

Examples of Outcome and Impact Assessment by NGOs

Integrated Impact Monitoring. The C-MAD Dairy Project

(George Cottina, Bernward Causemann, December 2010)

Experiences: Description for Practitioners

Context

((Sector, region, type of project, implementing NGO))

C-MAD (Community Mobilisation Against Desertification) is a Kenyan NGO. C-MAD's programmes include sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, community health, reproductive health for youth, water, sanitation and small-holder agricultural marketing. The programme described here works in Awendo Division, Rongo District, South-Western Kenya. It promotes sustainable livelihoods for farmers.

This particular project (2000-2008) focused on small-holder dairy promotion amongst women in sugar-cane growing areas. Its primary aim was to empower women economically by offering alternative sources of income. In these areas, the main source of income is from growing sugar-cane which is controlled by men. The available land is all under sugar-cane as a cash-crop, leaving very little for food crops. The second aim of the project was to improve nutrition. The strategy was to complement the household food supply by introducing dairy cows which could partly feed on the leftovers of sugar-cane but also 'force' the farmers to set aside some land for animal feed (nappier grass). This plot is typically tended by the women and they are able to grow other food-crops. Another fodder comes from the leaves of sweet potatoes where the roots (tubers) serve as food for the household.

Heifers (young female dairy cows) were introduced on a heifer pass-over basis where a recipient of a heifer had to pass over an in-calf heifer (a cow that is pregnant) to another woman; they had to pay for the heifer until this pass-over happened. In the event of the cow giving birth to a bull calf the individual rears it to market age (approx 12 months) during which she will be paying the equivalent of 2 litres of milk daily during the lactation (10 months of active milking) period, the sum of which is added to proceeds from the bull sale to buy a heifer that is passed on to another duly qualified group member.

Introduction of Tools

((A brief description of the tool and sources where to get a more detailed description.))

This is not one tool. The project has integrated many forms of monitoring in the implementation of the project, so that they are inseparably interwoven. Observing and recording of data of one activity is a necessary pre-condition for the implementation of another activity, and they are all indispensable and sensible for the ultimate aims of the beneficiaries. *Indicators* – the data that is observed and recorded – are at the same time necessary information for the process and sources of information on the project's influence on how people improve their lives through using the project.

Procedure of Application

((How did it work exactly? Lists of indicators, data collection instruments, process of data collection etc. Possibly describe steps))

After mobilisation in the project area, C-MAD facilitated the formation of an elected community project management committee (CPMC) in each village. A memorandum of understanding was signed between C-MAD, the CPMC and the local Ministry of Livestock office that allowed C-MAD and later the Ministry of Livestock to remove a heifer from one beneficiary farmer to another if the project was not well managed.

Farmers registered with the CPMCs, pay a registration fee and an annual subscription. The registered members were then trained by C-MAD and the Ministry of Livestock on dairy husbandry. The first batch of in-calf heifers was then given to the CPMCs who distributed them to members who met the conditions. Before members can receive a heifer, they need to meet a number of conditions, e.g. establish an acre of nappier grass, have a permanent water source and undergo a minimum amount of training (a man and a woman from the household) in dairy husbandry. They also needed to be fully registered with their (CPMCs).

The assessment was carried out by the CPMC, the Ministry and the C-MAD Project officer. Where more members qualified than the available heifers, distribution was made on a first come first served basis and sometime secret balloting was used ; a waiting list was then set up. The members did not have ownership of the heifers they received until they had passed on one in-calf heifer to another woman selected by the CPMC.

Monitoring 1: The CPMC needed to monitor and record if members met all the requirements in order to be able to conduct assessments. The assessments were important to the CPMC and the project staff to select beneficiaries for the seed and pass on heifers and also to ensure that no-one in the community accused them of unfair treatment or any favouritism.

Monitoring 2: When a heifer reaches insemination age artificial insemination (AI) is carried out by the Ministry of Livestock or private AI service providers, this was paid for by the member who has a heifer. The members were required to inform the CPMC who recorded the dates in order to be able to see which heifers would calve in future and give milk.

Once the heifer calved and gave milk, members had to contribute an agreed amount of milk or money to the CPMC until they had passed on the heifer, (like a fee for lease). If a cow gave birth to a female calf, that would be about 1 year. They had to give either a fixed amount of money or, most preferred, a fixed quantity of milk which CPMC sold. The money was then used for the cost and stipends of the management of the CPMC and a portion of it was savings for the members that they could source, e.g. for veterinary services or any other cow-related emergency.

Monitoring 3: The CPMC monitored and recorded the calving of heifers and the passing on of in-calf heifers. This monitoring was needed for the CPMC's income and to be able to pass on heifers. Members were keen to report that they have passed on an in-calf heifer because then they could stop payments. Village members were interested to record calving heifers because they hoped to get a heifer themselves. This was particularly the case for those who were next on the list of recipients. There was mutual interest in the correct recording of data, because it was relevant to all involved.

Monitoring 4: The CPMC recorded payments or contributions of milk for their own payments and for the selling of milk. Members were interested in making and recording contributions to build up their capital for emergencies. The data gave information about the spreading of the heifers and the build-up of capital. The milk produced was a good indicator of how the cow was managed as well-kept animals give considerably more milk. This information was also given to the C-MAD field officer who then knew when it became important to intervene.

Monitoring 5: If farmers/individuals gave money, not milk, it would be followed up by the CPMC and the field officer as this would signify a poor area and it raised a flag that there could be a problem.

Note: What does it mean if the number of heifers increases? Is that "just an output indicator"? In the concrete context of the community it means much more: food, status, income, empowerment, trust and potential for much more. See text below.

Monitoring 6: The records on calving gave indications on which heifers should be on heat again. If that was not the case, it could have indicated that something was wrong with the heifer, or that the farmer had neglected artificial insemination. The CPMC acted on that in order to quickly increase the number of calves, and thus of heifers distributed.

If heifers gave birth to a bull, members had two options: The member could sell it, top up the money and buy a heifer. This was then passed on in order to own the heifer they were taking care of. Most people could not afford the top-up as heifers were much more expensive than bulls. Most CPMCs decided that after the birth of a bull, people had to make a higher contribution than before which went into their savings. This guaranteed a top-up by the time the bull was ready for selling so that more heifers came into the village.

Note: The number and kind of problems encountered could give information about changes in the village over time. That was not done systematically here.

Monitoring 7: The increased contribution in case of a bull was not part of the project design. CPMCs observed the farmers' behaviour, and were empowered to adapt regulations and practice. The ability to top-up bulls was an indicator for the changing economic situation of beneficiaries. Those still without heifers were very interested in this process and contributed to the observation because they hoped to benefit faster.

Some CPMCs decided that their members save extra in order to be able to buy additional heifers from elsewhere to cover the village faster.

Monitoring 8: C-MAD observed the saving patterns of CPMCs. An increased saving and investment indicated that people perceived heifers as beneficial, an overall indicator of positive impact: People said that this was changing their lives and they wanted to put more money in it.

C-MAD trained some members who had basic skills to become para-veterinarians. Their services and the services of professional veterinarians from the Ministry of Livestock were made available to the farmers at a fee.

Monitoring 9: The money withdrawn for services provided information on the needs for veterinarians and the health status of animals, also an outcome indicator.

CPMC members would make regular visits to all heifer holding families (even after the families owned them) to assess the condition of the heifers, and could even remove the heifer if it was not taken care of well and give it to someone else in the village. C-MAD could even relocate to another village.

Note: Later, when savings had built up and people could withdraw money for other purposes, this could also give information about other social issues in the community.

Monitoring 10: The monitoring of the treatment of heifers was a way for the CPMC to prevent an animal being taken away from their village. It helped to encourage people to treat animals better.

Changes Observed

((What outcome/impact have been observed - positive/negative, intended/unintended))

There was more food production, better nutrition, economic improvements and an improved status of women. This could be observed during the visits. The increasing number of heifers is an indicator linked to increasing areas of land being taken away from sugar cane and used for food production.

At this time, the sugar cane industry in Kenya was on a downward trend. Living conditions in sugar-cane producing areas deteriorated. But in this area, the situation improved.

It is therefore reasonable to assume that the impact of the project was higher than the perceived change in living-conditions.

The increased saving was an indicator for an improved economic (and therefore social) status of women in the families, as saving was done by the women. The status of men in the community also increased as is expressed in the number and quality of cows he owns, even though the cows come through the woman. This was one reason why men supported the project, apart from the regular income and improved nutrition. A woman who brings cattle to the household will be respected more.

Some farmers bought additional heifers for themselves. That was an indicator of their improved economic situation.

With land under sugar cane reducing, and more land going under nappier grass, sweet potatoes and other food crops, women gained status as they had increased access to land as a productive resource.

Income from dairy animals is spread throughout the year, unlike the income from sugar cane which comes in a large amount and is usually paid in the man's bank account because the man owns the land (unless it is a female-headed household). Some men use the money for themselves, drink or have other wives elsewhere. The income from dairy animals is more regular and visible: Everybody sees how much milk is delivered. Therefore, a social obligation goes with it. More children go to school. Increased school enrolment and improved housing were observed and reported for the targeted households.

The regular checks on the heifers made farmers become more responsible in caring for the animals. Feeding animals in the stables (semi-intensive) is a lot of work. It kept husbands and youth out of school at home. Women and local administrators reported less drunk and idle men in the evenings. Local administrations loved the project because they felt that the unemployed and usually idle young men were kept at home.

Added Value of the Tools

((How did people think of the tools, how did they make use of them? This part is mainly descriptive.))

People recognised that the consistent observation, assessment and recording of data helped to spread the heifers throughout the village. The monitoring helped to create trust and effectiveness. It created confidence in people that they would benefit within the foreseeable future.

Many farmers have problems with keeping records. This was now completed by the CPMC. All the farmers needed to do was provide the information.

Farmers appreciated the reliability with which the proliferation of heifers proceeded.

Reflections for Leaders and Experienced M&E personnel

Background

((What is the background to the application of the tools? What factors played a role in making it a success (or – partial – failure)? What did the facilitators aim at? What did they achieve?))

The first heifers were introduced in 2001. The last batch was introduced in 2006.

This text is not the description of a project. The description focuses on the monitoring of impact (or outcome). That is why we have not touched on many aspects of the project. There was also training on nutrition, particularly feeding children, on HIV and AIDS, soil and water conservation, Gender and Development and imbedded team work in managing

the animals, thus not overburdening the already burdened women. Every sector of the household was able to appreciate the significance of the dairy cow in the home. But these were not relevant for this form of integrated impact monitoring.

CPMCs frequently covered more than one village and represented several groups of farmers. While the CPMC had the overall responsibility of assessing and approving beneficiaries, they were often accompanied by the farmer group leaders. The criteria for selection of beneficiaries not only included full membership and meeting preconditions but also took the views of the farmer groups. Sometimes such factors as vulnerability e.g. women with orphaned and vulnerable children or women who were single or at risk were given priority. Also such factors as equitable distribution amongst the villages were considered.

C-MAD introduced a water tank project in the area from 2007 onwards. C-MAD and another organisation have since introduced dairy goats. Goats are less expensive and therefore more affordable for the poorer sections of the community that could not afford the conditions set for a heifer.

Benefit of the Tools

((What is the added value of the tools? What did people learn? Did they change their practice? What did the NGO learn? Has it adapted its practice since? This part is more analytical.))

In many projects, when in the beginning only some people benefit, others drop out. The systematic monitoring and inclusive process that involved everybody helped to build confidence that everybody would benefit within a reasonable period of time. The number of registered beneficiaries actually increased over time.

The integration of monitoring into implementation and the monitoring of data that was equally relevant regarding output, process and impact helped the CMPCs to see obstacles and make sure the overall impact on the villages was increased.

The integrated impact monitoring helped C-MAD to see part of the impact it was achieving. It provided information about outreach. The information about the reasons for saving accessed, the members making financial contributions and the assessment of the holding of heifers had the potential to give information about challenging developments, including negative side-effects. The project built on a theory of change as outlined above. Whether the increased number of heifers actually led to increased income, food security and status of women was not measured directly. Direct observation during the process of implementation was sufficient to see that the theory applied mostly, and where it did not, problems came up that could be addressed. A cumbersome separate M&E system for impact was not necessary.

Lessons Learned

((What have we learned about the tools? What can be drawn as a general lesson for participatory M&E? What advice to give for people who want to apply the same tool? This could also refer to the 4 purposes of impact assessment.))

Many aspects of the social fabric and the economics of the area have been considered and integrated in the design of the project. This opens up the opportunity to measure many kinds of changes through the figures generated, not in a separate M&E system, but through the direct implementation of this project.

The monitoring described was focused on specific crucial aspects of the project application and gave integrated information on outcome. On the surface it appears that other wider impacts could not be documented that way. But one of the authors worked in the same organisation again with a different project; a water harvesting project, a couple of

years later in the same area where the project gave tanks on a cost-sharing basis. He was able to build on the community structures and quickly have impact. The CPMCs took up the initiatives very fast. This was possible because of the trust and competences built up within the community and the good relationship between C-MAD and the local government structures.

The success would have been threatened because individuals needed to contribute considerably for the roof catchment tanks. Where people had participated in the dairy cow project, they could pay easily so the project quickly rolled out tanks. It delivered 150 tanks in a period of 20 months. (That was the project budget.) More people wanted tanks so based on the people's contribution and their quick response, the project delivered another 210 tanks within this period and overshot its target more than double. Since then, the water harvesting project has brought in many more tanks and spread even beyond the area.

Whilst these more wide-ranging impacts usually happen much later, the potential for them can be seen in the process. The building up of trust and competence shows in the daily running. Active participation by the beneficiaries in ensuring quality and holding each other accountable was an empowerment of people to motivate their own change. Good performance in such a process and increased participation by the farmers is an indication that the capacity to take up new initiatives is increasing, and that potential builds up. The material successes of the dairy project are an indicator of, and at the same time a contribution to, the building of social capital which are core to development, and which was the central impact of the dairy cow project.

Purposes of Impact Assessment

((Rating is not on the tool itself. It is about the experience with the tool described in this example. It reflects the assessment of the NGO staff or advisers applying it.))

The four purposes of impact assessment on a range: 1 (very little use) to 5 (very useful):

Purpose	Level	Rating	Reason for rating
Learning from experience	CBO, NGO	5	The data is immediately used in making corrections and CBOs continuously make changes to its processes
Steering by NGO	NGO	4	The NGO used the process to quickly role out the project and make decisions on such things as staffing, with such active CPMC only one staff could serve the entire two divisions. Also such decisions as when to phase out and focus on other aspects was easier, C-MAD still works in the area but on market access for milk.
Empowerment of beneficiaries	CBO	5	The process enabled the beneficiaries through their elected CPMC to feel they had ownership. They felt more in control of the direction the project took, hence of their destiny.
Upward accountability	NGO	3	The integration with reporting was weak and aggregation was not really carried out at organizational level of the many aspects monitored. It was more a tool for point of implementation management. The potential to achieve more was realised later.

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Other persons acknowledged in this example are the entire management of C-MAD and the divisional livestock officers for Awendo and Uriri divisions, Ministry of Livestock, Kenya. The authors would like to thank C-MAD for permission to publish this experience.

References:

The four purposes of impact assessment are drawn from VENRO, the German NGO Umbrella, position paper “Quality before Proof”, <http://www.venro.org/628.html>

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