



Evaluation of the Livestock Fairs Intervention Project in Zimbabwe

Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Oxfam GB has been implementing the Livestock Fairs project, which is part of its Protracted Relief Program (PRP) in Zimbabwe since July 2004. The PRP addresses livelihood and public health needs through a suite of interventions that include Livestock and Input Fairs, a Tillage Voucher Scheme, Community and Nutrition Gardens and Conservation Farming (training in moisture-conserving agronomic practices and agro-forestry). These interventions target poor households, which Oxfam categorizes into three: chronically poor, transitorily poor and the economically at risk. The program interventions emphasize reaching the most vulnerable using community-based targeting mechanisms. The project document states the targeting proportions for the Livestock Fairs intervention as 25% for the chronically poor and 75% for the transitorily poor. Able-bodied members of targeted/selected households above 18 and below 60 years of age participate in public works programs identified by their communities. Local supervisors keep track of participation, together with government extension staff. Oxfam monitors the activities as part of quality assurance to ensure that meaningful work is done before vouchers are issued. Livestock Fairs are done in February/March of each year and to date at least three have been done in each of the project communities.

The impact of the project can be looked at in relation to the changes in livestock ownership within the communities as well as the social capital that is built because of wealth possession. This is at output level, which can be measured in say 1 to 2 years. The actual numbers distributed are another indication of this level of impact (output). The increase in numbers of the distributed livestock can also be measured as a short-to-medium term difference attributable to the project. At the same time impact can be assessed in relation to the life changes enabled through use of the livestock. Examples of this include paying school fees for children and other more strategic investments with longer pay-off periods. The assessment focused more on the first (broadened ownership of stock and growth in numbers) and not on the more long-term impacts, which could be measured after four to five years with indicators like consistency in paying children's fees to allow progression in education (see also recommendation on M&E).

Fairs appear to have played a part in improving the prices of and developing livestock markets although in some cases e.g. Chionekano and Guruguru Wards (Zvishavane) communities complained that Fairs generally led to price increases making non-Fair trade difficult. Livestock Fairs allowed bulk selling and buying and the associated direct injection of cash into the communities, appreciated by beneficiaries, Government extension staff and local leaders (village heads and councilors). However voucher redemption delays eroded the values as a result of the prevailing inflationary environment. On balance, other (non-Fair) interventions by Oxfam experienced similar challenges. For instance, it seems that there was no adequate dialogue on the pricing of tillage services and communities complained of very low prices worsened by delayed payment.

Livestock Fairs improved access to small livestock to vulnerable households who have made breeding progress. Although the livestock numbers remain modest the assessment established that the households are utilizing the livestock for multiple purposes with payment of school fees emerging as a top priority. This should be seen as a strong form of social protection considering that households are investing in human capital for benefits that will only accrue in the future. Most households still have their livestock and are looking to further years of breeding. Both beneficiaries and sellers are experiencing the benefits from the project. Areas that require improvement cover production aspects of the project, disease control, and extension services provision, monitoring and evaluation of project impact, development of local markets and the provision of appropriate training to beneficiaries. This is particularly

important if the impact and long-term sustainability of the project is to be enhanced.

The evaluation team recommends that Oxfam;

1. *Articulates a medium to long-term profound vision for the project.*
2. *Takes its project responsibility beyond simple inclusion of the poor into subsistence chicken and goat production to local market development, facilitation of linkages with other markets and broader economic empowerment for those that show promise.*
3. *Creatively supports the strengthening of public sector extension to aid and sustain the production processes of the new livestock owners.*
4. *Considers taking up relevant policy issues up the hierarchy to secure the initiatives that it is supporting on the ground.*
5. *Develops an exit and sustainability strategy (related to the vision discussed in Figure 1).*
6. *Invests in building the capacities of livestock recipients in a creative and appropriate way.*
7. *Develops and implements an M & E System where stakeholders and the community participate. The system should allow robust integration of specialist and Participatory Impact Monitoring where beneficiaries, community leaders and other stakeholders on the one hand and OXFAM M/E staff collect and co-analyze the data on the other. Related and to properly institutionalize tracking of life changes Oxfam, with technical assistance as appropriate, could consider setting up a system for collecting and analyzing panel data for a cohort of households over the next 5-6 years.*
8. *Seeks avenues to improve access to Veterinary Drugs.*
9. *Together with the community and key stakeholders should endeavor to address program implementation challenges faced in the project at present.*
10. *Revisits the depth and breadth of support while also reflecting on the optimum size of the suite of interventions that it brings to any given community.*
11. *Retains core program staff at least for the three-year project/program cycles.*
12. *Encourages buyers to show their capacity to look after livestock as they purchase.*
13. *Holds Fairs during weekends and school holidays nearer the drier months.*

The Fairs have brought a difference in the lives of both sellers and buyers i.e. numbers distributed, livestock uses and general livelihoods issues. However, the evaluation team urges Oxfam to provide additional structured post-Fair support to address challenges that new livestock owners face. This support is also necessary for beneficiaries and Oxfam's program partners. Offering the support will sustain the gains that the project is generating and ensure that the beneficiaries remain motivated to do more and thus climb out of the 'poverty pit' they are in.

Table of Contents

1.0. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	1
2.0. INTRODUCTION.....	3
2.1. BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION	3
2.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND	4
2.3 PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT	5
2.4 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH	5
3.0 MAIN FINDINGS 3.1 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LIVESTOCK FAIRS	9
3.2 APPROPRIATENESS AND RELEVANCE.....	13
3.2.1. <i>Identifying the sellers</i>	16
3.2.2. <i>Exploring Implementation Challenges</i>	17
3.2.3. <i>Delayed Payments</i>	21
3.2.4. <i>Administration of Vouchers</i>	21
3.3 IMPACT AND BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT	22
4.0 PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY.....	33
4.1. STAFF TURNOVER AND INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY	33
4.2. STORAGE AND MANAGEMENT OF PROJECT INFORMATION.....	34
5.0 PROJECT COSTS.....	35
6.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	37
<i>Figure 1: Proposed Project Trajectory.</i>	38
ANNEXES	44
ANNEX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE	44
ANNEX 2: EVALUATION TOOLS (QUESTIONNAIRE & FGD GUIDELINES);	48

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