Supporting Rural Livelihoods and Employment: 
Georgia 2012/13

This project, implemented from 2007 to 2012 in partnership with the Civil Society Institute (CSI), aimed to strengthen incomes among smallholder producers by improving production and marketing techniques, and advocating for a more enabling policy environment. The specific objectives of the project were to:

- Promote adoption of more intensive agricultural production;
- Improve market linkages;
- Develop and advocate policy for pro-poor development.

This effectiveness review covers the direct support which was provided over the five years of the project’s lifetime to 150 producer households in the regions of Adjara and Samegrelo. These participant households were distributed among approximately 15 communities throughout the two regions. Each household received support in the production and marketing of a specific product – one of potatoes, tomatoes, greenhouse vegetables, cattle and dairy products, or honey, depending on what was considered most appropriate in the local environment and market context. Participant households in each local area were formed into “business clubs”, through which they participated in training on productive techniques, and also received individual coaching from CSI and Oxfam programme staff. Each household also received a package of productive capital and inputs – including beehives, cattle and sheep, seeds, fertilizers and pesticides and sprayers, as appropriate to support production of the relevant product in each local area. Each household received a package intended to fully support production of the product in the first year, with the package of inputs decreasing over three or four years. Implementation was staggered so that approximately a third of the participants received support from 2008 to 2011, a third from 2009 to 2012, and the other third from 2010 to 2012.
Evaluation method

The effectiveness review adopted a quasi-experimental impact evaluation design, which involved comparing households that had been supported by the project with households in neighbouring communities that had similar characteristics at baseline in 2007. A household survey was carried out with 134 of the households directly supported by the project (including most of the households included in the livestock, tomato, potato and honey components of the project) and with 269 comparison households. At the analysis stage, the statistical tools of propensity-score matching (PSM) and multivariable regression were used to reduce bias in making comparisons between the supported and comparison households in terms of the various outcome indicators. The outcomes assessed included those related to the adoption of improved agricultural practices, production and sales of agricultural products, household income and wealth status, and measures of self-confidence and community involvement.

Results

The survey data provided evidence that supported households have, on average, adopted improved production techniques at greater rates than the comparison households, and during 2012 produced and sold much larger quantities of the products supported under the project than comparison households. In three of the project components, this increase in sales appears to have lead to a significant increase in overall household income. Among the tomato producers, household income is estimated to be around 40 per cent higher than it would have been without the project; the boost to income among the supported potato producers and beekeepers is smaller. However, in the case of those supported in cattle breeding, household income appears to be no higher than comparable households which did not receive such support. Similar variations in outcomes between the different components of the project are found in relation to other indicators of household wellbeing, such as the diversity of food types consumed in the household, or the ownership of assets.

Participants expressed more positive opinions than comparison producers on their ability to influence affairs within their communities, as well as on their level of self-confidence.

Outcome Rating Commentary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adoption of improved production techniques</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rates of adoption of improved production techniques were generally higher among the participants than among comparison producers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revenue generated from agricultural activities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Considerably larger proportions of the project participants made sales of the products supported under this project in 2012 than did the comparison households, resulting in significantly greater revenue being generated by the average participant household.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved household income and nutrition</td>
<td></td>
<td>Household income was considerably higher among supported tomato producers than in comparison households, with a smaller difference among the potato producers and beekeepers. There was no detectable effect on household income among households supported in cattle breeding.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased asset wealth</td>
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<td>Evidence of a significant increase in asset ownership since 2007 among the supported tomato and potato producers, relative to comparison households. No evidence of a corresponding increase among households in the livestock and beekeeping components of the project.</td>
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<td>Improved self-confidence and community participation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Project participants significantly higher scores on measures of community participation, self-efficacy and self-reliance than comparison respondents. The size of these changes vary between those in the different components of the project.</td>
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Going forward

The results of this effectiveness review were discussed with the Oxfam livelihoods team and partners, and with regional management. Although Oxfam’s Economic Justice programme in the country is now pursuing a different approach, some key lessons from this and other Effectiveness Reviews have been incorporated into the design and implementation of newer projects.

Photo credit: Caroline Berger 

Full versions of this report are available on Oxfam’s Policy and Practice website: http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/

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