

**BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA)
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)**

**SUCCESS STORY:
FIGHTING DISASTER-INDUCED URBAN POVERTY IN ZIMBABWE**

During the past several years, Zimbabwe has faced an ongoing complex emergency due to a collapsing economy, limited access to basic services, political instability and violence, disease, and poorly maintained infrastructure. The effects of hyperinflation and unemployment have exacerbated poverty, while large-scale displacement in urban and peri-urban areas as a result of political violence has further jeopardized the livelihoods of vulnerable populations.

Since 2006, USAID/OFDA has supported the Joint Initiative (JI), an innovative, multi-sectoral program implemented by six relief agencies to fight disaster-induced urban poverty and restore human dignity in cities and high-density suburbs throughout Zimbabwe. The program seeks to improve the livelihoods and food security of particularly vulnerable populations, including households headed by elderly people, child-headed households, people with disabilities, children, and people suffering from chronic illnesses. JI activities are designed to be self-sustaining and generate momentum; a small initial investment enables beneficiaries to build a business or grow vegetables, thus improving their families' lives and their own.

BUSINESS TRAINING AND SUPPORT TO GENERATE INCOME

In Njube, a high-density suburb of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second-largest city, Victor Magwada expanded a home tailoring business with JI support. "I was working for Barclays Bank," said Mr. Magwada, "[but] I had arthritis, became lame, and took a disability retirement package. However, with inflation, the money quickly vanished." Mr. Magwada had been using his family's manual sewing machine to produce small amounts of clothing for sale, but noted that "business was not flourishing." Mr. Magwada's wife, Christine, had been attending a JI home-based care training group. In April 2009, Mr. Magwada contacted JI to inquire about business training. JI responded swiftly, and the same day, Mr. Magwada enrolled in a one-week JI business management training course. Mr. Magwada developed a business proposal to produce school uniforms, hats, trousers, and work overalls for sale. JI approved the proposal and provided an electric sewing machine and cloth to support the expansion of Mr. Magwada's business.



Victor Magwada, a tailor, displays hats for sale (photo by Johs Pierce, USAID/OFDA).

By August, Mr. Magwada had increased the sewing business's weekly revenue from approximately \$25 to approximately \$120, providing much-needed income for his wife, 18-year old son Cliff, and 11-year-old daughter Tsitsi. "Now," he said, "there is money for food, for rent, and for materials. We can even drink coffee, tea, and juice." The electric sewing machine allows Mr. Magwada to work faster—he can produce 50 hats or 20 school uniforms per day—and with business proceeds he has bought additional sewing machines and a generator for times when the municipal grid does not provide electricity. Mr. Magwada also hopes to hire another worker to sew while he travels to deliver goods to customers. Before the JI intervention, demand for Mr. Magwada's products had been high, but "I would often upset customers," he said, "because I could not raise the cash to buy material. Now I pre-order 30 or 40 meters of material from my supplier in town, rather than purchasing 2 meters per time, because the supplier knows I will

pay.” Through a small initial investment to help Mr. Magwada invigorate his business, JI helped the family generate income in the face of disaster-induced poverty.

BUILDING MARKET STALLS TO SUPPORT INCOME GENERATION

At the 96 stalls comprising the Huriuyadzu hardware market in the St. Mary’s neighborhood of Chitungwiza, a high-density suburb of the capital, Harare, proprietors sell paint, varnish, screws, nails, locks, electric sockets, and other items for household and construction use. To compete with larger stores, vendors sell individual items, such as one nail, rather than the whole bag. As such, proprietors not only generate income, but also provide the community a service, since local residents comprise the bulk of day-to-day customers. In addition, approximately 50 percent of market stall operators are female, allowing women to run their own businesses and generate income for their families.



Danius Bangira, market organizing committee chairman, stands in front of his stall (photo by Johns Pierce, USAID/OFDA).

Until February 2008, however, many of the vendors operated informal, open-air stalls, risking police harassment. In addition, vendors transported wares to and from home every day, resulting in reduced income due to transport time. JI implementing partners stepped in to build the market and provide business training to vendors suffering from significant poverty in the wake of displacement and political violence. Following construction, JI partners turned over market operation to a committee elected by the vendors, all of whom own their own stalls. The committee organizes cleaning, arranges payment of security guards, and ensures that the market remains in good order. JI partners continue to help with business training, but the process is self-sustaining, generating income as well as building community members’ capacity to negotiate with local government authorities.

Danius Bangira, chairman of the market organizing committee, said he is now able to feed his family, pay rent, and pay school fees for his six children. In addition, Mr. Bangira noted that a steadier income—a profit of approximately \$4 to 5 per day—allows for budgeting, both in his business and his household.

INVESTMENT, SAVINGS, AND LENDING CLUBS: IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS THROUGH MICROFINANCE

To buy bulk quantities of goods for resale, many vendors acquire capital from community investment, savings, and lending clubs (ISALs) developed through JI, which provides training in member selection, accounting, and bookkeeping. ISALs allow community members to pool capital for business development and income generation; as one ISAL member said, “Money is idle if it stays at home, so we put it to work.” Once a week, the nine members of one such club, the Yambukai Savings and Credit Club in the St. Mary’s neighborhood of Chitungwiza, meet to contribute \$5 to the collective fund, repay loans, and extend new loans for business use. Members extend loans to one another for a two-week period at 10 percent interest, with all interest serving to increase the size of the fund. According to members, the club has enjoyed a 100 percent repayment rate to date. In addition, each week, the club puts money into a social fund to benefit members with sudden financial needs occasioned by such events as a child’s illness. Periodically, club members share the capital accumulated to date.



Members of an ISAL in Mbare conduct a meeting (photo by Johns Pierce, USAID/OFDA).



Charity Nyakunga and Jane Nkhwangwa demonstrate clothing for sale (photo by Johns Pierce, USAID/OFDA).

ISAL group members in Mbare, a high-density suburb of Harare, noted how running their own businesses has improved their lives. Letwin Nyamasaka sells household items at a flea market; increased profits generated through use of ISAL capital allowed her to build the frame for a new house and pay for school fees and uniforms for her children. Said Jessica Maphumo, group chairperson, “People do not view me as only a widow now,” since she now runs a trading company. Jane Nkhwangwa and Charity Nyakunga, members of the Chako Ndechawashandira ISAL in Chitungwiza, borrowed money for wool and textiles to produce school uniforms, sold at a 100 percent profit. Members of the Yambukai club noted that because of the ISALs, “We and our extended families are now eating better food than last year, helping our rural relatives, and paying school fees.”

LOW-INPUT GARDENS: IMPROVING NUTRITION

Until 2009, Fredrick and Senzeni Mudoko and their family, residents of Chitungwiza, could not afford a balanced diet due to the prohibitive cost of vegetables in Zimbabwe as a result of the economic crisis. In November 2008, JI started training the family in the technique of low-input gardening, which requires minimal acreage. JI partners train beneficiaries in crop management and crop rotation practices to minimize the use of scarce water, allowing beneficiaries to grow a diverse array of vegetables and herbs in backyards. In addition, JI trains beneficiaries to use animal manure and compost rather than fertilizer, saving money and helping the environment. The raised vegetable beds used in low-input gardens retain water better than beds closer to the ground and prevent spoilage during floods.

The Mudokos planted a low-input garden in February 2009, and by August were enjoying not only such produce as strawberries, but also flowers and herbs such as elderflower and nasturtium, used for cooking and medicine, and traditional vegetables such as *mowa* and *tsunga*. Emma Kachomba, another program beneficiary in Chitungwiza, not only feeds vegetables from her garden to the seven children and four adults in her household, but sells excess produce—such as spinach, sugarcane, and *kovo*, a local favorite—to generate income. Vegetables and herbs from low-input gardens supplement JI food assistance, another JI program component, allowing residents to enjoy a more balanced and thus more nutritious diet.



Emma Kachomba displays a carrot harvested from her low-input garden (photo by Johns Pierce, USAID/OFDA).

LOOKING AHEAD

During the program’s first phase from 2006 to 2008, JI assisted more than 57,000 beneficiaries in six urban areas throughout Zimbabwe. The second phase of JI operations, scheduled to run until 2011, seeks to deepen the reach of the program to meet the fundamental needs of an even larger number of vulnerable populations. Activities in the second phase include livelihoods and income generation, food assistance, support for HIV and AIDS patients, and child protection. Since the program’s inception, USAID/OFDA has provided more than \$2.5 million in support for JI, a collaborative effort that has helped improve the livelihoods and lives of some of Zimbabwe’s most vulnerable urban populations.