

profile

Number 65, December 2009

Inducing development in a post-conflict setting

The Rural Development Programme for Las Verapaces (PRODEVER) in Guatemala, approved in 1999 and declared effective in 2001, was implemented in areas severely damaged during the civil war. Total programme costs amounted to US\$ 26 million, of which IFAD contributed US\$15 million. With the overall objective of reducing rural poverty among peasants living in fragile natural resource environments in the poorest municipalities of Las Verapaces Department, the programme was structured around a multifaceted strategy that included the promotion of market-driven development of agricultural and non-agricultural income-generating activities; strengthening of local institutions and community organizations, and consolidation of economic associations; improving access to rural financial services; developing rural infrastructure; and introducing measures for the sustainable management of natural resources. A gender-sensitive approach was also foreseen as a cross-cutting strategy. One of the programme's most distinct features was that it was designed under a Flexible Lending Mechanism (FLM) that allowed for a longer implementation period (ten years) in order to better achieve its development objectives.

Main findings

PRODEVER was implemented in a post-conflict setting inasmuch as Las Verapaces Department not only sustained severe damage during the civil war but was totally marginalized from public structures once the peace process began. The programme was therefore conceived as a pioneering programme to seek new ways of promoting development in Las Verapaces. Its design was relevant to the needs of the poor in the programme area, and was sufficiently flexible to evolve in response to the challenges encountered during implementation while remaining in line with the Government's policies on rural development. However, it proved to be too complex inasmuch as it attempted to address the needs of a highly differentiated target population and an ambitious range of issues, all of which were important but ultimately overextended the programme's implementation capacity.

The programme made a considerable contribution to the development of Las Verapaces as about 5 per cent of the 16 000 targeted families succeeded in crossing the poverty line, with good chances of sustaining their higher income levels. Its impact differed in relation to the two broad categories making up the target group: those owning land and producing traditional commercial crops such as coffee, cardamom and cocoa; and those with very little or no land. To the first group of beneficiaries, PRODEVER provided training, technical assistance and investments in rural infrastructure, and contributed to improving market conditions and strengthening linkages between producers' organizations and key actors in the agricultural commercialization chain. Thanks to this set of interventions, PRODEVER opened up new opportunities for increasing sustainable



Instruction in practices of agro-industrialization of banana in the collection and processing plant of the Association of Banana Producers, Salac I community, Alta Verapaz, Guatemala



Source: PRODEVER

PROGRAMME DATA

Programme costs

Total programme cost: US\$26 million

IFAD loan: US\$15 million

OPEC Fund: US\$5 million

Government
Contribution: US\$3.7 million

Cooperating institutions

- United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)
- Andean Development Corporation (CAF)

Key dates

Executive Board
approval: December 1999

Loan effectiveness: Sept. 2001

Project completion: end 2009

incomes and made a strong contribution to reducing poverty levels. For the second group of beneficiaries (those without means of production, especially land), programme interventions aimed at providing literacy and skills training, mounting reproductive health awareness campaigns, and promoting food security enhancement projects. However, the impact of these interventions, in terms of food security, daily diets and income, has been scant to date. The evaluation noted that, for this second group of beneficiaries, different approaches, measures and methods would have been needed, as well as a considerably longer implementation period.



Trainers of the NGO ARN instructing members of the producer association of tangerines how to establish a business plan in the community Sajomt , Alta Verapaz.

The programme's focus on promoting a participatory approach, along with the support for strengthening community associations and social capital, proved to be innovative features in the post-conflict context of Las Verapaces Department. Additionally, new technologies introduced by the programme contributed to improving production levels and raising the productivity of commercial crops. Given the effectiveness of these technologies, the programme offers promising experiences for replication and scaling up.

One of the main factors contributing to the success of PRODEVER was its capable management and staff, which remained in place for six years. However, essential know-how and implementation capacity was lost with the complete replacement of the programme staff by a new government towards the end of the executing period, thereby compromising the achievement of its objectives. It is worth mentioning that the programme also benefited from intensive implementation support from IFAD, which invested heavily in enhancing its policy dialogue with the Government and contributed to considerably raising awareness with regard to rural development issues at the country level.

Key recommendations

- Consider new ways of preparing future programmes similar to PRODEVER, giving a stronger voice to actors active in the areas of intervention.
- Seek alternative ways of encouraging savings and credit "from below" in order to promote the development of small financial markets suitable to the habits of potential customers in the communities (savings and credit associations).
- Specify, from the outset, any differences in approaches and methods required to support different categories of target groups: those likely to lift themselves out of poverty through economic investment; and those living in extreme poverty, those lacking basic resources and those who, at least initially, will be in need of social assistance programmes.
- Link the programme's efforts more closely with permanent structures in the intervention areas: municipal development councils and other stakeholders at the community, municipal and departmental levels.
- Consider the possibility of maintaining and strengthening policy dialogue by agreeing on an agenda among the competent Governmental authorities, IFAD and other agencies, with regular meetings and work plans. This should include reviewing the implementation of the Government's rural development policies.

Further information:

Republic of Guatemala, Rural Development Programme for Las Verapaces (PRODEVER), Interim Evaluation, Report No. 2141-GT, December 2009, ISBN 9978-92-9072-096-6, Office of Evaluation, IFAD, Via Paolo di Dono 44, 00142 Rome, Italy. The full report and profile are available online at www.ifad.org/evaluation; email: evaluation@ifad.org.