



INTRODUCTION

This report is on supply of fencing materials for two more gardens in Matibi. This is the second phase of FFM's organic gardening programme which kicked off with two gardens in 2018. Phase 1 incorporated Tamuka and Njeremoto gardens, both situated by Msaverema Dam. Phase 2 introduced Ruzambu Garden of Chikandiwa Village near Ruzambu School (with 29 women and 1 man as initial members) as well as Kotamaurime Garden in Mafirenyika Village near Ruzogwe School. The latter garden started off with 33 members being all women. The proposition to start this second phase of fencing was put forward at the beginning of 2019.

SUCSESSES AND CHALLENGES

The project managed to sail through in spite of grave challenges presenting in the prevailing national economic situation. The project team managed to collect quotations from 3 suppliers thereby meeting the minimum requirement as per FFM policy. Two quotations were obtained early in March of 2019 but were expensive, being both in excess of 5 Thousand US Dollars. The supplier who had supplied the same materials in 2018 for 3.6 Thousand US Dollars had not tendered their own quotation this time around. The FFM Trust encouraged that there be a third quotation because the prices were apparently too high. Over 3 months passed before the third quotation could be acquired, interestingly from the previous supplier – Machakata Steelforce, charging 3.488 US Dollars which was agreeable to the Trustees.

The project also succeeded to take place regardless of threats in the national financial system. When the FFM and the supplier had drafted the terms of reference for the assignment to be paid in US Dollars, the Zimbabwe Government suddenly announced Statutory Instrument 142 which officially reintroduced the Zimbabwe Dollar thereby threatening the validity of the drafted terms. The quotation was pegged in US Dollars but all of a sudden it had to be re-quoted because the US Dollar was no-longer legal tender in the country. However, while both parties were still thinking of creative ways to tackle the problem, there was a follow-up interpretation to the



statutory instrument to the effect that civil society projects were exempted from the new regulations.

Another significant breakthrough was experienced with regard to transportation costs especially because the supplier did not have own truck. Prices of fuel continued to shift during the period under report, coupled with serious shortages of the commodity at service stations. For the project, the situation was worsened by the fact that there is no public transport plying the Masvingo-Matibi route. Other alternative transporters get their fuel from the parallel market at excessive prices thereby implying unbearable luggage fares for customers. After serious consideration, the supplier arranged with a kombi service which plies an adjacent route and made two trips to the two gardens.

Also important is the creative manner in which the contract was managed. The supplier had requested for downpayment due to shortage of cash. On the other side the Trustees preferred the payment-after-work approach. So, it was arranged that the supplier completes half of the work and get paid 1.744 USD for that part and then use the money to complete the remainder of the job. This creative bargain worked out quite well. Materials for Ruzambu Garden were delivered on July 8th and the ones for Kotamaurime were delivered on July 13th.

LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following lessons and recommendations spring forth from the above reported assignment:

- That the Trustees continue to play the important oversight role which they are playing. Their patience in delaying the project due to expensive quotations proved to be a wise one which resulted in a fairer price.
- That the FFM establish a database of suppliers for recurring projects. This can ease access to quotations when needed any next time.



- That there be more vigilance in financial matters in light of the unpredictable governmental interventions in this sector. Constant communication with banks, other agencies and stakeholders is critical in the prevailing scenario.
- That transportation issues be ironed out early in any transaction rather than midway in the assignment.
- That the payment-after-work approach be maintained wherever possible to avoid preventable inconveniences.
- That, owing to the huge turnout in the organic gardening scheme, the remaining gardens be sited early so that they are fenced early as well.
- That male members be encouraged to participate in the gardens to prevent the wrong belief that this is a female-only scheme. If they still do not turn out, it is still fine that the majority of beneficiaries are women since they are structurally a more vulnerable group.

CONCLUSION

The just completed phase means that there are at least 2 other phases involving at least 4 gardens in total. It was once reported previously that the whole Ward 3 (Matibi) requires 8-12 gardens to cater for the 17 villages which make up this community. Going forward, it has to be noted that the organic gardening concept is increasingly gaining appeal but there is limited availability of water sources to expand it. An important fact to note is that Ruzambu and Kotamaurime gardens tap their water from Runde River which, despite being a perennial source, is vulnerable to drought years. It is also important to note that the two new gardens are not completely new but only in the sense of being newly fenced; otherwise these are old gardens which had challenges related to insecure fences and there are numerous of gardens which are in this situation.