

Ex post evaluation – Zimbabwe

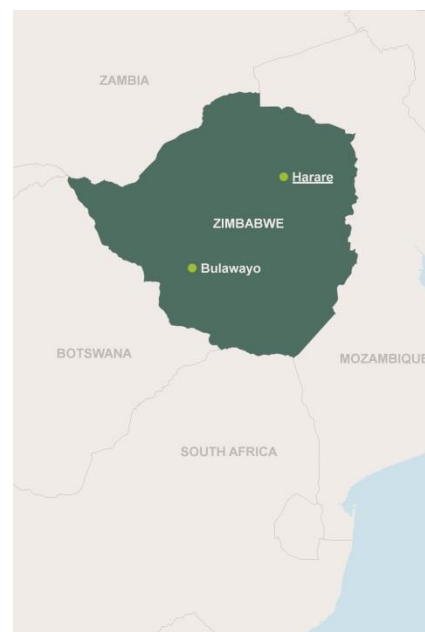
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Sector: Social welfare and social services (CRS Code: 16310)
Programme/Project: Supporting AIDS orphans and vulnerable children, BMZ
 No.: 2006 65 679*
Implementing agency: UNICEF

Ex post evaluation report: 2015

		Project A (Planned)	Project A (Actual)
Investment costs (total)	EUR million	53.54	64.87**
Other donors	EUR million	35.64	46.97
Funding (FC)	EUR million	17.90	17.90
of which BMZ budget funds	EUR million	17.90	17.90

*) Random sample 2015; ** Fund outflow until May 2010



Summary: This project involves the joint financing of a UNICEF "Programme of Support" (PoS) relating to the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NAP). The living standards of the children affected throughout the country were to be improved by means of support measures in various social and economic areas. In light of sanctions against the state of Zimbabwe, the programme was implemented with UNICEF as the executing agency and with the help of non-governmental organisations (NGO). Against the background of a fragile country with a donor blockade, this was a pilot project. The overall costs of the National Action Plan were estimated at USD 244 million, of which UNICEF wanted to raise at least USD 55 million USD (EUR 41.54 million).

Objectives: The aim of the programme was to improve the use of social services by orphans and vulnerable children, and to support their protection against all kinds of abuse. This was to be achieved by implementing multi-sectoral measures (education, health care, psycho-social care, child protection, shelter and clothing, economic strengthening, water). This in turn was intended to help improve the living standards of these children in delicate situations.

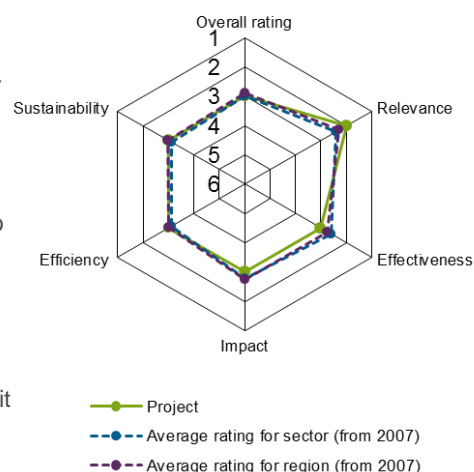
Target group: The target group was AIDS orphans and other disadvantaged children (disabled, abused, homeless, HIV-infected) aged between 0 and 18. The total size of the target group was estimated at 1.8 million children (2005), including 1.5 million AIDS orphans (who had lost one or both parents). The programme endeavoured to reach 25 % of the target group nationwide.

Overall rating: 3

Rationale: The high relevance is countered by marked limitations with the efficiency of the approach. The positive evaluation of the support in education (BEAM, 2012) receiving roughly 27 % of the PoS funds, gives an overall boost in the performance of the programme.

Highlights: Given the political stipulation to avoid public-sector infrastructures, two alternatives presented themselves to implement the PoS: build upon the existing offering from NGOs or establish a new range of more focused measures. The first option was chosen, which could be implemented in the short term.

Impact monitoring played no role until the donor-initiated impact evaluation (last implementation phase). The monitoring system was designed to be extensive, but it was limited to registering the children reached, with no quality or use elements on outcome level. There were no systematic checks either on the results reported by the NGOs involved in the implementation. Especially with such a fragmented programme that has very diverse measures and large number of players, monitoring is a key part of programme steering.



Rating according to DAC criteria

Overall rating: 3

Altogether we rate the efficiency of the programme as satisfactory. The children's living conditions were improved briefly during the term of the programme, but this was still valuable in light of the total economic collapse. But much more could have been accomplished both with a programme design that better targeted the needs of children and effective monitoring of its implementation. That said, a good quarter of the programme funds went on the stand-alone educational program BEAM, which an external ex-post evaluation certified as effective.

General conditions and classification of the project

The programme was carried out in a fragile state via United Nations Organisation UNICEF under the proviso that the state should not benefit from the donor funding. It was constructed as a multi-sectoral programme and was implemented with a cascading strategy via NGOs and associated community-based, subcontracted organisations (Community Based Organisation, CBO). The economic situation in the country deteriorated further during the implementation of the programme and culminated in the economic collapse in 2008. With the introduction of a mainly USD-based currency system and some economic reforms it witnessed an economic recovery beginning in 2009. In 2014 the EU repealed its decision to have no direct exchanges with the Zimbabwean government and resumed relations with Zimbabwe.

Relevance

Zimbabwe was (and is) one of the countries most affected by HIV in the world. Although it has had declining HIV prevalence and incidence rates in the last 10 years, an HIV prevalence of 15 % (2013) remains very high. An adequate response to the epidemic was made more difficult by the fact that the country was in an economic free fall – hitting bottom in 2008 with a total collapse – and because donors imposed sanctions against the autocratic government of President Mugabe beginning in 2001. Life expectancy had declined to 45 years in 2006, which in addition to widespread poverty was especially due to AIDS. The number of AIDS orphans who lost one or both parents was estimated to be 1.5 million. In this situation the Ministry of Social Affairs developed a National Action Plan (NAP) with donor support, which was dedicated to AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children. The UNICEF-managed Programme of Support (PoS) for the NAP, which used joint financing from various donors, was at the time an appropriate response to the urgent problem of caring for AIDS orphans. This basket funding and UNICEF authorisation not only served to coordinate donors but was at the time also one of the few ways to support the population of the country given the international sanctions. Due to these circumstances it served as emergency relief without officially being classified as an emergency-relief programme.

AIDS orphans are still a group in need of assistance. But the original definition of the target group partially overlooked the needs: for one, due to low funding it failed to reach all orphans as originally planned (the target of 25 % was introduced during the course of the programme). Additionally, alongside the AIDS orphans there are also at least as many other children who are not orphaned but still live in extreme poverty. The positive discrimination of a group carries with it the risk of envy and exclusion and is also hard to understand since the majority of the measures were associated more with general social assistance than specifically with HIV or orphans. This was the conclusion of the 2010 external impact evaluation of the programme and was taken into account in the design of the successor programme (CSP 2011-2015), for example, by focusing on poverty rather than HIV and on households rather than individuals. In this regard the programme can be seen as an initial learning experience in this difficult situation. Coordination with parallel programmes in other sectors such as education and health could have been facilitated via regional and more limited interventions. But the degree to which a regional focus would have been politically enforceable is unclear.

Relevance rating: 2

Effectiveness

The aim of the programme module was to improve the use of social services by orphans and vulnerable children and to support their protection against all kinds of abuse. To measure target achievement, 12 indicators were established and initial values were assessed. However, target values were not established and end-values were not evaluated, with the exception of a single indicator. This is used here as a measurement gauge. In addition, the result of an impact analysis at the end of the programme period is used, which provides indicators on the efficiency of the measures via a target-group survey.

The achievement of the programme objectives defined during the programme appraisal can be summarised as follows:

Indicator	Status Programme Appraisal	Ex post evaluation
(1) Ratio of orphans to non-orphans for school attendance ^{x)}	89 % (2005) (78 % of orphans and 87% of non-orphans attended school)	94 % (2013) (89 % of orphans and 95 % of non-orphans attended school)
(2) Evaluation of effectiveness via the target group (question: was the problem solved?)	n/a	The weighted effectiveness for the sum of all programme components was 56 %. For the most important components, it was as follows: 50 % for education, 49% for nutrition, 82 % for psycho-social care

x) This calculation does not take any absolute numbers into account but compares the school-attendance percentages of the two groups.

The first indicator was clearly reached: enrolment rates increased overall between 2005 and 2013. And, the proportion of orphans who go to school has grown disproportionately fast; as a group they have caught up compared to the other children. However, parallel to the evaluated programme there were also even larger and more targeted donor commitments in education, most importantly the National Social Programme (BEAM, roughly USD 86 million) and the Education Transition Fund (roughly USD 50 million). The former was also financed with funds from the UNICEF orphan programme (USD 20 million). This means the positive results in the education sector are due to several important interventions.

The limited effectiveness (indicator 2 in the table above) of measures from the perspective of the target group is due mainly to the fact that they are mostly individual measures within a broader context of need, i.e. these measures alone could not always contribute to resolving the problem (e.g. payment of school fees when there are further barriers such as the lack of a uniform). There can be no question that the orphans were supported at a very difficult time through emergency-relief-like measures, however, this might have been accomplished far more effectively via a less scattered programme approach or one that provided more comprehensive responses to complex needs.

Effectiveness rating: 3

Efficiency

From the perspective of the programme-executing agency there was a clear effort to implement the programme efficiently. During the programme period UNICEF reduced general administration expenses to less than 4.7 % (5 % was planned). The collective procurement of vehicles and other inputs achieved significant cost savings (30-40 %), but this was also accompanied by delays. Nevertheless, at 48 months the implementation period was consistent with the planned time frame. The programme's "open" competition approach, in which NGOs submitted applications to finance their ongoing activities related to HIV orphans, saved both time and costs. However, due to the three-levels institutional cascade strategy (UNICEF, NGOs, CBOs), the transfer costs in the programme were comparatively high (partially estimated, because

not all NGOs disclosed their costs): For each US dollar spent, only USD 0.58 made it to the children – a very low amount. Extensive calculations of the programme's cost efficiency were made in the 2010 impact analysis. The programme was also compared with other social programmes in Zimbabwe and the region. The PoS did rather poorly; in some cases costs were many times that of other programmes (a cost of USD 122 per child - up to Feb/2010). But the significance of this comparison is very limited because the compared programmes included completely different packages of measures, and the focus was on inputs and not outputs.

Regarding allocation efficiency, i.e. if you ask how much impact each allocated US dollar had, the situation does not look very positive. The programme lacks demand-based planning and an integrated approach, i.e. one based on problem solving. And the monitoring of achieved impacts was ineffective in the first years of implementation. Improvements here would probably have resulted in more quantitative and qualitative impacts for the target group. Because if a child needs a uniform and notebooks for school, in addition to school fees being reimbursed, then it is not very helpful to pay for the fees for one child, the uniform for another, and the notebooks for another. So standardised support that addresses essential barriers would have contributed to higher efficiency in production and allocation. This weakness is also attributed to the BEAM programme, which was rated as having high efficiency and high overall impact by an external ex post evaluation (2012).

A regional focus for the PoS would probably also have been more efficient. A total of 410,000 children were covered by an average of 1.5 (fragmented, uncoordinated) measures. Taking into account the nationwide spread of measures and the difficulties of multi-sectoral coordination, efficiency suffered in multiple ways, which is reflected primarily in the very high transfer costs. One must also take into account here the very fragile context, which significantly restricts the scope of programmes. Taking into account the contribution made by BEAM, the efficiency is just enough to be satisfactory.

Efficiency rating: 3

Impact

The overall developmental objective of the programme was to contribute to the improvement of living conditions amongst orphans and vulnerable children in Zimbabwe. To assess the extent to which living conditions changed as a result of the programme, the findings of a target-group survey conducted in 2010 are primarily referred to here. According to the survey, psycho-social care, for example, helped orphans deal with the pain they experienced and helped them better cope with everyday life. The administration of anti-HIV drugs (ARVs) helped reduce the burden of the disease, and school attendance opened up new opportunities for the future. In this regard the programme was certainly successful at contributing to improving the living conditions of AIDS orphans (temporarily), although it may not have done so to the extent that was possible or desirable, given the limited effectiveness of the programme (see above). The fragile context admittedly did not allow for the structural improvement of the living conditions of orphaned children. The programme primarily delivered short-term support, which was made all the more urgent by the 2008 economic downturn, in order to help vulnerable children through difficult times in light of the lack of government support. Also, the psycho-social counselling in particular certainly helped the target group feel that they were not totally alone. But this did not meet the primary needs for the target group, where concrete material support such as food, clothing and housing were considered much more important. Last but not least, the outbreak / growth of poverty-related crime was very probably also prevented as a result, but no data was collected on this. The targeted contribution to improving the education of the target group achieved by BEAM had more impact in this respect. In addition, this pilot project, which was carried out in a difficult environment, provided valuable lessons for the follow-up phase, e.g. regarding the definition of the target group: focus on poverty instead of HIV, and households instead of individuals.

Impact rating: 3

Sustainability

The programme was a pilot and was not conceptually designed for financial or institutional sustainability because it was aimed at pure survival or the preservation of minimum future prospects for affected children. However, it has made contributions to education and health services (ARVs for children) for exam-

ple, which will be continued and supported partly through the successor programme and partly through other specific sector programmes. This follow-up funding, in which all the original donors are involved except for German FC, guarantees further assistance for AIDS orphans, even if this occurs primarily in the framework of general social programmes rather than measures directed specifically at the target group. Consequently the PoS successor programme will be continued with a modified approach based on the lessons learned from the impact evaluation carried out in 2010 and in accordance with the changed socio-economic conditions.

The successor programme not only provides a certain financial sustainability for the measures, even if it is limited because of its dependence on funding by international donors, but also provides a certain institutional sustainability. Because UNICEF, as well as at least some of the participating NGOs, are involved in the successor programme, the tools that were introduced can be used and improved upon. Overall, extensive training also contributed to an improvement of the programme-planning and management skills of NGOs, which can continue to be used in the Zimbabwean context. However, a wider involvement in training of decentralised government administrative institutions as well as the small CBOs could have helped entrench competent implementation of the programme and coordination. Certainly, greater involvement of government institutions would have secured more systematic nationwide coverage with local services. This option, however, was not available and was to a certain degree an initial condition for carrying out the project via UNICEF and NGOs. In such a situation an exit strategy is also essential for transferring to government institutions the social services which were taken over temporarily. This was not discussed either in the design of the concept or the successor programme.

Sustainability rating: 3

Notes on the methods used to evaluate project success (project rating)

Projects (and programmes) are evaluated on a six-point scale, the criteria being **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency** and **overarching developmental impact**. The ratings are also used to arrive at a **final assessment** of a project's overall developmental efficacy. The scale is as follows:

Level 1	Very good result that clearly exceeds expectations
Level 2	Good result, fully in line with expectations and without any significant shortcomings
Level 3	Satisfactory result – project falls short of expectations but the positive results dominate
Level 4	Unsatisfactory result – significantly below expectations, with negative results dominating despite discernible positive results
Level 5	Clearly inadequate result – despite some positive partial results, the negative results clearly dominate
Level 6	The project has no impact or the situation has actually deteriorated

Rating levels 1-3 denote a positive assessment or successful project while rating levels 4-6 denote a negative assessment.

Sustainability is evaluated according to the following four-point scale:

Sustainability level 1 (very good sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project (positive to date) is very likely to continue undiminished or even increase.

Sustainability level 2 (good sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project (positive to date) is very likely to decline only minimally but remain positive overall. (This is what can normally be expected).

Sustainability level 3 (satisfactory sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project (positive to date) is very likely to decline significantly but remain positive overall. This rating is also assigned if the sustainability of a project is considered inadequate up to the time of the ex post evaluation but is very likely to evolve positively so that the project will ultimately achieve positive developmental efficacy.

Sustainability level 4 (inadequate sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project is inadequate up to the time of the ex post evaluation and is very unlikely to improve. This rating is also assigned if the sustainability that has been positively evaluated to date is very likely to deteriorate severely and no longer meet the level 3 criteria.

The **overall rating** on the six-point scale is compiled from a weighting of all five individual criteria as appropriate to the project in question. Rating levels 1-3 of the overall rating denote a "successful" project while rating levels 4-6 denote an "unsuccessful" project. It should be noted that a project can generally be considered developmentally "successful" only if the achievement of the project objective ("effectiveness"), the impact on the overall objective ("overarching developmental impact") and the sustainability are rated at least "satisfactory" (level 3).