



EVALUATION REPORT

Livelihoods and WASH improvement in the Border State of Northern Bahr el Ghazal, South Sudan

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on behalf of Welthungerhilfe Bonn

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I Summary

1 Brief description of the project and framework conditions

The primary aim of this evaluation was to use an impact analysis and a target-actual comparison to determine the outcomes and impacts of the project “Livelihoods and WASH improvement in the Border State of Northern Bahr el Ghazal in South Sudan. The evaluation took place 7–24 July 2013.

Specific evaluation questions focused on:

- a) the cooperation and coordination between Welthungerhilfe and CESVI and “lessons learnt” for possible collaboration in other projects;
- b) the perception of the project by the “beneficiaries”;
- c) whether the project improved beneficiaries’ food security and nutritional status at the local level.

The project can be considered typical of transitional aid, where emergency situations for returnees and internally displaced people (IDPs) co-exist with the everyday life of rural communities. The project holder is Welthungerhilfe (WHH) and CESVI, and the evaluation was jointly carried out by this consortium with WHH taking the lead role. Both organisations have been implementing projects in Sudan for many years. They have considerable combined regional knowledge and data available regarding basic information about the project area, target groups, cultural and environmental conditions. This knowledge and experience gathered with previous projects have enabled both organisations to identify entry points to the primary stakeholders. The objective of this project is to support livelihoods and to improve the food security of vulnerable rural households in Aweil North County, Northern Bahr el Ghazal (approximately 52,000 beneficiaries).

Welthungerhilfe’s responsibility lies with the food security component: the distribution of agricultural inputs and the initiation of vegetable gardens; whereas CESVI is responsible for the rehabilitation of boreholes, training for water point committees, hygiene promotion and construction of latrines.

South Sudan was declared a new state in July 2011. Building up this young nation encounters tremendous challenges. The conflict with North Sudan over both the disputed oil rich areas and the delineation of respective borders continues unresolved. Open armed conflicts and bombardments, as well as internal tribal clashes along the border and in the north-eastern part of the country have caused disruptions to the livelihoods of citizens resulting in thousands of IDPs.

By the end of July 2013, the country was facing a political ordeal. South Sudan President Salva Kiir dismissed his entire government. Observers see this as the culmination of a power struggle between the two most powerful figures in South Sudan: President Salva Kiir, leader of the largest ethnic group in South Sudan – the Dinka – and his former deputy Riek Machar, leader of the second largest ethnic group – the Nuer. If this power struggle shifted from the political sphere to society in general, it could result in another civil war. The UN and the USA are strongly intervening to prevent this escalation.

Since October 2010, approximately 40,000 returnees, who had lived in North Sudan for decades, have arrived in South Sudan, and since 2011 Welthungerhilfe has provided emergency assistance to more than 9,000 households of returnees and vulnerable members of the host communities in Aweil West and Aweil North. More returnees are expected to arrive in the near future.

The Northern Bahr el Ghazal State has been very much affected by fighting during the 20 years of the civil war, which resulted in the degradation and dismantling of basic services' provision by the government to the local population. This deterioration of services came in the form of poor existing infrastructures and services provision due to decades of imbalanced development between the North and South Sudan. The influx of returnees and IDPs exert an additional pressure on natural resources as well as factors of tension in the host communities.

2 Relevance

Generally the absorption capacity of the host population to integrate the returnees and IDPs into their direct environment and to provide services (water, medical and school facilities) and arable land is extremely limited. All initiated activities were implemented with regard to saving lives and are highly relevant to the core problems of the target group, such as quantity and quality of drinking water and poor hygienic and sanitation conditions in general, as well as recurrent food shortages, difficult access to agricultural inputs and other income sources. The accomplished activities were appreciated by the target group as well as by government agencies in all communities visited.

The results of the projects are all aligned to national emergency and development strategies. They correspond to regional goals and priorities. The project is cooperating with government agencies to achieve activity implementation.

3 Effectiveness

The following major activities were conducted:

- Identification of beneficiaries
- Distribution of agricultural inputs
- Capacity building and community-based structures
- Identification and selection of 500 women for vegetable production
- Two days training session in vegetable garden cultivation techniques
- Training of trainers on hygiene promotion and flood preparedness
- Hygiene promotion campaigns in Gok Machar and Ariath
- Rehabilitation of 10 flood-proof boreholes in Aweil North County

In principle all planned activities were carried out and all planned outputs achieved within the project period. The intervention was based on two complementary strategies: (a) the support to food security recovery processes and (b) the increase of access to safe drinking water associated with the promotion of hygiene. The choice of the two main sectors – “Food Security” and “WASH” – was also based on the urgent needs as identified by the population and stakeholders in the area. The project preparation focused on needs assessments and baseline surveys assessing the food security situation in general, as well as the WASH situation in the targeted project area.

Beneficiaries were identified from the most vulnerable groups. The selection was mainly carried out by representatives from the community, Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) and cross-checked by project staff. However, the intervention reached more than 3,000 vulnerable households with 24,731 beneficiaries, which corresponds to an average of 8.24 members per family. At least 11 IDP households, 1,447 returnee households and 1,542 rural host households benefited. Of these households, 276 were female-headed and a total of 12,843 children under 5-years old. Furthermore 500 women participated in the vegetable garden groups.

It is estimated that, in total, 4,617 households in 10 villages benefited from the rehabilitated boreholes. Multiplied by the average number of family members, at least 38,000 people benefited from the WASH interventions.

The overall execution of the WASH and food security interventions, the construction and rehabilitation work as well as the conducted training sessions were of high quality – certainly due to the dedicated team and the good cooperation between Welthungerhilfe and CESVI. However, not all project activities were implemented in line with the proposed concepts, which intended to involve communities as much as possible to strengthen ownership and sustainability. The envisaged involvement of the target group was also not achieved – the strategies and concepts as stated in the project proposal were too optimistic.

4 Efficiency

In principle the project management in Nyamlel as well as in Nairobi tried to spend the money in the most effective and efficient manner.

The original project budget totalled €1,069,392 and was allotted as follows: material for Food Security and WASH 46.5%, investments 13.5%, operational costs 18.4%, personal costs 18.5%, transport 1.4% and project support costs (including audit, evaluation and visibility) 1.7%. The project's budget corresponds to those of LRRD projects, where project monitoring and implementation costs are more or less equal to funds for communities and target group support.

Most probably the project will underspend regarding the budget for seeds and tools at around 5.62% of the total budget, due to locally procured seeds and purchase of tools made by local blacksmiths.

In general, the project management team (PMT) is committed, dedicated, qualified and motivated, with clear staff responsibilities. Staff, material and financial planning were realistically and appropriately calculated. The project has a functional security system, based on clear rules and regulations including a detailed emergency schedule plan. The entire project communication is sufficiently established and the project equipment is generally appropriate. Staff capacity building and capacity development is considered by the PMT. Welthungerhilfe is cooperating very well with the Alliance 2015 partner CESVI. Project infrastructure is meaningfully shared, managed and used.

The internal M&E system delivered data on the implementation status, as well as on finance administration and achieved outputs. Up to a certain level, information is gathered regarding use of outputs and outcome, but the latter is less well-documented and systematic.

5 Outcomes and impacts

The assessment of outcome and impact was conducted as per the indicators stated in the project proposal, bearing in mind the outline of the results chain. In addition, other direct and indirect, short, medium and long-term, positive as well as negative outcomes and impacts were analysed to get a broader picture and provide “lessons learnt” for subsequent interventions. However, the indicators were not quantified, so it is impossible to determine what the project implementer considers as a success or a failure, e.g. it remains unclear how many months of food self-sufficiency would be regarded as a satisfactory achievement.

It can be stated that with these measures all interviewed beneficiary families confirmed the reduction of hungry months. All reported that they had a considerable harvest, which helped to extend the months of food self-sufficiency. The vegetable production in the gardens provided an enriched diet and the surplus produce was used to generate cash income. Women reported in general about the improved health of their children, presumably coming from potable water as well as the improved nutrition.

All visited households and interviewed women’s groups had developed awareness on hygiene promotion and demonstrated good hand-washing practices as well as correct water usage and storage. Furthermore, people could correctly explain the relationship between household hygiene and reduction of waterborne diseases; actual confirmation of these measures being that all family members, but especially children under 5 years, greatly benefited by having fewer problems with diarrhoea.

All rehabilitated pumps had been functional, producing clean water. A preliminary test conducted by CESVI right after the rehabilitation and disinfection of boreholes showed no coliform bacteria in the water, but final and more detailed laboratory tests will be conducted by CESVI soon.

People reported that rehabilitating the pumps contributed significantly towards saving human lives and alleviating human suffering.

Communities appreciated the training for pump minders, as these are now able to carry out small repairs and maintain the pumps independently. A challenge will be how to handle a more serious breakdown because communities are not so sure what to do when an expensive spare part like a cylinder or socket is needed.

All institutional latrines were completed, but as yet not handed over to the school WASH committees, which were planned to be established. But the latrines are solidly constructed, gender segregated and in compliance with the Sphere standards. Last but not least, the improved hygienic conditions and protection, especially for girls, will contribute to a more relaxed and child-friendly school climate.

Furthermore, it can be reported that many women joining and working in the vegetable production groups, have already generated some additional cash income, which was used to buy minor household items such as sugar, salt, oil, tea and soap, and also partly to pay school fees, water fees, medical treatment and school uniforms. In addition, by coincidence, “new” gardening groups (gender mixed) were observed, on their own initiative, copying the advice and steps from the neighbouring women’s garden group. Apparently this group was convinced that they would gain additional food

and income from their newly created garden, and obviously took into account the lessons already learnt from the neighbouring group, applying many improvements to their own.

In respect of the project funds, project duration and project activities in relation to the political, social and environmental circumstances, and the unpredictable situation in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, it can be assumed that the project has contributed significantly to the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) “Eradicate poverty and hunger”, and the fourth MDG “Child health”, especially with its intervention in the WASH and the Agriculture sectors. Furthermore, it supported the third MDG “Gender universal education” and the fifth MDG “Maternal health”.

6 Sustainability

Sustainability is the main challenge for project implementation under the circumstances prevailing in South Sudan, as well as for programmes providing transitional aid. Sustainability is influenced by many factors, some of an external nature, with few possibilities for the implementing NGOs to influence.

Once people become empowered and motivated, they will not easily lose this. Therefore, socio-cultural changes will most likely continue and evolve. Rural communities already feel that the measures and activities can help them to improve their general livelihoods. This has opened up a new perspective in farming for some communities.

The major challenges regarding sustainability are – besides short-term project and the transitional character of the project – the weak capacity and performance of government agencies to support rural communities, as well as the general poverty of the current rural community society (host, returnees and IDPs) and their weak capacity to generate income sources. Therefore overall project sustainability is still fragile, but as mentioned before, the objective of this project was mainly to improve livelihoods in terms of saving lives. The main challenges are the lack of ownership of communities and their incapacity to independently carry out maintenance.

Even though the target group is difficult to mobilise and to motivate for stronger participation and contribution, due to the unclear future perspectives of returnees, refugees and IDPs and their non-clarified general situation and traditional and cultural attitudes, the project should have mobilised and requested the County Water Department (CWD) and the SSRRC to negotiate the community contribution and participation to strengthen community ownership. The public sector was dismissed too early from its responsibility. The project implementation concepts as declared in the project proposal aimed considerably to strengthen CWD’s, MoA’s and SSRRC’s capacity, which apparently was too ambitious.

7 Recommendations

The project is nearly at its end. Only a few activities have to be finalised. For this reason only a few recommendations are given:

- The intervention of rehabilitating boreholes should be further promoted to reach other rural communities in need, which are still numerous.

- Communities' contribution towards construction works (fencing, digging and other daily labour) should be strongly requested – e.g. the final pump assembly should be carried out only after the communities' contributions have been accomplished.
- Training on food security and agricultural measures should be offered to all interested people. Assets should be distributed only to beneficiaries having a minimum level of agricultural skills and the willingness to contribute and engage actively. A strong contribution (e.g. bush clearing, fencing, etc.) from the beneficiaries should be requested.
- Welthungerhilfe and CESVI South Sudan should consistently develop outcome-oriented monitoring systems and establish appropriate outcome-oriented reporting. A final assessment should provide quantitative data on the indicators agreed with OFDA (e.g. months of food security, litres of water consumption per person per day, etc.).
- Capacity development for staff members for further qualification should be strengthened.
- Last but not least, Welthungerhilfe and CESVI should continue to develop a multi-sectoral, holistic and results-oriented approach. The major challenges in this regard are how to combine meaningful emergency aid and rural development together, where relief target the most vulnerable while at the same time LRRD concepts promote potential producers. The recommended strategy is to promote rural farmers' productivity and develop income sources on one side and to increase the request for beneficiaries' contributions towards project outputs to strengthen ownership on the other.

8 General conclusions and “lessons learnt”

One important conclusion which can be drawn from this project intervention is that for a successful implementation aiming at ownership and sustainability, the involvement of and contributions from the communities must be increased.

In the present OFDA-funded project, Welthungerhilfe and CESVI have created a good basis for establishing a comprehensive programme to promote the resilience of rural communities in the NBeG region who are definitely facing difficult conditions. As it is unlikely that South Sudan will develop into a functional and stable democracy very soon, nor that the GoSS will be able to fulfil its responsibilities regarding the rural communities, it is of the utmost importance to support the rural communities in such a way that they can utilise their own resources and improve their livelihoods. This will also prevent the potential of more conflict from re-emerging. It is apparent that in countries where returnees and IDPs face emergency situations alongside the day-to-day lives of rural communities, targeted assistance for the most vulnerable is difficult. Because of general food distribution, the potential farmers are often demotivated to produce the staple foods. Generally emergency aid is highly reactive and insufficiently preventive.