



THE FACE-TO-FACE PROJECT VICTORY GARDEN CAMPAIGN

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Turning A Challenge Into Sustainable Change

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I. SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS & CHALLENGES

248 # of facilitators, divided into 70 facilitator teams

141 # of group village headmen communities (GVH), in 6 districts
48,186 # of households in these 141 GVHs

13,858 # of victory gardens created in 2018

21,854 # of victory gardens created since Campaign began in 2016

65,562 # of people who have benefitted from victory gardens

3,997 # of gardens still in existence as of December 2018

11,991 # of people benefitting from these gardens

18 % of gardens still in existence out of 21,854 gardens created

In 2018, the Face-to-Face Project (F2F) created 13,858 home victory gardens in Malawi, feeding 41,574 people, based on one garden feeding three people. A total of 21,854 gardens have been created since the Campaign began in July 2016, feeding 65,562 people.

With their gardens, families enjoy more food, better nutrition, more savings, and possible income. This helps families pay for school fees and materials, basic necessities, livestock, and household items.

Many families also grow medicinal plants, shrubs, and trees, which help them earn income. Numerous families have gardens that have earned them hundreds of dollars — a huge accomplishment where the Gross National Income is around 75 cents a day.

2018 marks the year we faced our biggest challenge since the Campaign began. In a span of 5 months, we uncovered a situation in which families were not maintaining their gardens because of reasons such as damage caused by animals, drought, false expectations, lack of knowledge, jealousies, and passiveness.

These reasons, the actions we've taken to address this challenge, and initial results of the actions, are described in this report. Already, we are seeing progress, including an improvement on the 18% existing garden rate that we recorded in December 2018.

We're confident that our multi-pronged response will first build on the successes the Campaign has experienced, and then take thousands of villagers along the path to long-lasting, sustainable change.



2. A NEW FOCUS FOR THE CAMPAIGN

To strengthen its position on long-term sustainability, in 2018 the Campaign's focus was changed from that of "Increasing the Number of Gardens" to "Increasing the Number of Families with Gardens."

Rather than racing to increase garden count numbers — admittedly a more heady and easily attainable goal — the focus now is on increasing the number of families with long term, productive gardens. This is relationship-driven focus that takes time to achieve.

As garden quality improves and families experience more benefits, more families will make their gardens an essential part of their lives.

2-a. Numbers Alone Don't Bring About Change

Often a majority of families in a village would create new gardens at the same time, only to then lose most gardens in six months. This is in spite of families having harvested vegetables from their garden — vegetables they would have spent money to buy. So while gardens helped them, families still would stop taking care of them.

One trend did become apparent — families that had particularly productive gardens were far more likely to continue their gardens than their peers. The more the family benefitted, the more likely they would continue their garden. This sounds obvious, but what is crucial is finding out where that Point of Benefit is.

In short, it's important to know at what point families benefit so much from their gardens that they continue their garden.

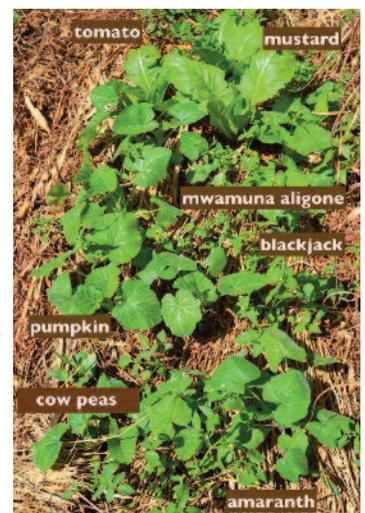
2-b. Setting the Point of Benefit at Six Months

Almost all families who created new victory gardens benefitted from more food, especially of leafy greens — mustard and spinach, for example — that mature in a matter of weeks. Still, we now know that one good harvest of leafy greens may not be enough to motivate families to continue their gardens.

The Campaign is setting the Point of Benefit at six months — in other words, we aim to have families enjoy continual benefits from their gardens over a period of six months. We're confident that this will result in many more families keeping their gardens.

Left: Rosebey Benga, her mother, and two children slept on the bare floor often without having food. In 2018, Rosebey created her victory garden, which now provides her family with a supply of good food. Rosebey also sold tomatoes, which enabled her to buy floor mats for sleeping and fabric for clothing.

Right: Because they lower the risk of relying on one crop, victory gardens are a sensible way to ensure a family has food. Companion planting, shown here, increases the garden's productivity and helps with pest control.





3. THE QUESTION OF SUSTAINING ONE'S GARDEN

In the 2nd half of 2018, F2F carefully reviewed Campaign operations and staffing limitations, and discussed at length with facilitators, chiefs, and villagers to understand why gardens were not being continued. Here's what we found.

3-a. Reasons Connected to Gardens

- Fences** Without a strong fence, gardens were quickly destroyed by pigs, goats, and chickens.
- Harvest** People harvested entire gardens at one time. This practice provided the family with a lot of food but left them with nothing growing in the garden.
- Planting** People neglected sowing seeds each month, which resulted in no new plants growing.
- Water** People without nearby water sources struggled to keep their gardens going in the long, dry season.
- Drought** Some villages had severe drought conditions that left villages without water.

3-b. Reasons Connected to Garden Owners

- Passiveness** Families lacked knowledge or initiative to continue their garden after the first harvest or first challenge.
- When Sick or Away** In the dry season when gardens need daily watering, villagers struggled to find others to care for the garden if they were sick or had to be away.
- False Expectations** Villagers thought they'll receive an award or gift if they created a garden. When they see that this does not happen, they abandoned their garden.*
- Jealousies** Villagers, believing facilitators benefited when gardens are created, become jealous of them. They noted that facilitators have t-shirts, backpacks, and bicycles, while they themselves receive nothing.*
- Value of Savings** Villagers were unaware or didn't fully comprehend the value of not spending money to buy vegetables.
- Scarcity Mindset** (see below right) Because villagers can only focus on acquiring money, they continually reverted back to old habits.

*Jealousies and false expectations are a commonly encountered challenge for many charitable interventions in Malawi — both GiveDirectly and the One Acre Fund acknowledged challenges caused by these issues in their programs.

3-c. Reasons Connected to Facilitators

- Creating Gardens** Facilitators, caught up in the initial euphoria of success, only focused on creating as many gardens as quickly as possible.
- Counting Gardens** Facilitators didn't understand or observe the rules of counting gardens, resulting in inaccurate reporting.
- Defining "Existing"** Confused about what an existing garden is, facilitators reported discontinued gardens as still "existing." To them, a garden that was created had in fact existed. This inflated existing garden data.
- Chiefs & Gifts** Some chiefs expected gifts if gardens were created in their villages — even if they were told that F2F does not give out handouts. When no gifts were given, chiefs sometimes shunned facilitators.

3-d. Reasons Connected to Face-to-Face (F2F)

- Staffing** Staff of 6 needed more manpower to lead the increasingly large Campaign.
- Skillsets** F2F needed more technical skillsets to handle all the data that was reported each month.
- Backup Plan** F2F needed backup plan when data coordinator took a sudden leave of absence in July 2018, causing delays before new data coordinator could effectively perform the work.
- Critical Eye** Caught up in the rush of gardens being created so quickly, F2F didn't maintain a critical eye — i.e., a healthy skepticism — that might have revealed the issue of existing gardens more quickly.
- Inadequate Funding** Fundraising for the Campaign fell short of goal by \$77,000, which would have directly helped with adding more manpower to the Campaign.

THE SCARCITY MINDSET

Sendhil Mullainathan, author of "Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much," argues that a "scarcity mindset" keeps people in the "scarcity trap." In short, very poor people are burdened with a tunnel vision that keeps them focused on fulfilling immediate needs, and prevents them from seeing new, alternative solutions.

An example is subsistence farmers and maize. Often families lose money as growing costs outweigh the value of their harvested maize. Families continue growing maize because this is what they know.

Some victory garden families are changing this by using new practices with their maize, renting out their fields, or focusing on their more profitable victory gardens.



Joyce Pameta and her husband never thought that a home garden could change their lives so much. “We keep learning,” Joyce says, “and we’ve never been happier.”

Chief Bito loves experimenting in his garden. In 2018, he grew acacia trees. Less than 10 months later, he tells us, “I sold 6 ox carts of wood worth nearly \$60. And I still have the trees!”

Charity Cosmos can now pay for her school fees for her sons by selling okra and papaya. “My kids help me take care of the garden. They even enjoy cooking the vegetables!”

Iganacios Yokonia grew sweet potato seedlings, which he transplanted to his maize field. “The potatoes grew so well, even without chemical fertilizers. After harvesting, I made \$140!”

4. BENEFITS OF A LONG-TERM, QUALITY GARDEN

In 2018, F2F put time and effort into making sure victory gardens are still a viable, scalable solution to fighting hunger and poverty. We did this by assessing the benefits of the Campaign, and uncovering any possible negative aspects. We concluded that a great many families are already experiencing the tremendous potential and possibilities for victory gardens to raise quality of life.

4-a. Communities

Since fewer people lack food, chiefs say that crime and theft go down, and cases of domestic and neighborly disputes also decrease. As explained earlier, villagers sometimes show jealousy toward facilitators and some chiefs have false expectations about what they personally will get from the Campaign. While it is impossible to completely avoid these issues, we are implementing actions to reduce their prevalence.*

These actions include being clear from the start that there are no handouts or rewards for participating in the Campaign, and having facilitators lead by example by always generously sharing their help and expertise with villagers.

4-b. Villagers

We have yet to hear a case in which a victory garden led to sickness, loss of money, loss of time, or danger. No one has reported any negative side effects from using compost and manure, nor has anyone said they were uncomfortable using it.

Most people benefitted from food they otherwise would have had to buy. Hundreds of families earn income from selling surplus vegetables and accounts of families successfully applying their victory garden knowledge in their maize fields are numerous.

We are reassured that villagers are *willing* to try victory gardens and *capable* of creating successful gardens under the tutelage of local facilitators. What is needed is to make sure that villagers

receive enough garden knowledge and guidance to have six or more months of continual success with their gardens — then we believe that the chances of them continuing their gardens will be much higher than it has been in the past.

4-c. Villagers Talk about Benefits of Victory Gardens

From the thousands of families with good gardens, here are some of the ways that home victory gardens improve their lives.

- * Produces a wide variety of food throughout the year, at very minimal or no cost to the family.
- * Saves money because the family does not need to buy vegetables.
- * Generates income when families sell surplus produce.
- * Lowers the family’s risk of relying on one crop for food and income.
- * Reduces the impact of unforeseen challenges, like medical issues, droughts and floods, and pests such as army worms.
- * Fights malnutrition, stunting, and other health issues caused by lack of food and nutrition.
- * Frees up time a person (mostly women) spends walking to market.
- * Reduces the risk of danger for women because they no longer have to walk in the dark to and from the market .

These are specific incidents of families benefitting from their victory gardens:

- * I bought soap and household goods from selling surplus goods.
- * I couldn’t afford the medicine the hospital prescribed for my stomach pain, but now I have money to buy them.
- * I used to spend \$1.50 every few days for vegetables. Not anymore!
- * A neighbor was skeptical about victory gardens, but after months of giving vegetables to him, he wants help creating his own garden.
- * When my son was at Kamuzu Central Hospital in the city, I sent food from my garden to him and his guardians. Many patients at the hospital lack food, so I’m grateful for our garden.
- * I learned how to harvest my climbing beans as seeds — I had enough to plant one acre of beans!



Izeki Magona is eager to try a victory garden, especially since his maize has done poorly for many years — including 2019, as floods ravaged his district. The Campaign is implementing an array of new strategies designed to increase his chance of enjoying long-term benefits from his garden.

- * Our youth group used profits from our garden to buy soap and salt for the elderly. Of course we give them vegetables too.
- * Instead of chemical fertilizer, I made 24 oxcarts of compost and put it on my maize field.
- * I sold my peppers and bought blankets, clothes, and a baby basin.
- * After selling beans and squash leaves, I paid my son's school fees.
- * I'm an orphan with my own garden and now my relatives enjoy okra, pumpkin, amaranth, and more. I still had enough left over to sell so I could buy roofing materials.
- * From the proceeds of my garden, I went and bought a pig!

5. TAKING ACTIONS

Since November 2018, F2F has been implementing various actions to increase the number of families with long-term gardens. These actions are informed by the scarcity mindset-influenced question:

What is it about the Campaign that enables families to abandon their gardens, and what can the Campaign do to help families attain long-term success with their gardens?

Our new actions aim to help families experience the benefits and see the potentials that accompany a productive, long-term garden.

5-a. Actions to Improve Gardens

Better quality gardens lead to a greater percentage of gardens being maintained. These strategies help produce more good gardens.

1. Create a precise, easy, step-by-step manual for facilitators to use when teaching and monitoring victory gardens.

2. Insist that sturdy fences be built within the first few weeks that a garden is created — a period when enthusiasm is high, and when there isn't much other garden work required.
3. Require gardens to start with short-term and long-term plantings, so families benefit from their gardens for a longer period.

5-b. Actions to Improve Facilitators

These actions began being implemented from November 2018

1. Increase facilitators' knowledge of advanced victory garden practices, including succession planting, building stronger fences, water management techniques, and tree cultivation.
2. Hold training sessions to increase facilitators' ability to effectively monitor existing gardens, including how to guide, encourage, and motivate villagers, from single mothers to grandparents to chiefs.
3. Require that all facilitators have quality gardens that can serve as role model gardens and be used as good teaching tools.
4. Facilitator teams must create five stellar gardens per village, so people can see firsthand what a good victory garden looks like and hear how these gardens are benefitting its owners.
5. Require new villagers creating their first gardens to see what an established, productive victory garden looks like.
6. Require new villagers to hear from other villagers with victory gardens how these gardens are improving their lives.

5-c. Actions to Improve the Campaign

These actions began being implemented from December 2018.

1. Hold workshops with chiefs to harness their full support, understanding, and engagement with the Campaign.
2. Emphasize returning to families who used to have gardens, and by building on their knowledge and experiences, motivate them to re-create, improve, and keep benefitting from their gardens.
3. Conduct weekly or bi-weekly visits to each of the Campaign's 6 districts to review data collecting, emphasize monitoring existing



Above: Facilitators use bicycles to quickly travel to other villages. This also creates jealousies among villagers, who think facilitators received bicycles because villagers made gardens.



Right: In our most recent garden count, Kambeu village recorded a 63% existing garden rate, higher than many other villages. We're studying Kambeu and other villages with even higher existing garden rates to find successful strategies that can be used elsewhere.

gardens, and spot check both new and existing garden counts.

4. Engage the higher levels of chiefs and Traditional Authorities to tap into their support, engagement, and leadership.
5. Watch for partnerships with authoritative entities, such as government-related agencies. Carefully explore partnerships that leverage their authority to encourage, motivate, and skillfully apply productive pressure on chiefs and villagers.
6. Our December 2018 garden count shows that some villages are in fact experiencing success. 21 villages had existing garden rates over 75%, and 30 villages had over 50%. We're studying these villages to find strategies to replicate in other communities.

5-d. Actions to Improve Face-to-Face

These actions began in November 2018. If necessary, F2F is prepared to tap into its reserve funds to fund activities.

1. Held emergency staff retreat in November 2018 to come up with a team response and way forward.
2. In January 2019, hired 2 field coordinators and an accountant to work with our staff bookkeeper. Field coordinators are being trained to work independently in the field by April 2019 so they can coordinate regularly with field officers and facilitator teams.
3. Hired 5 field officers in December 2018 who live in the villages and work directly with facilitator teams under F2F supervision.
4. Simplified garden count worksheets, so data entry can be done in the field without the use of laptops or software programs.

5-e. Actions to Increase Funding

These actions began in September 2018.

1. In 2018, added 3 new board members to increase fundraising potential. A fourth new member may join in April 2019.
2. Hired fundraising and board development consultant firm (The Advance Group) to grow Board's fundraising capabilities.

6. IMPROVING THE WAY GARDENS ARE COUNTED

Especially in the first half of 2018 when gardens were being created at a fast rate, facilitators in the central and southern Malawi districts of the Campaign both over-counted the number of gardens being created and mistakenly added in gardens created by youth group members. This resulted in data showing higher numbers of families who created gardens than there actually were.

Here are the reasons for why facilitators erred on counting:

- * If a family relocated or recreated their garden after it had fallen into disuse, this garden was counted as a new garden.
- * If a family created two or more separate gardens, facilitators recorded the total number of gardens.
- * Facilitator teams joined forces to create gardens in a new village and then each claimed the new gardens as their own.
- * Youth groups created gardens, which resulted in double-counting.

We established new rules for counting garden, as follows:

- * The most gardens a family can have is 1, counted the first time they create a garden. Subsequent gardens aren't counted again.
- * Gardens created by youth groups are counted separately.
- * If facilitator teams join together to create gardens, only 1 team can count those gardens in its counts.

Although they lower the overall garden count, these new changes more accurately describes the situation on the ground with regards to families. If we err, we want to err on the conservative side.

For example, if a village has 100 households and created 50 gardens, then 50 families have benefitted from gardens. If that same village has 40 existing gardens, then we know 80% of families who created gardens continue to benefit from them.

Numbers in this report are based on data we collected after implementing actions to correct inaccurate reporting.



Water remains a big challenge. There's too little in the dry season, and too much in the rainy season. Because victory gardens resist erosion and drought, they're better able to survive extreme weather conditions.

7. LESSONS LEARNED

We've learned a lot in 2018. Here are important takeaways:

1. Double-check everything, if possible with one's own eyes. Never take anything for granted.
2. Even when results seem positive and there's cause for celebration, maintain a dose of healthy skepticism.
3. We know we can create gardens. What's more important is making sure families experience so many benefits from their gardens that they begin viewing their garden as a constant, vital part of their lives.
4. Make sure staff is able to cover for each other in case of emergencies or job vacancies.
5. Always insist on regular communications with all parties involved.
6. When reviewing data, look for inconsistencies and red flags.
7. Remember to set aside preconceived ideas so you can examine situations from the villager's point of view.



Recent 2019 March flooding appears to have caused serious damage — we will update 2019 goals after visiting our communities and assessing the situation.

To help them monitor existing gardens more effectively, F2F has been conducting training sessions aimed at strengthening facilitator's skills at listening, teaching, and encouraging villagers to improve their gardens.

8. 2019: LOOKING AHEAD

In 2019, much effort will be focused on getting families — especially those who previously created gardens but then lacked the knowledge and skills to continue them — to recreate their gardens.

9-a. 2019 GOAL FOR NEW GARDENS CREATED

Working in

140 GVH communities
that have a total of **43,716 households** *

The Campaign will employ

247 facilitators, divided into **69 facilitator teams**

to create

16,560 new gardens for 16,560 new families

9-b. 2019 GOAL FOR NUMBER OF EXISTING GARDENS

In December 2019, record that

15,000 gardens are still in existence
(raising existing garden rate to 39%, a 20% increase over 2018)

Out of gardens created since October 2018, record that

60% of gardens are still in existence

Record total # of gardens created since start of Campaign in 2016

38,414 gardens for 38,414 families

which have benefitted

115,242 people

*Note that the # of GVHs and subsequent # of households will increase during 2019 as facilitator teams expand into new areas to create gardens.

An NGO came in to Chief Duwa Chikhosi's village with a garden project and asked people to build fences. After they did this, villagers waited for the NGO to return with seeds, fertilizers, and training, but the NGO never showed up. Perhaps villagers misunderstood or the project ran out of funds, but it left Chief Duwa's villagers skeptical of garden projects.

With Duwa's help, we're creating model victory gardens in her village so people can see firsthand the longterm benefits of having a victory garden.