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Sida Evaluation

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Final Report from the Evaluation of Sida's work with Poverty

Annex 1: Executive Summaries of Impact Studies

Annex 2: Summary of impact results from 8 cases in Zambia and South Sudan



Authors: Carsten Schwensen, Louise Scheibel Smed, John Rand, Anne-Lise Klausen and Ayla-Kristina Olesen Yurtaslan.

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List of Abbreviations

BGFZ	Beyond the Grid Fund Zambia
CDSS	Community Development Support Services
CIVSAM	Sida's Civil Society framework/programme
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HPF	Health Pooled Fund
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PaCC	Peace and Community Cohesion
SAP	Strengthened Accountability Programme
SCT	Social Cash Transfer
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNJPSP	United Nations Joint Programme on Social Protection
USD	United States Dollar
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association

Annex 1: Executive Summaries of Impact Studies

Executive Summary of Impact study of Musika, a Zambian rural project

This report presents an impact assessment of the Contribution “**Support to Musika**”, in Zambia. Musika is a national Non-Government Organisation (NGO), registered in July 2010 with the aim to reduce poverty and create wealth in rural Zambia by stimulating business relationships between the corporate sector and smallholder farmers. The assessment is primarily based on a quantitative analysis of secondary data sources collected during two project phase, 2013-2017 (Phase 2) and 2018-2022 (Phase 3).

Musika’s general approach has focused on stimulating development of a supportive market environment to provide sustainable opportunities for smallholder farmers in Zambia to invest in their own production and use markets to graduate out of poverty.

In particular, Musika’s intervention strategy focused on support within four pillars for agricultural development: i) *Agricultural input markets*; ii) *Agricultural output markets*; iii) *Agricultural service markets*; and iv) *Agricultural finance markets*. From our analysis, we find clear positive poverty reducing impacts from Musika’s interventions within the supported districts. Musika’s support has contributed to improved market access, providing an opportunity for smallholder farmers to access knowledge-based and cost-effective products and services. Among the direct beneficiaries of Musika’s support, significant positive impact is found on income, livestock, food security and access to finance. While we also found that the number of assets has increased for the direct beneficiaries, this effect is not significant. Results on farm productivity and technology are also insignificant.

Despite some positive effects, Musika’s support has been insufficient to counteract negative trends in both overall and extreme poverty at national level in Zambia during the period. Still, however, our findings show that Musika has contributed to enhanced service and product delivery as market players have become more efficient with reduced transaction costs, enhancing resilience and potentials for scalability. This is important also to take into consideration, beyond the statistical procedures and analysis lens applied in this report.

Executive Summary of Impact study of the Strengthened Accountability Programme, a programme for small-scale miners in Zambia

This report presents an impact assessment of the Diakonia implemented Strengthened Accountability Programme (SAP) in Zambia. Caritas Zambia has implemented the SAP in Zimba District in Southern Province of Zambia. The intervention supported two small-scale mining communities (Chilobe and Chilubwa) and their collective action to demand higher prices for mining resources and better services for their communities. It also supported community members with conservation farming to allow them to diversify income sources.

The assessment forms part of the *Strategic Evaluation of Sida's Work with Poverty* and is based on quantitative and qualitative data collection from both supported and non-supported communities in Zimba District, desk review and stakeholder consultations in Lusaka.

We find a positive significant treatment effect on income primarily driven by enhanced mining income as no effects from diversification of income were realised. No effect was found on crop income due to inconsistent and low uptake of conservation farming techniques. However, there are some indications of positive effects on food availability. The impact of distribution of goats to community members has been weak. We find significant positive impact on assets, such as housing quality, and concrete effect on women's ownership of fruit trees. Communities' access to water has been improved but no effect on health and sanitation services was realised.

Evidence indicates a significant positive impact on reduction of child labour in mining and enhanced application of protective gear. Enhanced joint decision-making and attitudes towards gender equality in the supported households was also realised but with no direct impact on reducing GBV. While the SAP explicitly targeted youth and women this has not been sufficiently monitored in the intervention and can therefore not be sufficiently assessed.

Executive Summary of Impact study of United Nations Joint Programme on Social Protection in Zambia

This report presents an impact assessment of Zambia's Social Cash Transfer (SCT) programme which is a core element of the contribution "United Nations Joint Programme on Social Protection in Zambia (UNJPSP) II". The assessment is part of the *Strategic Evaluation of Sida's Work with Poverty* and is primarily based on an analysis of secondary data from different sources. UNJPSP II aims to provide SCT to the most marginalised women and children in Zambia, including for people living with a disability, with the aim to combat multidimensional poverty.

Evidence - especially from a pilot of SCT combined with a nutrition intervention - shows that SCTs have contributed to improved food security and nutrition diversification for the poor beneficiaries, especially in rural areas. This has had a positive impact on children's health. There have been some positive effects on urban beneficiaries' business engagement but no impact on income and paid employment for rural beneficiaries. The supported households in rural areas have however initiated gardening to a higher extent than the control group.

Negative effects on prolonged breastfeeding and uptake of vitamin A have occurred due to misconceptions that real food is better also for very young children's nutrition and covers all vitamin needs, as well as the misconception that the vitamin supplements could jeopardize their participation in the SCT. Our analysis also revealed a significantly negative effect on asset accumulation. While SCT has been well targeted towards poor families in rural districts the targeting in urban areas has been less convincing.

So far, the programme has reached 33% of the Zambian population with an emphasis on marginalised women, children and people living with a disability. However, it has not been possible for the programme to counteract an overall increase of poverty in Zambia, including in extreme poverty. It is likely, however, that the increase in poverty in times of economic instability, droughts etc. would have been even larger in the counterfactual scenario with no social protection support and no SCT at all.

The SCT corresponds to a purchasing power of about USD 0.25 *per day per household* which is well below the required USD 3 *per day per person* to raise households out of poverty. The continued commitment of the Zambian Government to provide social protection throughout the intervention, even when the economy has performed poorly, is important for the impact of results over time. However, irregular and unpredictable payments have been a challenge.

Executive Summary of Impact study of Beyond the Grid for Zambia

Beyond the Grid Fund Zambia (BGFZ) was designed to create access to basic and affordable renewable energy services for energy poor people living outside the national electricity grid. This was to be achieved by incentivising private sector companies' expansion and investment in off-grid energy generation, distribution and service delivery. In this way, BGFZ aimed at enabling access to clean, modern energy services for more than one million Zambians living in peri urban and rural areas.

Our study shows that the impact and outreach from BGFZ has been impressive. The programme managed to reach more than one million people, most of them new customers who had not been able to access energy products and services before and had no access to a good alternative. The access to basic energy services has contributed to enhanced quality of life for the costumers and their families, although there is an absence of real evidence on health and education impacts. We also found that the focus on productive use of the energy products has not been high.

While the majority of the customers are people living in poverty, there are indications that BGFZ has faced challenges in effectively targeting and reaching under-served people living in poverty to a sufficient extent. Thus, while BGFZ overall has demonstrated an innovative and successful model for market penetration of unserved poor costumers for energy products and services, including cooking stoves, the distribution model has had some challenges and a viable business model for how to reach the “last mile” is still to be developed.

Executive Summary of Impact study Health Pooled Fund, South Sudan

The **Health Pooled Fund (HPF)** was a flagship, multi-donor program launched in 2012 to support delivery of essential health services in South Sudan. From the outset, the HPF's long-term goal was to build a government-led health system to provide critical, life-saving services, particularly on maternal and infant health. To this end, the HPF contracted implementing partners to deliver a sub-set of services under the Ministry of Health's 'Basic Package of Health and Nutrition Services' at government health facilities, while working to build the Government's capacities and ability to take over health service delivery in the longer-term.

Our study shows that the HPF played a pivotal role in preventing total collapse of healthcare delivery and achieving incremental health gains in one of the world's most challenging contexts. Concretely, the HPF improved healthcare in South Sudan by enhancing service coverage, particularly in maternal and child health services. The HPF increased patient attendance significantly and expanded community-level healthcare through the Boma Health Initiative (from 2019-2024), treating over 3 million cases of malaria, diarrhoea, and pneumonia in children. Paired with the programme's immunisation campaign, the HPF has made an important contribution toward decreasing preventable childhood disease and mortality. Likewise, on maternal health, the HPF greatly expanded availability of services. Skilled birth attendance rose significantly in health facilities supported by the HPF, which is a key precondition for improving maternal health outcomes.

While our analysis indicates that the HPF likely realised its intended impact in terms of decreasing maternal and child mortality, it has fallen short of achieving its vision of a government-led health system. Low capacities of the Government, lack of skilled health personnel, financial constraints (or lack of prioritisation) in public budgets leave the healthcare system in South Sudan highly reliant on donor engagement and funding. In addition, gaps or disruptions in HPF service delivery highlight the high risk that its achievements may be reversed in the absence of institutional and financial sustainability. As such, our study highlights the challenge of achieving sustainability in a very fragile, conflict-affected context, where donors may face a trade-off between addressing pressing needs, and strengthening national systems and actors.

Executive Summary of the UNFPA Country Programme for South Sudan

The Third UNFPA Country Programme for South Sudan (2019-2022) aimed to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and to reduce maternal mortality in South Sudan. UNFPA adopted a systemic approach, partnering with the Government of South Sudan to strengthen national healthcare systems and deliver integrated sexual and reproductive health information and services. In parallel, it provided direct support to crisis-affected populations, particularly women and youth.

Our study shows that UNFPA has played a significant role in improving the availability, accessibility, and utilisation of services for sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence in South Sudan. Concretely, UNFPA's support was critical to ensuring that over one million women and girls have had access to SRH and GBV services during the programme period, including in displacement-affected contexts.

Notably, the programme's focus on training and deployment of midwives led to increases in skilled birth attendance, which is directly linked to reduced maternal mortality. The programme also had a profound impact on mothers living with obstetric fistula who received successful treatment. Nevertheless, our study also highlights the difficulty of achieving a long-term impact in such a fragile, conflict-affected context. Despite efforts to strengthen national systems for maternal health and family planning, achieving sustainable government ownership remains a significant challenge. The government lacks the institutional capacity, financial resources, and, most critically, the political commitment needed to maintain the services and systems established by the international community. As a result, the programme faced persistent challenges, including inadequate training for healthcare professionals, high staff turnover, delayed or unpaid salaries, and chronic shortages of essential medicines and medical equipment in health facilities.

Executive Summary of Impact study of the UNDP South Sudan, Peace and Community Cohesion project

This report presents an assessment of the development outcomes of the “**UNDP South Sudan, Peace and Community Cohesion project (PaCC), Phase 1**”, as well an assessment of Sida’s reporting thereof.¹ The contribution was implemented from 2017 to 2020. It addressed specific conflict drivers in order to reduce insecurity in five geographic areas (“conflict hotspot/cluster”). The contribution supported divided communities to implement joint projects of common interests, as a way to develop positive relationships. The contribution also helped to set up institutional peace institutions both at the local and national level.

Beneficiaries of PaCC Phase 1 reported improvements in a range of areas, including the perceived sense of security. However, the data does not allow us to clearly attribute these improvements directly to the project. The security situation in the project areas remain volatile, however, and project gains are easily rolled back because of the recurring crises. The project has not been successful in addressing the fundamental issue of weak or absent institutions in South Sudan. Moreover, achievements in local communities could not be scaled up to national level. This points to the difficulties of achieving long-term sustainable impact in a fragile, and conflict-affected context, where there is limited political will and few incentives to institutionalise peacebuilding mechanisms.

The non-earmarked funding from Sida allowed for adaptive management and flexibility, enabling the funds to be spent across all activities of the PaCC, something that was perceived as being important for achieving positive results.

Sida’s reporting are based at the limited data available. However, the underlying data has clear limitations, and these are not reflected in Sida’s reporting.

¹ This case study constitutes part of the overall “Strategic Evaluation of Sida’s Work with Poverty”. There are seven other case studies, which are presented in separate reports.

Executive Summary of Impact study of the Budi Nexus Pilot

This report presents an impact assessment of the Contribution “Nexus Pilot in Budi County in South Sudan” (the “Nexus Pilot”). The Nexus Pilot (2020-2022) was implemented by Community Development Support Services (CDSS) in Budi County, in Eastern Equatoria State. The project was developed and managed by Church of Sweden under Sida’s CIVSAM framework. Budi County faces severe violence from cattle raiding, ethnic conflicts, chronic displacement, droughts, and extreme poverty. Women and girls experience high levels of gender-based violence (GBV). At project onset, communities faced killings, resource conflicts, food insecurity, and limited economic opportunities.

The project aimed to address protracted conflict, displacement, and multidimensional poverty through an integrated humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach. Interventions included peace dialogues and conflict resolution mechanisms, Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) for economic empowerment, and infrastructure including a grinding mill and boreholes.

Available evidence on impact is contradictory and limited in confidence. Beneficiary interviews and project reports claim improvements in security perceptions, women’s participation in decision-making, VSLA-enabled livelihoods, and reduced cattle raiding. However, these claims could not be triangulated with independent sources. Only three of five VSLAs functioned effectively. Claims of reduced GBV and improved gender equality could not be triangulated. Severe drought conditions from 2021 onwards may have counteracted project gains and amplified resource-related tensions, however this cannot be concluded with certainty.

As a pilot project, learning was a key objective, yet documentation was inadequate. No Theory of Change was developed jointly with partners as planned. No quantitative baseline data were collected. The main evidence sources - CDSS self-reporting and brief fieldwork conducted in July 2024 - are assessed as having “limited confidence” and “sufficient confidence” respectively. Security constraints further restricted data collection. Church of Sweden did not provide sufficient monitoring and evaluation support to CDSS.

CDSS demonstrated a community-anchored, holistic approach in an extremely challenging context and merits recognition for its efforts. Yet the Nexus Pilot demonstrates both the potential and limitations of short-term integrated programming in fragile contexts. While the approach and the local knowledge of CDSS show promise in addressing multiple dimensions of poverty, the experience shows that addressing complex challenges requires sustained, larger-scale interventions and systematic evidence generation to enable learning. The failure to adequately document and monitor this pilot represents a missed opportunity for the broader development community to learn from both successes and failures in implementing nexus approaches in one of the world's most challenging operational environments.

Annex 2: Summary of impact results from 8 cases in Zambia and South Sudan

Report	Country	Sector/intervention	Scale/reach	Targeting	Main poverty impacts	Systemic effects	Main limitations
Musika	Zambia	Agricultural market systems development for smallholder farmers	National programme reaching large numbers of farmers through market actors	Strong focus on rural smallholders	Significant positive impact on income, livestock, food security, access to markets and finance. Increased number of assets but insignificant. Farm productivity and technology adoption was also insignificant.	Attempts to transition to a market system development approach did not go smooth why Sida - as the largest donor - ended its funding strongly affecting sustainability.	Attribution challenging because impacts occur indirectly through markets.
Beyond the Grid Fund Zambia (BGFZ)	Zambia	Off-grid renewable energy access	Reached more than one million people	Most beneficiaries were poor households, but some underserved poor groups remained difficult to reach	Improved access to modern energy for >1 million people (majority of them new customers who had not had access to energy products before); improved quality of life; limited evidence on health/education impacts.	Demonstrated successful private-sector model for off-grid energy markets but still limited reach of “last mile” costumers.	Limited evidence on productive use of energy and downstream welfare impacts.
UN Joint Programme on Social Protection (SCT)	Zambia	Social protection/social cash transfers	Reached about one-third of Zambia’s population, 1.4 million households	Well targeted in rural areas e.g. poor women, children and people living with a disability; weaker targeting in urban areas.	Significant positive impact food security, nutrition and child health and welfare; some business effects in urban areas; little effect on rural employment/income but effects on gardening. Negative effects on prolonged breastfeeding, uptake of vitamin A and asset accumulation.	Strong institutional contribution to national social protection systems. Effects on nutrition and food security not sustainable without continued support.	Could not reverse national poverty trends; some unintended negative nutrition behaviours.
Strengthened Accountability Programme (SAP)	Zambia	Small-scale mining, livelihoods and accountability	Localised intervention in mining communities	Targeted poor mining communities, including women’s groups	Significant positive effect on income (mainly from mining), asset accumulation and housing, use of protective gear and reduced child labour. Positive effect on fruit trees, especially for women, and access to water. Weak effects on farming diversification and livestock. Enhanced joint decision making and attitudes towards gender equality but no effect on gender based violence.	Some gains through collective action and cooperatives but not convincing systemic effects.	Weak uptake of conservation farming; limited diversification effects.

Report	Country	Sector/intervention	Scale/reach	Targeting	Main poverty impacts	Systemic effects	Main limitations
Health Pooled Fund (HPF)	South Sudan	Health systems strengthening and service delivery	Nationwide health-sector programme	Strong reach to highly vulnerable populations, women and children	Major improvements in maternal and child health services, immunisation and community health. This included treating over 3 million cases of malaria, diarrhoea, and pneumonia in children and skilled birth attendance rose significantly in health facilities; prevented health-system collapse.	Contribution to health-system functioning but it has fallen short of achieving its vision of a government-led health system.	Sustainability constrained by fragile state capacity and donor dependence.
UNFPA Country Programme	South Sudan	Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)	National programme	Strong focus on women, girls, youth and crisis-affected populations	Expanded access to SRHR services, GBV services and maternal health support; over one million women and girls reached. Increased skilled birth attendance directly linked to reduced maternal mortality and successful treatment of mothers living with obstetric fistula.	Lack of institutional capacity, financial resources, and, political commitment is a critical challenge for sustainability.	Broader demographic and mortality impacts difficult to measure directly.
Budi Nexus Pilot	South Sudan	Humanitarian-development-peace nexus pilot	Pilot-scale intervention in Budi County	Focused on conflict-affected and vulnerable communities	Some improvements in security perceptions, women's participation in decision-making, VSLA-enabled livelihoods, and reduced cattle raiding but evidence on impact is contradictory and limited in confidence.	Generated lessons on nexus programming but local results were not scaled at national level and weak or absent institutions challenges sustainability.	Small scale and limited duration constrain wider impact claims.
UNDP Peace and Community Cohesion (PaCC)	South Sudan	Peacebuilding and conflict reduction	Multi-site intervention in conflict-prone areas	Targeted conflict-affected communities	Reduced local conflict drivers, improved community cohesion, security conditions and sense of security in targeted hotspots, however data cannot attribute these improvements directly to the project.	Contributed to local peace infrastructure and dialogue mechanisms but these were not scaled at national level and weak or absent institutions challenges sustainability.	Difficult to establish long-term peace impacts in volatile contexts

Final Report from the Evaluation of Sida's work with Poverty

Main evaluation method: mixed-methods, synthesis analysis, literature review.

Positives: Across Zambia and South Sudan, Sida-supported interventions generated tangible benefits for poor populations, including improved incomes, food security, and access to essential services. In Zambia, interventions performed better as the systems are relatively stable while in South Sudan contributions have helped sustain basic services under extreme and fragile conditions.

Shortcomings: The impact results from Sida's work were uneven and remained limited in scale and transformative impact. Impact measures were often constrained by underuse of existing evidence in contribution designs and weak evaluability. Heavy reliance on partner-reported data, limited triangulation, and insufficient use of national data systems further created a verification gap and constrained deeper analysis.



SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

Visiting address: Rissneleden 110, 174 57 Sundbyberg
Postal address: Box 2025, SE-174 02 Sundbyberg, Sweden
Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64
E-mail: sida@sida.se Web: sida.se/en

