fertilizer, were also notable expenses, with 41% and 40% of recipients allocating funds toward these needs.

Additionally, 38% of households directed their cash toward other miscellaneous expenditures, while

13% invested in small businesses, indicating some focus on income generation. Education-related expenses, including school fees, uniforms, shoes, and books, accounted for 8% of total spending. A small proportion (3%) used the funds to pay for labor, suggesting that immediate household consumption needs took precedence over hiring external help.

FOOD ITEMS (%)



Food items consumed by respondents:

Maize being the most reported staple, making up 30% of total consumption, this highlights maize's central role in household diets. **Animal source foods**, including meat and meat products, accounted for 17%, indicating a notable intake of protein-rich foods. **Groundnuts** and **rice** were equally represented at 14%, demonstrating their importance as alternative staples. **Beans** contributed 11%, further diversifying protein sources.

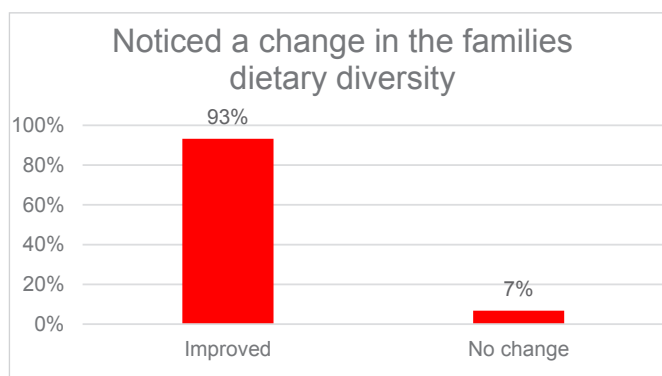
The "Others" category, making up 14%, included a variety of additional food purchases. Soya was frequently mentioned, primarily for **porridge preparation**, alongside **sugar**, **biscuits**, and other porridge-making ingredients such as **nsinjiro (groundnuts flour)**. **Cooking oil** was another common purchase

Additionally, milk was purchased, particularly for babies who do not breastfeed, and fruits and vegetables were also acquired, primarily for children.

This distribution indicates a balanced approach to household food consumption, combining staple foods with protein sources, cooking essentials, and fresh produce to meet nutritional needs.

"The cash distribution helped us in the short term to buy urgent needs, especially food for our children. Now, our children are no longer malnourished, and their health has improved."

FGDs



The bar chart indicates that 93% of respondents noticed an improvement in their families' dietary diversity, while only 7% reported no change. This suggests that most households experienced a broader range of food consumption, likely incorporating a mix of staple foods, proteins, and other essential nutrients.

This aligns with the previously analyzed food consumption data, where maize was the dominant staple, but households also incorporated animal source foods, groundnuts, rice, beans, and other diverse food items. The "Others" category, which included soya, cooking oil, fish, eggs, milk, fruits, and vegetables, further supports this dietary diversification. The inclusion of these items, especially proteins and fresh produce, has likely contributed to the observed improvement in dietary diversity among families.

Overall, the data indicates a positive impact of cash transfers on household nutrition, with families accessing a more balanced diet that goes beyond staple foods to include a variety of nutrient-rich options.

3.3.3 Conclusion

The data highlights the essential role of cash assistance in ensuring household food security, with all recipients prioritizing food purchases. Other significant expenses included clothing, agricultural inputs, and miscellaneous household needs, while a smaller portion of households allocated funds to income-generating activities and education. The spending patterns reflect an emphasis on immediate sustenance, with limited investment in long-term economic resilience.

In terms of food consumption, maize remains the dominant staple, but households also incorporated a diverse range of protein sources, including meat, beans, and ground nuts. The inclusion of additional food items such as soya, cooking oil, and fresh produce suggests efforts to improve dietary variety.

The reported improvement in dietary diversity among 93% of households indicates a positive nutritional impact, likely driven by increased access to varied food sources. This aligns with spending trends and food consumption data, demonstrating a shift towards more balanced diets that go beyond staple foods. Overall, the findings suggest

that cash assistance has contributed to enhanced household nutrition, though continued support may be necessary to sustain these benefits and encourage long-term dietary improvements.

3.4 Agriculture Assistance usage

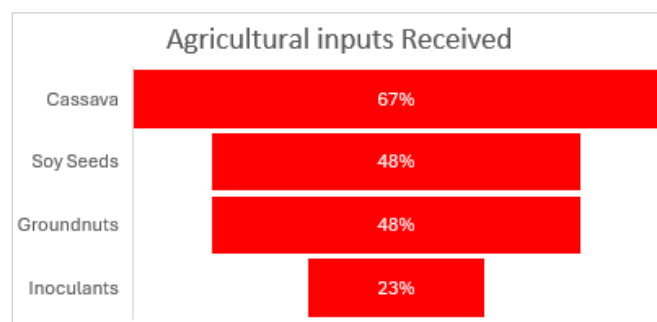


Picture 2: A beneficiary that received soy and cassava inputs explaining how she utilized it on her fields

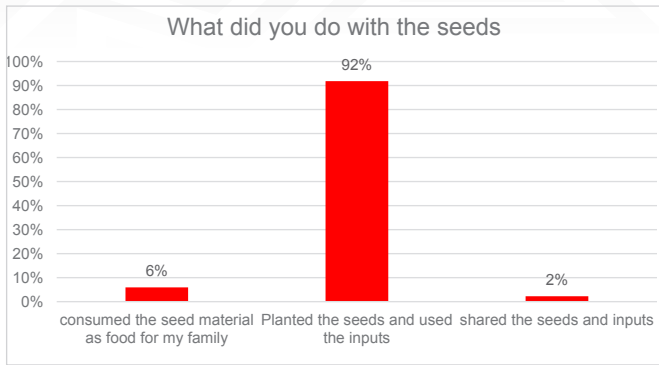
“These seeds are a better investment. When we harvest, we can sell and get more money than the cash we received.” FGDs

3.4.1 Introduction

The assessment examines the distribution, utilization, and performance of agricultural inputs among beneficiaries. It highlights the types of inputs received, their intended use, and the level of satisfaction among recipients. Additionally, it explores planting rates, crop preferences, and the effectiveness of the distributed seeds, providing insights into their impact on food security and agricultural resilience.



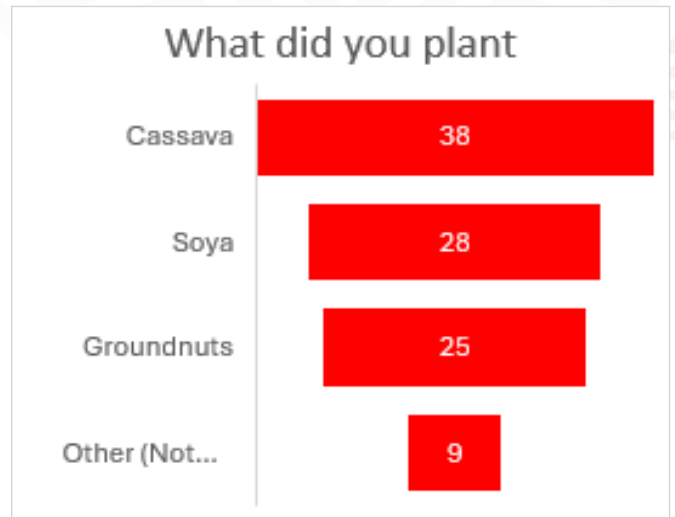
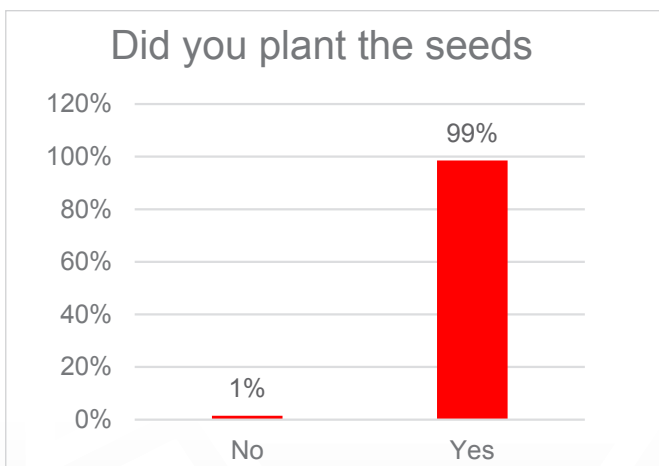
As per the programme design, cassava was the most received input, with 67% of respondents benefiting from it. Soy seeds and groundnuts were received by an equal proportion of respondents, each at 48%. Inoculants were the least distributed input, reaching 23% of the respondents. The adjusted percentages ensure that all received inputs are accounted for while maintaining proportionality.



The majority, 92%, planted the seeds and used the inputs as intended. A smaller proportion, 6%, consumed the seed material as food for their families. Only 2% of respondents shared seeds and inputs with others. This distribution indicates that nearly all beneficiaries prioritized agricultural use over other purposes.

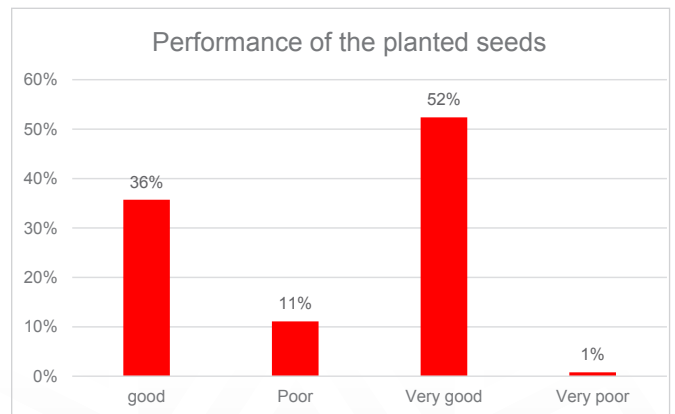


A significant majority, 71.77%, rated the inputs as "Great," indicating high satisfaction. Meanwhile, 19.35% found them "Good," while 7.26% rated them as "Okay." Only 1.61% considered the inputs to be of "Bad" quality. Overall, the data suggests that most beneficiaries were pleased with the quality of the agricultural inputs they received.



Shows a high adoption rate of the distributed seeds, with 99% of respondents planting them. Among the planted crops, Cassava was the most popular (38 respondents), followed by Soya (28), Groundnuts (25), and other crops (9), indicating a diverse planting strategy that enhances food security and resilience. The low percentage (1%) of non-planters suggests minimal barriers to seed utilization, though understanding their reasons could further improve future distributions.

Note: It is important to note that the seeds were chosen by the participants based on their preference and suitability for the location indicated by the District Crop Officer. However, the majority of participants did initially not choose cassava despite its resilience to drought and poor soil conditions and its significance to food security during the common lean period (much later harvest than the other crops). The programme decided to utilize savings from other budget activities to promote cassava by distributing the crop as a top-up to other chosen crops.



A majority, 52%, rated the performance as "Very good," indicating successful germination and growth. Additionally, 36% found the performance to be "Good." However, 11% reported "Poor" performance, and 1% rated it as "Very poor," citing a low germination rate as the primary issue. Overall, while most respondents had a positive experience, a small portion faced challenges related to seed viability. During FGD recipients reported a dry spell at the end of December, which negatively affected the performance of cassava (drying up of distributed cuttings).

3.4.2 Conclusion

The findings indicate a high adoption rate of the distributed inputs, with nearly all respondents utilizing them for agricultural purposes. Cassava emerged as the most widely received and planted crop, followed by soya and groundnuts. Beneficiaries expressed overall satisfaction with the quality of inputs, with most rating them positively. However, a small percentage faced challenges, particularly related to seed viability and germination. Addressing these issues could further enhance the effectiveness of future input distributions and strengthen agricultural productivity.



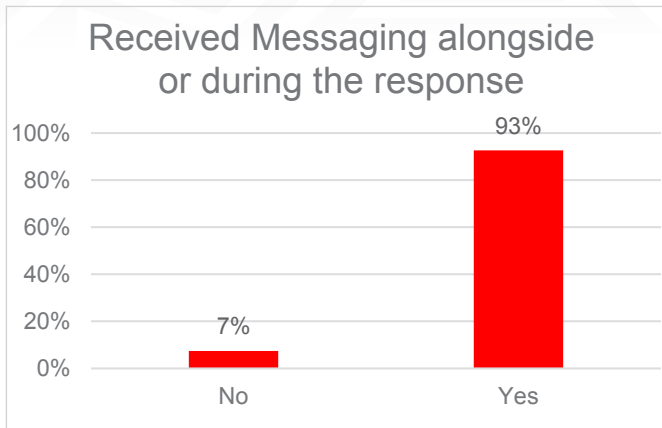
Picture 3: Agricultural Extension Officers (AEDOs) sharing insights from the trainings they provided to beneficiaries

3.5 Training CSA/GAP

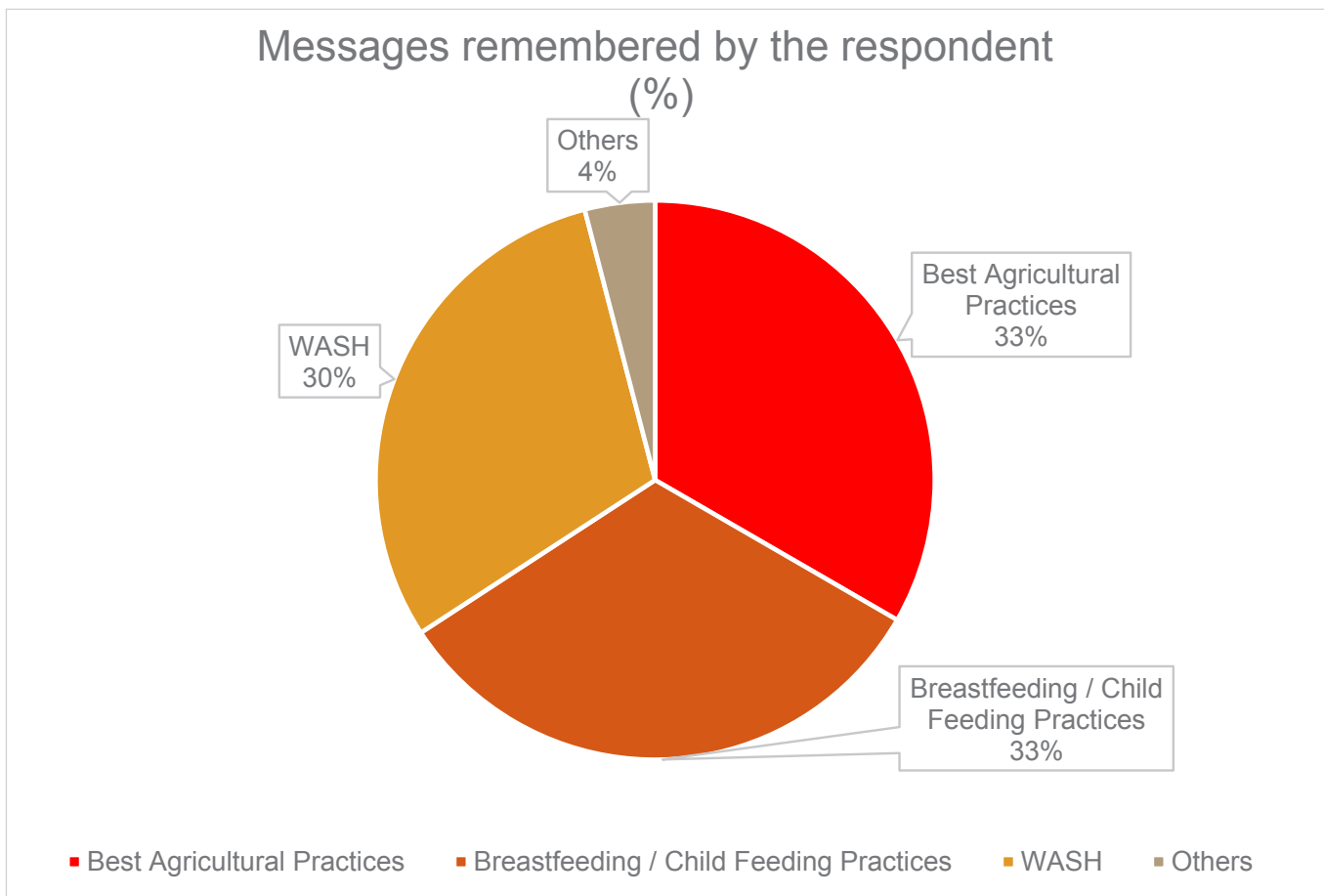
3.5.1 Introduction

Effective communication and hands-on training are essential components of agricultural and nutrition-related interventions. The majority of respondents (93%) reported receiving messages during the response, highlighting strong communication efforts. Key messages focused on Best Agricultural Practices, Breastfeeding/Child Feeding Practices,

and WASH, with recall rates of 33%, 33%, and 30%, respectively. Additionally, practical 3-days trainings covered a range of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) topics, including crop planting, soil conservation, pest management, and afforestation. These sessions provided farmers with new or refresher knowledge on improving agricultural productivity, enhancing nutrition, and promoting sustainable farming practices.



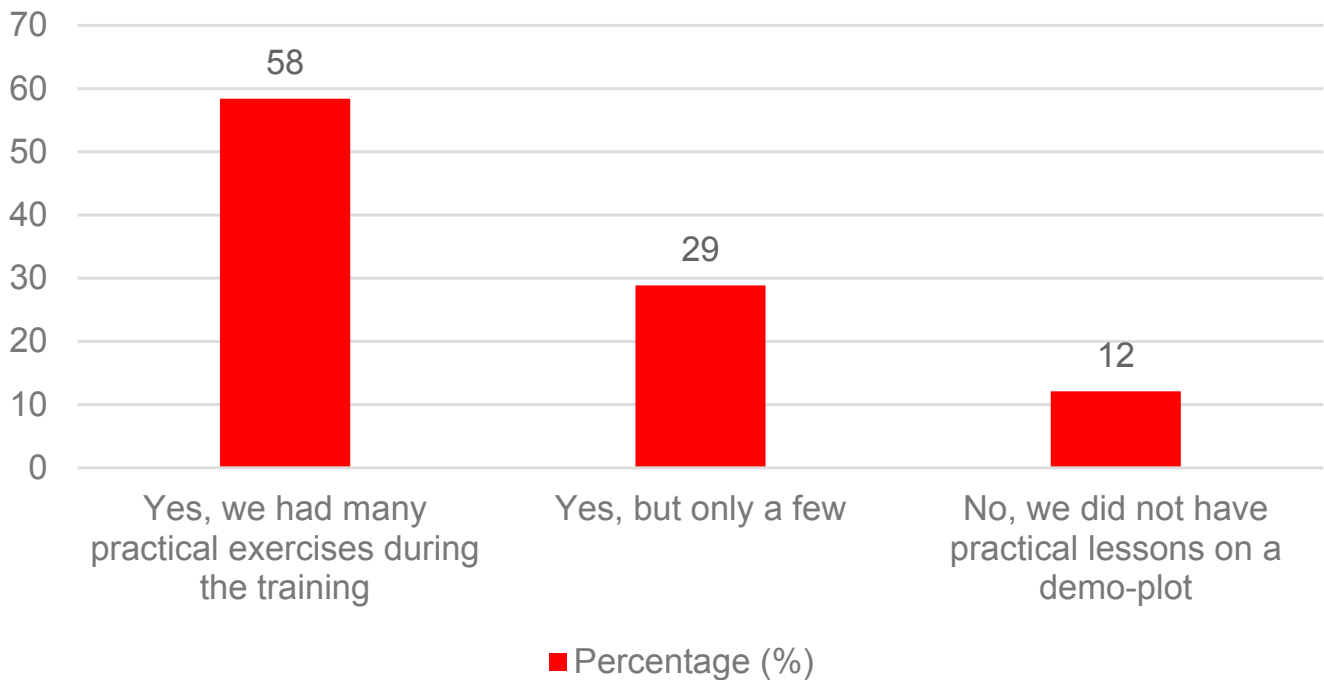
Most respondents (93%) received messages alongside or during the response, while only 7% did not, indicating widespread communication efforts during the intervention



The most remembered messages were Best Agricultural Practices and Breastfeeding/Child Feeding Practices, each recalled by 33% of respondents. WASH messages were remembered

by 30%, while only 4% recalled other messages, indicating a strong focus on agricultural, nutrition, and hygiene-related messaging.

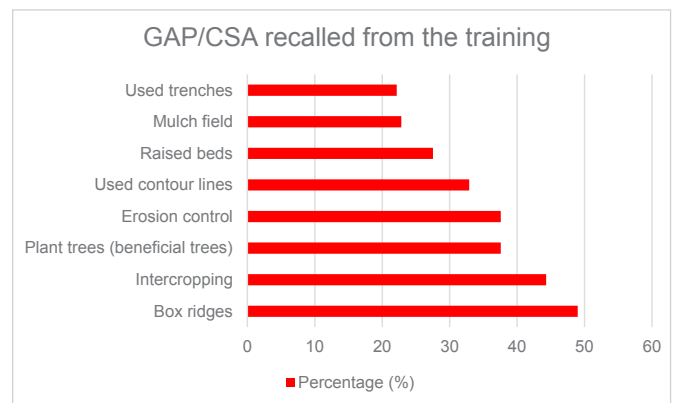
Practical trainings on GAP/CSA



The trainings cover: The training covered various practical lessons related to crop planting, spacing, and management. Participants learned about general planting techniques, including seed and cuttings planting, recommended planting spaces, and methods of planting. Specific lessons focused on making ridges, constructing box ridges, and double-line planting, as well as soil erosion control and contour line measurements.

For specific crops, respondents mentioned training on planting soya, ground nuts, and cassava, including how to improve crop production, protect ground nuts from pests, and manage cassava ridges and spacing. Some sessions covered planting demonstrations for soya, groundnuts, and cassava, using demonstration gardens.

Additional topics included tree planting techniques, pest and disease control, and crop management in the field. Some participants also recalled lessons showing pictures of good agricultural practices to reinforce learning.



3.5.2 GAP that the Respondents Could Recall

Respondents recalled various Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) from the training sessions. In terms of planting techniques and spacing, they learned about seed planting, early planting, and the proper planting of seeds. Specific techniques included plant spacing at 10 cm apart, line spacing, and ridge spacing. Participants also remembered the recommended spacing for soya and ground nuts, with some noting the practice of using two lines on one ridge instead of a single line. Lessons on planting ground nuts with inoculants were also highlighted.

For soil and water conservation practices, respondents mentioned the use of contour lines, box ridges, and intercropping. They recalled techniques such as erosion control, raised beds, making footpaths, and proper ridge-making. The construction of box ridges and land clearing were also emphasized as essential techniques for improving soil and water retention.

Regarding pest and disease management, participants learned about managing pests and diseases using improved seeds and pest management strategies. Some recalled taking care of crops using *usipa* to prevent pests, while others mentioned the use of chemicals, urine, and burning charcoal to control insects. Lessons also covered land clearing, seed inoculation, and proper ridge-making to minimize pest and disease risks.

In the area of soil fertility and crop management, the training emphasized intercropping, mulching, and the use of box ridges. Participants also learned about fertilizer-making using urine and gaga and received lessons on planting ground nuts in low-fertility lands to help with soil restoration and erosion control.

Finally, afforestation and tree planting were key topics in the training. Respondents recalled learning

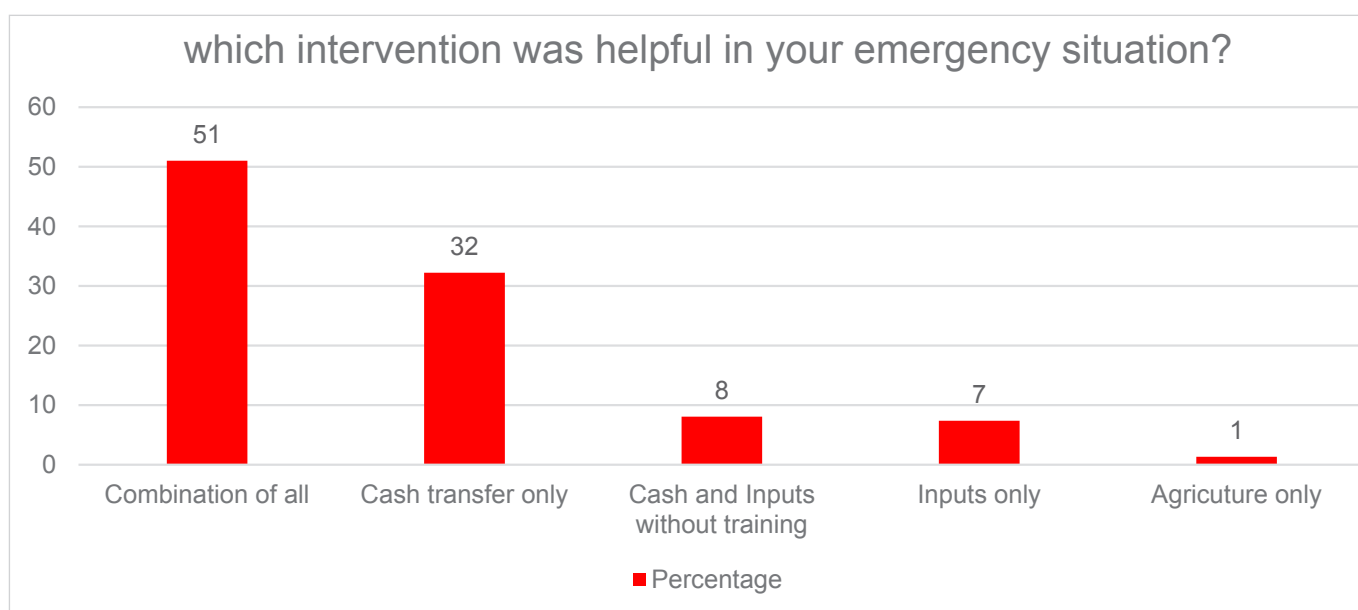
about planting trees alongside the construction of box ridges, with afforestation being promoted as a critical practice for environmental conservation.

3.5.3 Conclusion on GAP/CSA

The findings indicate that most respondents benefited from both messaging and practical training, reinforcing their understanding of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). The recall of key messages and training topics suggests that interventions successfully conveyed critical information on crop management, soil conservation, and sustainable farming techniques. Moving forward, continued emphasis on hands-on demonstrations and refresher sessions can enhance knowledge retention and encourage wider adoption of these best practices, ultimately contributing to improved agricultural productivity and food security. Simultaneously, feedback from the FGD suggests that overall understanding and knowledge among rural households on GAP and CSA topics is already widely existent. In future the role of AEDO's can shift towards support to households in adopting and further implementing sustainable farming methods.

3.6 Feedback Mechanisms

3.6.1 Recommendations and Preferred response methodology



3.6.2 Suggestions for the program:

Most respondents suggested increasing the amount of financial support provided to beneficiaries, citing economic challenges and the rising cost of goods. Several also recommend ensuring timely and consistent disbursement of funds, with some expressing concerns about unmet expectations regarding the duration of cash assistance.

Additionally, many respondents emphasized the need for more agricultural support, including increased access to seeds (particularly maize) and farm inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides. There were also calls for expanding training on agricultural practices and improving follow-up support to enhance the program's effectiveness.

A few respondents highlighted the importance of monitoring and evaluation to ensure equitable distribution and timely delivery of resources. Some beneficiaries expressed general appreciation for the program, urging its continuation and expansion to reach more people in need.

3.6.3 After Action Review / Learning Workshop

Based on the results of this report and the collected experiences during the jointly implemented Nutrition Emergency Response, key stakeholders (GIZ, SHA, Dedza District Council) held an After-Action Review Workshop for the documentation of best practices, learnings and recommendations for future programming.

3.6.3.1 Coordination

Best Practices:

- The coordination between the two GIZ Projects (GIAE and FNSP), the implementing organization (Self Help Africa), and various sector offices at the Dedza District Council (Nutrition, M&E, Agriculture, Emergency, and Health) was effective. All stakeholders were actively engaged in planning, implementation, monitoring, and review of the response.

- Extra personnel from GIZ and Self Help Africa were designated for overall coordination, improving the timely implementation of interventions without impacting other project activities.

- Investing time in Post-Distribution Monitoring and After-Action Review Workshops proved beneficial for joint learning and future recommendations for GIZ, the implementing organization, and government sector offices involved in emergency responses.

Challenges and Improvement Areas:

- Gaps in the involvement of government sector offices were noted. Unlike the previous response, a multi-sectoral coordination committee was not established at the same scale, which was seen as a step back. Closer involvement of the emergency and risk management office and the district agriculture office could have prevented issues like the drying up of Cassava cuttings due to a lack of horticulture expertise.

3.6.3.2 Beneficiary Targeting

Best Practices:

- Nutrition screenings using MUAC tape effectively identified households with acutely malnourished children or pregnant and lactating women, ensuring support for the most vulnerable. This method maximized resource utilization for nutrition and health improvements.
- Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs) were well-trained and sensitized, highlighting the importance of preparing extension workers for emergencies.
- Utilizing data from routine nutrition screenings can reduce the risk of data falsification and save financial resources. If routine screenings are not conducted, framing the exercise as a routine screening before announcing its use for a response program is advisable.

Challenges and Improvement Areas:

- The nationwide fuel shortage posed logistical challenges for nutrition screenings. However, limiting geographical coverage to two TAs (compared to four TAs in the previous year) simplified coordination and resource allocation.

3.6.3.3 Cash Modality

Best Practices:

- Cash transfers significantly improved food security and dietary diversity among households, with spending prioritized on food, followed by clothing, agricultural inputs, and miscellaneous needs.
- Using the existing “E-Wallet” from Airtel, transfers were quicker than in the last response. Initiating the procurement process from the start of the response can further improve this process.
- Timing cash transfers with agricultural inputs ensured households had funds for immediate nutritional needs without needing to sell or consume the inputs.

Challenges and Improvement Areas:

- Accessibility of mobile money payments was a major challenge, as many households, particularly women, lacked phones, SIM cards, or national IDs. Allowing beneficiaries to name proxies helped, and previously experienced issues with forwarding funds or demanding shares were reduced through intense sensitization.
- Some beneficiaries were unaware of the feedback and safeguarding mechanisms. Proper sensitization, such as sending an accompanying text message with the cash transfer notification stating the toll free line, could address this.

- Monitoring market prices closely to adjust cash amounts according to rising costs and considering household size and the number of children under five in cash calculations could improve future programs.

3.6.3.4 “Plus” Components

Best Practices:

- With increased financial resources, the response program integrated proper “Plus” Components. The combination of cash, seed inputs, training and nutrition messaging enabled beneficiaries to meet immediate nutritional needs and improve food security and resilience in the medium to long term. This was identified as one of the key success factors of the overall response.
- Accompanying messages are central in cash transfer programmes. They can not only increase the utilization of cash for the intended purpose, but also reduce the risk of causing unintended harm (e.g. food safety, aflatoxin prevention, optimal infant and young child feeding, etc.)
- High adoption rates and positive feedback on the quality of agricultural inputs suggest that providing seeds and other inputs is effective. Supplied seeds, combined with cash transfers, were used as intended and will contribute to household food availability, provided climatic conditions are favorable.
- Proper timing of support (between November and December) aligned with the lean period and planting season, contributing to the program's success.
- The quality of seeds was rated very good or good by most participants, thanks to good procurement processes, including buying from reputable suppliers and thorough inspection of delivered seeds.

- The training component was useful, met the interest of rural households, and aligned with the agricultural office's training materials. Cascading agricultural training from AEDOs (ToT) to beneficiary households is a good practice, aligning with the government extension structure and saving financial resources. Workshop participants recommended scaling down the training of trainers to a one-day refresher and sensitization on program specifics and expectations for future programmes in the same area.

Challenges and Improvement Areas:

- Beneficiaries suggested better aligning the distribution of seeds and inputs with the start of the planting season, though this remains

challenging due to unpredictable weather conditions. Scheduling distribution in close collaboration with experts from the District Agriculture Office, considering different agroecological zones, was recommended.

- The unavailability of groundnuts on the market was a major challenge. An earlier procurement process or sourcing alternatives could have improved distribution to beneficiaries.

- Gaps in follow-up support from Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs) and Agricultural Extension Development Officers (AEDOs) were identified. Enhancing continuous engagement and technical support is essential for sustained adoption of recommended practices.

4.0 Conclusion

Overall, the programme design and the implementation of the Nutrition Emergency Response (Drought Response) were considered successful by the sampled households. Only a few aspects of the implementation would need further verification, e.g. completeness of input distribution.

- **Effective Coordination:** The emergency response program demonstrated strong coordination among GIZ projects, the implementing organization, and various sector offices. This facilitated timely and efficient implementation of interventions.
- **Successful Beneficiary Targeting:** The use of MUAC tape for nutrition screenings effectively identified the most vulnerable households, ensuring that resources were directed to those in urgent need and ensuring a nutrition-sensitive response.
- **Impact of Cash Transfers:** Cash transfers significantly improved food consumption and dietary diversity among households, highlighting the fundamental role of cash assistance in emergency responses.

- **Integration of “Plus” Components:** The combination of cash, seed inputs, and training was a key success factor, enabling beneficiaries to meet immediate nutritional needs and improve food security and resilience in the medium to long term. The importance of accompanying nutrition messages should not be overlooked. They can increase the utilization of cash for the intended purpose and reduce the risk of causing unintended harm (e.g., food safety, aflatoxin prevention, optimal infant and young child feeding).

- **Challenges in Accessibility and Logistics:** Issues such as the accessibility of mobile money payments, logistical challenges due to fuel shortages, and gaps in follow-up support were identified as areas needing improvement.



