



Evaluation of Health, Empowerment, Livelihoods and Protection (HELP) Kailahun Programme in Sierra Leone

Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The health, empowerment and livelihoods programme [HELP], Kailahun, is a €2,326,094 three year, 2004 - 2007, programme implemented by Oxfam GB with funding from the EC, UNHCR and Oxfam's own contribution. HELP's **overall objective** is consolidation of peace and stability, establishment of an efficient link between relief, rehabilitation and long term development interventions, economic recovery and sustainable economic and social development. Its **purpose** is to contribute to the sustained improvement of the living conditions of refugee and returnee population and host communities in four Chiefdoms [Kissy Tongi, Luawa, Mandu and Upper Bambara] of Kailahun District.

HELP has **3 mutually reinforcing components**: namely: **public health**, comprising water points, latrines and public health education; **livelihoods** for socio-economic empowerment; and **protection** focusing on human rights including women and children's specific human rights; with gender as a cross-cutting theme. HELP is relevant to post war Kailahun, where water and sanitation [watsan] infrastructure and services were damaged, agriculture and economic activities disrupted, and post war human rights abuses and violations remain high. HELP is consistent with the GoSL's PRSP and the Kailahun district council development plan 2007 – 2009. The programme **design is appropriate** with respect to: recognition of the urgent need for watsan services; the interconnectedness of watsan physical activities and public health education; economic recovery as a vehicle for community participation and involvement in long-term development initiatives; awareness raising and social mobilisation and organisation for watsan and livelihoods initiatives through which social cohesion is being rebuilt and communities take greater responsibility for development processes; emphasis on community contribution of local resources and materials, thereby instilling a sense of ownership and control and destroying the dependence syndrome cultivated during periods of relief.

Oxfam GB uses a **demand-response approach** whereby it stimulated demand for low cost, appropriate and replicable models of water points, latrines and savings and credit scheme through awareness raising and sensitisation sessions involving community based health clubs [CHCs], water management groups and structures, and village savings and loan [VS&L] groups. It then responds to the demand by supporting communities to set up models that are in line with their socio-economic circumstances and can be replicated.

Oxfam GB focused more on the physical water points aspect of HELP in year 1. There were delays in starting latrines and software activities like formation of water management committees. This is attributable to, among other things, that the programme was still more inclined to relief. **HELP planning** assumed programme taking off on all fronts at full throttle. The planning overlooked the issue of the country's human resource base which was severely limited coming out of a protracted war. Oxfam was, therefore, constrained in injecting experienced development oriented staff. The planning also did not factor in some dynamics of development as regards community sensitisation, awareness raising, mobilisation and organisation. These processes are essential for community participation and involvement which in turn influence the pace at which development projects move. And for communities rebuilding trust, confidence, self-esteem, social cohesion and social structures, there was a definite need to factor adequate time for these essential processes. This should be a learning point for programmes that involve transition from relief to long-term development.

Oxfam GB has been **cost effective** in implementing HELP, making a saving of €360,000 which was de-committed back to EC in March 2007. The savings were from refocused programme activities in livelihoods and from general operational and staffing budget lines. More importantly, Oxfam GB consistently sought to find cost-effective and efficient ways of delivery which would entail low cost, sustainability and replication for communities.

HELP's activities have reached about 20% of the combined population of the four Chiefdoms. This is consistent with the specific objectives of the three components of HELP. More are on the verge of being reached as some aspects of HELP have **outstanding physical activities** that are nearing completion, namely, 16 water points and 150 dual pit family latrines. Oxfam's share of imported materials for completion of these activities is said to be in warehouse. Oxfam will have to see these activities, whose estimated budget for contractors fees, and staff and other running costs is €128,670 [as at 30 June] through, for the good names of EC and Oxfam GB. The budget should be less when July spend is taken into account.

The general view of the evaluation is that HELP is having **positive impact** on the lives of the people in the four Chiefdoms. This **impact level evaluation** listened attentively to the analysis and views of women, men, girls and boys in 24 communities [a 48% sample] in the four Chiefdoms on how HELP is impacting on their lives. It also took into consideration the views of representatives of stakeholders and other players in Kailahun and at national level. The conclusion is that HELP is a success but there are lessons to draw from its experience.

In **public health**, over 28,500 people have direct access to safe water, over 3,000 to latrines and over 1,773 to community based health education through CHCs. There is a body of evidence, in form of testimonies, that people have benefited from safe water, cleaner environments, improved personal hygiene, reduction in diseases such as diarrhoea, stomach aches, malaria, skin diseases, etc, and fall in morbidity and mortality rates. Women, children and men are all beneficiaries. It is also apparent that while the level of knowledge on environment health and personal hygiene are high, practises do not always match the level of knowledge. This is a challenge for the health education practitioners to develop strategies that promote individual behaviour change.

Points to consider in public health programming include: Oxfam GB providing all imported materials for initiatives like water points and latrines; developing an approach where by communities are exposed, in practical ways, to a range of models of latrines as opposed to one per community [this could be a function of facilitation leading to communities and households deciding on choice of latrines]; and, where the relatively expensive latrine models are involved, Oxfam to find ways for the poorest in communities accessing these during the demonstration phase rather than inadvertently subsidising the relatively well off. Specifically for water points, programmes should consider protection of traditional sources of water that communities revert to when the protected sources dry up. Programmes should also stay close to the UNICEF initiative of building the capacities of district council to warehouse spares for water pumps to ensure that all the water pump types used are captured in the data base.

The **livelihoods** component has been very successful in many respects. Sixty [60] VS&L groups have been established in 38 communities. Another 23 have been replicated in 16 communities without Oxfam support but with mentoring by exiting groups. Loan repayment rate is high at over 91% with the interest earned circulating in the communities. Over 62% of VS&L scheme membership is women. Members of

groups say they are benefiting in that the scheme: promotes a culture of saving; provides training in business; and, makes affordable loans available for income generating activities, social obligations and emergencies. The main issue raised for consideration in livelihoods programming is on inclusion of the poorer and vulnerable members of communities that are not in a position to make regular savings which are a pre-requisite for membership.

Gender and protection are cross cutting themes. Awareness raising and sensitisation takes place during CHCs', VS&L groups, women in leadership and water management training sessions. Gender issues including women and children's special human rights, sexual and gender based violence are covered and so are protection issues where attempts are made to build capacities of communities to address issues through community action and by linking up with appropriate external actors like IRC, police and family protection units and Ministry of Social Welfare. Gender and protection are being actualised in the public health and livelihoods activities. For example, water points are said to reduce walking distances for women and children fetching water, thereby reducing exposure to dangers of abuse and snake bites associated with distant water points. Issues of abuse and violations of rights [e.g. rape, wife beating, verbal abuse, children workloads, denial of adequate food] are there but said to have decreased as a result of the programme. Many issues that were previously treated as taboo are now being talked about openly.

It was found that women are increasingly taking on positions of leadership in public forums and groups. Previously, women tended to defer such positions to men. Initiatives that specifically target women and other special groups tend to accelerate the ascendancy of women into leadership. The involvement of women in CHCs, VS&L groups and water management in large numbers and also in leadership is building their confidence and self esteem. Women are generally becoming more involved and participative in decision-making and control of household resources while men are opening-up to tolerance and accommodating the views of women.

Gender is a key consideration in Oxfam GB. The HELP programme document and the baseline reports did not have detailed gender responsive indicators that could be measured throughout the life of the programme. Consequently M&E Unit's monthly CHC monitoring reports and impact case studies and HELP programme yearly and other reports were not gender and generation responsive to the extent demanded by the Oxfam GB Gender Mainstreaming Tools [Oct. 2002].

All components of HELP involve some aspect of **social organisation and formation of structures**. The social processes and structures are said to enhance social cohesion, rebuilding trust and confidence in these communities that were divided, dispersed and scattered far and wide by the civil war. HELP is, therefore, contributing to peace and stability and socio-economic recovery in Kailahun district.

Communities are taking responsibility for development initiatives through the social processes and structures promoted by HELP. This together with the demand-response approach whereby Oxfam GB is stimulating demand for low-cost, appropriate and replicable watsan facilities and livelihood projects, should provide for **sustainability**. Although HELP has done well towards its specific objectives and purpose, the main consideration, implied by the programme overall objective and approach, should really be whether the seed that has been sown and the seedling that has been nurtured in the past three years will grow to bear fruit and go on to multiply. In other words, has HELP sparked a fire that will spread within and beyond the four Chiefdoms of Kailahun, through replication of processes and activities? The seed was sown and the seedling nurtured. As for the progress of the plant, only time

will tell, but there are some early encouraging signs like: water management committees taking measures for maintenance and repair of water facilities; some isolated replications of latrines; and the extensive replication of VS&L groups.

The **success factors** for HELP include: peace and stability in Kailahun and in the country during the programme period; Oxfam walking the gender and protection talk by having a gender mixed team for the programme to interface with communities; relevance of the programme and its design; baseline surveys and needs assessments informing programming; and Oxfam GB being a learning organisation with respect to relevant experiences of other players.

Based on what the evaluation viewed as opportunities for HELP, some of which were missed, there are points for consideration for Oxfam and other players going into the future. These include the following:

- Ensuring that various processes are inclusive of the poorest and vulnerable who may not be in a position to set aside savings in order to participate in initiatives or to contribute towards imported materials for household level projects.
- Investigating and piloting different techniques of harvesting and storage of the plentiful rain water.
- Ensuring that future Oxfam GB programme documents and baseline reports have comprehensive gender analysis and detailed gender and generation responsive indicators that can be measured throughout the project/programme cycle
- Developing partnerships with LNGOs and other players in order to build capacity that remains in the district to support communities when programmes end.
- Ensuring involvement of relevant government line ministries and local government. Where possible and appropriate, extend and formalise MoUs and partnership arrangements for clarity of responsibilities and obligations to each other. Structured involvement of line ministries has potential for building capacity of ministries at local level, influencing policies and practises and scaling up of good practises to areas outside the agency area of operation.
- Using lessons from HELP to inform the rural water and sanitation objective and strategies of the GoSL watsan policy draft. Specific areas where HELP can inform the policy are that of “choice of technology” for water points and that of low cost community led latrines.
- Using lessons from HELP to influence the GoSL watsan policy draft to be pro-poor specifically on the potential twin threat of proposed Government withdrawal from being a watsan service provider to policy formulation and supervision and the proposed active encouragement of private sector involvement in rural water provision. If these 2 proposals were to pass, there is a real threat of privatisation of water placing safe water beyond the reach of the rural poor and vulnerable.
- Identifying one or two specific advocacy issues with clear objectives and strategies for pursuit during programme timeframe, linking actions at grassroots to the local [district] and national levels. Over and above the selected advocacy issues would be many others that can be engaged on in collaboration with others on an ad-hoc basis.
- Building capacities for community based advocacy so that development agencies are not always speaking for the communities at local and national levels.
- Bilateral and multilateral donors and institutions should step up efforts to build capacities of government and line ministries. Government has the ultimate responsibility to provide policy framework and support development processes in the country. Without adequate capacity, government will not be able to support various initiatives such as ones started under HELP.

- Drawing lessons from HELP on the importance of packaging mutually reinforcing components for programmes targeting resource poor communities emerging from war and or relief.
- Future LRRD programmes to draw on the experience of HELP with regards to planning the transition period, i.e. that crucial period marking the interface between relief and development, needs to be planned realistically.

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