



IMPROVING FOOD PRODUCTIVITY AND MARKET LINKAGES PROJECT (IFPMLP)

EVALUATION

FINAL REPORT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides findings, conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations from an evaluation of the Improving Food Productivity and Market Linkages Project (IFPMLP). The evaluation covered the period from 2014-2019 and encompassed all project interventions. The evaluation sought to:

- determine the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, sustainability, including progress towards project outcomes;
- assess Value for Money of the project (efficiency, effectiveness, economy, partnerships and equity);
- provide information for future planning; and
- identify lessons learnt and best practice from the project which could be applied to improve the project as well as other similar projects in the region.

METHODS

A quasi-experimental design was utilised to collect data from both beneficiary and comparison (non-beneficiary) groups. The design was selected as no pre-intervention baseline study was conducted. This between subjects design assisted in measuring project impact, as any difference between the beneficiary and non-beneficiary group was attributed to the project. Data collection was conducted through a combination of Individual Questionnaires, Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions. A total of 217 Individual Questionnaires were administered. These comprised of 110 interviews with beneficiary households and 107 interviews with non-beneficiary households. In addition, eight (8) Focus Group Discussions were conducted together with 15 Key Informant Interviews.

KEY FINDINGS

Demographics

The majority (71 percent) of respondents were headed by males with the remaining 29 percent being headed by females. Gender compositions of households were critical in assessing differences in access to as well as utilisation of different household assets. The majority of respondents (76 percent) were married followed by 22 percent who were widowed, 2 percent who were divorced and a small proportion (0.5 percent) who were never married.

Effectiveness

The programme contributed towards reducing household vulnerability measured by low incidence of hunger in beneficiary households (10%) compared to non-beneficiary households (48%). Reduced incidence of hunger was attributed to various factors including increased production, diversified cropping as well as diversified livelihoods sources. The project initiated a transition from maize and tomatoes towards diversified cropping including butternut, Irish potato along with NUA45 bean variety. The project further supported communities and farmers to diversify their saving options by introducing Income, Savings and Loans (ISALs).

Farmers highlighted the importance of improved livestock production methods beyond the common practice of range-land production where livestock are left to graze freely from the natural environment. The programme introduced controlled feeding with training and practical demonstrations for more than 35 livestock farmers in ward 17. Pen fattening and supplementary feeding further contributed towards improvement and maintenance of good livestock health, resulting in increased conception and parturition rates. Calving rates within communal areas ranges from 30 – 50% but with the introduction of forage production, pen fattening and supplementary feeding, this increased to 60% in the project areas. The Livestock Production Department (LPD) further reported that calf mortality was also reduced from 5% to 2%.

Relevance

The Improving Food Productivity and Market Linkages Project (IFPMLP) project prioritised increasing household access to income/asset base. Beneficiaries reported that increasing access to income was critical as they previously had constrained access to income and assets. Increasing agricultural productivity was cited as a key indicator of programme relevance especially as communities reported struggling with declining productivity due to successive droughts and limited access to inputs. Water harvesting was introduced with the construction of a dam providing potential for both crop and livestock production. Dam construction demonstrated programme relevance as it responded to water challenges identified by communities. A relevant implementation approach was utilised where community members provided labour during dam construction and were paid USD20 per month. The project contributed towards improved farm decision-making through facilitating access to information. This was done through the ICT4D platform named “Kurima Mari” (farming money) which provided real time access to information on prices, farming tips as well as weather forecasts. Beyond agricultural production, the programme addressed some key crosscutting issues like HIV and AIDS. Responding to HIV and AIDS was critical especially as the health of farmers contribute towards productivity.

Outcomes

The ISAL methodology contributed towards increasing the asset base for participants. This brought a greater sense of security to the community and a cushion against poor crop production. The beneficiaries have accumulated individual household assets as a result of an incremental advantage on the funds. Group members bought fertilizers while others managed to acquire goats, indigenous chickens, ox drawn ploughs and black poly pipe (HDPE) for irrigation. At the height of inflation, some groups resorted to cash distributions as commodity prices kept escalating. Asset building groups contributed towards improved access to fertiliser (31.8%), groceries (24.7%), kitchen utensils (10.6%) and goats (10.6%). The majority of female respondents (40 percent) used their income for consumptive purposes by purchasing groceries while the majority of males (35 percent) invested in productive purchases (fertiliser). In addition, none of the female respondents bought cattle while 7.7 percent of males reported buying cattle. The project contributed towards nutritional improvements with beneficiaries being provided with sugar beans of the NUA 45 variety. There was improved livestock production by facilitating access to technical back stopping and trainings offered in conjunction with local Crop and Livestock Officers. The project initiated a process of transitioning towards potato seed sovereignty as two Irish potato farmer producers were assisted to have varietal demonstration plots.

Value for Money

The evaluation used Social Return on Investment (SROI) as a measure for value for money (vfm). The SROI ratio for the project was USD1.74: USD1 which means that for every USD1 invested by the programme a social value of USD1.74 was created. This means the project created a positive social return validating the conclusion that investing programme activities especially with construction, Irish potatoes, and artificial insemination presents a good return on investment. Thus, the programme intervention presents a good Value for Money.

Sustainability

The project managed to put in place sustainability structures through capacity building and skills transfer, development and sustenance of partnerships as well as introduction of technology. The project included strong focus on capacity building and skills transfer. Farmers were trained on potato farming,

potato seed production, ISALs, butternut production, production of livestock feed as well as bookkeeping and Farming as a business (FaaB). The project partnered with Government departments specifically District Agriculture Extension service providers. The partnership created linkages between government provided expertise and community farmers. Farmers reported being able to independently engage agriculture extension staff even without the involvement of CTDO. In addition, the VET doctor reported having been linked with communities and farmers which was previously not happening. The introduction of ICT4D further fostered sustainability as the project will be used beyond the programme phase. In addition, the platform was used for other programmes that were not necessarily supported by the IFPMLP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDING/CONCLUSION	RECOMMENDATION
Access to water is an entry point to enhanced productivity for all other interventions. Limited access to water constrained agriculture productivity and community leaders requested for dam construction in other villages beyond the one village where dam construction support was provided.	Explore possibilities of facilitating access to water in other villages beyond the current dam. This can be done through an asset creation model where community members provide labour with external support.
High cost of potato seed is limiting the extent to which farmers can expand their production.	Consider supporting farmers to scale up localised seed production due to high levels of interest in Irish potatoes.
High cost and fuel shortage affecting productivity especially for the peanut butter making group.	Consider investing in solar powered machines as a cheaper, environmentally friendly and reliable alternative source of energy.
The evaluation documented gender differences in investments by members of asset building groups. Females were more likely to invest in consumption while males were more likely to invest in productive assets. This may potentially perpetuate existing gender disparities.	Future projects should include operations research components to understand emerging trends and where possible introduce interventions/responses that respond to emerging issues.
Limited resources resulted in sub-optimal monitoring and evaluation which potentially resulted in lost opportunities to document impacts, adjust implementation and facilitate data driven experiential learning.	Follow up programmes should invest in monitoring and evaluation to facilitate data driven decision making, prioritisation and investment.
The 40% success rate achieved in AI delays the rate of breed improvement. In addition, failed cows/heifers will require re-bulling. Pre-and post-insemination management is critical as heifers will be stressed due to too much handling as well as travelling to insemination points.	Train local inseminators to ensure the skill is available locally.
Farmers sometimes lost out to middlemen who bought their livestock at below market prices.	Continue the process of engaging competent buyers. Invest in more trainings and exchange visits to abattoirs, commercial feedlots and similar projects that are running successfully.