

Federal Republic of Nigeria

Community-Based Agricultural and Rural Development Programme Project Performance Assessment

Executive Summary

1. The Community-Based Agricultural and Rural Development Programme (CBARDP) in Nigeria was selected for a project performance assessment to build IOE's project-level evaluative evidence for the Nigeria country programme evaluation in 2015. Fieldwork was undertaken in Jigawa, Katsina, Kebbi and Sokoto States from 2 to 15 July. Because of security concerns, the field mission was unable to visit the North East and so could not verify in any depth the influence of insurgency and violence on programme activities. The assessment had a particular focus on assessing the sustainability of a large number of community organizations and infrastructure created by the programme. For the latter, it used an asset verification tool, which covered 49 assets in 20 villages.
2. CBARDP was designed in a northern Nigerian context of the highest poverty in the country, and covered a huge geographical area. The **programme goal** was "to improve the livelihoods and living conditions of the poor rural communities, with emphasis on women and other vulnerable groups in the seven states participating in the programme". The programme had an initial budget of US\$68.5 million but a three-year loan extension with additional financing in 2010 increased funds by US\$16.9 million. IFAD provided 50 per cent of funding for all categories of expenditure, with the balance to come from Government and beneficiaries.
3. The programme had two components. The **awareness and capacity-building** component conducted awareness-raising and empowerment activities within 207 communities, and 65 local governments. The **community development fund (CDF)** component delivered 28,116 CDF investments across 42 categories. The number of direct beneficiaries reached was 1.2 million, or around half of the original target. The delivery of these interventions was highly concentrated within the selected village areas and local government areas.
4. **Relevance.** At the time of design, Nigeria was facing a challenging political and economic situation. After 30 years of military rule, rural poverty remained deep and persistent, and new approaches were being sought to resolve this seemingly intransigent problem. The Rural Development Strategy, formulated in 2001, was based on core principles of a participatory approach to reflect community needs, capacity building at community and local government levels, the transferring of resources to communities, support for decentralization, and greater equity among groups and by gender. CBARDP's emphasis on strengthening local actors down to village level and enabling communities to determine their own development and to manage their own funds was closely aligned with this policy framework. Besides policy relevance, CBARDP was well-aligned with local government responsibilities and funding. There was generally good buy-in from the seven participating states. CBARDP, as one of the first multi-state programmes applying community-driven development (CDD) methods, was seen as significant in demonstrating how such an approach could be rolled out in a substantial manner.
5. **Effectiveness.** Strengthening and widening the CDD approach across a vast area of northern Nigeria required the systematic sensitization and formation of community groups and community development associations (CDAs), which took place across all 207 selected village areas. From the field visit, out of 27 CDAs

visited, all but three were found to be operational, with representatives available to discuss their activities and share their records. The assessment team judged that the CDAs demonstrated reasonable confidence in their relations with local government officials and in managing programme assets. Their financial viability appeared fragile, as they could not demonstrate up-to-date bank records or membership details. But they did show a commitment to maintaining the assets provided under CBARDP, especially the social and community infrastructures.

6. The programme's approaches have been successfully institutionalized. Federal, state and local government systems were adapted to channel resources directly to communities, and credit agencies have provided substantial credit flows. The flow of government resources into the programme increased and the CDD approaches were adopted beyond the CBARDP areas. From the field visit, it was clear that state and local government council personnel were still working closely with the CDAs. Since CBARDP closure, new projects have emerged, and in some instances these projects are being coordinated by the CDA with the local government.
7. **Efficiency.** CBARDP suffered a significant delay before reaching effectiveness 17 months after the loan was signed. The programme continued to experience difficulties with the release of counterpart funds. The disbursement rate and volume accelerated dramatically from 2010, when the disbursement rules changed. However, the transaction costs for the decentralized fund management were relatively high and resulted in relatively high costs per beneficiary. Each state was consequently accounting for and submitting withdrawal applications individually. The number of applications was much higher than normal for IFAD and represented a high transaction cost for both IFAD and the Government.
8. **Impact.** Poverty impact remained highly localized, reaching less than 5 per cent of the total population in the seven states. Impact on incomes and assets has occurred only for a small number of beneficiaries. Overall, Government data for the northern states show that poverty has worsened despite the investments from Government and other development partners.
9. The CDAs as a fourth tier of government have been the most important impact delivered by CBARDP. This village-area form of community-based development architecture has been adopted widely across the programme area and has been sustained beyond the programme's duration. Testimonies received by the assessment team suggest that community organizations have shown a considerable level of resilience, even in conditions of insecurity and conflict.
10. **Sustainability.** The sustainability of a significant proportion of the assets, skills and credit systems supported under the programme remains good two years after programme closure. The asset verification exercise provided positive findings, with about 74 per cent of the sample (34 out of 46) rated as being in either reasonable or good working order and being successfully maintained by the relevant village committee. The highest ratings were found in Kebbi and Sokoto States. The lower-cost assets had better ratings. Often economic assets run by individuals (welding, sewing, threshing, milling, irrigation) were continued successfully and provided a significant increase in income to poorer beneficiaries.
11. **Gender.** Women were to be the main beneficiaries of the programme and they were targeted through the participatory approach. But the CDD approach has been less effective in transforming existing power relations and addressing issues of inequality within communities. The available evidence shows that women participated in high numbers in activities, but less in decision-making. Field visits found that the CDAs provided ground-breaking opportunities for many women involved, making them participants in activities for the first time. Nonetheless decision-making was reported to occur only in women's associations rather than at the CDA level itself. The high uptake of traditionally female interests and occupations (i.e. health and nutrition, sewing and knitting) and low uptake for

female literacy classes indicate that in fact the programme may have reinforced existing roles and stereotypes. Furthermore, field visits found that little has changed in terms of women's workloads.

12. **Innovation.** The CDA counts as the most significant innovation delivered by the programme, in that it provided the structure and principles for how CDD would work at village level. The rules of operation (including election of officials and the hierarchy of the apex committee and sub-committees) and the authority invested in these entities by virtue of their transparent democratic structure and because they were entrusted with dispensing programme funds have given them credibility. There is also evidence that the CDD approach has been scaled up more widely.
13. The significance and impact of CBARDP could have been better established if the **monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system** had provided a more solid evidence base to establish the effectiveness of the CDD approach. The overambitious design of the participatory M&E system was out of step with the capacities at community level. It was a missed opportunity that the participatory M&E, which would have been a major asset for the CDD programme, was never fully realized.
14. **Recommendations.** Below are some key recommendations for consideration by IFAD and the Government.
 - **Formalize the role of CDAs.** Under CBARDP, social inclusion, transparency and accountability have been enhanced. At the same time, CDAs maintain poor records, have limited accounting skills and there is limited reflow of assets. In the future, greater support for financial management as well as basic literacy and numeracy are needed. In future operations, such as the Climate Change Adaptation Programme, IFAD should focus on providing greater support for bringing about state legislation to provide a legal basis for CDAs to operate and be sustained.
 - **Provide appropriate guidance on participatory M&E and impact studies.** While routine monitoring and financial reporting have been largely satisfactory, much greater attention should be paid to: (i) proposing a more appropriate participatory approach to M&E at community level, so that it is aligned with local capacities and interests; and (ii) conducting more suitable evaluation surveys that consider the counterfactual, use sound data cleaning and verification, apply statistical tests to explore the meaningfulness of the data, and above all adopt a more objective approach to interpretation of the evidence. In addition, useful thematic studies need to be undertaken to provide insights on programme performance and emerging issues.
 - **Address power relations and social values through culturally appropriate gender strategies.** Important strides have been made in bringing greater equity to women in terms of sharing of development resources and being given greater opportunity to manage their own investments. Greater efforts are needed to bring women into decision-making structures such as CDAs, even though this is not straightforward in the more conservative Islamic culture found in northern Nigeria.
 - **Provide differentiated guidance on how to categorize beneficiaries and monitor benefits.** The IFAD Results and Impact Management System has encouraged a strong focus on counting different categories of beneficiaries. However greater attention needs to be given to how types of beneficiaries are defined and counted (to avoid double-counting, for example). Greater support also needs to be given to confine the number of top-down indicator and improve the analysis of who benefits (i.e. targeting).