

Sustaining Livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Theme: Zimbabwe's Protracted Relief Programme (PRP)¹

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Editor's notes

This SLSA looks at the linkages between the sustainable livelihoods approach and the design and implementation of a comprehensive longer-term relief programme in Zimbabwe. As the developmental dimension of relief receives increasing attention, it is appropriate to reflect and learn from a complex, protracted relief situation where an overriding priority has been about having a longer term impact on poverty. This article was written by Steven Wiggins of ODI who has led the evaluation of PRP and Ian Goldman of Khanya-aicdd who facilitated the design of Phase I and a concept for Phase II, with the assistance of Tom Barrett of DFID Zimbabwe.

Introduction

The Protracted Relief Programme (PRP) aims to assist the poorest and most vulnerable households in Zimbabwe suffering from the effects of rainfall failures, economic decline, and the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Since 2002 international agencies have carried out repeated relief programmes in Zimbabwe, with large-scale food aid distribution as the main element. While these have helped to alleviate hardship and to support the nutrition of young children, they have been insufficient to reduce poverty and vulnerability

¹ Drawn from an output to purpose review of the PRP conducted in September/October 2006, authored by Sue Jones, Priscilla Mataure, Baki Mlalazi and Steve Wiggins, and edited by Steve Wiggins.

significantly. The PRP is an ambitious longer term alternative to food aid, consisting of diverse activities mainly designed to boost food production by the poor, to improve access to water, and to provide care to the chronically ill. It is an interesting attempt to implement support through NGOs at scale in a situation of decline, using a range of simple technologies and a learning approach. The project purpose is “stabilising food security and protecting livelihoods of vulnerable households, particularly those affected by AIDS”.

The Programme was launched in July 2004 and has a total budget of around £30 million until July 2007, funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). It is working at scale and during the third year of operations it is expected that more than 250,000 households will be reached directly (see Table 1) and many more indirectly

PRP is implemented through twelve major non-government organisations (NGOs)², some of whom work through smaller, local NGOs as implementing partners. Technical support is provided by international centres and UN agencies, including CIMMYT, FAO, ICRAF, ICRISAT, and UNICEF. A Technical Learning Co-ordination Unit (TLC) carries out overall co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation and learning support. Government have been kept informed of the programme but there is no formal agreement regarding the project. Each NGO does however have formal MOUs and the PRP is effectively funding their projects in a coordinated way.

Table 1: The scale of PRP from 2004/05 to 2006/07

Intervention	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Agriculture	No of client households served (000)		
Provision of inputs - seed, fertiliser or both	93	110	120
Seed multiplication	3.6	1.9	13
Conservation farming	3.1	5.9	31
Gardens, individual, community and drip kits	20	37	69
Livestock	4.9	10	16
Other livelihoods			
Non-timber products		1.1	2.6
Agroforestry products			3.7
Micro finance		0.1	0.6
Water and Sanitation	No		
Water points, new and repaired: number	221	845	760
Latrines: number	393	1,239	3,672
Health and Hygiene Training, trainers trained		1	1.3
Home Based Care	1.1	1.8	21
Training in HBC and HIV/AIDS, clients x 000	1.1	10	23
Total	168	196	250

² Action Aid, CARE, CAFOD, CRS, FCTZ, IDE, Oxfam, Pump Aid, Red Cross, River of Life, Save the Children and World Vision

Key focus areas of the Programme

The main components of the programme are shown in Table 1, and include direct promotion of improved agricultural technologies and food security (e.g. conservation farming, gardens), support to health and hygiene and care for households suffering from HIV/AIDS.

The programme clearly has a **protection** component, protecting households at great risk, e.g. through the home-based care and water and sanitation components. It also has a strong **prevention** component, preventing households from slipping into the risk of starvation or disease, e.g. through the agricultural and water and sanitation programmes. The agricultural activities in particular also have a **promotion** aspect, with the potential to help households to significantly improve their livelihoods, providing a springboard to income generation.

Emerging results

Most of the **agricultural activities**, the bulk of the PRP, are working well — some remarkably well. In conservation farming, PRP has been able to help develop and roll out a promising technology ideally suited to poor farming households in drier areas. Results from the 2005/06 season are very good. The main issues concern the mix between the provision of inputs and equipment on the one hand, and of extension and training on the other. Other important questions concern the modality of providing inputs such as seed and fertiliser and how to ensure that they respond effectively to different needs: direct distribution, organised fairs or vouchers.

Water supply is much appreciated and works well, thanks in part to innovative pump designs such as the Elephant pump that uses a rope and washer design to draw water. **Latrine** provision is more questionable, because of a uniform national design that is relatively costly and is not well designed for the sick, the aged or for female children. While trials of alternative designs are ongoing, the relative contribution of latrines to hygiene and health compared to education on hand-washing need to be assessed. More importance is now attached to health and hygiene training rather than just the hardware.

Home-based care for the chronically ill works well and meets a pressing need. The main issue is tailoring the support packages to the needs of different clients.

Nutrition gardens at household and community levels provide vegetables and herbs. The latter need to be used with care. It is good to see that partners have started the job of publicising the merits and dangers of different herbs.

PRP has made major efforts in the last year to tackle the challenges of **targeting**, both through the use of improved methods and through more recognition of the issues with associated study and debate to find working solutions. The concept of graduated packages of support, where the Programme benefits all in the community, but with greater levels of assistance for the very poor, has gained widespread acceptance. Not

enough, however, is known about the extent to which existing interventions reach the poorest or about the impacts of these interventions on them.

Monitoring and evaluation systems are being established. The main issue is that the focus so far is largely on inputs and activities, and only now is starting to focus on outputs and impact. Much qualitative information exists on the effects of the Programme, and the system needs to capture and use this.

Partners' progress on **mainstreaming HIV/AIDS and gender** concerns into the Programme has been variable. An emerging challenge is addressing the lack of male involvement in home-based care and in some of the labour-intensive activities. Gender may well be best addressed within a broader consideration of equality of opportunities and exclusion.

A key challenge is to ensure that projects are **demand-led and community-driven**. Again, progress has been made with evidence of more participatory planning on the ground. At Programme level, useful reports on the possibilities for more community-based approaches were commissioned. To support practice and thinking, a working group on the entire range of social dimensions of the PRP would be useful.

Networks of support, interaction and expertise are being built in the Programme. In the last year, interest in **social transfers** has emerged. There may be scope for piloting such approaches, perhaps through schemes with youth supporting the poor and vulnerable, or through cash transfers for the elderly and those supporting orphans.

Government agencies, mostly from the provincial, district and village levels, are significantly involved in PRP but mainly in implementation, with much less involvement in design and planning. Working relations in the field with government agencies have improved considerably and are good: the PRP is clearly much appreciated at these levels.

Emerging Impacts

Good progress was made in the second year towards achieving the programme purpose. Programme outputs in several agricultural activities, including the very large seed and fertiliser distribution, show benefit-to-cost ratios of 1.27 or more. The water supply component of PRP was rapidly rolled out. It meets strongly felt needs, with multiple benefits to the households using the new or rehabilitated water points. At around US\$25 for each household reached, it is economical. Home-based care also meets intensely-felt needs and works with existing institutions, both formal and informal.

The Programme contributes substantially to improving food security of client households, mainly by increasing their own production, and to a lesser extent by generating extra income to buy in food. In most cases, the benefits to client households are at least as great as those offered by typical food aid programmes, but most PRP activities are cheaper than food aid and are sustainable. And in its extension activities, PRP potentially generates long-lasting benefits as farmers develop new skills in conservation farming, micro-dosing of fertiliser and so on.

The main caveat to this positive assessment of PRP is that of attribution: in a complicated crisis, what would have happened in the absence of PRP and other donor efforts? The absence of a large-scale disaster in Zimbabwe marked by high mortality and massive displacements of the population may be due to donor programmes, but it may also be a tribute to the resilience of the poor and vulnerable, or to the mitigating effects of remittances. It would be useful to see if more can be done with the existing data sets to draw out the specific influence of PRP.

During the third year there is also a need to monitor closely partners' commitments to focus interventions more strongly on poorer and more vulnerable people. The shift to a more demand-led, community-driven approach still needs more work.

Effective learning, dissemination and co-ordination

FAO and UNICEF play a key and growing role in **co-ordination**, both between government at national level and the Programme and between the PRP activities and those of other donors and NGOs in the fields of agriculture, water and sanitation, and nutrition. In addition the Consultative Group International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) centres are working closely with partners to good effect in terms of the technical quality of agricultural activities. They are also now generating important evidence of Programme effects in the field.

Communication and networking between partners has improved in both implementing and technical terms. Beyond the Programme, good relations with government departments and agencies have been formed, NGOs have drawn in funds from other sources to support PRP activities, and DFID Zimbabwe is developing its relations with other donors who may potentially be interested in co-funding an expanded Programme. In addition the programme is drawing in a significant pool of local consultants with a wide range of expertise.

The TLC is managing information and co-ordinating the PRP successfully, with processes of planning and reporting standardised across partners. Studies commissioned in mid-2006 have proven to be a valuable resource of **lessons** to date. A range of technical guidelines were produced and disseminated and are being implemented. At field level there is increasing evidence of adoption of PRP-promoted technologies, such as conservation farming, even by households that were not included in the Programme. That the Programme functions relatively smoothly has much to do with the TLC's co-ordination, although they have had less time for drawing out and disseminating lessons.

Effective NGO management

Effective management systems were set up and operate well for the most part — no small achievement when so many implementing and supporting agencies are involved. Having said that, performance-enforcement mechanisms tend to be weak. The clearest case is that partners that repeatedly submit reports and accounts (very) late face no penalty, and reports to TLC and the Programme are routinely submitted six or more

months in arrears. On financial management, disbursement rates are well up this year compared to last. Yet there are weaknesses in financial procedures. A commissioned report has also shown that some partners have significant failings in their governance.

Changes for the future

A number of changes are being suggested for the final stages of this phase of the programme, including:

- **Dropping or reassessing some activities:** e.g. drip kits, or if not abandoning this technology, then at least using simpler irrigation systems using buckets or watering cans; alternative latrine designs that are cheaper;
- **Getting a better understanding of impact** of more activities being implemented: e.g. sample surveys of clients using gardens and receiving livestock;
- **Agreeing on standards:** e.g. standards on HBC to allow for a graduated package of care based on clients/household need, operation of health clubs
- **Better targeting:** using a targeting framework and an inclusion strategy to find ways effectively to involve those less visible and excluded, such as the chronically poor, elderly, disabled, women and youth;
- **Mainstreaming HIV/AIDS:** using the HIV/AIDS Time Line to allow programmes to focus on their HIV/AIDS mainstreaming interventions with an 'HIV /AIDS lens';
- **Strengthening the community-based approach:** initially focusing on participatory training, and assessing how interventions could be designed to respond to the needs of particular groups;
- **Improving learning and dissemination:** gathering more data on outputs and impact rather than activity and inputs, ensuring that experiences and qualitative assessments from the field are fed in to the PRP programmes; complemented by dissemination of summaries and lessons learned.

Recommendations for a **Phase II** of the PRP include:

- More attention to the needs of the less able very poor, including the disabled, some of whom are often excluded;
- More effort to engage with communities and to ensure that the PRP is increasingly responsive to the felt needs and demands from the communities and less supply driven;
- Continued rolling out of the innovative activities that proved successful in Phase I, while continuing some further innovation in Phase II;
- Continuing to pioneer innovative approaches to safeguarding livelihoods, including forms of social assistance such as cash/voucher transfers, micro-finance/voluntary savings and loans.

Protracted relief and sustainable livelihoods

The PRP addresses livelihoods in a number of ways and some weaker areas are being addressed in Phase 2 – see Table 2.

Table 2 How the PRP addresses the SL principles

SL Principle	How addressed in the programme
People-centred Empowering Responsive and participatory	This principle has not been strong in the programme where different NGOs initially supported supply-driven interventions, responding to the emergency. These principles indicate that support should result in increased voice, opportunities and well-being for the poor. Some of the initiatives have been empowering, others technically focused and less so. Community-based planning (CBP) was tested by SCF. It is proposed to strengthen this in Phase 2 where communities can identify their own situation and priorities, choosing from a menu of responses from government and PRP. It is also suggested to increase participation in the design of service delivery
Holistic	A wide range of interventions have been supported ranging from agriculture, water, to home-based care. There has been detailed monitoring of livelihoods through the TLC. The use of integrated CBP would increase the holism and impact. Improving coordination with government agencies such as Rural District Councils and AREX would assist.
Sustainable	Economic – many of the initiatives are in themselves improving incomes and local economies (eg conservation farming, gardens, livestock) and will have sustainable impacts. The services being provided are generally not viable unless support is provided from some source, whether government or NGOs. The service delivery models such as HBC are however low cost models. Social – in general the systems of extension and support being promoted are community-based, such as home-based care and extension of conservation farming through volunteers. Environmental – the technologies being promoted such as conservation farming, drought tolerant varieties, micro-irrigation, are not intensive in resource use, are adapted to the physical environment and are responding to the needs of climate change. Institutional – as a programme coming from a humanitarian base, although with a longer term perspective, the main priority in this phase has not been to establish sustainable delivery systems. That needs to be a stronger focus in Phase 2.
Strengths-based	The models being promoted build on low cost local designs (eg modified Blair toilets), capacities of local NGOs as well as of local people. It is important that international NGOs strengthen their role as building capacity of local NGOs, rather than just service delivery
Multi-level (or micro-macro links)	There are links between micro level where the NGOs are operating, Councils and the centre, although links with provincial and central government are not strong, but there are excellent links with the international research centres. . There has been significant feedback from experience in the field upwards and AREX has established a task force on conservation farming.
Conducted in partnership	There are a wide variety of partnerships in the programme, between NGOs, NGOs with international research institutions, and less strong with government, primarily Councils and AREX. This needs to be strengthened in Phase 2.
Disaggregated	Some NGOs have made an effort to understand the needs of different groups and disaggregate their responses, eg SCF starting with CBP. This has improved during the programme but with some it is still supply-driven. All programmes are responding to recognised priority needs at community level e.g. water, agricultural inputs etc
Long-term and flexible.	The programme has been interesting. Even though it is classified as a humanitarian intervention it is having a long term impact on poverty and longer term benefits. There is evidence of significant evolution as services,

	interventions and ways of operating and technologies have emerged or failed, with a pragmatic approach to coverage. It is proposed that Phase 2 take an even longer-term approach, with a 5 year programme, given the impact and success of Phase 1.
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Conclusions

The PRP is an interesting programme for a number of reasons:

- It is operating at **scale**, with almost 1.5 million people likely to be reached in the third year of operations (i.e. 10-15% of the population of Zimbabwe), and covers a diverse range of interventions affecting people's livelihoods;
- In a situation of declining government services and poor governance it is being **implemented through NGOs**, demonstrating that even in such situations it is possible to have impact at scale and that NGOs can be viable service implementers;
- Many interventions have very **simple technologies**, e.g. conservation farming, home-based care and simple water pumps, and most seem to be having significant impacts. These have been adapted from experience elsewhere, implemented and modified;
- It demonstrates that it is possible to improve livelihoods through **agriculture**, a sector where there has been much pessimism over the last 10-15 years;
- A range of **community-based support** mechanisms are being used successfully and at scale, including community-based extension (conservation farming), home-based care, and in the water sector;
- It is being operated through several international agencies, NGOs both international and local, and with local government ;
- A **learning** support process is explicitly designed into the programme through the TLC, and the programme has adapted to learning and changes.

The proposals for Phase 2 will strengthen the demand side of the work (people's voice and choice), as well as the sustainability of the interventions.

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Useful resources

Livelihoods: Online Learning Resource. University for Professional Education Larenstein and Wageningen University

A new online resource to introduce learners to Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches. The site hosts case study papers covering topics such as migration, trade liberalisation, gender and agriculture.

http://www.livelihoods.org/post/Wag_postit.htm?em=0307

[source: Livelihoods Connect March bulletin]

Upcoming activities/programmes

Call for action learning case studies

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As part of a research project to learn the lessons from action learning projects in Africa and to start building a practitioners network on action learning, Khanya-aicdd is calling for examples of action learning that potentially could be used as case studies for more detailed analysis.

Each example should fit into the following criteria:

- It was consciously an action learning/action research intervention (degree to which methodology was conceptualised may differ, and may have evolved during the intervention);
- It was participatory in method;
- It involved partnerships;
- The process did, or sought to, lead to change in practices and/or policy (some examples which failed or struggled may also be useful);
- It was carried out or completed in the past decade;
- It was carried out in Africa.

If you know of relevant examples, please send the name of the project, its location and contact details (website, email or phone) to stephen@khanya-aicdd.org or aziza@khanya-aicdd.org. Please feel free to pass this on directly to them.

Building Capacity for Rights: Democracy & Development in Africa

11-22 June 2007, Johannesburg, South Africa

(organised by the Centre for Applied Legal Studies, University of the Witwatersrand)

This course will cover the nuts and bolts of party politics from the inside. Topics to be addressed include running effective campaigns; public opinion and polling; successful electoral strategies; media relations; policy development; membership recruitment; issue management; and political party funding. For further information contact

timolt@law.wits.ac.za

[source: GSDRC Bulletin April 30]

Humanitarian Development Summit

17-19 October 2007; Nairobi, Kenya

This central theme of this second Humanitarian Development Summit will be the vast capital resources being applied to humanitarian relief and sustainable development from the private sector and global foundations, with the key issue being the most effective allocation and application of these resources. The summit will incorporate private bilateral meetings, government and NGO workshops, international exhibition, seminars, plenary speeches and working groups devoted to various sector requirements. For further information contact info@developmentprogram.org or visit www.humanitariandevelopmentprogram.org

Human Rights Fieldwork – Principles, Strategies & Skills

27 October to 3 November 2007, Ireland

(organised by International Human Rights Network (IHRN))

A course exploring the principles underpinning effective human rights fieldwork. To enhance the necessary skills of participants to carry this out safely before, during or after armed conflict. For further information contact <http://www.ihrnetwork.org/hr-fieldwork.htm> or info@ihrnetwork.org

Past editions of SLSA - available at www.khanya-aicdd.org

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19	May 2006	Decentralisation
18	Feb 2006	Local institutions and participatory development
17	Nov 2005	Participatory forest management (PFM)
16	Sept 2005	FAO's work on People-centred development with a livelihoods perspective (PCD-L)
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14	Sept 2004	Community-based management
13	June 2004	Learnings about the sustainable livelihoods approach
12	Feb 2004	Sustainable livelihoods and small-scale mining
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9	April 2003	Community-based workers as a model for pro-poor service delivery
8	Feb 2003	Institutional support for sustainable livelihoods
7	Sept 2002	Local economic development and sustainable livelihoods
6	June 2002	HIV/AIDS and sustainable livelihoods
5	March 2002	Social capital and sustainable livelihoods
4	Dec 2001	Rights-based approach to development
3	Sept 2001	Corporate Citizenship
2	July 2001	Community-based Planning
1	May 2001	The sustainable livelihoods approach

Sustaining Livelihoods in Southern Africa is an initiative of the Khanya-African Institute for Community-Driven Development (Khanya-aicdd). The editors are Ian Goldman, Khanya's CEO, and Rachel Searle-Mbullu and Stephen Greenberg from Khanya's Learning & Sharing Programme. Ian can be contacted at goldman@khanya-aicdd.org, Stephen at stephen@khanya-aicdd.org and Rachel at rachel@khanya-aicdd.org.

