

PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS REVIEWS

'enhancing effectiveness through evidence-based learning'



Food Security and Livelihoods Support : Democratic Republic of Congo 2011/12

Oxfam GB carried out a food security and livelihoods programme in the area of Kasenyi and Tchomia, beside Lake Albert in the north-east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, from December 2008 to November 2009. During those 12 months, the project supported nearly 2000 producers in three value chains: livestock rearing, fishing, and vegetable farming. The effectiveness review focused on the activities in the fishing value chain. This aspect of the project supported 150 fishers at three settlements on the lake shore, as well as 1063 women who were engaged in the drying, smoking and marketing of fish. The fishers were organised into groups, and received distributions of modern nets and other productive equipment, as well as training and technical support. The fish processors were also formed into local associations, each of which was provided with a “semi-modern” furnace for use in smoking fish. These women also received training and productive inputs.



Map showing the areas of Kasenyi and Tchomia in red (from <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki>)

Photo: Jane Beesley/Oxfam

Evaluation Method

In March and April 2012, a team of enumerators administered a household survey to 164 male fishers and 230 female fish processors in the area of Kasenyi and Tchomia. The respondents included a random sample of the project participants, as well as comparable non-participants selected from communities where the project was not implemented. The survey was designed to capture data relating to Oxfam's global indicator for livelihoods – the percentage of supported households demonstrating greater income, as measured by consumption expenditure per capita – as well as on household food security status, asset wealth, and current fishing and fish processing activities. At the analysis stage, the statistical tools of propensity-score matching and multivariable regression were used to control for measured differences between the intervention and comparison respondents. It is important to note that only around 40 per cent of the fish processors supported in 2008/09 could be identified and located in the communities at the time of the survey; most of the rest were reported to have since left the area. The findings of this effectiveness review apply only to the fish processors who have remained in the area since that time.

Results

The results provide no indication of any sustained effect on the quantity or quality (as measured by price) of the fish being sold by either the fishers or the processors. Among the fish processors, there is also no indication of any positive effect on household income as a whole or on any other measures of household wellbeing such as food security or asset wealth. However, for the fishers, the data do provide some evidence of sustained higher income and increased asset wealth among those who were supported by the project. These results are corroborated by several self-reported measures of household income which were collected during the survey. It appears from these results, therefore, that the project activities of 2008/09 have enabled fishing households to realise some sustained improvements in wellbeing. Unfortunately, however, the same does not apply to the households of fish processors.

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
Outcome 1 – Sustained improvement in the quality and/or quantity of production	●	No evidence of a sustained effect on the quantity or unit price of fish being sold by supported households.
Outcome 2 – Sustained increase in household income	●	Some indications that household income is significantly higher among supported fishers, but not among the fish processors.
Outcome 3 – Accumulation of asset wealth	●	Some evidence of an increase in asset wealth among the households of supported fishers, but not among supported processors.

Going forward

The work which was evaluated was a short-term project, and Oxfam GB has since closed its operations in the province. However, some lessons have been learned from this evaluation which can be applied elsewhere in DR Congo and more widely. In particular, these results suggest that projects aimed at promoting sustainable livelihoods should not be carried out in areas with transitory populations. More importance should be given to the external risks in planning work like this: in this case, the change in regulations on fishing in Lake Albert and epidemics of disease may have damaged the potential for participants to benefit from these activities.