

## **REPORTING BACK**

### **Community Feedback on the Report of a Retrospective Study on Community Mobilization for Orphan Care and Support In Malawi and Zambia**

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## **Acknowledgements**

I would really like to express my sincere gratitude to AED and DCOF who made it possible for these committed men and women in Malawi and Zambia to feel good about their work. Like many said during the dissemination meetings, if it became standard practice when a study is conducted, to take its findings back to the participants, then we could expect to see even greater results.

To borrow from the participants words, the case study findings are a “wake up call” to all those working in the area of orphans and vulnerable children as well as to the beneficiaries of their efforts.

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## **Acronyms**

AED	Academy for Educational Development
CAC	Community AIDS Committee
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
COPE	Community-Based Options for Protection and Empowerment
COVCC	Community Orphans and Vulnerable Children Committee
DACC	District AIDS Coordinating Committee
DCOF	Displaced Children and Orphans Fund
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PCI/Z	Project Concern International/Zambia
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
VAC	Village AIDS Committee
SCOPE	Strengthening Community Partnerships for the Empowerment of Orphans and Vulnerable Children
STEPS	Strengthening (HIV/AIDS Interventions) through Extended Partnerships
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## Introduction

*It is good that you have kept the promise to come back to give us the feedback, many times people come to our communities to collect information and they never return if they return mainly we hear of their return through high profile meetings were we don't even have access to contribute further. .*

*- From community groups both in Malawi and Zambia*

This report represents the feedback from communities in Malawi and Zambia to the report of a study carried out in 2006 to assess the effectiveness of community mobilization in providing care and support to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC).

In June and July 2006, Jill Donahue and Louis Mwewa (hereinafter referred to as “the consultant”) carried out case studies involving 30 community committees and four districts that had been mobilized to respond to the needs of orphans and other vulnerable children in Malawi and Zambia during the period 1997–2002.<sup>1</sup> The findings of that process were reported in *Community Action and the Test of Time: Learning from Community Experiences and Perceptions*.<sup>2</sup> That report was prepared to inform future planning and action by policy-makers, program planners, and practitioners. From the start of the case study process, the consultants informed the community groups with whom they met, that the findings of the case study were going to be presented to them for feedback. This was in view of the fact that the case study process was different from other studies in many ways, in that the study report would bring together experiences, lessons and perceptions from communities and from which they themselves could benefit. The case study emphasized the fundamental importance of the communities’ contributions to the project activities, and noted the fact that many development organizations committed to improving the well-being of children have designed programs to mobilize and strengthen these community responses. Such efforts aim to build the capacities of grassroots groups to identify, protect, and serve such children, either directly or by supporting the households in which they live.

It was with this goal in mind that the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF) of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provided funding and support for such community mobilization and capacity building initiatives in the first place. In 1995 through USAID Malawi, DCOF provided funding to start the Save the Children US program, Community Options for Protection and Empowerment (COPE) in Malawi. In 2000, COPE secured funding from other sources and changed its name to STEPs. Currently, the project operates with the name of Tisamalirane (“Taking care of each other” in Chichewa) and has funding from USAID, through Family Health International; the Hope for the African Child

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<sup>1</sup> The Case study process was funded by the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund and the Africa’s Health in 2010 Project of the Academy for Educational Development.

<sup>2</sup> Jill Donahue and Louis Mwewa, December 2006. “Community Action and the Test of Time: Learning from Community Experiences and Perceptions, Case Studies of Mobilization and Capacity Building to Benefit Vulnerable Children in Malawi and Zambia.” The Displaced Children and Orphans Fund, USAID; with the support and participation of the Africa’s Health in 2010 Project of the Academy for Educational Development; USAID/ Africa Bureau/Office of Sustainable Development; Save the Children US; CARE International; and Project Concern International,. Available at [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/humanitarian\\_assistance/the\\_funds/pubs/comaction.html](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/the_funds/pubs/comaction.html) and <http://africahealth2010.aed.org/pubs.html>.

Initiative; the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria; and Banca Intesa (through Save the Children Italy).

In Zambia, DCOF supported a similar community mobilization and capacity building approach from November 1997 to September 1999 through Project Concern International's (PCI/Z) program for orphans and other vulnerable children. From January 2000 to September 2002, DCOF provided funding for the Strengthening Community Partnerships for the Empowerment of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (SCOPE-OVC) program of CARE International. Both the PCI/Z and CARE projects were managed by USAID Zambia. CARE has continued to implement SCOPE-OVC, with funding from various sources including USAID (through World Vision's RAPIDS program), the Hope for African Children Initiative, the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, and other private donors.

The case studies carried out in 2006 were not evaluations of these programs. They were essentially a retrospective exercise aimed at identifying the key elements in the community mobilization process that contributed to the success and/or failure of efforts to build the capacity of communities to support their own orphans and vulnerable children. The original study was completed in July 2006 and a first draft report was issued at that time. The report was then circulated among members of an interagency Steering Committee that oversaw the assessment, for inputs and a final version was issued in December 2006.

In conformity with the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach that was used for the assessment, and in order to validate the findings and conclusions, it was decided to present the report to the communities which participated in the assessment to determine whether they considered its findings to accurately reflect their experiences. The Africa's Health in 2010 project, with funding from USAID/Bureau for Africa, contracted the technical services of the same consultant it hired to participate in the study, to present the report to the communities and record their responses in a report, which will serve as a useful addendum to the final report on the assessment. This activity also provided an opportunity to fulfill the commitment made initially to the communities to share the results of the study with them. The feedback meetings were held in April 2007.

During the presentation to community representatives in Malawi and Zambia, the consultant did not present new issues but focused on presenting the outcomes of the study to validate/authenticate the findings as an accurate reflection of their views. Almost all the community groups that participated in the case study process were represented by one or more representatives in the meetings for reporting back.

## **Methodology**

The case study dissemination meetings brought together representatives from community groups in Malawi and Zambia who had participated in the case studies. Most of these groups had continued to function for eight to ten years. Also included were a few stakeholders working at district level, including representatives of district government, other governmental bodies concerned with the welfare of children, and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The meetings were held in central locations, such as district assembly halls or other places that community members have convenient access to. In Zambia two dissemination meetings were conducted – in Kitwe and Livingstone. In Malawi five dissemination meetings were held in Lilongwe, Nkotakota, Mangochi, Dedza, and a meeting with Save the Children national office staff members was also held in Lilongwe.

During the dissemination meetings, the presentation was done on flipcharts or, where possible, using PowerPoint. After presenting the summary of the case study findings, focus group and plenary discussions, guided by questions, were used to help participants understand and review the relative importance of issues raised by the study. This included such questions as: Which issues raised were important? Why were they important? How could participants use the information in their work with vulnerable children?

The methodology used during these sessions was similar to that used in the case study process itself. The questions used were the same ones used in the ranking exercises, Venn diagram and general group discussions.

<b>Overview of the Process of the Meetings</b>		
<b>1</b>	<b>Presentation</b>	<b>Groups</b>
	<p>A presentation to be done based on the findings, observations and conclusion of the study</p> <p>Power Point In Kitwe Flip charts in all the other places.</p>	<p><b><u>Malawi</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- VACs</li> <li>- CACCs</li> <li>- DACs</li> <li>- NGOs</li> <li>- Government Departments</li> </ul> <p>One dissemination meeting was held for all in each of the districts where feed back was conducted.</p> <p><b><u>Zambia</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- COVCCs</li> <li>- DOVCCs-</li> <li>- Government Departments</li> <li>- NGOs-</li> </ul> <p>One dissemination meeting was held for all groups in Livingstone while two were held in Kitwe.</p>
2	Focus Group Discussions after the presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One FGD was held in Kitwe for COVCC since they had their own dissemination meeting</li> <li>- The rest of the groups in both countries had plenary discussions.</li> </ul>
3	<p>Plenary – General Discussion</p> <p>With guided questions – What information they found important? Why was the information important? How is the information going to be used?</p>	

<b>Livingstone Dissemination Meeting – Zambia 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2007</b>	
<b>Name of Community</b>	<b>Number of Representatives</b>
Nakatindi – COVCC	3
Mapenzi – COVCC	2
DOVCC	4
Zambia National Defence Force	2
Zambezi Saw Mill- Community group	2
Livingstone Street Children Ass.	1
Nakatindi Community School	2
YWCA	1
Ray of Hope	2
Kazungula – COVCC	3
Ministry of Education	2
Mapenzi- Community School	2
LICAP-	2
Care International Staff	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>

<b>Kitwe Dissemination Meeting- Zambia 13 April 2007</b>	
<b>Name of Community/Organisation</b>	<b>Number of Representatives</b>
Itimpi - COVCC	1
Musonda – COVCC	2
DOVCC	3
Salemu Street Centre	1
CINDI- Kitwe	1
Organisation for Youth Voices.	2
Chipata - COVCC	2
District Social Welfare	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

<b>Lilongwe Dissemination Meeting-Malawi 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2007</b>	
<b>Name of Community/Organisation</b>	<b>Number of Representatives</b>
Kalyeka -RAC	2
DAC	3
SAVE the Children –Staff	1
Lumbazi – CAC	3
District Information Office – Lilongwe	1
Magistrate – Judiciary Lilongwe	1
Department of Social Welfare –Lilongwe	1
Kulamula- VAC	2
Ngoza-VAC	2
Youth Attention for Development – NGO	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>

<b>Nkhotakhota Dissemination Meeting- Malawi 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2007</b>	
<b>Name of Community/Organisation</b>	<b>Number of Representatives</b>
Mpamatha- CAC	3
Njumbula- VAC	3
Kanyambo – VAC	3
Kanyambo- Youth	3
DAC	4
Red Cross	1
District Social Welfare	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>

<b>Dedza Dissemination Meeting –Malawi 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2007</b>	
<b>Name of Community/Organisation</b>	<b>Number of Representatives</b>
Dedza – DAC	1
Kanyesi – CAC	3
Msampa – VAC	2
Kutsoro – VAC	3
Kutsoro – Youth	2
SAVE the Children Staff	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

<b>Mangochi Dissemination Meeting – Malawi 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2007</b>	
<b>Name of Community/Organisation</b>	<b>Number of Representatives</b>
Namwera (NACC)	3
Namwera VAC	2
Balakasi VAC	2
Nombo VAC	2
Chimwala CAC	3
Mangochi DAC	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>

### **Outcomes of the Feedback Meetings**

In Zambia a total of 42 people participated in the dissemination meetings, and in Malawi 69 people took part. Most participants represented communities and committees that participated in the case studies. In addition to the meetings profiled in the tables above, a meeting was held for Save the Children staff at the national office in Lilongwe. A total of 111 participants took part in the meetings in the two countries.

### **Community Reactions**

Participants confirmed that the information presented during the dissemination meetings on the purpose of the case studies was the same as presented during the original discussions at community level, and they expressed gratitude that the goal of case studies' was adequately covered. Those who had not been part of the original case studies indicated that the purpose as well thought out and said that it was relevant to their work as organisations working with communities. They also observed that it was rare for their organizations to do the kind of reflection on and learning from previous work as was done in this study.

### ***Hypotheses***

The study tested four hypotheses. These were:

1. The mobilization processes created by the Malawi and Zambia programs were effective in catalyzing genuine ownership. Ownership in turn generated wide community participation.
2. Community-led action occurred because of genuine ownership.
3. Where community ownership was present, committees were able to sustain their activities over the long term to benefit especially vulnerable children.
4. Communities who own the decision-making and action process ensure that vulnerable children benefit from the support that they are able to mobilize internally or access externally.

Participants in the dissemination meetings said that these hypotheses were a great tool which helped them to clearly understand issues in the report and to make the study more meaningful.

The hypotheses also provided a great opportunity to go through the summary of findings more easily and to follow their own story, which they had shared with the consultants during their community visits.

Participants observed that the first two fully reflect the way that they themselves perceive ownership and helped them recall what they discussed with the consultants regarding ownership. The two other hypotheses on sustainability and reaching the most vulnerable were seen as a consolidation of their views regarding the process of community mobilization and capacity building. They also noted that the hypotheses reflected how the consultants understood the contributions of the communities and committees to the case study process. As one of the participants said during the Dedza (Malawi) meeting, *“This report is truly ours, it fully tells our own story going by the hypotheses that were developed by the consultants; they have made it easier for us to hear our own story of our work in our own language.”*

### ***Study Methods and Tools***

It was noted that the consultants’ methodology was highly participatory and provided great learning opportunities both to the communities and to the district committees. Further, most of the participants alluded to the fact that the study’s tools were quite appropriate for the communities and committees, as they were very simple and straight forward. This was in view of the fact that they helped them to participate in the study and not be mere passengers/passive spectators in it. To this end most participants felt that the tools used in the study were of high quality and well-administered. Some of them even suggested that they would be very happy to learn how to use them on their own within their communities and committees.

### ***Ownership***

Participants said that the issues that were presented in the study report concerning ownership were very well outlined and gave an accurate picture of their own communities and committees. They also noted that its points on ownership were very useful for the communities and committee members because it helped them to think more about how to safeguard the principles of ownership. Most participants from NGOs and other government institutions mentioned that the information that had been provided would be very useful in their programming. This brought to their attention the fact that on some previous occasions they had taken for granted communities’ involvement, without considering issues pertaining to ownership. Therefore, the information that was presented during the dissemination was going to be put to good use as they plan their activities with the communities and the committees.

Other participants went further to mention that, if genuine ownership has to be nurtured, it is important to make sure that they avoid choosing their committee leaders during the same period as political elections in their area. This was because experience had shown that those selected during times of intense political activity (e.g., elections) may participate in committees for motives other than interest in community aims and activities. To a very large extent once such leaders got elected, they failed to meet the expectations of the community. Participants also said that they learned from their own experiences regarding ownership after hearing the summary of the case study findings.

The discussion provided an opportunity for participants to look at other means of exploring more resources that would help them to rejuvenate and strengthen genuine ownership. This was an observation from both Livingstone, (Zambia), and Dedza, (Malawi), where participants observed that most communities start with the good motive of trying to bring change to their communities. They felt that, they need to acquire the skills that are required to build and support community ownership, before receiving external resources. Otherwise, having these resources too soon could lead to internal squabbles which eventually disrupt the sense of joint ownership, leading to total collapse of the committees.

In order to continue strengthening and fostering genuine ownership, it was also noted that there is an ongoing need for community leadership to give motivation talks and organize skills-building initiatives. They also looked at ownership at their level as being resourceful following what they learnt from the information in the case study. This was following the fact that when people know what skills, talents and resources they have as a community, these factors assist in building and strengthening four factors that holds community committees together, including compassion, unity, common vision and community participation and transparency.

### ***Sustainability***

Participants said that for the sustainability of the benefits of their efforts programs should encourage and support communities and their leaders to invest more of their own resources. In most communities, despite the great things that might have been done as a result of good mobilisation, little attention had been paid to safeguarding the factors that promote genuine ownership. After listening to the summary of findings of the case study, participants from both countries said that they had been enlightened. They had come to a realisation that there would be no true sustainability without ownership. There was a consensus by all participants that the report provided a great insight to them on the issue of sustainability.

### ***Targeting the Most Vulnerable***

The participants noted that in as much as including young people in decision-making should be a priority, the empowerment process should be key. They acknowledged the findings that there were differences between the perceptions of young people and those of adults about vulnerability. Just as the original mobilizations were great for building ownership by the communities, the same should be done to groom young people for future leadership. As part of this process, adults should take the points of view of the youth seriously before making decisions in the interest of the community. Only when young people's perceptions are taken into account, would programs then target the genuinely vulnerable children.

### ***Importance and Use of the Information from the Case Study Process***

Participants mentioned that they were very excited to receive the feedback from the case studies and for them that was very important. They felt that the consultants valued their input and respected their views. As a result they felt that the report represented their interest, and they viewed it as their own. They confirmed that nothing new had been added to the information they had shared with the two consultants.

The report was endorsed by all those who participated in the meetings as being a correct record of the information that they had provided. Generally, participants held that all issues raised in the

report are very important, since they all contribute to forming the true picture of community mobilization and capacity building. They felt that the case study report contained facts that would stand the test of time. They described the study report as a record of testimony that would be used as a tool to inspire them in their work.

### **Conclusion and Way Forward**

The consultant appreciated having the opportunity to meet again with some of the good people whose voices can be heard in the report. While he was not able to get to all the villages from which the women, men and young people that participated in the dissemination meeting came, he was assured that those who attended the meetings would do further disseminations in their own communities and organizations. They promised that the report will definitely get to all those who contributed during the study as well as to other community members.

The following were proposed by the meeting participants as some of the different ways the report could be used in the two countries:

- It was felt by most participants that the report would be used to mobilize resources – at community level, with government, as well as with external donors. It was mentioned that now they can go back to their larger communities and share information and seek community support to continue working with vulnerable children.
- The information would also be used to develop sensitization campaigns on community mobilization and capacity building – particularly following on the five steps that have been put together in the report’s recommendations.
- Participants said that they would use it as an orientation tool for the incoming leaders at community level and for those who want to support community mobilization and capacity building activities. Regarding district structures, it was observed that at times people just do not know about the process of mobilizing communities; therefore this report would be useful tool for their orientation.
- The report will further be used to formalize and stimulate networking activities. Going by what has been provided in the report networking has been a missing link. If compassion, unity, common vision and community participation and transparency are factors that have to be invested in, there is a great need for community groups to learn from each other.
- Participants will continue to share information from the case study with the wider community. For the purposes of making the report more user-friendly in Malawi there was a proposal to have it translated into the local language, Chichewa, and to share it with other communities. In Zambia there was also a promise to share the findings with other communities and newer orphans and vulnerable children committees (COVCCs).
- It was proposed to use the report to lobby government at both local and national levels to come up with a common strategy on community mobilization and capacity building. This was prompted by the fact that, in the past, resources that had been allocated for community mobilization and capacity building did not reach the intended beneficiaries. Some groups had become dormant because they may not have gone through a rigorous

mobilization process. (The comment came from all the participants in the two countries, In Malawi this came out in Lilongwe and Dedza meeting while in Zambia all the two meetings expressed the same sentiment).

- Another idea was to use the report to draw up guidelines at community level on mobilization and capacity building processes.
- Use it as a tool in their review processes of community activities