

# Field Perspectives:

## Farmer Resilience & Rebuilding Initiative



The previous shock for Mozambican farmers in the Beira Corridor was Cyclone Idai in March 2019. Due to the multiple shocks during the 2019/2020 agrarian season, the COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating this vulnerable population almost one year exactly after the Cyclone, and for an already stressed market ecosystem, the challenges to maintain safe social distancing while still going about their farming activities will be extra hard for families.

### **Multiple shocks force a hard balance**

In partnership with the Swiss Development Cooperation, iDE Mozambique responded to the humanitarian and development needs of the post-Idai context with the **Farmer Resilience and Rebuilding Initiative (FRRI)**. While iDE is not a relief organization, we are a leading agriculture and market development organization with an established presence in the Beira corridor with strong relationships with farmers and private sector actors along the supply chain. Thus, we leveraged our capabilities to facilitate the short-term efforts of major relief organizations to increase their reach and impact, while fostering resilient supply chains and food security. Through the delivery of agricultural inputs through voucher-based mobile Input Trade and Technology Fairs (ITTF), affected beneficiaries use a voucher system, based on a market appropriate pre-set cash value, to purchase agricultural inputs which they deem meets family needs. The goal of these ITTFs is to support local agri-business and ensure access to quality inputs in remote areas. By supplying improved inputs and complementing that with tailored Farmer Field Schools and Marketing and Field days, smallholders are ensuring production during subsequent seasons. At a glance, FRRI has had the following impacts to date:



- 192 Lead Farmer serving as ToTs trained
- 300 Farmer Field Schools established
- 12,755 smallholders trained on climate smart agriculture
- 149 smallholders participated in financial literacy trainings
- 12,000 smallholder received vouchers for the first cycle of ITTFs
- ~\$530,000 directly injected into the last-mile private sector through ITTFs
- 37 local commercial input suppliers participated in the first cycle of ITTFs
- 6 rural WASH entrepreneurs and 128 [Farm Business Advisors](#) serving communities

COVID-19 has posed an unprecedented challenge to the global community, requiring difficult decisions that weigh economic risks against health risks as countries, regions, and individual towns evaluate what is necessary to prevent the transmission of the disease. In Mozambique, this debate is particularly difficult due to previous climate and economic shocks which have heightened the relative insecurity of the food supply system. While the precautions of lockdowns and social distancing are absolutely necessary to keep people safe, a decrease in production and availability of food in markets can directly impact the next two growing seasons and put vulnerable farmers more at risk.

### **Repairing the supply chain**

Rural smallholder farmers invest in their crops every planting season and each harvest represents needed income in the hands of the farmer. Therefore, the closure of agro shops across Mozambique has made it more challenging to purchase improved inputs such as seeds and fertilizer, and micro finance institutions are reluctant to make new loans. Restrictions on movement put farmers at risk of being unable to sell their produce, make a profit, and recuperate that investment. Further, violations of curfews in some last-mile communities along the Beira Corridor are costing some residents valuable assets such as goats. This means that farmers will be unable to reinvest in their businesses in the next planting season and this lack of income endangers their food security not only for farmers and their families, but also the larger community that relies on them each day for their next meal. As COVID-19 takes a toll on market access in rural Mozambique, it is essential that supply chains and livelihoods are stabilized for both SHFs and last-mile private sector actors. There is clearly a need to facilitate access to quality inputs in remote areas, **with a particular focus on women's empowerment and private sector involvement in last-mile supply chains.**

For 38 years, iDE has been building market-based solutions for smallholder farmers around the world. During times like these, iDE's resilient networks of small entrepreneurs can be the difference for poor households between having a meal tomorrow or going hungry. Our primary focus in agriculture has always been on creating income opportunities for smallholder farmers. We aim to make a lasting impact by connecting clients to markets that deliver innovative and affordable agricultural products and services in order for them to prosper through abundant, nutritious harvests.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has forced iDE to postpone the second cycle of Input Trade and Technology Fairs for 16,000 Mozambicans directly impacted by Cyclone Idai in Manica, Sofala and Zambezia Provinces until October 2020, we are continuing to serve our clients during these extraordinary and difficult circumstances. To that end, we canvassed our field managers for their input as well as the expressed needs and input from the smallholders farmers they work with. We took that information and prepared an [Operating Norms and Implementation Manual](#) detailing our adjusted project norms that will enable us to reduce the shock of COVID-19 by working to prevent a health crisis from causing a hunger crisis.

iDE's goal with the adapted ITTF approach is to continue to rebuild local market ecosystems, thus fostering resilient systems that are better equipped to respond to climate and global shocks. **It is in this aim that iDE is currently accessing various contingency plans for the implementation of ITTFs for the main planting season in October 2020.** In order to mitigate cash-flow constraints faced by smallholders in the post-Idai and COVID-19 context, our goal is

to make up for the inability to directly support beneficiaries during the cool season in March and April 2020 by directly supporting **20,000 beneficiaries** and more than 45 local commercial input suppliers through our next cycle of ITTFs and Marketing and Field Days.

## Rethinking old models

At iDE we link our resilience-focused programming with last-mile market systems development as they are both approaches for facilitating development in complex systems. The aim of establishing market resilience is to ensure that cost effective strategies address the root causes of poverty and food insecurity in contexts that are prone to cyclical shocks and stresses. Through integrated market interventions that reduce dependency and vulnerability, while increasing competitiveness and inclusivity, resilience is strengthened, leading to increased sustainability of program outcomes.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates a clear need to foster resilience by rethinking traditional extension models and support to last-mile agriculture. At iDE we are focusing on expanding proven solutions that blend the social and environmental needs of SHFs and the markets in which they operate, be it through digital support, relying on decentralised rural entrepreneurs, and facilitating access to proven affordable post-harvest and production technologies. It is in this aim that iDE is piloting the [Market Systems Resilience Index \(MSRI\)](#) in Mozambique, an adaptive management tool that doubles as a quantitative measure of household and market system resilience. Through a partnership with the farmbetter mobile app, farmers are then provided with actionable knowledge on how to adapt to climate change and improve their resilience. Recognising the cash-flow constraints as a result of harvest loss due to Cyclone Idai and the exacerbation of these markets by COVID-19, this approach offers a model that fosters systemic market change that can be activated in the face of unforeseen environmental and economic shocks.

