

Assessment of Income Generating Activities (IGAs)

Financial sustainability of the Zambian Mothers Shelters (ZaMS)

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City/Country

The Republic of Zambia is a landlocked country in south-central Africa.¹ This project took place in two districts of Zambia, Lundazi and Mansa. Lundazi district has a population of 323,870 with 95.1% of its population being rural, and Mansa has a population of 228,392 with 61.9% of its population being rural.^{2,3}

Career Connections

Traveling to Zambia and working with local staff allowed me to explore various aspects of conducting research in a global setting. The trip provided important insight to potential dissertation topics and a future career goal to conduct research on maternal and child health in low income countries.



Example of a Mother's Shelter in Lundazi, Zambia.



Midwife providing antenatal care education to a group of pregnant women.

Experience

Background

Zambia has an estimated 1,400 maternal deaths annually, resulting largely from preventable complications.⁴ Mothers Shelters have been identified as a potentially lifesaving and economically viable solution to address some of the preventable causes such as long distance and lack of transportation to reach a health facility for childbirth. The mothers shelters were instituted with context appropriate Income Generating Activities (IGAs), such as oil press and grinding mills, to ensure sustainability of the shelters. Community members can use these services for a small fee, and the profit is used to support the Zambian Mothers' Shelters (ZaMS). Local staff from Africare, a non-governmental organization, have been working with University of Michigan on the ZaMS project and provided translation and field support throughout the trip.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this trip was to examine how the various IGAs are financially supporting the on-going operational costs of the ZaMS. We also gathered various end line data including individual surveys and focus group interviews to analyze and compare with previously collected baseline data.

Outcomes

We were able to collect data on start-up costs, fixed and variable operational costs, and recurrent costs of the IGAs and ZaMS. Furthermore, we were able to identify common challenges and successes of the various IGA operations. All the individual surveys and focus group data were collected, entered, organized, and are in the process of being transcribed, translated, and analyzed.

Skills/Insights Developed/Gained

Through this trip, I was able to better understand the context of the ZaMS project. It was a great opportunity to learn how research in a low resource setting is conducted, and further develop various research skills, including critical thinking and organizational skills. I also learned how to communicate and collaborate with an international partner.



Africare staff conducting focus group interviews.

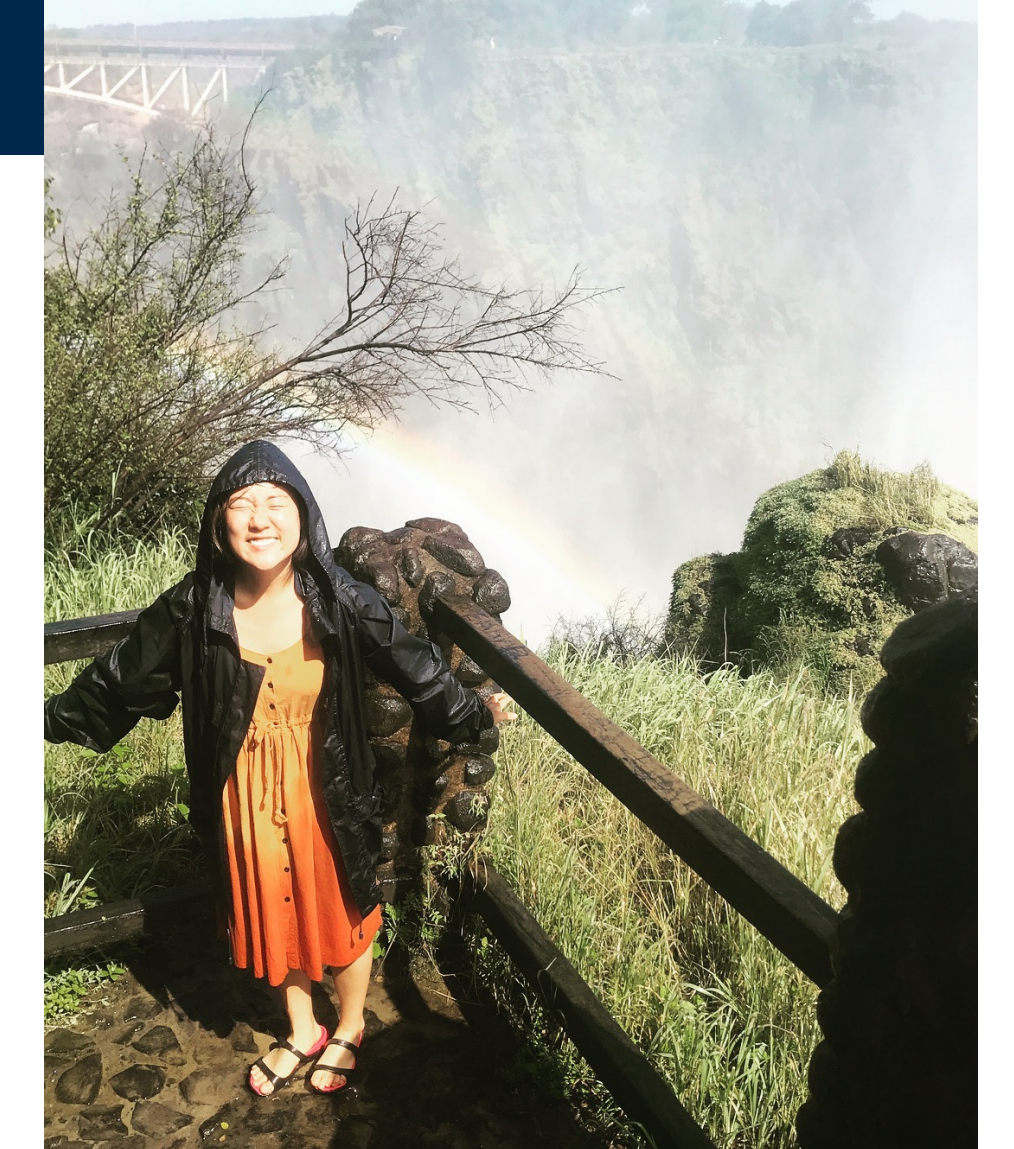


Examples of Income Generating Activities (IGAs) grinding mill (left), moringa tree farm (middle), and oil press (right).

Advice

- Learn a few sentences in local language(s)! People appreciate the effort!

- Don't be afraid to try new things but be smart! When in doubt, ask!



In front of the Victoria Falls.

Acknowledgement

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