

# PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS REVIEWS

'enhancing effectiveness through evidence-based learning'



## Strengthening Sustainable Livelihoods : Niger 2011/12

This effectiveness review covers a project that aimed to strengthen the livelihoods among poor pastoralist communities in the rural commune of Bermo, in the Maradi Region of Niger. This project has been implemented by Oxfam GB in partnership with the Association pour la Redynamisation de l'Élevage au Niger (AREN) since 2008.

Oxfam and AREN have been working together on humanitarian and development projects in this area since the severe drought of 2005. The current project facilitated the establishment of the Groupement des Interêts Economiques (Economic Interests Group, GIE) which has taken an active role in organising support and representing the interests of pastoralists in the area. GIE's primary objective has been to improve the position of pastoralists when buying or selling livestock. Oxfam and AREN have worked to develop the capacity of the institution and its members and established centres to train trainers on improved livelihoods activities and drought preparedness, as well as on gender issues and HIV/AIDS awareness. Other project activities have included cementing traditional wells, to make them more durable and reduce health risks, and providing particularly vulnerable women with livestock to breed as an income-generating activity.

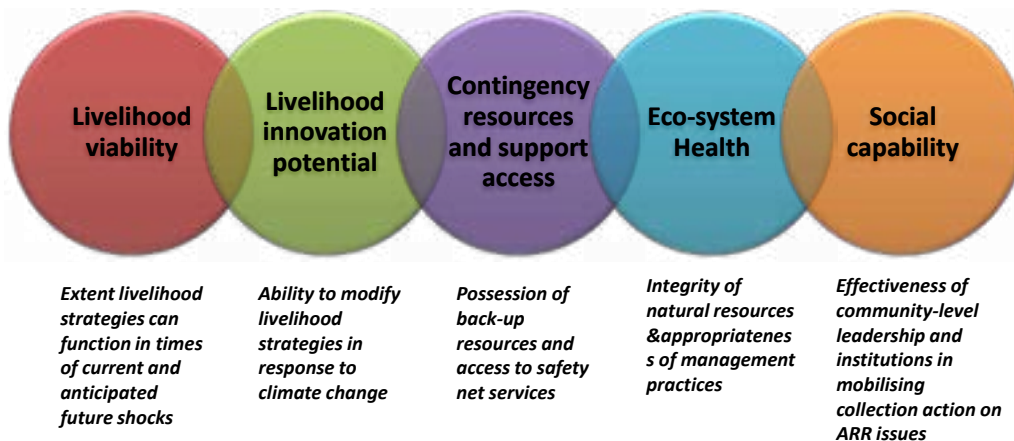


Figure 1: Dimensions affecting the ability of households and communities to minimise risks from shocks and adapt to emerging trends and uncertainty

Photo credit: Jennie Matthews

## Evaluation Method

To assess the effectiveness of the programme on reducing risk and promoting adaptive capacity, a quasi-experimental impact evaluation was implemented. This involved administering surveys to 197 households in Bermo commune, as well as 449 households in the neighbouring commune of Gadèbedji, who served as a comparison group. At the analysis stage, the statistical tools of propensity score matching and multivariate regression were used to control for demographic and baseline differences between the intervention and comparison groups, so that remaining differences in outcome measures can be assumed to reflect the results of the project. As well as collecting data on risk reduction and adaptive capacity, the survey also included questions on livelihoods activities, livestock transactions, and indicators of household wellbeing.

**Rating key:** ● - Evidence supporting large impact; ● - Evidence supporting more modest impact; ● - Evidence of large impact, but only for specific sub-groups/measures; ● - Evidence of modest impact, but only for specific sub-groups/measures; ● - No evidence of impact

Outcome	Rating	Commentary
<b>Outcome 1</b> – Oxfam GB global indicator for adaptation and risk reduction (ARR)	●	No evidence of impact, either among GIE members or the wider population.
<b>Outcome 2:</b> Increased negotiating power when buying or selling livestock	●	Some indications that households in the project area have realised higher prices when selling cattle and sheep.
Outcome 3 – Increased household income and wellbeing	●	No indications that households in the project area have improved in terms of income, food security or wealth indicators.

## Going forward

Some major project activities have taken place since the undertaking of the effectiveness review, which are already thought to be generating more positive results. In particular, GIE has taken over management of the cattle market in Bermo town, with the aim of reducing pastoralists' dependence on intermediaries when buying or selling livestock. It has also established a number of solidarity groups to support members in production of artisanal products, so as to reduce their dependence on income from livestock.

A workshop will be held in late 2012 with the partner organisation to discuss how to further address the weaknesses identified by the effectiveness review. Here, participants will discuss: how to better encourage pastoralists to engage in strategic destocking; whether a community-based early-warning system should be established; and the putting in place of a contingency plan and fund raising strategy in the event that a humanitarian response becomes necessary. The partners will also consider how to better integrate monitoring and evaluation activities into project management processes.

## Results

The effectiveness review found no evidence that this project has had a positive impact on overall household resilience. In particular, households in the intervention area did not demonstrate any difference in destocking or migration behaviour, livelihood diversification, or livestock diversity. On the other hand, it is clear that households in Bermo commune have better access to veterinary services and received more training on drought management techniques than the comparison households. In line with the primary objective of the project, members of the GIE reported having received more training and support in marketing their livestock. Perhaps as a result of this, pastoralists in the area appear to be realising systematically higher prices from the sales of cattle and sheep than those in neighbouring areas.

It should be noted that some key interventions had not yet been implemented at the time of the survey work, including changes in the management of the livestock market in Bermo town and the establishment of solidarity groups focused on various artisanal products. Unfortunately, however, there is no evidence that pastoralists in Bermo were better off overall as a result of the activities which had been carried out as of December 2011 on any of the various indicators of household income and wellbeing.