

CHRISTIAN AID/ODA. NGO CO-FUNDED PROJECTS: BURKINA FASO

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The Projects

This joint ODA/Christian Aid evaluation covered two NGO projects funded by Christian Aid in Burkina Faso. The projects were implemented by Federation Wend-Yam (FWY), a peasant organisation covering 44 villages, and ACECO, an association of 25 village savings and credit groups. Christian Aid's programme in Burkina Faso is one of its largest in West Africa, and these two organisations are seen to be amongst the most successful of its partners in Burkina Faso. The ODA Joint Funding Block Grant Scheme provided 21.5% of the total amount of £247,619 committed to the two projects by Christian Aid.

Between 1986 and 1993 Christian Aid has assisted ACECO, as an organisation, with funding to the value £144,163. In contrast, Christian Aid funding for FWY has focused on three specific activities: livestock fattening, literacy and training and market-garden development, implemented by the Federation's members between 1990-93. Both organisations were selected for evaluation by Christian Aid and include activities under way as well as completed activities.

The Evaluation

This evaluation was one of a series of joint NGO/ODA evaluations of NGO projects. The evaluation was undertaken by a team consisting of representatives from ODA, Christian Aid, ACECO, and FWY and three independent consultants. The field work was carried out in May-June 1993.

Overall Success Rating

The FWY market-garden and livestock activities were judged as *successful*, with their objectives largely achieved and having significant overall benefits in relation to costs.

The FWY literacy project was *unsuccessful* in relation to its initial objectives, with uncertain benefits in relation to the costs. ACECO has been partially successful in terms of its achievement of its objectives but with benefits low in relation to overall costs.

The Main Findings

- In both organisations alleviation of poverty was an overarching objective, seen to be applicable to most members. In practice there was no intentional targeting of benefits on the basis of equity or need. In the case of FWY there was no evidence that access was concentrated in one economic, ethnic or religious group. In ACECO access was not visibly restricted, though overall use of services by the membership was low.
- The FWY assisted market-gardens were achieving their objective of increasing available land and increasing dry season income. The livestock fattening activities had also achieved their objective of increasing participants' dry season incomes, but with declining success in the last two years. There was no evidence that the literacy activities had been successful in terms of their original objective of helping improve the capacity of FWY office-holders to carry out their duties, since few participated, and fewer achieved literacy. However, others in the community, especially children, have benefited.
- ACECO has been successful in achieving its goals of increased numbers of CECs, increased membership within villages, increased female membership, and an increased volume of loans. It has not been successful in increasing the volume of savings, which have fallen over the last three years, nor in achieving a satisfactory rate of loan repayment.
- Women form a small minority amongst the staff and office-holders at the village and central level of both organisations. Women's membership has been actively encouraged by ACECO, in contrast to FWY, where there is no explicit policy and their role as members is relatively invisible. The benefits women have gained from ACECO membership seemed marginal, whereas in the case of the FWY market gardening activities, women have valued the benefits produced.
- Both organisations are potentially self-sustainable, on the income generated from membership fees, fees for service, and some additional self-generated income. Both would, however, require improved management capacity and a perceived improvement in quality of services to members before this potential could be realised.

Lessons

- NGO projects funded within the context of a long term relationship with a donor tend to be more similar to ODA process projects than normal bilateral projects initiated after a formal appraisal process. In this context documentation of changes over time in project design, and the active use of that documentation to learn from past experience, are essential.
- Membership organisations, such as FWY and ACECO, gain credibility with donors and government partly through their apparent size, defined in terms of membership numbers. One consequence can be that growth is pursued as a goal at

the expense of improvement in quality of service.

- A membership organisation is primarily accountable to its membership for the type of service it provides. In this context donor support for specific development activities should be linked to promotion of institutional developments which enhance the accountability of the executive to the membership, and the membership's own capacity for informed participation.
- As NGOs grow in size, with increasing numbers of activities and supporting donors, technical assistance to enable improved management of an organisation's finances can be as important as technical assistance provided for the implementation of specific project activities.
- Donors monitoring the performance of non-government organisations which specialise in savings and credit should make use of measures which focus on financial performance, even though their wider concerns may be with institutional development and social impact.

Further Information

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