



Better livelihood opportunities

Namibia: Northern Regions Livestock Development Project (NOLIDEP)

The northern communal areas (NCA) of Namibia are home to over a million people, 90 percent of whom live in rural areas and are dependent on fragile natural resources for most or part of their livelihoods. Seventy percent of this rural population live in poverty. NOLIDEP has contributed to building a foundation for public services in rural communal areas, neglected prior to independence in 1990. The project has helped construct dams and boreholes so that farming communities have better access to water and has improved veterinary services. The development of a Geographical Information System (GIS), a database of indigenous knowledge and natural and physical resources, has laid the groundwork for better rangeland management. The project has also encouraged poor households, especially those headed by women, to obtain small livestock and find alternative sources of income.

Key recommendations arising from the evaluation include:

- **Mechanisms for the effective participation of civil society** and the development of a common understanding of what is meant by participation between the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development (MAWRD) and its development partners are essential.
- **The government should continue to decentralise and restructure** public services and foster partnerships with civil society. This will improve local accountability and create an environment more conducive to development activities.
- **Supporting sustainable resource management is critical.** Equally there is a need to diversify the economy and encourage people away from crop and livestock production to other economic activities in the long term.
- **Poverty across the NCA is complex and multidimensional** and must be recognised as such: cultural, social, economic and agro-ecological conditions are diverse providing different economic opportunities for different people. Future programmes of support need to ensure that targeting mechanisms take into consideration the inherent diversity of poor people's lives.

Project data

Total cost	USD 15.5 million
IFAD loan	USD 6 million
Co-financiers	Belgian Survival Fund; the Governments of France and Luxembourg; Lux-Development
Executing agency	Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development
Partner agency	United Nations Office for Project Services
Project dates	September 1994 to June 2003
Evaluation date	March 2002

Main results

Rural households have become more involved in identifying priority areas for investment and have begun to contribute towards the costs involved and to manage capital assets supplied by the project. The Community Development Fund has helped rural Namibians, especially women, to start small income-generating activities such as making bricks, milling grain and baking bread. So too, the Small Stock Seed Capital Fund has enabled households without animals – 70 percent of which are headed by women – to obtain goats, chickens and donkeys leading to improved food security, stronger social status and self-esteem for women and a potential for economic empowerment previously unavailable. Eleven new Veterinary Rural Extension Centres with drug supplies, equipment and trained staff, now reach over a thousand farmers. The key to success is to place people and the sustainable use of resources at the centre of the development process, rather than the delivery of specific, pre-determined investment options. Moreover, the rural poor need to secure access to natural resources (land, vegetation and water in particular) as a fundamental pre-requisite to the introduction of sustainable resource management systems.

▶ Bottom-up participation

NOLIDEP has made some progress in promoting the concept of participatory development. Rural households have been assisted in taking a role in identifying priority areas for development and have begun to contribute towards the costs of investment - in water development for example. However, local people and groups need to be empowered further to take a proactive role in managing their own development process, to organise themselves to get the support they need, and develop a sense of ownership and belief in their own abilities. Training and gradual assumption of responsibility for activities will help people find their own solutions to problems. The need to give adequate time, emphasis and resources to community mobilisation and the participation process, should not be undermined by the desire to meet set physical and financial targets.

Decentralising development

The Namibian government is in the process of decentralising and restructuring public services and has set up Regional Councils to spearhead planning and supervise the execution of development programmes. Government policy on decentralisation includes the intention to strengthen the capacity of local authorities and public service representatives to plan and manage the development process in broad consultation with constituencies, NGOs, community-based organisations, farmers associations and the private sector. Collaborating with civil society groups and helping them to develop are important aspects of the project, given that civil society organisations in Namibia are still weak. To date, NGOs have provided, for example, training in PRA techniques and special skills for women's groups. Ideally, however, MAWRD and civil society organisations should shift towards increased partnership rather than ad hoc contractual relationships. In addition, MAWRD needs to co-operate more with other ministries and the

private sector and spread responsibility for project implementation: the ministry is unlikely to have either the human or financial resources to undertake total responsibility for the implementation of multi-dimensional development programmes.

Natural resource management

New water facilities and the organisation of water point committees have encouraged communities to recognise the need for tighter controls over rights of access to water, particularly where the community itself has contributed to installation costs. Distances to water points are now shorter which will lead to healthier animals and increased survival rates during drought periods. However, apart from water development aimed at relieving the

pressure on over-grazed areas, NOLIDEP has not succeeded in helping farmers and herders to manage available natural resources in a more efficient and effective manner. More attention, for example, should be given to help livestock owners appreciate more fully the importance of balancing livestock numbers with available fodder resources and planning herd management to cope with drought periods. The information gathered by mapping indigenous knowledge using GIS technology can now be used as a discussion tool with communities concerning the pros and cons of water supply developments and the implications for adjustment to livestock development. At the same time, diversification of the economy away from livestock production will help ease increasing pressures on the natural resource base.

Reaching the needy

It is important to define the means by which to reach principal groups from the outset of future interventions. The project, in its initial design, assumed that benefits would automatically filter down to the poorer people, but in reality these were often skewed towards people who are less poor, especially those who already owned livestock. Although the 'trickle down' effect may result in overall economic growth, the evaluation concluded that project activities designed specifically for poorer people would be a more effective way to reach them. Whilst project activities have mostly provided support for livestock owners, NOLIDEP's approach was modified during implementation mainly to make it more inclusive of different wealth categories amongst the rural population, especially poorer people who do not own animals. NOLIDEP assisted poorer households to access resources and skills to engage in productive activities: the Small Stock Seed Capital Fund for example, enabled poorer households to obtain small animals with a 10-25 percent contribution towards the costs ■

Further information

Republic of Namibia, Northern Regions Livestock Development Project Interim Evaluation, Report N° 1313-NA, October 2002, available from: Office of Evaluation, International Fund for Agricultural Development, Via del Serafico 107, 00142 Rome, Italy. The full report is online at www.ifad.org/evaluation; email m.keating@ifad.org or telephone +39 06 5459 2048.



Villagers from Oshushu, Ohangwena, who were involved in experimenting with resting communal grazing areas to help regenerate degraded land.