



Evaluation of the Vulnerable Group Feeding Programme in Zimbabwe

Full Report

Oxfam GB Programme Evaluation

June 2008

Commissioned by: Oxfam GB Southern Africa

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation of the Vulnerable Group Feeding Programme was commissioned by OXFAM GB with the aim to evaluate the Food Aid Programme and provide recommendations for future programming.

It was carried out between April and June 2008 by a single consultant.

The methodology involved review of official reports and other relevant documents, interviews with OXFAM staff, focus group discussions in communities, interviews with beneficiary and non-beneficiary households and interviews with other agencies.

This report starts by highlighting overall strengths and weaknesses of the programme. It identifies strengths in the high level of participation by beneficiaries, apolitical food distribution processes, on-going reviews by OGB staff that generate evidence-based solutions to challenges and the good quality of reports produced. Weaknesses include low staffing levels, weak linkages between the VGF and other OGB programmes.

Regarding the programme design and implementation, it notes the concerted efforts made to abide by the key guiding principles of accountability, transparency, dignity and timeliness.

The VGF Programme was a very welcome initiative that came at a time when people were in desperate need of food aid following a harvest failure within the context of a declining macroeconomic environment. It was therefore an appropriate response targeting the vulnerable and food insecure households providing them with food commodities that met their basic nutritional needs.

Beneficiaries expressed a great deal of satisfaction with the rations, registration and distribution processes. They felt they were in control of most processes that they believed were fair and transparent. Some non-beneficiaries, however, pointed out that there were exclusion errors that resulted from the categorisation process.

The general view of most beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries was that the current food crisis affected everyone so that even those that had money could not access food because it was not available on the market. Their recommendation was that the available food should be distributed to all even if it meant reducing rations. One village committee member stated that, "It is better to limit the number of children than to give too much to a few households while others are starving."

Beneficiary perceptions were that the implementation of the programme went very well and indications were that the planning for the physical distribution was good. They were satisfied with the fact that in most cases they received what they had been promised. They were fully involved in managing the distributions.

The implementation that had a strong component of community mobilisation and gender responsiveness empowered communities to take ownership of food distribution processes. Despite the short time within which the programme had to be

implemented, communities were sufficiently mobilised and were empowered to take control.

OXFAM Great Britain (OGB) faced some challenges relating to the staffing situation. The budgeting process and planning for registration, monitoring as well as verification processes did not allocate adequate staff and other resources. As a result there were human resources bottlenecks that affected some aspects of the programme negatively. For instance, in many cases the same people that were responsible for registration were also the ones that did the distributions and verification. This compromised the targeting process and caused some inclusion errors.

In terms of the skills mix in the VGF teams, OGB was well prepared in as far as budget processes allowed. While the human resources capacity was over-stretched the quality of staff and the high level of motivation made up for the low numbers. However, in terms of material resources to be used in the programme, there were a lot of inadequacies particularly at the start of the programme. For example, Shurugwi District did not have computers during the initial stages of programme implementation. Kwekwe did not have a landline and there were no internet facilities. Communication facilities were inadequate across all three districts. The Gweru warehouse that put in a request for a generator in October 2007 did not get it until April 2008. The reason given for this delay was due to OGB's slow approval process.

WFP had certain expectations regarding OGB's involvement. Because their relationship was a partnership, WFP expected OGB to commit some resources towards the programme. OGB met those expectations by contributing the bulk of the financial and material resources to the start-up activities. Resources were diverted from other programmes to support the start-up of the VGF programme.

On the side of WFP, there was a lack of preparedness in the budgeting for activities. Having decided to adopt a new methodology, it was important to analyse the processes involved and assess the required resources. There was need for WFP to shift away from estimating the required resource input using the tonnage of items to be distributed. This completely neglected the high demand for person time in highly participatory processes. As a result such critical activities as monitoring and evaluations as well as verifications were compromised.

Most of the desired changes did take place but some could not be ascertained. To a large extent the programme succeeded in preventing households from disposing productive assets, there was a very high level of women's participation in the implementation, most local authorities did respect OGB's apolitical stance and OGB staff effectively networked with relevant government departments. The outcome of reduced malnutrition levels was difficult to ascertain in the absence of baseline data.

Recommendations.

The following recommendations were made to contribute towards strengthening of future programmes of a similar nature.

1. Allow more resources and time for registration processes.

2. Tighten screening processes so that only the deserving people benefit from food distributions
3. Ensure clarity in the categorisation guidelines.
4. Allocate adequate resources to verification and post distribution monitoring visits so that they are undertaken as per plan.
5. The budget should make contingencies for urgent cases that are identified during the course of programme implementation.
6. Develop guidelines that focus on indicators directly contributing towards food access as opposed to production potential.
7. Craft appropriate interventions for those in the category of transitory food insecurity so that their resilience is built and they can move out of the food insecurity situation.
8. Streamline transport arrangements within OGB to avoid time wasting.
9. Streamline documentation for greater efficiency in the use of time.
10. Ensure flexibility in the format of the narrative report to allow it to capture exciting processes.
11. Decentralise warehouse so that Kwekwe has its own.
12. To ensure urgent facilitation that is required in short-term responses, OXFAM should be prepared to action things quickly.
13. Field officers must be capacitated on gender so that they go beyond numbers and pay attention to the qualitative aspects of women and men's participation.
14. Gender awareness raising on sex abuse within a humanitarian context should include the dimension of possible abuse by humanitarian agency staff.
15. Carry out needs and capabilities assessments together with baseline surveys to inform the planning and design of future interventions.
16. Budget processes must be responsive to the new highly participatory methodologies that are adopted.

The following recommendations were made regarding important issues that emerged:

- In recognition of the predictability of hunger, OGB should move away from purely relief interventions and bridge the humanitarian and development divide.
- In targeting beneficiaries, OGB must give more weight to vulnerability indicators that directly relate to food access.
- Recognise the special circumstances of the HIV/AIDS infected and link up with other OGB programmes to provide the necessary support to meet their special needs.

ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AREX	Agricultural Research and Extension
FDO	Food Distribution Officer
FDP	Food Distribution Point
FEWSNET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
HIV	Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OGB	Oxfam Great Britain
VGF	Vulnerable Group Feeding
WFP	World Food Programme
ZIMVAC	Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee

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1. Introduction

Oxfam GB implemented the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) project in Shurugwi, Chirumanzi and Kwekwe Districts from September 2007 to April 2008. The project supported a total of **217,669** vulnerable individuals.

This evaluation commissioned by Oxfam GB in April 2008 aims to review the impact of the Vulnerable Group Feeding Project and assess how much the objectives of the programme were achieved. The evaluation focuses on the effectiveness in delivering the programme outputs and resource management, progress made towards achieving the programme objects and areas of future improvement. It also assesses the current food situation in the selected sites. The aim is to learn lessons and make recommendations for future programme planning and design.

1.1 Background to the VGF

- The VGF was developed in conjunction with or at the invitation of WFP. Its aim was to provide assistance for vulnerable households without means of self-support including the chronically ill, child headed, elderly, single parents and disabled headed households. Those with mentally disturbed or physically disabled member(s), orphans, destitute persons and households with high dependency ratio were also included.
- The programme commenced August 15th 2007 and was terminated on April 30th 2008.
- The rationale for the programme was ongoing food insecurity. Several coinciding factors contribute to this quite serious situation, which will continue to increase the number of people who are food insecure. The important factors include poor harvests resulting from successive droughts, lack of agricultural inputs, the sharply declining macroeconomic environment and the impacts of HIV/AIDS. This situation has persisted into the 2007/2008 season.
- In keeping with ZIMVAC recommendations and in consultation with the respective district authorities, 57 wards were selected in three districts. The project planned to support a total of **217,669** beneficiaries who were selected in three districts. Table 1 shows the breakdown by district.

Table 1. Breakdown of Beneficiaries by District

DISTRICT	Number of wards covered	Number of beneficiaries
Kwekwe	20	132,826
Chirumanzu	16	39,843
Shurugwi	21	45,000
Total	57	217,669

1.2 Context of Crisis

- By April 2007 there were indications that Zimbabwe would be facing a food crisis after erratic rains had triggered low harvests in the 2006/2007 season.

This crisis was predictable in light of the macroeconomic challenges facing the country. These included acute foreign currency shortages that made it difficult to import food, as well as extremely high levels of unemployment that left many people unable to generate income to source food from wherever it could be found. Unavailability of food stocks in the country and abnormally high inflation rates that passed the 150,000% mark in April 2008 compounded the problem. WFP and FEWSNET predicted that an estimated 4 million people would need food aid to survive until the next season.

- By the beginning of April 2008 there were clear signs that the food crisis was going to be protracted because the country was not going to have enough food in stock or on the market to meet its needs. Excessive rains from December to the end of February followed by persistent dry spells during the remaining part of the growing season resulted in the wilting of plants. The situation was compounded by the inability of most farmers to access any type of input. The result has been zero harvests in most vulnerable areas leaving people with no food stocks at all for the rest of the season.
- In the current season, WFP again estimates that over 4 million people in Zimbabwe are going to need food aid until the next harvest. The current crisis is going to be of unprecedented magnitude because people's resilience has been continuously eroded in the last decade.

1.3 Methodology

- A gender aware participatory approach at the data collection and analysis levels was adopted. Data was collected from secondary and primary sources using a variety of methods that were predominantly participatory.

The methodology was as follows;

- A review of project documents, periodic project reports, and other relevant official documents.
- Discussions with key head office staff, the Food Aid Manager, team leaders, food distribution officers as well as other relevant people in OGB and other like organisations including institutional partners.
- Based on information obtained from the above sources and the programme terms of reference, a checklist of questions was drawn up to be used to guide interviews, dialogues and discussions.
- Due to security considerations arising from the fact that the evaluation was carried out during an election period, selection of sites to be visited was purposive. It included those wards that were deemed to be politically safe.
- At the selected sites the consultant interviewed such key informants as programme support partners, village distribution committees, traditional and community opinion leaders, community facilitators or volunteers and other relevant development agents.
- Individual interviews guided by a checklist of questions were conducted with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries at their homesteads.
- Focus group discussions were held with such stakeholders as female beneficiaries and male beneficiaries separately and then together to get a more

comprehensive picture of gender dynamics that go beyond simple representation.

- The consultant made audio-visual observations of assets, interactions, relationships, behaviour and responses where applicable.
- At the end of field interviews and discussions the consultant had feedback sessions with OGB officers that accompanied her on the site visits.
- After the compilation of the first draft report, a report back session was held with senior programme staff in OGB. Comments from this session were incorporated in the final draft of the report.

Limitations.

- Due to the limited time available for the study, no structured survey was conducted and therefore there was hardly any statistical data generated. The study relied on statistical data from reports generated by Oxfam GB staff. The participatory process adopted generated evidence that served to highlight challenges, lessons, worst case scenarios and any interesting experiences. The evidence provided is therefore not meant to be representative.
- The security situation threatened field visits. In one area in Chirumanzu the consultant and OGB staff were requested to vacate the area because they had not sought permission from the youth of the dominant political party to carry out the evaluation. This resulted in the consultant only conducting a single focus group discussion and two individual interviews as opposed to the planned seven individual interviews as was the case in Shurugwi and Silobela.
- Transport for field visits also presented serious challenges. There was no specific vehicle assigned to the evaluation. The consultant had to share transport with other officers who were engaged in different activities or functions. As a result, there was a lot of time wasting when the consultant had to wait for Oxfam staff that were using the same vehicle to complete their tasks.

2. Overall Strengths and weaknesses of the programme

2.1 Strengths

- The high level of participation by beneficiaries and communities in general was a strength in the programme. All village committees that were interviewed felt that they owned the distribution processes. They believed that the programme was truly designed for people to benefit.
- The success in ensuring that there was no political interference was another major strength. This was particularly so because the nation was preparing for the harmonised elections and the likelihood of politicians wanting to use food as a political tool was very high especially since there was a food crisis.
- Regarding the management of the programme, the quality of reports produced by OGB staff was very good. It demonstrated a high level of professionalism.

- Review meetings or sessions that looked at challenges faced in the implementation and generated evidence-based solutions or recommendations were very important in ensuring relevance and responsiveness of the programme. The compilation of “Lessons Learnt” was of great value for improving future programmes .

2.2 Weaknesses

- Low staffing levels and inadequate resources such as transport compromised some of the critical activities such as verification visits as well as monitoring and evaluation. The fact that the methodology was highly participatory should have signalled the need to allocate a larger number of officers and facilities because participatory processes demand more time than non-participatory ones.
- Linkages between VGF and other OGB initiatives were weak despite the fact that they were targeting more or less the same beneficiaries. Developing these linkages would be useful in sustaining the benefits of VGF. It would allow VGF to contribute towards building community resilience and enabling people to move out of the transitory food insecurity position.
- There were delays in starting activities at the beginning of the programme due to OGB’s lack of preparedness for emergency responses. All programme staff had to be newly recruited for their jobs because there were no people assigned to take charge of emergency responses. In the process of reviewing its performance, OGB recognised this weakness and addressed it through its restructuring exercise by establishing some permanent emergency positions.
- OGB was very slow to respond to some urgent needs because there were no logistical arrangements in place to allow for swift response to requests. A case in point is that of the procurement of a generator for the warehouse in Gweru. It took almost six months for the generator to be made available to the warehouse. A six months’ food distribution programme could not afford this kind of delay.

3. Programme design

The key guiding principles in the programme were;

- Accountability
- Transparency
- Dignity and
- Timeliness.

Visible concerted efforts were made to abide by these principles. These efforts succeeded to a great extent in the first three areas listed above. A number of sound mechanisms were put in place and the results were quite impressive.

In terms of timeliness, there were some challenges both internal to Oxfam GB and external to it. However, the overall picture was positive.

3.1 Timeliness

- Stakeholders that were interviewed in the different communities felt that the Food Distribution Programme was timely because it came in just before there were serious cases of malnutrition and loss of lives. While there were reported cases of children fainting because of hunger, there were no deaths reported prior to the start of the programme. However, there were already signs of serious hunger.
“If Oxfam had not come in when it did there would have been many deaths.”
This was the common expression across all wards visited.
- On the side of OGB, it was felt that there were delays due to processes external to it. First there was a delay by government in accepting that there was a food crisis. Because originally the intention had been to start distributing in *August* OGB had put some things into motion and did not sit back waiting for the external processes to complete their course. It sourced internal funds to start some of the preparatory work such as putting in place recruitment processes.
- WFP did not make a commitment to support the programme start-up and this introduced uncertainties on the part of Oxfam GB. WFP had expected OGB, as a partner, to commit resources to this intervention as was spelt out in the budget notes of the Addendum to the Agreement Between World Food Programme and OGB.
- Oxfam GB lived up to expectations by contributing about US\$80,000.00 plus other material and logistical support. While there were expectations that WFP would assist with start-up funds, the assistance that came was not of the expected magnitude. WFP contributed about US\$10,000.00. All energies in Oxfam were focused on the distribution of food and financial as well as material resources were redirected from other activities to VGF.
- The budget notes clearly spell out the proportions of OGB’s contribution under each line item. Some of the items that were OGB’s responsibility were very late in coming. Two examples are computers for the Shurugwi office and the generator for the warehouse. Furthermore, the absence of a landline in Kwekwe made communication very difficult. These delays and the lack of adequate communication facilities compromised the delivery of the programme.
- While the start of the programme was viewed as timely by beneficiaries, the end was not. By the end of March, 2008 when the distribution stopped, it was clear that there would be no harvests again so the need for distributions still remained. At the time of the evaluation, most people indicated that their stocks were running out in a week or two and they had no clue as to how they were going to survive. One councillor in Silobela commented that how people were surviving was quite a mystery. In Chirumanzu a Food Distribution Committee

member noted that the ending of the programme would result in deaths of those chronically ill and in great need of good nutrition. She pointed out that just over a month after the food distribution stopped there were already signs of scabies among some individuals.

- The food crisis was exacerbated by preparations for the harmonised elections of March 29, 2008 which were immediately followed by more intense and violent campaigns for the presidential run-off. Many activities of NGOs that were supporting vulnerable people were suspended. People were displaced from their homes and thus their livelihood activities as well as coping strategies that had cushioned them from the crisis. In some cases their productive base was destroyed. Any efforts at building people's resilience so that they could sustain their livelihood security were hampered. In the meantime the macroeconomic environment continued to decline at unprecedented rates. The number of the food insecure continued to increase and it was very clear that urgent action was needed before lives were lost.

3.2 Appropriateness

3.2.1. The food basket

- Beneficiaries were very happy with the programme and they all agreed that it was most appropriate. They were satisfied with the type of commodities provided and were very happy with the inclusion of soap and cotton wool. The food basket contained the basic items that they all needed. Cooking oil, in particular, was considered very important because it not only contributed to the nutritional value of the food but it also improved the taste.
- Women claimed that their physical appearance had improved. Their skin looked better because of an improved diet and availability of soap and petroleum jelly. In Chirumanzu, they were better able to cultivate their gardens and improve their household diets as well as cash flows. Children's appearance improved. They were able to participate in school activities when school was on. Where vulnerable people were excluded there were deaths reported. One child about nine years old and an elderly widower in Ward 8 in Shurugwi were reported to have died of hunger during the post-distribution period in April, 2008.
- More than 90% of the people interviewed conceded that the monthly rations were enough to last them a whole month. However, this was contrary to what Post-distribution reports said. The reports recorded over 70% of beneficiaries stating that their food rations lasted three weeks or less. The variance may have arisen because of the sample of beneficiaries that was interviewed at Final Distribution Points. It was mainly made up of committee members and other people that did not appear to be the most deprived community members according to visual observations. They appeared to be people who were supplementing their own stocks of food rather than depending entirely on distributions.

3.2.2 The type of response

- The design of the programme was appropriate in as far as it addressed urgent needs of vulnerable and food insecure people at a time when Zimbabwe was facing an acute food crisis. However, treating the crisis as an emergency was not appropriate because the crisis was foreseen way in advance and it was also clear that it was going to be protracted. There was no doubt that the emergency response was addressing a predictable situation. Early warning systems that included the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee's (ZIMVAC) crop assessments had sent out signals of the imminent poor harvests during the 2006/2007 season.
- As indicated earlier, the food crisis was not only due to adverse weather patterns but it was a result of a combination of erratic rains, the macroeconomic deterioration characterised by extremely high inflation rates, high levels of unemployment, erosion of the productive agricultural base and the impacts of HIV/AIDS. All these factors combined to make the crisis predictable. The acute shortage of agricultural inputs plus persistent heavy rains in December and January followed by a dry spell in February and March clearly rang warning bells for the 2007/2008 season. During the course of the project implementation, it became clear that the crisis was going to be protracted and there was need to prepare for more extensive responses. The hunger period was going to extend into the next season.
- While the need for food distribution was clear, it was also apparent that the situation called for an approach that was different from that used on short-term crises targeting an almost homogenous group of vulnerable people. Beneficiaries in this case constituted both chronically and transitorily food insecure people whose vulnerability circumstances were not the same. The chronically food insecure were the most resource poor with limited capacity to produce while the transitorily food insecure had potential to produce and some had resources to purchase food on the market but there were no inputs for production and food was not available on the market.
- The intervention was most suited for the chronically food insecure but less so for the transitorily food insecure. The later required urgent food plus support to enable them to come out of the transitory state of food insecurity. Discussions with a WFP representative indicated that the responsibility for bridging the humanitarian and development divide rested with its cooperating partners. It was up to OGB to build up preparedness to allow communities to plan and move forward.
- Ideally, the transitorily food insecure people should not be found in a protracted food relief programme as might be the case in Zimbabwe's current food crisis. They should be assisted to quickly get out of the food insecurity trap and move forward. However, the need for food aid is even greater in the 2007/2008 season because of the peculiar socio-economic and political environment.

- The transitorily food insecure are going to need food aid until such a time that they are able to produce their own food, purchase it on the local market with the available money or earn enough income to source it from other markets.
- For OGB, there is need to go beyond emergency and link such programmes with its wider long-term activities. This calls for closer cooperation and collaboration between teams working on different programmes in the same communities. For greater effectiveness in addressing the food insecurity challenges, Oxfam should shift thinking towards bridging the humanitarian and development divide. As part of the restructuring and on-going review process in Oxfam GB, the challenge is being addressed. Within the VGF there was an attempt to do that in Chirumanzu where sorghum seed and fertilizer were distributed to 3,000 households in four very vulnerable wards. Each beneficiary household, that was also on the VGF programme received 5kg sorghum seed, and 20kg fertiliser. Unfortunately, this initiative did not have the desired impact because of late delivery of the inputs.
- The weakness with this initiative is that even if inputs had been delivered on time chances of a success story from the above intervention were slim because productive inputs were targeted at people with the least potential to succeed. These vulnerable people did not have their own resources to invest in the crop to increase productivity. Their weak productive base reduced the potential productivity of the inputs provided. The likelihood of reallocating inputs to other crops or uses was high. It was not surprising that most of the recipients of these inputs used the fertiliser on their maize crop rather than on the sorghum only because that was all the fertiliser they had and it had to be spread thinly in priority areas. It would be difficult to achieve expected production levels under these conditions.

3.2.3 Tackling crosscutting issues

- The programme identifies HIV/AIDS as a cross-cutting issue that needs to be mainstreamed and the major activities undertaken focus on awareness raising, hygiene and child abuse. While hygiene is very important in the food security equation, it can only be effective if food is available in the right quantities and quality to meet the daily nutritional needs of the infected person.
- Some interviewees identified the need for extra rations for the HIV/AIDS infected and recommended that some action be taken. They noted that in recognition of this special need, when GMB had supplies in Zhombe it allowed the HIV/AIDS infected to purchase twice per month when everybody else could only purchase once.
- WFP made it clear that such specialised interventions were not within their mandate but there was no reason why its cooperating partners could not be more responsive and link up with other programmes to supplement what is made available by VGF.
- The use of dramas as the major tool for gender awareness raising tended to favour gender dimensions that could be easily enacted in plays. Gender

violence and sex abuse for example were areas that had a high profile in the awareness raising initiatives. However, there appeared to be a gap in terms of addressing the possible gender abuse by Oxfam GB officers involved in food distribution. Cases of Humanitarian agency officers demanding sex to give women access to food aid have been reported elsewhere. OGB should take note of this and incorporate this dimension in its gender awareness initiatives.

- While gender representation, abuse and gender based violence are important in the food security debate, it is important to balance these issues with others that bring out the benefits that arise from gender equality. It is important to highlight the value added to the welfare of society by having women's full participation. For example the high level of participation by women in the food distribution processes provided them with a greater opportunity to directly feed back to OGB on the quality and appropriateness of the food. Since women were responsible for food utilisation processes they were best placed to advise on the desired properties in the food that was being distributed. As committee members, it was easier for their voices to be heard.
- Women's high level of participation in food distribution activities was a good reflection of their responsibility for household food security. The importance of involving women was explained by communities not only as the need for quantitative representation but also for the attributes that women brought into the initiative. For example, it was widely accepted that women in general were honest and that chances of leakages when food was delivered at FDPs were minimised by putting them in charge. Additionally, putting the food in the hands of women at the distribution points ensured that food would get to the intended beneficiaries and not be diverted.
- In one of the focus group discussions, a male member of a village committee raised the sentiment that men were not interested in being too involved in food distribution issues because food was not their domain of control in the home. Other committee members were more positive about it and pointed out that the high level of women's participation in the VGF distribution processes was not by default but it was by design and for good reasons. The debate around this issue demonstrated a good appreciation of the importance of responsiveness. It re-emphasised the benefits that accrued to households by putting women in charge of food distribution processes at the community level.
- OGB officers that were interviewed did not appear to have internalised gender dimensions of food distribution as well as communities had. They did not seem to have a good appreciation of the fact that women are the people who translate products of agriculture into food and nutrition security for their households. Their emphasis on achieving numbers in terms of representation underplayed the importance of attributes that women and men brought into the food security equation, particularly into the utilisation pillar of food security.

4. Approach used

- WFP in conjunction with its cooperating partners crafted the methodology that was to be used in the food distribution processes. The new methodology was

highly participatory and gave opportunities for communities to take ownership of most of the targeting and distribution processes.

- Oxfam and WFP jointly trained trainers in the new methodology that was expected to cascade down to the field level. This happened to a large extent but there remained some gaps that were largely caused by very low staffing levels in the VGF programme in OGB.
- Findings suggest that communities were not involved in the programme planning. Their involvement began when Oxfam was mobilising to start the registration process and then set up committees. The programme was planned at the level of the WFP and partners. However, at the implementation stage all communities that participated in the study stated that they were fully involved and had control over registration and food distribution processes.
- More than 95% of beneficiaries that were interviewed indicated that using schools for the mobilisation process was most effective because it allowed for wider coverage in terms of community involvement. It also helped minimise the politicisation of the process because schools brought together parents and guardians supporting the different political parties but sharing the common important goal of education for their children.
- Beneficiaries fully understood what they were entitled to under the programme. This was announced at the Final Distribution Points when the food was being handed out.
- At food distribution points, the input and involvement from the community was very high. Once the food was delivered to distribution points communities took control. They ensured that the food was secure and safe. They are the ones that handed the food over to intended beneficiaries. In situations where beneficiaries were not able to physically collect the food community members ensured that their representatives got the food to them.
- In the course of the implementation of the programme, particularly during the initial stages a gap that was associated with inadequate time and low staffing levels was identified. The planning and design underestimated numbers of people and the time required to carry out planned activities. This may have been due to the fact that the initiative was using a new methodology that required a high level of beneficiary participation in which processes were important features.
- The planning and budgeting focused more on the physical distribution and less so on processes that are very important in participatory approaches. It was only after the implementation began that there was a realisation of the time and huge amount of work required for those processes. Despite the ability to use casual labour, there was a strong feeling that the inadequate staffing levels compromised the quality of work. This was of particular concern in the area of monitoring and evaluation.

- One of the major reasons for the low staffing levels was that WFP use tonnage to be moved to calculate the matching staffing levels. This approach was not appropriate for a highly participatory methodology that was adopted. Using tonnage to be moved neglects the time and human resource demands of participatory processes. It is imperative that budgeting processes be made more responsive to the methodologies that are adopted.

4.1 Targeting

- Registration involved a number of activities that were carried out with the full participation of communities. The main activities included;
 - Social mapping
 - Compilation of full register
 - Identification of the most vulnerable using community indicators.
 - Categorisation
 - Ranking households by number
- The social mapping exercise provided a sound baseline for the demographic data that was critical for targeting purposes. It was useful for triangulation in the registration process. It also took community participation to a higher level following mobilisation meetings where communities were largely recipients of information.

4.1.1 Targeting

- There was a lot of debate around targeting and the general feeling was that everyone in those communities was vulnerable. All communities recommended that the available food be distributed to all even if it meant reducing the quantities per household. The general observation was that there was need for further analysis of the vulnerabilities of the different categories of people in order to craft appropriate responses.
- Informal social networks at community level are often redistributive and work in such a way that households with food share some of it with those without. They are more effective in identifying the genuinely food insecure and redistributing the available food within communities. For example, cases of hunger are brought to the attention of church or local leaders. Some are brought to the attention of those relatives or neighbours with surplus stock. In both cases the response is normally to share what is available even if it is not going to last very long. The argument is that those that have food cannot watch other people in their communities go hungry while their stomachs are full. It is important to keep in mind that there are always exceptions to any rule and it should not be surprising to find pockets of selfish community members.
- This point was raised by some of the interviewees who believed that it would be more efficient if this type of informal redistribution were formalised by distributing whatever was available to all vulnerable community members. They believed that if all people were given food rations they would support each other more effectively in deficit periods.

- The point being highlighted is that there are local or informal mechanisms for distributing food that can be strengthened by such initiatives as the VGF for improved food security in a community. It would be useful to assess the local situation and take into account and build on prevailing practices or strategies for addressing the food insecurity challenge at the local level. For greater effectiveness, such informal social networks should inform the design of the intervention. For future purposes, it would be very valuable to conduct needs and capability assessments together with baseline surveys that can inform the planning and design of future interventions.

4.1.2 Appropriateness of indicators

- There was a need to develop specific indicators that would identify people with absolutely no access to food regardless of their demographic or social status.
- For instance, a widow was automatically assumed to be vulnerable by virtue of being the head of household through loss of a husband. The marital status of a person did not necessarily have a direct relationship with one's food insecurity status. In fact there is no robust study that has provided empirical evidence of women headed households being worse off or poorer than male headed households.
- Some widows who were deemed vulnerable were among the most affluent people in their communities but readily accepted in the category of the most food insecure even though in reality they were food secure because they had sound support systems provided by their families. They received regular remittances from offsprings who were employed within and outside the country. According to M&E reports approximately 25% of beneficiaries were receiving remittances. These were increasingly coming in the form of groceries because of the awareness of the futility of trying to buy them locally. This meant that they had easy access to food in a situation of acute shortages.
- Indicators should directly relate to the challenge being addressed by the initiative. For instance, the main challenge here is lack of access to food. The lack of physical access is a significant factor. It is important that the indicators used in the targeting incorporate the key determinants of food access that include household income in cash or in kind (this includes remittances), price of food and distance to food source.
- In a peculiar situation of market failure such as we currently have in Zimbabwe food availability indicators are important because they directly determine the ability of households to put food on the table even where there is economic access. What this means is that determinants of food availability such as own production, domestic food stocks, the food distribution chain and food imports are important in identifying the chronically and transitorily food insecure.

- In developing indicators, it is important to balance access and availability indicators so that they inform the type of intervention appropriate for the chronically and the transitorily food insecure.

4.1.3 Inclusion errors

- Across the three districts, Verification reports estimated inclusion errors averaging 16%. This percentage was quite significant. In Shurugwi, two serious cases of inclusion errors relating to widows were noted. The first widow was running a thriving grinding mill at the business centre with the help of one of her sons. The other son living at home with her was operating a commuter omni bus between Shurugwi and Masvingo. This widow was also getting support from three of her daughters who were in formal employment as high-level professionals.
- The second widow was being supported by four daughters in formal employment and private businesses. She also got monthly remittances from six grandchildren in the UK and USA. The daughters used these monthly remittances to procure groceries from South Africa and supply their mother with all her requirements including luxuries. This widow had a deep freezer that was stocked with meat and other items. She was engaged in trading, selling food items that her daughters procured from within the country and outside.
- The two widows were far from being food insecure, not even transitorily. They did not deserve to be on the list of beneficiaries but they were there because they were widows and one of them was looking after her orphaned grandchildren whose mother had died and left them with their father who was in formal employment. Although it was common knowledge that their father was employed and in a position to provide for them, what appeared to have been more important in the registration process was that they were being looked after by their widowed grandmother after their mother died. Interestingly, these orphans had always lived there even when their mother was alive.
- A challenging exclusion issue that was noted in Shurugwi had to do with age. A decision was made to exclude young able-bodied people from the beneficiary list. It is important to bear in mind that food insecurity is not a state reserved for a certain age group. People of all ages are affected. The use of age as an indicator and exclusion of young able-bodied men and women resulted in serious exclusion errors in some communities visited.

4.1.4 Exclusion errors

- While the young able-bodied people had the greatest potential to produce their own food or work and earn money to buy food, prevailing conditions prevented them from doing so. They were genuinely vulnerable and food insecure and therefore deserved to be included in the programme. Excluding them from the programme forced them to engage in illegal activities such as gold panning or prostitution. Exclusion of young and able-bodied food

insecure people in the current macroeconomic environment negates the whole essence of protecting a community's productive base and ensuring that vulnerable people do not resort to harmful coping strategies.

- Exclusion of young households who were deemed to be able to engage in productive work raised a lot of questions about who was really vulnerable. Was it the food insecure or the socially disadvantaged? In the current macroeconomic environment what options did they have that did not force harmful or illegal choices? May be OGB should have introduced a “cash or food for work” programme for this group of people.
- There were reported cases of headmen who after the distributions at the FDPs, recalled all the food, put it in one basket and redistributed to all village members. These are cases where people strongly believed that all members of their communities were vulnerable because even those that had money were not able to purchase due to unavailability. The desire was for zero exclusion errors.
- With the exception of one that expressed concern about the registration process, all five communities visited had a strong sense of ownership of the programme. In one case when a chief raised a complaint about the food distribution being driven in the interest of the opposition party and the distribution committee being dominated by well-known members of the opposition party, the women members of that distribution committee strongly objected to this view. They emphasised that the food distribution activity was apolitical. They argued that people elected to the committee were individuals that they felt could deliver and unfortunately for the chief it just turned out that most people in that area supported the opposition and not the ruling party.
- The view that if one had assets they could sell them in order to buy food contradicted the project's important objective of preventing households from disposing productive assets.

4.1.5 Sizes of households and inclusion

- The VGF project was targeting vulnerable households regardless of size. Each household member was allocated specific rations. This approach made it advantageous to have big families or households because it meant bigger rations. The definition of household appears to have been left very open and it made it easy to inflate numbers of children or members of households. In fact there were numerous reported cases of inflating numbers of children.
- Sentiments of some community members that were interviewed were that the project should set limits to the size of household that could be included in the distribution. The suggestion was that for each household, only up to a given number of children or dependence could be allocated rations. This would allow more households to directly benefit and reduce cases of inflating numbers of beneficiaries per household. They believed that everybody was vulnerable and deserved to be included and therefore limiting the size of household would allow for wider distribution.

- Contrary to the argument about everybody deserving to be included in the distribution programme, the view here is that no matter how vulnerable, there were pockets of food secure people who had robust coping strategies and support networks such as remittances from offsprings. These did not deserve to be included in the programme. Extensive verifications should identify such people and exclude them from the programme.
- Interestingly enough, one family in one of the beneficiary wards was reported to have opted for exclusion from the programme because they were food secure. The parents had sons and daughters in formal employment that provided adequate support for their food and other needs. This family was keen on preserving its social status and image. One interviewee stated that this family had pointed out that it would be unfair for them to accept food that they did not need and deprive some needy people that would be excluded. It is important to note that such cases were not common.

4.2 Categorisation

- Methods used in the distribution grouped people by villages. Most of these activities went on without significant hitches. However categorisation generated some debate around how it was conducted.
- The process of classifying people into four groups of vulnerable people (A,B,C,and D) confused some. Using ownership of such assets as cattle and implements to determine vulnerability in the context of poor harvests within a sharply declining macroeconomic environment implied that the program promoted the disposal or distress sale of productive assets to meet urgent and short-term food needs.
- Although local indicators designed at village level were used, there were people who felt that key wealth indicators such as livestock were identified and imposed by OGB. During a focus group discussion with the Food Distribution Committee in the Mufiri area, Shurugwi district one member did point out that Oxfam had identified livestock as a key wealth indicator. His statement was not contradicted by any of those present. This was echoed at another focus group discussion with non-beneficiaries in Silobela. It appeared that this was the perception of several people at these gatherings.
- A monitoring and evaluation exercise carried out in Kwekwe District recommended that project staff should not define indicators for villagers. This was an indication that some of the project staff were pointing villagers to what they deemed to be appropriate indicators. This was a violation of the recommended methodology that placed the responsibility of identifying the most vulnerable people on the community.
- This perception that OGB had identified the indicators for the categorisation process could have arisen because of misinterpretation of what was being done. Those people who saw Oxfam as having identified the indicators were not comfortable with the categorisation process. In particular, there were

beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in Silobela who felt that the categorisation was carried out like a quiz and it confused them. They felt that the way the questions were asked unsettled them. An example of a confusing question was; “If maize was brought, how much would you buy, 5kg, 10kg, or 50kg?”

- This question was meant to assess one’s buying power but in some instances it was easily interpreted to be assessing one’s felt needs. People who answered that they would buy 50kg did not mean that they could afford 50kg. Rather what they meant was that their desire would be to buy 50kg.
- Discussions with some of the Food Distribution Officers revealed that the approach used in the categorisation process varied. This was confirmed by beneficiaries from different areas who related different categorisation experiences. There is need to standardize these critical activities for greater conformity in targeting.
- Some of those indicators used were not appropriate for those that were transitorily food insecure because of the unavailability of food on the market. Even those that had money could not access food and they therefore deemed themselves as vulnerable as those in category A.
- In Zhombe it was noted that on the few occasions that the Grain Marketing Board had maize for sale to people it sometimes allocated as little as 3x50kg bags per kraal with 80 households. If all households were to receive an allocation from these three bags they would each end up with less than 2 kg of maize.
- Ownership of livestock was used as a key indicator for food security because it was argued that people could resort to distress sales to earn cash or get food through barter. In the short-term the urgent objective of accessing food would be achieved but in the medium to long-term people would be worse off because of eroding their productive base. This sent conflicting messages to people in the different categories. It appeared as if they were being encouraged to sell their productive assets.
- A headman in Zhombe pointed out that, the fact that one had a nice house did not mean one was food secure. He was opposed to selling productive assets to buy food but promoted the accumulation of assets in order to be able to increase food production.
- The view is that having remittances in foreign currency cash or in kind are better indicators of food security than youth, productive assets or possession of a nice house. In this case, even if people sold their productive assets to earn cash to purchase food, there was very little food available to buy on the local market.

5. **Accountability mechanisms**

- A number of accountability mechanisms were put in place to ensure that benefits went to the right people and things were done in a participatory and

transparent manner. These mechanisms provided opportunities for even the most vulnerable people whose voices are not normally heard to express their opinions.

- Suggestion boxes and help desks that were placed at every food distribution point allowed people to raise their concerns or point to irregularities anonymously. Household verification visits and Monitoring and evaluation exercises were also important accountability mechanisms that were designed to ensure that the project achieve its objective of increasing access to food by the most vulnerable people.

5.1 Verifications

- In October and November 2007, verifications were done targeting wards that had high percentages of the population registered in Chirumanzu as well as Shurugwi and where low registration percentages were recorded in Kwekwe. About 33% of total wards were verified across the three districts using public and household verifications. Percentage inclusion errors were highest in Chirumhanzi and Kwekwe.
- In general, verifications revealed a significantly high level of inclusion errors, averaging 16%. In Chirumanzu, where OGB had been implementing the PRP, the inclusion error was relatively higher because people were familiar with the selection criteria that used assets as indicators. In the 10 wards that were verified, 8,147 people were verified out of the programme.
- Household verifications targeting 75% of the households in a village set out to authenticate the information in a letter put in a suggestion box. They found a 14% inclusion error and only one exclusion error. The inclusion error was quite significant. The Review Workshop held at Fairmile Hotel in Gweru reaffirmed the higher prevalence of inclusion errors over exclusion errors.
- In projects such as this, household verification visits are very important because there is always a tendency to understate assets or use influence and intimidation for inclusion. In most areas, even where OGB had not operated before, people had been involved in similar initiatives and were familiar with wealth indicators that were normally used by agencies. These were very similar to those identified by communities. They knew how to manipulate the system so that they qualified as beneficiaries.
- It was important that intensive verifications be undertaken at the beginning of the programme to ensure that the objective of reducing food insecurity and malnutrition among the most vulnerable people would be met. The importance of verification was highlighted in Chirumanzu where a verification process covering nine wards found inclusion errors of 20% on the average but being as high as 38% in some wards.
- These high inclusion errors were due to the poor performance of Food Distribution Officers who did not follow the recommended registration procedures and beneficiary knowledge of the commonly accepted indicators.

Beneficiaries who had been exposed to similar interventions falsified information in order to qualify for registration.

- Although these challenges were pointed out to the team leader by the responsible M&E officer, no action seems to have been taken particularly with regard to the negligence of FDOs. The observation was that the team leader in Chirumanzu did not act on a number of challenges raised.
- Verifications are important for assessing benefits that accrue to households holding assets on behalf of family members. For example a large proportion of livestock, small ruminants and even implements may belong to family members residing elsewhere but the custodians use them in their production processes and consume by-products such as milk and eggs. These by-products contribute towards household food security and should be taken into account.
- Physical household verifications were the weakest link in the targeting. Intensive verifications were only done in Chirumanzu yet they are very crucial in targeting the intended beneficiaries. In terms of prioritisation in resource allocation, verifications were low on the list and were easily by-passed in favour of other tasks that were deemed urgent. In a report, one M&E officer alluded to the fact that household verifications were only undertaken in a few places because officers had other demanding activities. This implied that verifications were not viewed as part of the core business of the M&E team.
- Ideally, verifications should be an integral part of the work of food distribution officers that would then be monitored by the M&E team. It should not be the responsibility of the M&E team only. There should be intensive verifications in all areas particularly before the actual distribution takes place. This requires more than one M&E officer per district. The M&E officers interviewed and their team leader echoed this suggestion.
- In one area a Food Distribution officer observed that a well off widow who was getting remittances in cash and in kind every month was a beneficiary while other deserving people were not. This widow did not qualify to be on a beneficiary list for the food insecure.
- When the M&E officer became aware of this situation he did not do anything about it because, according to him, he did not want to be seen to be interfering with community processes. This was a poor excuse. If food distribution officers had been responsible for verifications, they would have easily pointed out this inclusion error to the village committee and reported it to the Oxfam team for that area. Since food distribution officers engage with communities on a more regular basis than M&E officers, they have better communication with people in communities and they would know the most effective entry points for dealing with inclusion errors.
- There appeared to have been no strict guidelines on how to deal with inclusion errors that were identified after the distributions had started. In another case in Shurugwi an inclusion error was identified by a Food Distribution Officer but was not reported. It could have been because verifications were viewed to be

the responsibility of M&E and he did not feel obliged to follow up on the irregularity. In view of the above, it is recommended that verification be a responsibility of all field officers. Reporting channels should be clearly defined for the officers.

- Verifications also identify exclusion errors upon which action should be taken urgently. There was a case in Shurugwi where community members were aware of an exclusion error but no action had been taken. The excluded household was made up of husband and wife who were both suffering from HIV/AIDS related illnesses. They were looking after four of their own children and three orphaned grand children. From visual observation of their homestead, they were extremely resource poor.
- This was a clear case of a vulnerable food insecure household that qualified to be in Category A. Members of the Food Distribution Committee even brought this case to the attention of the consultant during the field visit of this evaluation. It transpired that it was their nine-year old grandchild that had collapsed and died a couple of weeks prior to the field visit and it was widely believed that the child had died of hunger. This raised the concern of the community and they finally wanted some action taken to ensure the inclusion of this household. Unfortunately, it was too late for the little girl who had died and the remaining members of the household could not benefit because the project had come to an end.
- If verifications had been undertaken, such an exclusion error could have been officially identified by OGB. Community members were aware and sympathetic but according to the wife who was interviewed at the homestead, people in the community were too scared to challenge the influential brother-in-law who was believed to have engineered the exclusion because of some family feud. Because this household was too vulnerable and did not have a voice in the community, it was left to the community and verification processes to speak on its behalf.
- During the registration processes, some challenges were encountered. An interview with a local chief revealed that there was a headman who compiled his own list of people to be involved in the process. He excluded some people from attending the initial mobilisation and registration meetings. Some intimidated others and imposed themselves. Household verification visits would have exposed this irregularity.

5.2 Monitoring and evaluation systems

- A monitoring and evaluation framework outlining the minimum standards to be monitored in each facet of the VGF programme was developed. It was developed as a broad framework for VGF Monitoring and Evaluation work plans and activities as well as a tool to check compliance with minimum standards in humanitarian work. A review of the indicators included in the framework revealed a weakness in process indicators that are very important, particularly when using the new highly participatory and process oriented

methodology that was adopted for the VGF. Furthermore, some indicators did not take into account the prevailing conditions in communities.

- An example of indicators used is; Nutrient supply standard; nutritional needs of people are met and the food basket and rations are designed to bridge the gap between the affected population requirements and their own food supplies. This indicator assumed that people had their own food supplies and distributions were supplementary. This was not necessarily the case for many of the beneficiaries. The supply was not bridging a gap but meeting all household food needs.
- Unavailability of inputs on the market exacerbated the situation because some of the cereal rations were used as seed maize and for loan repayment. Additionally, informal social network processes redistributed the food to address the more urgent and practical needs of communities rather than the static situations that the VGF was designed for. This may partly explain why for over 70% of beneficiaries, food rations lasted for only three weeks or less and therefore may have not been adequate to meet the desired nutritional needs. This highlights the need to revisit indicators to make them more relevant to prevailing circumstances.
- Due to understaffing in the M&E team that had one officer per district and inadequate transport systems, the team was not able to abide by the framework. It did not achieve all its targets. The focus of resources was on distribution activities and this compromised such processes as post-distribution monitoring and verifications.

5.3 **Suggestion boxes and help desk**

- The suggestion box and the help desk provided opportunities for feedback by members of the community. They enhanced accountability to communities. However, at a couple of sites, those interviewed admitted that there was not a clear understanding of what the help desk was set up for. In almost all wards that were involved in the study the help desk was used to raise complaints about exclusion. To a large extent, it mainly served the purposes of non-beneficiaries who used it to try and get into the programme.
- Suggestion boxes were placed at all food distribution points for people to raise issues of concern. Because of the dynamics of power relations that made it difficult for people to publicly challenge the manipulation of the registration by some individuals, the use of suggestion boxes and the help desk was effective in correcting some of the irregularities.
- The anonymity in the process allowed those that had no voice in the community to be heard and exercise their influence in the registration process. A case in point is that of a letter put in a suggestion box at Ntabeni North, Siyaphambili. The letter pointed to registration of ghost, undeserving and inflated households in Mahofa village. The information in the letter was authenticated through a verification process and undeserving cases were verified out.

- The help desks did not seem to have drawn as much attention as the suggestion boxes. Some people stated that it was not very visible in terms of its location at Food Distribution Points. However, this may have been due to the fact that it did not provide a high level of anonymity as was provided by the suggestion box.

5.4 Public addresses at distribution points

- Public addresses spelling out entitlements were very important accountability mechanisms. They promoted transparency and minimised leakages after food was delivered to the final distribution points. These addresses were augmented by the actual distribution at village level which was done publicly with the scooping involving the villagers themselves.

6. Capacity building of field staff and village committees

- Training of field staff was done in VGF Distribution Modalities, Commodity Tracking Systems and Logistics, Accountability Mechanisms, HIV/AIDS and Gender as well as sexual abuse and exploitation in the Humanitarian Context. Indications are that the training in most instances was effective. Field monitors were sufficiently capacitated to ensure that distribution modalities were adhered to. Village committees demonstrated a good grasp of procedures to be followed at distribution points.
- All focus group discussions with Food Distribution Committees led to the conclusion that village committees had a good grasp of their responsibilities and understood the procedures when food was delivered at their distribution points. They were aware of what to check and the importance of having an individual's signature to confirm items delivered. Most of them displayed a good knowledge of the of the distribution processes.
- HIV/AIDS and Gender awareness training did make an impact on the programme. This was evident in the way focus group discussions handled the gender dimensions of food distribution. There was no trivialisation of issues or down grading the importance of responsiveness in food distribution processes.
- Communities appeared to share a common desire of ensuring that food reached the rightful beneficiaries in the correct quantity and quality. The accepted approach was to put the food in the safest hands that would ensure delivery to the intended beneficiaries. With respect to food security issues, gender awareness was quite high in many aspects. However, as indicated earlier, there were still gaps that needed to be filled in order to improve the gender responsiveness of the programme.
- In terms of HIV/AIDS there was a high level of awareness and a willingness among community members to discuss the implications of the pandemic on food security. AIDS awareness levels were quite high. It is, however, difficult to ascertain how much of this could be attributed to the training provided by OGB because those interviewed did not place the HIV/AIDS challenge within

a humanitarian context. The contextualization only came in when they suggested bigger rations for the HIV/AIDS affected. Since WFP did not feel that it was within their mandate to address specific dietary needs of the HIV/AIDS affected, this could not have come from the training offered.

7. Logistics Support Systems

- WFP provided prescriptions on warehousing and guidelines for the tender processes. These were universal guidelines provided to all cooperating partners regardless of variations in prevailing local conditions. WFP audits against these standard guidelines given to partners.
- The reality on the ground, however, dictated differently. Cooperating partners had to adapt WFP guidelines to suit local conditions. A case in point is the use of a recommended truck size of 30 tonnes in remote areas. This was not possible because these large trucks could not be accommodated by most access roads. Only smaller trucks could use them and this is what OGB had to resort to. Additionally, within the time constraints it was not possible to find the prescribed types of trucks. Furthermore local transporters were resentful of external ones coming to compete for contracts. All these factors created logistical challenges for OGB. On the whole, OGB was able to address the challenges.
- From discussions with beneficiaries, OGB staff and review of official documents, logistics support systems appeared to have been robust. Sentiments expressed by those involved in the distribution at different levels in the organisation and in communities point to efficient warehouse management and good coordination between the field and the warehouse teams. Although staffing levels were inadequate, there was a good mix of skills and expertise.

Challenges with secondary transporters

- The initial stages of the VGF were fraught with challenges of short landing. Distribution Monitoring and Evaluation reports indicate that significant losses were recorded but quantities were reduced as the programme progressed. Reported cases of short landing were either due to transit losses or under-loading. In December 2007 in Kwekwe District, 52.25x50 kg bags of cereals were either lost in transit or did not get to FDPs in correct quantities. In January 2008 the figure had dropped to 7x50 kg bags. In February, 7.50x50 kg bags of cereal and 3x25 kg bags of CSB were missing.
- Because of the timing or urgency of the programme, it was difficult to abide by WFP guidelines for hiring transport. For example, 30 tonne trucks were recommended but these were not practical in most instances because of the condition of roads. It was only smaller trucks that could access roads in remote areas. Sometimes the only option was to use 5 tonne trucks to suit local conditions.

- In addition to the physical challenges of the environment within which Oxfam GB was operating, there were socio-political ones that arose. Even though it was not always easy to find the desired type of transport for distribution in the beneficiary districts, the expectation was for Oxfam to hire locally and not from other districts or provinces. This placed some difficult restrictions on Oxfam GB.
- Some challenges were experienced with transporters in terms of delays in delivery of food to distribution points due to difficulties in accessing spare parts and delays in the replenishment of fuel that was supplied by OGB. A review meeting held between 10 and 11 April, 2008 in Kwekwe and Chirumanzu noted that transporter capacity was the major limiting factor in moving food and adhering to plans. It recommended that transporter tendering processes should ensure that reputable and able transporters are engaged. Greater transparency is required in these processes.
- WFP also faced fuel challenges that affected dispatch timetable. Unfortunately it was not always possible to communicate the delays to distribution points and this inconvenienced committee members who sometimes waited for two to three days at distribution points. Because women constituted a large proportion of committee members, these delays interfered with their reproductive responsibilities such as child care, food preparation, housewifery and caring for the sick.
- Other challenges with transporters related to meeting deadlines for submission of invoices due to lack of capacity. They were always late to submit invoices that had errors. Transporters were provided with training on invoicing and as a result the situation improved as the programme progressed. WFP was strict on quality but flexible on deadlines and this allowed capacity building of transporters to take place.

Warehouse location

- According to the warehouse manager, the location of the warehouse was appropriate for covering the three districts. However there were warehouse capacity challenges that had to be addressed. The view was that the Gweru warehouse had adequate capacity for Shurugwi and Chirumanzu but Kwekwe needed to have its own. This view was shared by team leaders in the different districts.

Commodity tracking

- Commodity tracking seems to have gone well in some areas. Contrary to M&E reports, in almost all the sites visited, beneficiaries indicated that they got all items that they were entitled to. Commodity Tracking Systems Officer tracked items all the way from warehouse where they were under the charge of store keepers right down to beneficiaries at the Final Distribution points using shipment instruction numbers.

8. Donor compliance

- Generally, WFP was satisfied with OGB's delivery of the service. The representative that was interviewed indicated that the reporting had been satisfactory and field monitors had been positive about OGB's implementation of the programme.
- Daily reporting and updating of ledgers was hampered by power outages. For updating ledger, OGB used an electronic spreadsheet and when there was no electricity it was not possible to do the updating. Provision of a generator as an alternative source of electricity would have alleviated the problem but it was only made available in April 2008 although the request had gone in October 2007.

9 Collaboration with Government Institutions

- From the start of the programme, Oxfam GB engaged the relevant government institutions in the distribution processes. Meetings were held with key stakeholders, district authorities, line ministries and local partners to introduce the VGF and Public Health programme. These included sensitisation meetings with councillors to facilitate mobilisation as well as caucus meetings with community leaders. District Drought Relief Committees were involved in the Ward Ranking process and consultations were held with District Administrators on an on-going basis. Generally there was a high level of participation from government institutions in the relevant processes.

9. CONCLUSION

- The consensus on the VGF was that it made some very positive impacts on the challenges of acute food shortages in a declining macroeconomic environment. All people that participated in the evaluation conceded that if the VGF programme had not come when it did there would have been loss of lives from hunger. The food basket was appropriate and it reached the beneficiaries in the correct quantities in the majority of cases. On the whole, the programme met its main objectives.
- The programme was executed in a satisfactory manner despite a multiple of challenges that included low staffing levels and a harsh economic and political environment. Distribution processes were highly participatory and beneficiaries developed a sense of ownership and control. A broad range of stakeholders that included relevant government institutions were sufficiently engaged and they facilitated processes that were important for the successful execution of the programme.
- Despite this optimistic view of the programme some action could have been taken to improve its impacts. The most widely voiced concern about the programme was the exclusion of some very food insecure people. The unavailability of food on the local market made many people vulnerable and there was the conviction that food should have been given to everybody.

- Another area of concern was the inability of such teams as the M&E to abide by their work plans because of low levels of staffing and transport constraints. The evaluation identified other gaps that need to be addressed to strengthen the programme. They will enrich the planning process for subsequent VGF programmes. These are identified below along with recommendations for action.

11 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Allow more resources and time for registration processes.*

The highly participatory methodology that has been adopted for the VGF programme requires more time and this translates into more financial and material resources. For the process to yield the desired outcomes it is imperative that adequate time be given to all activities and tasks.

2. *Tighten the screening process to make sure that only the vulnerable and food insecure people are included.*

The VGF intervention is designed to target vulnerable people that are food insecure. In one village in Shurugwi, a decision was taken not to include young people of active age as beneficiaries because that was their interpretation of the guidelines. There are young people of active age who are genuinely vulnerable and food insecure. They should not be excluded just because of their potential to produce just as it is important not to include all widows regardless of their resource endowments and support systems. There is need to tighten the screening process and zero in on food insecurity to ensure that beneficiaries are all deserving people.

3. *Allocate adequate resources to ensure that extensive verifications are carried out at the start of the programme.*

The highly participatory methodology for registration and targeting is very good because it empowers communities to take control of processes and minimises manipulation by local leaders. However, it is not full proof because power relations in communities are such that the most vulnerable people's voices are not heard. To minimise manipulation by local leaders and other influential people, it is important for OGB to put in place robust checks and balances to counter manipulation efforts. Verifications are useful tools to achieve this objective.

- Household verifications should be an on-going responsibility of both the M&E and food distribution officers. Regarding the responsibilities of food distribution officers, post-distribution monitoring should have a verification component that informs verification activities of the M&E team.
- Verifications should be concentrated at the beginning of the programme to minimise inclusion errors.

4. *Develop clear categorisation guidelines to minimise confusion.*

The categorisation process appeared to have created confusion in some areas. This was mainly due to the different interpretations given to guidelines provided to Food Distribution Officers. There did not appear to be a common

understanding of the methodology and this compromised the registration process by producing exclusion errors. There is need for greater clarity in the categorisation guidelines. It may be necessary for OGB to revisit this part of the registration process and develop clearer guidelines to ensure that indicators are not imposed on communities and questions asked are clear.

5. *Develop guidelines that focus more on indicators directly contributing towards food access.*

- During the categorisation process, make use of the more specific vulnerability indicators. Food aid often addresses the challenge of access. Because the major determinants of food access are household income (in cash or in kind), prices of food and stocks from own food production, Indicators such as insufficient purchasing power, no cash income, no remittances, no source of vegetables (no garden), zero harvest, too ill or too old to physically access food, young orphans with no productive surviving parent and no other form of adequate support are quite powerful in reducing inclusion errors.
- It is important to keep in mind that it is a number of indicators that combine to render one very food insecure. One's social position such as being a widow, orphan or single woman head of household only draws attention to the potential for vulnerability because that status is characterised by deprivation of an important part of a support system such as loss of husband or parents that normally provide.
- In addressing the food access challenge, caution must be exercised because support systems are often wider than is assumed. Support from adult working children or relatives has been an important traditional area of social protection in the Zimbabwean culture. After a father dies, children tend to be more protective towards their mother and therefore they provide greater material support and take charge of her well-being. The same may be said for some orphans.
- Focusing on food access indicators must not be interpreted to mean that availability indicators should be left out. Rather, it is only to suggest that the chronically food insecure face access challenges even when food is abundant at fair prices on the market. The focus on access indicators is to ensure that the intervention targets those people who would suffer from malnutrition or die of hunger if they were not assisted because they are not able to physically, socially and economically access food.
- The current food crisis in Zimbabwe is peculiar in that it is about both access and availability challenges because of the poor harvests in collapsing macroeconomic environment where markets are no longer functioning. This makes almost everybody vulnerable because even those that have money and cannot find food on the market. In this respect, availability indicators become relevant but they should not be the dominant ones. They should be useful for crafting appropriate interventions that enable people to get out of the food insecurity trap as quickly as possible.

6. ***Provide a contingency budget to cater for urgent desperate cases that are identified in the course of programme implementation.***

Categories are not static because the situation deteriorates for those that are excluded. During the project implementation period, some people slipped from category C to category A but hardly any moved from A to C. Some very urgent cases emerged and they presented serious challenges not only to the programme but also to field officers to whom communities looked up for help. Very little could be done for such urgent cases yet they were predictable situations.

- During the programme design and planning there was awareness that there would be exclusion errors that would need urgent attention in order to avoid deaths from starvation. There was also awareness that some situations would become desperate with time. However, the programme did not make adequate contingencies to deal with these situations.
- The view here is that there should always be a contingency budget for dealing with urgent desperate cases that are identified in the process of implementing programmes. It is important to avoid such situations as the Chekenyu (Shurugwi) case where a child from a very vulnerable household died of starvation because of power politics in the extended family.

7. ***OGB should craft appropriate interventions for the transitorily food insecure to enable them to come out of the food insecurity trap. .***

- The transitorily food insecure are not welfare cases. They have the potential to get out of the food insecurity trap and move to higher levels of development. Interventions targeted at them should only be meant to relieve acute shortages and should be complemented by longer-term combination of protection and promotion that minimize any negative impacts of food aid such as depressed domestic production and dependency. Assistance targeted at those that are transitorily food insecure should therefore have a capacity building component that strengthens their resilience and productive base so that they become self-reliant. This transition is the responsibility of OGB and not WFP.
- For example, instead of targeting input distribution to the most vulnerable, that are not even able to work, inputs should be targeted towards those food insecure people with the greatest potential for high labour productivity. Once they are assisted in this way these people can move out of the category of transitory food insecurity and may even be able to produce surplus for redistribution to the most vulnerable. A lot of redistribution of food takes place through informal social networks. These can be boosted through capacitating those people that are able to produce surplus.

8. ***Streamline transport arrangements within OGB to avoid time wasting.***

- This is particularly important when teams with different mandates are required to share the same vehicle. The M&E team, for example, faced a lot of challenges with transport because they did not have specific vehicles assigned

to them. Additional to the challenge of the low staffing levels, transport constraints compromised the work of the M&E team.

There was the problem of time wasting trying to accommodate different programmes into transport arrangements. This was even experienced during the course of this evaluation. When field visits for the evaluation were undertaken, the consultant had to fit into the programme of team leaders and field officers who were in the process of closing down offices at the end of the project. This left her with very little time for interviews and discussions in communities.

There is need to strengthen planning or allocation of transport around the various activities to ensure that some key ones do not get compromised. The team in charge of transport should prepare work plans

9. *Streamline documentation for greater efficiency in the use of time.*

Some senior officers in the programme felt that there was too much documentation that was required from programme officers and this took a lot of time to prepare. It took officers away from their core responsibilities and compromised the quality of work. While WFP felt that the required documentation was not excessive and it was necessary, this was not viewed in the total context of documentation to meet internal and external reporting requirements. The internal documentation feeds into the documentation to meet WFP requirements. Taken in its total context, the required documentation is burdensome. It is necessary that the programme design and planning process address the issue of documentation in its totality and streamline it for greater efficiency in the use of time.

10. *The format of the narrative report should be flexible enough to allow it to capture the key and exciting processes.*

The view of some officers was that the format of the narrative report was restrictive and did not allow them to capture exciting processes. The narrative report is very important for future programme design and planning. It is the one that provides lessons that can strengthen future interventions. For highly participatory programmes such as the VGF, understanding the processes is critical for success. It is recommended that the format of the narrative report be flexible enough to allow reports to capture the key processes. This is would be very useful for WFP because it would allow them to better understand such things as why it is not practical to use tonnage to be moved as the key determinant of human resource requirements.

11. *Decentralise the warehousing for greater efficiency in food distribution.*

The warehouse in Gweru servicing all three districts is located very long distances from some of the feeding points. In most of these areas access roads were in very poor condition. Persistent heavy rains that fell in December and January worsened the condition of roads. As a result, delays in deliveries to feeding points were experienced and this inconvenienced local committees and villagers who waited for deliveries at feeding points for up to three days in some cases.

- In addition, the capacity of the warehouse itself was over-stretched by accommodating supplies for the three districts. This applied to both the human resource and physical capacity. The view of the warehouse manager and other senior programme officers was that Kwekwe should have its own warehouse and the Gweru warehouse be left to service Shurugwi and Chirumhanzi. While there may be implications for the budget, this arrangement would improve efficiency in delivery.

12. *Be prepared to action things quickly because emergency programmes are time based.*

Because an emergency programme is time based with distributions on fixed days, loading required to be done on the day before and daily reporting or updating of records, it is important to have adequate capacity to respond to challenges within a short time. In Zimbabwe, there are currently numerous challenges that hamper smooth operations. Power cuts, for example, interfere with the production of reports and update of ledgers using electronic spreadsheets. A request for a generator was submitted in October 2007 but delivery was only effected in April 2008 when the programme was winding down. Emergency situations require urgent facilitation so there is need to be prepared and to action things quickly.

13. *Capacitate field officers on gender so that mainstreaming efforts go beyond quantitative representation and include qualitative attributes that add value.*

- On gender there is need to go beyond numbers and pay more attention to qualitative aspects of the involvement of both women and men and what attributes they bring in. There is need for OGB to balance the quantitative and qualitative aspects of gender responsiveness. More attention should be given to welfare benefits of increasing women's effective participation in the food distribution activities. There is need to take a broader picture and link these welfare benefits that directly accrue to households with gains to society as a whole through accelerated development. Field officers need strengthening on gender so that they can support communities more effectively.

14. *Incorporate the dimension of possibilities of sex abuse by Oxfam GB staff I gender awareness training.*

- The gender training must raise awareness on sex abuse by staff of humanitarian agencies and promote the use of accountability mechanisms to minimise the abuse.
- Numerous cases of sex abuse by humanitarian aid officers have been recorded in similar initiatives. This was particularly prevalent in situations where registration was done administratively but this does not mean that the new methodology totally precludes chances of this type of abuse. Monitoring and verification processes that unearth inclusion errors can be manipulated to allow sex abuse to cover up for these errors. It is important that communities be made aware of such possibilities so that they make use of accountability mechanisms such as suggestion boxes or help desks to minimise them.

15. Carry out needs and capabilities assessments together with baseline surveys to inform the planning and design of future interventions.

- Recognising the predictability of hunger, there is need for the planning and design stages of programmes to incorporate information gathering processes that improve effectiveness, relevance and appropriateness. Needs and capabilities assessments are very important in identifying existing elements that can be incorporated into the programme. They point to informal activities and arrangements that work better in the local environment. For example, there are numerous social networks and social protection mechanisms that can be built upon for greater impacts. For example such social protection mechanisms as burial societies and savings clubs that are multipurpose could be used in the crafting of interventions for the transitorily food insecure whose consumption and production need to be protected. Similarly informal social networks such as kinship networks that redistribute food to deficit households of relatives or members of the clan can provide a sound foundation for targeting the most vulnerable.

16. Budgeting processes must be responsive to the new highly participatory methodologies that are adopted.

- The challenge with the low staffing levels was mainly due to the fact that when WFP and its cooperating partners developed the new methodology for identifying beneficiaries and distributing food they did not make any changes to the budgeting process. The use of tonnage to be moved as a basis for calculating the required staffing levels was not in tune with what would be happening on the ground. Failure to recognise that each methodology requires different levels resource levels results in the failure of the methodologies to make the expected impacts. It is imperative that whenever changes are made to the methodology the budget process should be reviewed and adjusted accordingly.

10. Recommendations on Emerging Issues

The evaluation process brought to the fore some issues that are highly debated and on which OGB should develop a common understanding and take a corporate position that will guide its planning and design of programmes.

1. Predictability of hunger

- There is now a wide consensus about the causes and predictability of hunger and food crises. According to Amartya Sen, “While drought and other naturally occurring events may trigger famine conditions, it is government action or inaction that determines its severity, and often even whether or not famine will occur.” It is equally true that in crisis or politically sensitive situations, donor and NGO action or inaction may also trigger famine conditions. In this regard, it is important that OGB recognises the predictability of food crises and plan for them accordingly rather than treat them as purely emergencies.

- Discussions with WFP made it clear that it had a limited mandate as a humanitarian agency but there was no reason why its partners with a broader mandate could not link their WFP supported humanitarian initiatives with other activities in their broader mandate. Since partners are already engaged in other longer-term activities in some of the districts where VGF was being implemented, it would make sense for new interventions to build on old ones especially in situations where community resilience would have been eroded by shocks and stresses over time.
- In WFP the food crisis addressed by the VGF is not viewed as an emergency. Rather, the VGF is a targeted intervention designed to address a specific challenge within a given time frame. In OGB, however, the situation is referred to or treated as an emergency. As a result emergency work has not been integrated into development long-term activities. There is need for OGB to shift its mind away from emergencies and design initiatives that bridge the emergency-development divide.
- Recognising the predictability of the food crisis will allow OGB to help communities sustain benefits from short-term interventions and build on them for longer-term development.
- Bridging the emergency and development divide should incorporate an exit strategy from food distribution for those with the potential to produce and move on with development. The strategy should build their resilience and strengthen their productive asset base to cushion them against future shocks and stresses that would normally result in acute food crisis situations. It should craft a smooth transition from relief to recovery and then development through social transfer programmes that provide timely, adequate, predictable and guaranteed resources to food insecure people. The transition should be such that people are able to meet minimum food needs and protect as well as promote their livelihood assets and strategies. In this regard, OGB needs to link its relief activities with the PRP and other development initiatives.
- Several things need to happen for this smooth transition to take place. Firstly, OGB should link up with informal and formal early warning systems locally, in communities and nationally, e.g. FEWSNET, AREX Crop Assessments and requests or warnings from local authorities. Secondly there is need for social protection initiatives to be incorporated into responses to food crises.
- Now that the new structure in OGB has a Humanitarian Team, it will be possible to bridge the humanitarian and development divide. Already, a review meeting recommended urgent action for the most vulnerable people.

2. Who is to be targeted?

- The VGF programme raised a critical question concerning who exactly was being targeted. The issue being addressed was food insecurity and the challenge was to provide access. Some indicators used related to the physical and mental status of people, some were about the social status and others related to the economic status of the people. It is widely accepted that all these statuses put people in vulnerable conditions that lead to food insecurity. However, it is not a cut and dry case and therefore it is important to bring clarity to the challenge that is being addressed, who is affected and what it is that puts them in the position of being affected?
- Assuming that a widow becomes vulnerable because losing a husband deprives her of a source of livelihood presupposes that married women do not generate or earn incomes. It also presupposes that the late husband was productive and provided for the family. Such assumptions are erroneous and provide a weak base for classifying widows as vulnerable. Similarly, expecting that all young able-bodied men can work and generate incomes in cash or in kind, under any economic conditions is also not correct.
- To minimise these errors, it is important that the targeting process first examine closely the underlying causes of food insecurity. It is important to understand what it is that hinders access to food. If it is inability to produce enough food for own consumption, it is important to understand the real constraining factors. Is it the physical well being of people, the lack of inputs or the absence of a member of a certain sex. If it is the inability to access food on the market, is it because it is not available or it is lack of buying power. It is important that such issues be interrogated in order to come up with appropriate indicators.

3. Special treatment for the HIV/AIDS affected

- Although the HIV/AIDS affected households were often identified as a particularly vulnerable group, the programme designs were blind to their specific needs. Yet, by singling them out, one would expect that the idea is to take into account their special circumstances and be more responsive to their special needs. This was not the case in the VGF.
- All beneficiaries were treated as homogenous in terms of allocations. Almost all the people that participated in interviews and focus group discussions believed it was important to address the specific needs of the infected. More specifically they believed that it was necessary to allocate relatively larger portions of rations to the HIV/AIDS infected because their bodies required more food to better cope with their illnesses.
- WFP's view on this issue was that its programme targeted its support to HIV/AIDS infected heads of households. It aimed to make food accessible to vulnerable food insecure people. The idea of increasing rations for the HIV/AIDS infected to address their special needs was for specialised programmes such as Home-based Care.

- In the context of WFP's mandate the point is valid. However, there is still the question of raising expectations. By identifying people's vulnerability with a particular social, economic, physical and mental condition, expectations of addressing particular needs are raised. The programme identified gender as a crosscutting issue that needed special attention and after raising awareness efforts were made to ensure a high level of participation by women in the distribution processes. Regarding HIV/AIDS, awareness was raised but the special circumstances of the HIV/AIDS affected households were not addressed.
- While addressing special needs of the HIV/AIDS affected households may be outside the mandate of WFP, it is within the mandate of OGB. This is where it becomes important for OGB to link its work in various areas and take advantage of synergistic relationships for greater and more long lasting impacts.

Appendix

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Oxfam GB Food Aid Programme Evaluation

OXFAM GB PURPOSE: To work with others to overcome poverty and suffering

OXFAM GB TEAM PURPOSE: To act with poor people as a force for change in addressing the causes of poverty, suffering and injustice and alleviating their symptoms

The overall objective of the programme was to mitigate the impact of 2006/07 drought by improving the food security of women, men and children in Midlands province by the end of the project by April, 2008. The targeted districts were Kwekwe, Shurugwi and Chirumhanzu. The expected result was up to 217,699 vulnerable individuals have access to food aid in Midlands province over the next 7 months through monthly food distribution. By implementing the programme, the following changes in policies, attitudes, practices and ideas were pursued:

- To reduce levels of malnutrition amongst the targeted populations in Midlands province through the provision of food for up to 217,699 people.
- Reduction in people resorting to harmful coping strategies
- To prevent the targeted households from disposing of productive assets and abnormal numbers of livestock.
- Women and girls are not forced to resort to transactional sex or other risky coping strategies.
- Oxfam GB ensure how better its interventions are accountable to beneficiaries
- People needing immediate support to access food receive it in a way that meets their nutritional needs but it will help to them to stay in their villages and grow for the next year.
- OGB will actively seek women participation in project planning and implementation
- Networking at district level with government and non-government organisation for mutual coordination and cooperation.
- Local authorities respecting OGB's apolitical stance and will not politicise food aid.

2. Objective:

To evaluate the Food Aid programme and provide recommendations for future programming. The evaluation should focus on the effectiveness in delivering the programme outputs and resource management, progress made towards achieving the programme objective and areas of future improvement.

3. Specific Tasks:

Working with the Oxfam-GB Humanitarian Programme Coordinator and Food Aid team, conduct the programme evaluation, which involves field plans, data collection, data analysis, and report writing. Data should be disaggregated by gender as much as possible. The following specific tasks should guide the evaluation:

Overall approach

1. Critically assess the approaches under the VGF programme in terms of strengths and weaknesses. Assess what was effective and what could be improved regarding design and implementation, community mobilisation, ownership and empowerment.
2. Assess whether the programme was appropriate/timely in meeting scale of needs taking account of assessment data.
3. Assess whether Oxfam got the technical aspects of its programme right with regards to food security support, training of food monitors, support to village committees, setting up and carrying out of distributions etc. How could this be done better?
4. Assess whether Oxfam got the technical and social aspects right regarding HIV/AIDS? Did the programme include specific activities on HIV/AIDS? What was the impact positive or negative of these interventions? Did the programme consider specific needs and issues of HIV/AIDS affected households around targeting, in programme design and programme implementation? Did the programme ensure that households affected by HIV/AIDS were not unintentionally excluded e.g. by access to distribution points, stigma? What was the input and involvement from the community and more specific people living with HIV/AIDS if any?
5. Assess whether Oxfam got its technical aspects rights regarding gender? Did the programme consider gender issues around targeting, how programmes were designed and implemented, input and involvement from the community?
6. Assess whether the logistics support adequate with particular regard to warehouse management, food transportation, commodity tracking and recording processes. How could this be done better?
7. Assess the programme's short term impacts as against planned objectives.
8. Consider the existing staffing structure and effectiveness of support processes and make recommendations as necessary for how this might be improved or adapted with regards to a future VGF programme.

Targeting

9. Assess Oxfam's current approach to targeting and make recommendations for a more rationale approach if necessary to ensure that the most vulnerable within the targeted community are reached, while maintaining core values of community participation.

Accountability

10. Assess the effectiveness of Oxfam's accountability mechanisms e.g. How much were the community involved with the programme planning and implementation, did beneficiaries fully understand what they were entitled to under the programme, what opportunities have members of the community had to provide feedback on their observations on the project – for example things that were not working well, or suggestions for different ways of doing things.

Donor compliance

11. Assess the effectiveness of Oxfam's systems in meeting donor obligations. Did the programme adhere to donor regulations as outlined in the donor contract especially regarding narrative and financial reporting requirements, donor regulations on procurement etc.

Monitoring and Evaluation

12. Assess Oxfam's current M&E systems and procedures with regards to VGF programme and make recommendations for streamlining and improving the efficiency of these for any future VGF programme and inclusion of crosscutting aspects such as gender and HIV/AIDS.

4. The assessment Methodology;

1. Review of available secondary data/Project documents
2. Community interviews with project beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries using PRA, community approaches and other relevant methodologies.
3. Interviews with key informants (veterinary officers, local leaders, AREX officers, traditional leaders e.t.c.)
4. Interviews with Oxfam GB staff implementing the programme
5. Integrate analysis of secondary data with the primary data collected to make recommendations for Oxfam-GB.

5. Expected Output

A well-researched and concise report providing the findings of the evaluations including the methodology and research design used.

Outline lessons learnt and recommendations with regard to programme implementation and achieving programme objective.

6. Skills and Competence:

- A postgraduate degree in Agriculture, Nutrition or related degree.
- Significant experience conducting food security assessments, M&E including data collection and analysis techniques.
- Understanding of the Zimbabwean context and sensitivities as well as available information sources.
- Cultural and gender sensitivity.
- Assessment, analytical and planning skills.
- Good oral and written reporting skills.
- Diplomacy, tact and negotiating skills.
- Development skills.
- Ability to travel within Zimbabwe and work long hours or in difficult circumstances.
- Well developed interpersonal and team skills and proven ability to be flexible.
- Good written and spoken English is essential and the ability to communicate in Shona is an added advantage.
- Sympathy with the aims and objectives of Oxfam GB.

7. Duration and Timeframe

It is anticipated that the field visit will take 22 days and should include travelling and conduction of activities expected. The estimated time-table is presented below and consultancy work should begin the week beginning 14 April 2008.

Tentative schedule

Activity	# of days	Comments
Secondary Data review and tools development	3	Programme files and documents available.
Travel fro Harare to Kwekwe Office and hold Interviews with programme manager and staff	1	Laxwell and Livison will be focal person. Accommodation arrangements by Loreen.
Document review and interviews with logistics team	1	Norman and team will be focal persons.
Field work in Kwekwe, Mvuma and Shurugwi, and travel back to Harare	8	Livison, Trust & Kurai will be focal persons.
Data analysis and report Writing by consultant	7	First draft sent to Oxfam management
Oxfam GB input on the report and return to consultant	5	Report with Oxfam comments sent back to Consultant for finalization.
Final Report Compiled by consultant	2	Final report sent to Oxfam management
Total consultancy days	22	

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First published online by Oxfam GB in 2010.

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