



Evaluation of Securing Rural Livelihoods Project in Northern Ghana

Executive Summary

Oxfam GB Programme Evaluation

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Evaluators: Lawrencina Adams

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This document reports on findings of the evaluation of Oxfam GB's: Securing Rural Livelihoods Project launched in 2004/5.
2. The purpose of the evaluation is to review the progress made, assess and provide an opinion on whether objectives were achieved within the allotted time frame, the drawbacks to achieving the objectives and propose a way forward for Oxfam, its partner organizations and beneficiaries.
3. The general conclusion is that the programme has had a positive impact on the lives of peasants in the focal development areas and has set them on the path towards sustainable self reliant poverty reduction. This intervention has resulted in sustainable livelihoods of smallholder food and cash crop producers through increased agricultural production and investment.
4. The methodology adopted by Oxfam is generally good. The use of existing local organisations as partners for the programme is commendable in that it sought to build the capacity of local organisations.
5. Most of the organizational structures and systems of partners are in place. Prior to programme partnership, the human resource base of some partners was low but has now increased by three (Livelihood officer, Gender officer and finance Officer).
6. The programme is contributing to building the capacity of partners and beneficiaries through the provision of training to partner's staff, institutional support through the provision of motor bikes and other equipment and payment of operational costs. Beneficiaries were given training in micro-credit, book keeping and animal traction.
7. Partners are facing certain challenges in the execution of the programme as the project ends. The inability of Oxfam GB to conduct its bi-annual monitoring review and delays in funds disbursement impacted negatively on project activities. In general partners did not have problems complying with the accounting principles and procedures of Oxfam GB.

There exist a gap in the provision of technical backstopping to the partners programmes due to inadequate feedback and the absence of frequent monitoring reviews

8. There has been progress towards the objectives of the programme. The use of bullock traction for farming has increased crop production. Also the use of the multi-functional platform that processes cassava, maize and sorghum has increased the income levels of women engaged in produce processing. The introduction of women farmers to livestock production has empowered women in the beneficiary communities. Tree plantations established in communities will increase afforestation in Northern Ghana

9. Communication between Oxfam GB Accra office and Oxfam GB Tamale office it was found to be inadequate and more directive than consultative. These are usually in the form of directives which are expected to be implemented with partners by the project team. There is inadequate feedback from the Tamale office to partner organisation on critical programme management decisions and their impact on the project. In the same vein there is no documented evidence on the submission of analytical programme reports from the livelihoods coordinator to the programme development coordinator on challenges encountered in the programme and to facilitate a mutually agreed system or mechanism for addressing those challenges. This leaves a gap which is often filled by speculation which in turn unsettles the partner organizations.
10. Programme inputs such as micro-credit, livestock (small ruminants), new technologies (donkey traction and bullock ploughing), Agro-forestry and afforestation and advocacy/ campaigns contributed to the attainment of programme objectives. However, most of the livestock transferred from outside beneficiary communities could not survive due to the climatic conditions/change. Bullock distribution to beneficiaries was inadequate. There were also complaints about inadequate training given to beneficiaries in bullock ploughing.
11. Project intervention contributed in the increase in organisational assets and the human resource base of the partners. In the medium term it enhanced institutional capacity in project delivery, enhanced monitoring skills. The project capitalised knowledge within the partner organisations and huge capital investment if loans are recovered. In the long term the project intervention enhanced the project management skills of partners, it has increased donor confidence in the partners, and the project has set some partner organisations on the path to achieve growth and maturity and self sustainability.
12. One of the programme objectives was to enhance the economic empowerment of women through access to factors of production such as land, capital, labour, entrepreneurship etc. but the unintended outcome was reduction in domestic violence, more harmonious household relationships,(La'atari and Tanchara focus group), the reduction in rural-urban migration(Dintigi focus group).
13. The programme in one way or the other intended to build the capacity of partners to ensure organisational sustainability but contrary to this, some partners are still very much dependent on donor support. The programme has now created an additional need for partners to have a partnership policy, conflict of interest policy and procurement policy. Some partners will be able to sustain programme since their institutional capacity has been enhanced, institutional assets have expanded, human resource capacity and core competence of organisation has also been enhanced. Efficient management of portfolio should ensure that organisations recover costs in running project activities.

14. With regards to project linkages in operational areas the agro-forestry serves as building materials and feed for the livestock, droppings of livestock as manure for crops and returns on crop production serve as income for household expenses thus reducing poverty.

It is recommended that:

- There should be a higher level OGB staff or similar technical person with appropriate skills set for coordination, programme analysis, agri-business promotion and policy analysis who would be promoting organisational learning across all of Oxfam's work in-country and reporting to the CPM. Also there is a need for a review of skills sets and competencies required for effective front line coordination and technical backstopping to ensure that the requisite analysis is done and fed back to partners whilst at the same time providing head office with the requisite recommendations for future programme direction. A new structure is proposed in this report with the requisite skills set.
- Oxfam should ensure that its partnership principles and tool kits for partnerships assessment are used henceforth to ensure good principles of partnership are maintained. There should be a consistent application of conflict of interest and procurement policy with OGB.
- Oxfam should sign a fixed/time bound MOU's with partners
- Upward and downward flow of information is critical in the management of this project
- There is need to articulate Oxfam's procurement policy and conflict of interest provisions to partners through the livelihoods coordinator to ensure that this is well understood and that there is a whistle blower provision to protect whistle blowers.
- Feedback from Oxfam to partners should be documented and should be tracked for implementation by the livelihoods coordinator. Frontline programme manager requires a more analytical and solution oriented approach.
- Decision making should be institutionalized and not personalized. Decisions should be documented to ensure continuity in spite of high staff turn-over.

Partner organizations

- Partner organizations on their part should have more transparent structures and adopt more modern systems of management for efficiency and sustainability.
- They need to confirm their autonomy and ability to operate beyond external support.
Most partners do not have confidence of succeeding after external funding ceases.
- Should diversify their funding base by actively seeking new innovative partnerships outside the scope of Oxfam.
- Should have their own tailor made programmes that are in line with their own vision and mission and collaborate with other partners whose vision and mission coincide with theirs.

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