

Summaries of SNV impact evaluations

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Summaries of SNV impact evaluations¹

1. Impact evaluation of the School Garden project, Uganda, 2015²

Summary

The project was funded by UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Netherlands Embassy in Kampala. It was implemented from 2011 to 2014 by SNV in cooperation with LCBs contracted by SNV. SNV had an advisory, coordinating and oversight role and aimed to contribute by coaching schools and by supporting local governments. The project aimed to support 750 primary schools in the creation of school gardens and to use them as community Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) promotion centers. The school gardens were used to teach parents about GAP and also to motivate them to play a role in education service provision and monitoring. The project helped to establish more than 700 school gardens, taught parents about GAP and improved children's access to midday school meals. Many parents increased their production, food security and income and improved their awareness of a balanced diet. The results at household level were sustainable, but at school gardens level this was problematic. The project benefitted 10-15% of the households with children at the schools. The school garden has been an entry point for a broader involvement of parents, which has strengthened accountability relationships between parents and the school. This has led to reduced teacher and pupil absenteeism and increased participation of pupils. Local government staff co-owned the project. Local government staff did not replicate the approach at the wider community level. Only few demonstrations for community members took place. Schools did not become platforms for interaction and cooperation between key stakeholders. CD of local governments in this regard did not take place. The support provided by SNV to LCBs was insufficient to address the gaps in their capacities. The project proved to be complex and ambitious, which negatively affected its effectiveness.

SNV management response

SNV agreed with the report and recognized that the approach was too ambitious. It learned to be more restrained in future and that other approaches than school gardens would be more suitable to involve the wider community. SNV accepted the recommendation to ensure that LCBs have sufficient capacity to implement the project effectively and indicated that it had taken action to address the shortcomings as signaled in the evaluation.³

Synthesis

The focus of the evaluation was on impact achieved by SNV clients that received CD support directly from SNV or indirectly through LCBs that had received CD support from SNV in their turn. Outputs in the field of improved capacities of implementing institutions were reported too. The school garden project contributed to increased capacity of LCBs, which is important in relation to SNVs' localization strategy. In some cases the CD goals were not achieved as the project relied too much on some LCBs that did not have enough capacity to implement the project well and to build the capacity of local governments. Although the question how much improved capacities contributed to the realized impact cannot easily be answered, the evaluation showed that SNV, next to other factors, anyhow contributed to the results by playing a supporting role.

¹ Summaries of reports and management responses as well as syntheses are prepared by IOB.

² ECORYS, 2015.

³ SNV, 2015a.

2. Impact evaluation of the Rural Agriculture Revitalization Program, Zimbabwe, 2016⁴

Summary

The Rural Agriculture Revitalization Program (RARP) program was implemented by SNV in the period 2009-2014 and funded by the FAO, DANIDA, DiFD, the Netherlands Embassy in Harare, etc. SNV was involved in CD of local institutions and LCBs. The goal was to strengthen value chains through involvement of rural agro-dealers in the supply chain. Program components to support the market systems were: input and output marketing, agri-business support and contract-farming. The program had little impact on the productivity, production and crop income of small farmers, yet access to inputs improved. The lack of impact was caused by market inefficiencies, poor weather conditions and a changing policy environment. RARP supported CD of agro-dealers and indirectly strengthened smallholder farmers' capacity. The program also stimulated the delivery of inputs to rural areas through the agro-dealers distribution channel. Farmers were brought into contact with contracting companies. A lack of focus resulted in some components being less successful and not addressing the needs of the beneficiaries. The evaluators concluded that RARP had strengthened the capacity of some local institutions, but that their sustainability had not fully been achieved yet.

SNV management response

SNV responded that the evaluation confirmed the agro-dealer model and that SNV would continue to improve this model. SNV regretted that the evaluators did not capture the complexity of the program and argued that it concerned an adaptive and organic intervention as the situation in Zimbabwe did not allow for design predictability as suggested by the evaluators. SNV agreed with the conclusions concerning the limited impact on productivity and income and acknowledged that conclusion about the sustainability of local institutions.⁵

Synthesis

SNV Zimbabwe implemented RARP. CD of local institutions and LCBs by SNV was one of the inputs next to other inputs. SNV also hired LCBs to deliver trainings to stakeholders such as agro-dealers. The evaluation concluded that RARP and LCBs had contributed to CD of agro-dealers and small farmers, but to what extent this had contributed to the impact of the program was not discussed. The impact on agricultural production was not significant. Several explanations for this were given, but a reflection on the quality of CD support by RARP and LCBs as possible explaining factor was not presented. Therefore, it remains largely unclear to what extent the contributions of SNVs' RARP program have been effective.

⁴ Share Value Africa, 2016.

⁵ SNV, 2016a

3. Impact evaluation of the Food Security program, Burkina Faso, 2014⁶

Summary

The Family Farm Management System (FFMS) aims to contribute to food security through better farm management. Five Provincial Unions of Cotton Producers (UPPCs) managed the project. SNVs' roles were: CD of UPPCs and LCBs, monitoring project implementation and monitoring and supervision of LCBs. In the FFMS approach farmers record data on agricultural and livestock practices which allows them to make informed decisions on resource allocation and thus to improve their farm management, thereby ensuring food self-sufficiency and increased income. Outcomes of the program were that informed farm management planning, income from crop sales and awareness of food needs improved. As there were no significant differences in improvement of the food security status between farmers participating in the program and the control group, no statistical evidence of direct impact of the program on the food security status was found. More knowledge resulted in changes in several agricultural practices, and more production of selected crops. More knowledge did not automatically lead to changes in food security. Other factors are at play within or outside of the sphere of control of farmers. There are indications that the CD support provided by SNV in the past had been more effective than the support provided by LCBs that were contracted after 2008.

SNV management response

SNV confirmed the positive conclusions and agreed that informed decision making was the most important result of FFMS. The conclusion that other factors influence the household food security situation as well was also endorsed. Therefore, in future programs SNV would integrate FFMS in a broader package of services aimed at changing smallholder farmers' practices.⁷

Synthesis

Informed decision making was the most important result of the program. Direct impact on food security was difficult to trace, but other positive impacts were detected indeed. SNV provided CD support to UPPCs and LCBs and funded the project until 2012. Beneficiaries confirmed that there had been a link between CD support and improved farming practices and it is likely that CD support from SNV had been more effective than support from LCBs, who took over this role from SNV in 2008.

⁶ Royal Tropical Institute, 2014.

⁷ SNV, 2014a.

4. Impact evaluation of the WaSH project, Ethiopia, 2015⁸

Summary

The WaSH project was implemented by SNV and UNICEF in the period of 2007 to 2012 and aimed at increasing access to water supply and improved sanitation services and practices in communities and at schools. Donors were UNICEF, SNV, the World Bank and others. SNV collaborated with local government offices and provided CD support to them. SNV was also involved in awareness raising and change of practices at household level. UNICEF focused on the 'hardware'. The evaluation aimed to assess the impact of the program on the water and sanitation situation and on capacities of government functionaries. The main results of the project were: access to improved sanitation within households increased, the incidence of diarrhea declined, access to water at schools and the functionality of water schemes improved. Access to water is still limited at schools and not all water schemes are functional. The beneficiaries i.c. Woreda⁹ staff assessed the services provided by SNV as good. There were positive changes in staff capacities in the targeted Woreda's compared to control Woreda's. Most CD results are likely to sustain. SNV contributed to the results through CD, training on operations and maintenance and supporting local WASH committees. The 'hardware' (UNICEF's focus) component was the main constraint.

SNV management response

SNV responded to the recommendations of the evaluators concerning M&E, private sector involvement, watershed management and engagement in L&A to narrow the gap between demand and supply of safe water. Some of the recommendations had already been implemented and increased attention for watershed management was included in the SNV strategy for 2016-2018.¹⁰

Synthesis

Overall, the impact of the project was mixed, but the contributions of SNV in terms of CD of local government staff and on awareness raising at household level and at schools have been effective. It is likely that improved capacity, awareness and behavior contributed to the positive results achieved. The hardware component, UNICEF's responsibility, constituted the main constraint for more impact.

⁸ Aidenvironment, 2015.

⁹ A Woreda is a unit of local government in Ethiopia.

¹⁰ SNV, 2015d.

5. Impact evaluation of the Sustainable Sanitation and Hygiene for All program, Cambodia, 2016¹¹

Summary

The Sustainable Sanitation and Hygiene for All (SSH4A) program was implemented by SNV with the Provincial Department of Rural Development (PDRD) in Kampot Province. Its aim is to enhance access to improved sanitation and hygiene practices of communities. Through CD local governments are supported by SNV to manage the provision of sanitation services better. Results of the program are that the incidence of diarrhea and the open defecation rate reduced significantly. The program has also achieved behavioral change among community members, generated empowerment and strengthened local capacity. The capacity of local government agencies to steer and monitor the program increased. This outcome was the result of the commitment of government officials and SNV and of effective CD activities implemented by SNV. These activities were institutionalized making the program in the project area sustainable. Yet, there were structural weaknesses in the capacities of the PDRD which would prevent replication of the program in other parts of the Province without significant external support. Furthermore, there was no structured learning process at the local government level and limited knowledge transfer took place between SNV and PDRD. The evaluators doubted whether experience and knowledge would be retained if key PDRD officials involved in the program would leave. This would create risks for its sustainability.

SNV management response

SNV responded that the conclusions confirmed that the approach to sanitation and hygiene had been highly effective. The development of models that can be sustained without SNV support to help the identification and reach of hard-to-reach groups were announced. Recommendations concerning provision of resources outside the existing system and subsidizing latrines at schools were not supported as this would promote dependency, be unsustainable and be against the program logic.¹²

Synthesis

The program has been successful. The achievements were the result of the support provided by SNV and of strong commitment of the PRDP and SNV. Some weaknesses in the capacities of the PDRP were identified and concerns about replicability and sustainability of the initiative were expressed. SNV seriously considered the recommendations and explained why it did not agree to some of them.

¹¹ NSMC, 2016.

¹² SNV, 2016b.

6. Impact evaluation of the Improved Cook Stove program, Lao PDP, 2015¹³

Summary

The program (2011-2016) aimed to strengthen value chains to facilitate development of a market for Improved Cook Stoves (ICS) as traditional cook stoves with low efficiencies are widespread and charcoal production contributes to depletion of forestry resources. The Association for Rural Mobilization and Improvement (ARMI) is the main implementing partner and SNV the technical advisor. SNV activities include producer training, establishment of testing facilities, promotion campaigns and CD of local partners such as ARMI. Funding comes from various sources including core funding from the ministry. The program is led by Oxfam Novib. The program was expected to meet the production target of 100.000 ICS by 2016. The ICS were of high quality and efficient and they contributed to charcoal savings. Training and subsidization of tools and equipment for producers was successful. Consumers were convinced of their value as they lead to financial and time saving and prices are no barrier. SNVs' CD support to local partners was highly effective, with ARMI demonstrating leadership in managing the program. Sustainability was stimulated by a market-based approach, engagement with government bodies and a focus on CD of ARMI. Lack of awareness and accessibility of potential consumers were barriers to wider purchase and scaling up the production was problematic due to lack of access to finance and transport and low profit margins. The viability of the business model independent of external support was uncertain.

SNV management response

SNV endorsed most of the conclusions and recommendations. SNV agreed that access to finance for producers is important and therefore introduced a USD 10.000 revolving fund for working capital for ICS producers managed by ARMI. SNV shared the opinion of the evaluators that, to the increase awareness regarding ICS, retailers should be equipped with better tools to explain the benefits of ICS and actions would be taken to do so.¹⁴

Synthesis

SNVs' CD support and other activities had positive impact and have been effective and they contributed to the strength of ARMI. The production of the targeted 100.000 ICS by 2016 was on track. ICS offer increased efficiency and lead to charcoal and time saving for users. It is likely that SNV through strengthened leadership and management capacities of ARMI contributed to these results. Other outputs of SNVs activities such as trained producers, established testing facilities and promotion campaigns may also have contributed to the achievements.

¹³ IOD PARC, 2015.

¹⁴ SNV, 2015c.

7. Impact evaluation of the Africa Biogas Partnership Program, Burkina Faso and Tanzania, 2016¹⁵

Summary

The Africa Biogas Partnership Program (ABPP) is implemented in six African countries and aims at developing a domestic biogas sector. It is implemented by SNV and Hivos and financed by the ministry. From 2009 to 2013 SNV focused on the creation and CD of national program teams to disseminate the technology. In the period 2014 - 2018 the focus is on private sector development. In the period 2009-2014, the programs installed all biogas functions. In Tanzania 78% of the targets were achieved; in Burkina Faso 44%. The conditions in Burkina Faso were difficult. Many adopters were satisfied and the purchase of firewood reduced and comfort and time saving increased. The first group of biogas users belonged to the richer segments of the target groups. Expansion to a larger group of users was stimulated by the introduction of a cheaper design, better promotion and easier access to credit. Masons were stimulated to form private biogas construction enterprises but they had almost no experience in enterprise development and their capacities needed to be strengthened. The program, especially in Tanzania, appeared to favor the market participation of larger biogas construction companies and there was a risk that they would limit their operations to high potential areas. This strategy might hamper longer term widespread installation and maintenance of bio digesters. SNVs' advisory role evolved from an executing expert, a trainer and technical expert towards the role of a facilitator, coach and critical observer. Support from SNV was crucial and was appreciated by the teams. The program collaborated with LCBs too and SNV identified and trained them and assessed their performance. Their quality and relevance was positively assessed by the stakeholders and by the evaluators. The evaluation concluded that governments were too slowly responding to the emerging biogas market and recommended that the program should invest in advocacy towards governments.

SNV management response

SNV agreed to most of the evaluations' findings and recommendations. It supported the idea to invest in advocacy towards governments and decided to support the claim making power of biogas organizations. The need for a strategy for institutionalization of biogas functions was acknowledged too. SNV disagreed with the conclusion that smaller biogas construction enterprises were excluded from the market in Tanzania. SNV would use the learning from the evaluation for future programs.¹⁶

Synthesis

The program was successful. In 2014 the achievement of the targets for 2018 was on track, particularly in Tanzania. Adapted credit products, cheaper designs and better promotion were introduced to make biogas accessible for larger groups of users. Some set-backs were the slow response of governments to the emerging biogas market, decline in production in 2014 and low capacity of masons. Evaluators and SNV differed on the question whether larger biogas companies benefitted more than smaller ones. SNVs' role evolved from executing expert towards facilitator/coach. SNV maintained also some practical implementing tasks and was involved in knowledge development and in brokering relations. SNV support was highly valued.

¹⁵ ACE Europe, 2016.

¹⁶ SNV, 2016c.

8. Evaluation of SNV interventions in fragile settings, 2014¹⁷

Summary

This evaluation was carried out in Kenya, Mali and Zimbabwe to gather lessons from SNV practice in fragile settings. The focus was on programs in the agricultural sector.

SNV achieved or even exceeded its targets. It operated successfully despite fragility factors and a politicized environment. Although there was no sound evidence that the program could claim all peace- and state building goals, SNV reached impressive results in terms of conflict mitigation and peacebuilding. Long term engagement, good relationships with local partners, a market-based approach and the ability to work simultaneously at various levels were success factors that distinguishes SNV from humanitarian or peacebuilding actors. The evaluation concluded that there was only limited reflection on the conflict dimension, which implied that a conflict-sensitive approach was not *systematically* applied. This may eventually harm the project effectiveness and the peacebuilding process. SNVs' interventions were affected by fragility and conflict and in some cases SNV caused adverse effects on the environment as a result of a lack of understanding conflict and fragility dynamics and a technical focus.

SNV management response

SNV appreciated the findings of the evaluation and follow-up actions were announced to strengthen the performance in fragile settings. SNV would pay more systematic attention to conflict and fragility factors, field-based staff would learn from good practices and cooperation with peace building organizations would be explored.¹⁸

Synthesis

Activities in the agricultural sector contributed to improved incomes and job creation for the poor and conflict management training and mediation between conflicting groups contributed to conflict mitigation and peacebuilding. These two were interrelated: less poverty helped reducing conflict and less conflict helped poverty reduction. The implementation of the four success factors mentioned was challenging. The lack of understanding of SNV of conflict and fragility dynamics was the key limiting factor. Therefore, SNVs' success factors need to be adapted to the peculiarities of fragile settings. The evaluation recommended to develop the conflict and fragility capacity of SNV advisers and LCBs.

¹⁷ Clingendael, 2014.

¹⁸ SNV, 2014b.

9. Evaluation of SNVs' engagement with local CD support providers, 2014¹⁹

Summary

This evaluation focused on Bolivia, Nepal and Tanzania. Working with LCBs was part of SNVs' localization policy since 2007. SNV country offices engage LCBs to implement programs that are beyond their reach, because it is sometimes a donor conditionality or because LCBs have access to specific knowledge and expertise. SNV provided CD support to LCBs and to improvement of the enabling environment for LCB's. In the policy, the focus on practice change and localization go hand in hand. However, according to the evaluation, in practice the engagement with LCBs is a means in function of program implementation and a strategy of SNV country offices to meet future challenges. The main vehicle is sub-contracting and this is insufficient as a mechanism for strengthening capacities of local CD support providers. Despite this, CD of LCBs does take place e.g. concerning innovative methodologies, multidisciplinary teamwork and networking. Quality and efficiency of LCBs' services and access to market information improved. The benefits for SNV from working with LCBs are substantial: increased outreach, improved effectiveness in complex situations and contribution to resource mobilization. There were no visible changes in the CD support market that were the result of could be ascribed to SNV.

SNV management response

SNV stated that both SNV and LCBs benefit substantially from their cooperation. In response to the observation that 'working with LCBs as clients in terms of strengthening their capacities is not an explicit priority of SNV', SNV announced that it would formulate and implement initiatives such as systematically addressing CD of LCBs.²⁰ SNV confirmed the conclusion that its opportunities to influence the market in terms of availability of CD services are limited.²¹

Synthesis

SNV cooperated structurally with LCBs in the context of the localization policy. The cooperation had many advantages for both SNV and the LCBs. SNV strengthened the capacity of LCBs and their quality improved. Next to localization, SNV also aims to increase its impact and LCBs fit in that endeavor as sub-contractors. As a result, strengthening the capacities of LCBs received lower priority. SNV responded to this conclusion by introducing initiatives to better address CD of LCBs.

¹⁹ Velden, F. van der, 2014.

²⁰ In 2014-2015 SNV implemented a leadership program for LCBs. Information: Allert van den Ham and Margriet Poel (both SNV), November 2016.

²¹ SNV, 2014c.

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