

Oxfam GB Project Effectiveness Review Management Response






Regional Director: Aboubacry Tall

Country Director: Michael Mamudu Salifu

Name of Project reviewed: Promoting Food Security in South East Liberia through Commercial Rice Value Chain Development

Date: 24/10/13

Summary of contribution scores below

Outcome/Impact	Rating	Short Commentary
Outcome 1 – Adoption of preferred agricultural practices		There is evidence that the project succeeded in encouraging the adoption of some improved techniques. However, few participants reported engaging in multi-cropping, and the slash-and-burn agriculture continues to be a problem.
Outcome 2 – Increased rice production		The older participants harvested significantly more rice in 2011 than those who were not participating in the project at that time.
Outcome 3 – Increased overall agricultural production & profits		The overall value of crops harvested and the revenue generated by crop sales in 2011 was approximately the same among those who had been participating in the project and those who were not at that time.
Outcome 4 – Improved household food security		There is no evidence that the interventions had an effect on household food security on any of the measures used.
Outcome 5 – Increased household income		There are no positive differences found between the older and newer project participants, in terms of household consumption or other indicators of material wellbeing.

1. What follow-up to the review have you undertaken or planned (if any) e.g. discussion, analysis, workshop?

The PIP review was recently done. The review team gathered important feedback from beneficiaries and key stake holders including the Ministry of Agriculture, the county level authorities and civil society organizations that are linked to livelihoods activities. Lessons learned from this process will be taken forward by the Country Leadership and Programme Teams in current and upcoming livelihoods programmes implementation in the country.

This year's Country Learning Review to be carried out by Mbacke Niang the RPM will be on the current Rice Value Chain project. The review will focus on key components of the current project including things the current project has done differently from the past, current achievements, changes from beneficiaries, success factors and lessons learnt.

There has been an EC Result Oriented Monitoring earlier in the year, where we developed an Action Plan for follow up activities. This plan is being updated regularly and feedback provided to the EC. We also plan an end of project evaluation.

The Project Co-ordinator has conducted field level discussion on the progress of the project and re-aligned work being carried in consultation with beneficiaries, Ministry of Agriculture and local county level authorities.

In February 2014 the Joint Monitoring team will be visiting and assessing the project with the view to increasing understanding and re-aligning direction.

2. Overall, do the findings concur with your own expectations or assessment of the project/programme's effectiveness?

No, they don't.

Admission however is made that there was no strong monitoring and evaluation framework to collect the required data for impact. Admission is also made of the fact that there were many changes in staff and project management was difficult because of the nature of the partner.

However it is useful to note that 3 key areas such as:

- Increased household incomes
- Improved Food security
- Increased overall agricultural production and profits

...can be short term, but these areas are normally long term. The true value of these can be ascertained in a year or 2 after the project. This in the context of the fact that the dam construction did not get completed in good time for cultivations.

Secondly, the report states that there was an increase in rice production. Rice is the main food crop in Liberia. The report should analyse how there is an increase in rice production and yet household incomes and food security were not achieved. These might not have been at a 100% level of achievement but there is evidence that these were achieved to a good degree.

3. Did the final results of the Effectiveness Review identify areas that were particularly strong in the project (ie large impact)?

Yes, under Outcomes 1 and 2 and increased rice production. Adoption of preferred agricultural practices was registered by the report to have strong results and large impacts. The report states that *“those who were participating in the project at this stage sold an average of 2.4 bags of rice in 2011, from a harvest of 22.1 bags on average. There is some evidence that the value of rice sales was higher among the older participants than the newer participants that year “*

4. Did the final results of the Effectiveness Review identify areas that were weak or very weak (ie no or very little impact)?

Yes these relate to the following outcomes:

- 3 on Increased overall agricultural production & profits
- 4 on Improved household food security
- 5 on Increased household income

5. a) Is the reviewed project continuing? If yes, what actions are being taken in response to the weak areas identified in question 4?

Yes

MEAL Related issues

- A database for capturing rice production and change in house hold poverty level is developed and in use.
- A Financial software for capturing and ensuring the morality of financial transactions has also been put in place and training on both given to the partner and Oxfam staff

- The lead partner to the previous project has been replaced with another partner who is working collaboratively
- The marketing of rice will be carried out by 4 women organised groups instead of the Amenu Co-operative which had taken a political leaning, having been unduly favoured by the previous partner.
- A revised submission to the EC intends to bridge the gap between hardware and software development. The balance was heavily skewed towards hardware development.
- Oxfam now has 2 staff on the project operating from the field and who are in daily contact with the project beneficiaries as well as the partners. In addition, we have proposed the inclusion of a Civil Engineer in the revised project.
- There is Joint Monitoring that will visit this project at least twice before its closure. The team made up of CD, PDM, FSM, Log and HRAM will review the performance of the project and assess need for alignments. Also visiting is the project Verification Team made up of the FSM and the Logs to verify expenditures, assets and Business functioning and take corrective actions.

b) What actions are you planning in response to the Programme Learning Considerations?

Programme Learning Considerations:

- *Investigate if there are any constraints which prevented project participants bringing their rice to market in 2011.*

Yes these have been investigated and actions taken in that regard. These are reflected in the evaluation reports and project visit documents.

- *Review protocols for selecting project participants in the future to ensure that the right households are targeted.*

We are reviewing this. We are requesting further support from the RC and other Country Programmes to better appreciate targeting and partner selection.

- *In cases where demand for project support is significantly greater than the numbers that can be served at one time, consider allocating such support through a lottery approach.*

Well noted. We will review the suggestion for a better understanding of how this works and how to apply this in Liberia.

6. If the project/humanitarian response is ending or has already ended, what learning from the review will you apply to relevant new projects in the future? How can the Regional Centre and Oxford support these plans?

We will review our approach in the selection of project participants. We will conduct need and vulnerability analysis with potential beneficiaries, which will give us an indication of the most suitable beneficiaries to support. Furthermore, we will endeavour to focus our attention within limited number of communities to increase our impact, other than spreading across large areas.

We may need some guidance notes from the Regional Livelihood Adviser on learning and key steps to follow in conducting such analysis for the appropriate beneficiaries' selection. The region could also share with us, best practices from similar programmes implemented elsewhere.

The reports will be published by Oxfam. If you have objections to this, please say so and explain why.

There is no objection. However there are some none related components which the review incorporated, within key and specific aspects of the project and thereby impacted some of the results negatively.

For example, the focus of this project was to increase rice production. Therefore, the result should be judged by the evidence of production highlighted here, which should be able to reflect a better score/result. LIBA72 (reviewed project) was preparing for the crops diversification under LIBA82 (current project). Even though farmers were cultivating other crops, besides rice, the low production of other crops (as highlighted in the review) should not be used to measure the overall outcome, rather as an added advantage by the intervention and the farmers own innovation to incorporate this into the project. In fact, this provided the basis for the crops diversification in LIBA82 project. By measurement, these attributes should reflect positively in this evaluation

There were also complexities and challenges with the methodology adapted under outcome 5 (Increase Household Income), which had great effects on the results. There were several factors used to measure this result, which may also suggest the same error which was avoided by not using the different livelihood activities to measure household income. The survey should have used an approach that would capture only the net income from sales of produced rice to measure this result. The cost estimation of households' food and non-food consumptions by respondents themselves also gave rise to some unrealistic figures, as most household do not record or take appropriate account of household expenditures. These factors also made it difficult to capture each person's daily expenditure, without being liable to some degree of error. Attitudes and cultural behaviour further influence some of the responses provided.

The actual design and approach of the review was to compare communities that had benefitted, and communities that did not benefit from the project. But this was not applicable, as all of the communities in the region had been touched by the project. The review design and approach (comparing “old and new” beneficiaries), which was adapted at field level during the final period by comparing “old and new” beneficiaries further complicated the actual data collection exercise and may have impacted some of the outcomes. This assumption did not consider several key factors with respect to the status of the “new and old” participants in both projects. Some had just joined the project, others were halfway, and some were beneficiaries of similar projects previously implemented by other NGOs and supported by the EC, especially pre-war Liberia. This form of design (comparing “old and new” beneficiaries) could be tried, tested and validated before applying to a crucial or critical evaluation with such a peculiar context as this project (LIBA72). This situation made the study more complex as the context did not suit the methodology adapted in the last minutes at the field level. This also caused the team to struggle in setting the targets/quota per community.