

Dominican Republic: South Western Region Small Farmers Project, Phase II

The South Western Region Small Farmers Project (PROCESUR) - Phase II, approved in 1998 and declared effective in 2000, was implemented in three provinces along the border with Haiti, one of the poorest areas of the Dominican Republic. It also covered the so-called “bateyes” settlements of Haitian families living in extreme poverty in sugarcane-producing areas of the target provinces.

The general objective of the project was to help reduce poverty through sustainable social and productive development in the south-west of the country, and improve the incomes living conditions of poor farmers. The project was structured around two components: community development and access to rural financial services. Direct beneficiaries included around 10 000 families. Total project costs amounted to US\$17.6 million, of which IFAD contributed a loan of US\$12 million.

Main evaluation findings

The evaluation found that, overall, project design was relevant to the needs of the poor in the areas and in line with Government's and IFAD priorities. The project sought to merge rural productive development strategies with a beneficiary participation approach in both the design and execution of project activities, and thus developed a new form of intervention to better meet the challenge of reducing rural poverty. It also benefited from ample room for experimentation. The National Planning Office (ONAPLAN) was designated as implementing agency, but project execution was mainly in the hands of private agents, with the participation of rural communities. However, its pioneering nature was not accompanied by a more decisive role at the strategic level to oversee and decide, beyond the level of project management, on project direction.

PROCESUR focused on the intended target population: the poor. However, different groups of poor, such as single mothers, unemployed youth, illiterate adults, families of farmers without land, etc., called for a very different approach to poverty reduction. This led to greater complexity, which translated into implementation delays and negative consequences for project efficiency.

PROCESUR was effective in several aspects, such as support to grass-roots organizations, promotion of gender equity, service delivery, social infrastructure and access to financial services. However, it achieved little in terms of promoting new rural microenterprises and integrating them into productive chains. In the first years of project implementation, emphasis was placed on social interventions rather



A woman from *La Descubierta* in her vegetable garden checking on her eggplants. She has received a loan from the Agricultural Bank to support this activity.

Source: ©IFAD/Horst Wagner

PROJECT DATA

Project costs:

- IFAD loan: US\$12.0 million
- Contribution of the Government: US\$2.51 million
- Beneficiaries: US\$2.56 million
- NGOs (local): US\$0.53 million

Key dates:

- Executive Board approval: 3 December 1998
- Loan effectiveness: 5 April 2000
- Project Completion: 31 December 2007

than on a strategy to promote support to value chains identified for intervention (coffee, bananas, sheep and goat herds.)



The women's association 'Las Claveninas' started their poultry farm with credit obtained from the Agricultural Bank and technical assistance from the project.

Source: ©IFAD/Horst Wagner

The project had a positive impact on the family income (especially in coffee production); it managed to increase social capital in the communities supported and strengthened private entities such as NGOs, cooperatives and financial institutions. On the other hand, limited impact was achieved with regard to food security and management of natural resources, and insufficient attention was paid to the integrated management of the watershed.

Despite the project's efforts in this regard, there is still room for improvement in the dissemination of experiences and lessons learned in the development of the area, particularly in view of the highly innovative nature of PROPEUR.



A farmer irrigates his maize field. The project gave him improved maize seeds and fertilizer in exchange for the use of his field for demonstrations.

Source: ©IFAD/Horst Wagner

Key recommendations

Ensure that the **institutional/political anchor** for new IFAD-supported projects in the Dominican Republic is an institution specializing in rural development within the framework of the Government's new policies and strategies in this particular area of endeavour.

Design and targeting: (a) Improve the definition of the target population by indicating the types of units that the project will focus on (households, individual microenterprises, grass-roots organizations, communities), and ensure that there is a clear differentiation of the "instruments-interventions-time horizons"; (b) Ensure active participation of beneficiaries in the definition and implementation of lines of action during the whole project life, respecting the "on demand" principle but also taking into account other elements such as e.g. the potentialities and risks of the organizations, as well as those related to the region, environment, and the market; (c) Bear in mind the provisional nature of some aspects of initial project guidelines. A distinction should be made between a project's mandatory components (commitments made in the loan agreement) and those that are only indicative.

Implementation arrangements: (a) Ensure that tasks of strategic importance to project implementation are carried out by organizations with the necessary experience and capacity; (b) Examine the approximate costs of different implementation models (execution by project, outsourcing of services, or a combination of the two); and (c) Plan for appropriate outsourcing of technical/financial services.

Lines of action/components: (a) Complete activities initiated to support commercial crops (e.g. coffee and bananas) grown by farmer groups along their production chains; (b) Promote the use of competitive funding applications as a means of financing productive projects at the community level and encourage young people to take part; (c) Evaluate the stage of consolidation reached by social organizations for which support is to be provided; (d) Support should be provided for microfinance initiatives more solidly rooted in the rural communities concerned. Weather insurance instruments merit support.

With regard to **knowledge exchange**, the evaluation team recommends that the systematization of the PROPEUR experience be completed and that this information be disseminated and exchanged with specialized stakeholders.

Further information:

Dominican Republic, South Western Region Small Farmers Project - Phase II, Completion Evaluation, Report No. 2452-DO, August 2011, ISBN 978-92-9072-253-3, Independent Office of Evaluation of 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.