



Mid-Term Evaluation of the NGO Joint Initiative for Urban Zimbabwe Community Based Support for Vulnerable Populations

Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction to the JI Programme

The Joint Initiative (JI) Programme was developed by seven international NGOs to strategically combine their capacities and resources in order to address the acute needs of vulnerable groups in urban areas of Zimbabwe where poverty and deprivation have deepened during the past few years. The programme is unique in that it probably represents the first major collaborative thrust by both donors and NGOs to assist poor and very poor urban households in a comprehensive manner. The NGOs that make up the Joint Initiative Group (JIG) are Africare, CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Mercy Corps, Oxfam GB, Practical Action and Save the Children UK. The programme is supported through a pooled funding mechanism from six international donors (DFID, USAID, SIDA, AusAID, CIDA and the Norwegian Embassy in Harare).

The programme started in May 2006 and the first phase is scheduled to end in November 2007. The programme seeks to assist up to 12,000 vulnerable households in six urban locations in (i) Mbare, Harare, (ii) Mzilikazi, Makokoba and Njube in Bulawayo, (iii) St. Mary's in Chitungwiza, (iv) Sakubva in Mutare, (v) Mkoba, Mtapu, Senga and Mambo in Gweru and Mucheke and Rujeko in Masvingo. A needs assessment conducted at the beginning of the programme identified a number of priority areas where assistance was most urgently needed by poor and very poor households: (i) livelihoods support, (ii) food security, (iii) shelter, (iv) education support for OVCs and HIV/AIDS. Child protection has subsequently been extended to cover all the programme's activities as a cross-cutting issue. In some communities, the JI partners work with local NGO partners to implement their activities; in other areas they are the implementers themselves.

Purpose of the Review

The main objective of this mid-term review was to assess progress of the programme against milestones and outputs outlined in the JIG log frame. A second objective was to review wider programmatic issues relating to the management and operation of the programme, the appropriateness of the interventions and the targeting of beneficiaries. Briefly, the consultants were required to address the following issues and to make recommendations for decision making with regards to the continuation of the programme: (i) the consortium approach; (ii) shelter intervention; (iii) project implementation and operating space; (iv) the political context and risks; (v) targeting of beneficiaries; (vi) the donor group and the funding mechanism; (vii) coordination of programme activities and linkages with other urban initiatives and stakeholders; and (viii) appropriateness of the response in relation to the needs and existence of gaps.

Methodology for the Review

The review was conducted by a team of two consultants. It was conducted over a two week period from 21 May to 1 June 2007. The review involved (i) interviews with the JI partners, both local and international, the donors and other stakeholders such as local authority and government officials, (ii) interviews and group discussions with a non-random sample of the beneficiaries, (iii) field visits to sites in Mbare, St.

Mary's, Mutare and Gweru where the interventions are being implemented, and (iv) review of key programme documents.

Assessment of Progress to Date

The first few months from May 2006 were spent on mobilisation and sensitisation of key stakeholders, gaining approvals from the various urban authorities, identifying and registering potential beneficiaries, developing and piloting some of the programme tools. All this preparatory work was necessary before implementation of the prioritised interventions could begin. Actual implementation started in November-December 2006 after completion of the preliminaries.

A lot of progress has been made in almost all the interventions. The highest rate of attainment has been in the provision of monthly food vouchers where the target number of households is already receiving assistance. Likewise, the formation and training of community groups to support and strengthen their livelihoods is almost on target in most of the locations. Although the education support component is still lagging behind by a wide margin, the implementing agencies expect to reach the target number of beneficiaries in both Mutare and St. Mary's by the end of June 2007. At the time of the review, they were processing beneficiaries from the remaining schools in each site and discussing with the school authorities the nature of support from the block grants.

Only the shelter component was lagging behind at the time of the review. This is not surprising, given the complexity of the processes involved in construction and the legal requirements that must be met before work can begin. Unlike in rural areas where there are few or no legal requirements to be fulfilled in the provision of shelter, the opposite is the case in urban areas. After identifying the beneficiaries, it is then necessary to confirm their rights or entitlement to the land on which construction will take place, draw the building designs and have them approved by the relevant municipal authorities.

In the process, a lot of valuable lessons have been learnt by all the partners relating to:

(a) working in an urban environment that is politically highly charged and (b) in terms of working as a consortium. Despite some initial difficulties, the partners have invested a lot of time and energy in developing networks and this is now bearing fruit. The programme has also demonstrated that it is sufficiently adaptable such that ways are continuously being found to incorporate lessons learnt.

The review also examined several issues such as the implementation of the shelter component which has been source of disquiet among some of the donors, project implementation and operating space, the political context and risks of implementing such programmes in urban areas, the targeting process or beneficiary selection, programme coordination and the appropriateness of the interventions. In all, we were satisfied with the manner in which the programme is working to address the problem of poverty and vulnerability among the urban poor and very poor in Zimbabwe. Where appropriate, we have made recommendations for consideration by the JIG. It should be noted that, in many instances, our recommendations

coincide with what the partners were already considering in order to improve the performance of the programme.

Overall Recommendation

Overall, we were highly impressed by the progress the programme has made to date and the impact it is already having on the lives of the beneficiaries. We strongly recommend the donor group to continue supporting the programme and, funds permitting, enable the partners to scale it up to cover more urban communities in the six towns and elsewhere.

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