



Final Evaluation of the NGO Joint Initiative for Urban Zimbabwe Community Based Support for Vulnerable Populations

Executive Summary

Oxfam GB Programme Evaluation

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Evaluators: Lovemore M. Zinyama, Bakhethisi K.T. Mlalazi

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The JI Programme was launched to address urban poverty and vulnerability resulting from the decline in the macro-economic environment in Zimbabwe, the collapse of social welfare and municipal services, and in response to “Operation *Murambatsvina*”. It was set up in 2005 by 7 international NGOs with their local implementing partners and was supported by group of 5 donors through pooled funding. The over-arching goal of the programme is **to restore dignity and reduce suffering for the most vulnerable in urban and peri-urban areas of Zimbabwe.**

The agreement entered into by the donor group and the NGO partners provided for a mid-term review (carried out in June 2007) and a terminal evaluation. This is the report of the end-of-programme or terminal evaluation.

Purpose of the Evaluation

This evaluation was meant to consider the rationale for the type of approach used in the Joint Initiative and also to consider measurements of success the programme had achieved in meeting its goals.

Evaluation Process

The evaluation was undertaken by two consultants over a 10-day period, and was done through perusal of relevant documents, interviews with the donor group and JI partners, and visits to implementation sites to observe interventions and discuss with beneficiaries and key stakeholders.

Findings

The JI programme has largely achieved its objectives and has had a noticeable impact on the lives of beneficiaries and the practices of implementing partners. The interventions were selected as a result of research on the needs of potential beneficiary communities and are, as a result, relevant to the needs of the communities and to the urban environment. With the deterioration of the economy in Zimbabwe, the interventions of the programme are even more relevant today.

Major challenges faced in implementing the programme included adjusting to operating in an urban environment, dealing with heightened political tensions and sensitivities, and operating in a highly volatile macro economic environment. These have combined to affect aspects of programme implementation, but the JI managed to successfully navigate through most of these challenges.

The management of the programme has been effective and parties to the initiative (donors, local and international NGOs) expressed general satisfaction with how the programme has been managed. Areas that could be improved to enhance effectiveness include more effective ACCs, greater harmonisation of methodologies and deliberate lesson learning.

Relations have been developed with a wide range of stakeholders at all levels and these have benefited the programme. Relations and networks have been particularly useful in lobbying and dealing with the authorities, but they have also benefited programme implementation through sharing information and skills.

Conclusions

There is no doubt that the JI programme has been an innovative approach in providing support to poor and vulnerable urban households. Overall, the programme successfully met its targets and objectives. The partners, both local and international, should be commended for what they have achieved, especially given the continually deteriorating socio-economic conditions and worsening poverty and a hostile political environment.

Recommendations

Improvements in Programme Management

- Standardise and improve the functioning of the ACCs across all the sites;
- The lead agency to ensure that feedback in the form of progress reports are disseminated down to both international as well as their local partners as part of the process of information sharing and engendering a feeling of genuine partnership;
- JIG to ensure that its contingency plan is functional.

Improvements in Programming Methodologies for Future Implementation

- Agree on “best practices” and adopt these frameworks for interventions and approaches;
- Ensure that beneficiary verification attains 100% in all interventions as much as possible and provide a forum for community contribution, but without compromising the JI’s criteria;
- Work towards greater collaboration with those outside the consortium who are working in the same sectors;
- Consortium allocates more resources towards research and documentation of its experiences, successes and failures (e.g. in advocacy and lobbying local authorities, “best practices”);
- Improve lesson learning, ensure that sector meetings are held more regularly and provide a forum for sharing;
- Ensure that M&E is placed more strategically;
- Consider modalities for community M&E;
- Provide more opportunities for consultation with children on child protection issues and child rights and respond to their needs;
- Liaise with DAACs and other stakeholders for a review of the contents of the standard HBC kit so that it takes account of emerging health status of HIV/AIDS patients so that it reflects the needs of the beneficiaries (i.e. less emphasis of wounds and more hygiene items);
- JI to continue efforts to improve the programme’s cost effectiveness.

Recommendation to the Donor Group

Overall, the consultants strongly urge the donors to continue with funding support to the Joint Initiative for the reasons presented in this evaluation report.

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