



FINAL EVALUATION

PIN's Support to Strengthening Agricultural Extension Services in SNNPR, Ethiopia

From April 2011 to December 2013, the Czech INGO People in Need (PIN) implemented the project *Support of Farmers and Agricultural Education in Damboya and Halaba Special Woredas, SNNPR, Ethiopia*.

This brief summarizes the core findings of a commissioned evaluation and assesses to what extent PIN – one year after receiving the final report – has used the evaluation's lessons and recommendations for maximizing the positive impacts of its work.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation took place in October 2013 with the aims of assessing to what extent the project has achieved its intended outcomes, to identify its main strengths and weaknesses, and draw key lessons and formulate practical recommendations for maximizing the impact of PIN's further interventions. In the course of 20 working days, the evaluation team engaged in the process 194 randomly selected farmers (43% female, 57% male), 19 DAs from target and other FTCs, 8 Kebele representatives, 3 Health Extension Workers, and 2 WAO officials. Its results were discussed with the project implementation team who subsequently prepared an Action Plan addressing the evaluation's main recommendations. A detailed description of the applied methodology, including data collection templates are available upon request.

BACKGROUND

With financial support from the Czech Development Agency and in close partnership with the Woreda Agricultural Offices (WAO), PIN's project aimed to increase the effectiveness of agricultural extension services and in doing so strengthen the food security of 34,000 people. Its main focus was to address the most influential gaps in the official agricultural extension system. PIN supported eight Farmer Training Centres (FTCs) in securing essential equipment and training facilities, gaining year-long access to water for irrigation, and increasing the diversity of promoted crops. Their Agricultural Extension Workers, commonly known as Development Agents (DAs), were assisted in strengthening their technical know-how and ensuring long-term financial sustainability of FTCs' services. The project envisaged that building the capacity of FTCs and DAs – with the involvement of selected 'model farmers' – would be translated into improved practices of ordinary farmers resulting in higher productivity and diversity of their farming.

LOOKING BACK

HOW WELL DID PIN'S INTERVENTION PERFORM?

DID PIN'S SUPPORT MATCH THE NEEDS?

- ✓ PIN's project correctly targeted chronically food-insecure areas with underdeveloped agricultural extension services which lack adequate facilities and provide limited benefits to local farmers.
- ✓ Its approach of **supporting FTCs as the official service providers was highly relevant** and worth multiplying, especially from the sustainability and cost-effectiveness point of view.
- ✓ The project was highly relevant in terms of supporting the government's policies, adding value, and filling those gaps in their implementation which reduce their benefits to local farmers.

- ✗ PIN primarily focused on building the capacity of FTC/ DAs and the so-called model (usually better-off) farmers, each of whom is responsible for supporting 5 ordinary, usually poorer farmers. Relying on this official system has not proven to be relevant: **in the past 2 years, only 43% of farmers were assisted by model farmers**, and only 12% prefer to be trained by them as compared to DAs. As a result, the agricultural extension system tends to be more beneficial to food-secure and knowledgeable farmers. The system's shortcomings were also acknowledged by WAO representatives.

THE VALUE FOR MONEY PIN DELIVERED



LOWEST VALUE FOR MONEY: NOT WORTH REPLICATING

- ✗ **Hybrid chicken** provided to FTCs for demonstration purposes require costly initial and follow-up investments and are prone to often fatal diseases.
- ✗ **Low cost water ponds** for irrigation were not suitable as they were built of less durable materials, lacking cover far reducing evaporation, and with no protection against becoming a breeding site for malaria-transmitting mosquitoes.
- ✗ **Facilities for DAs' accommodation** were not always required, as DAs usually rent a room in a local family's house.
- ✗ **Computers and DVD-players with TV** provided limited benefits for training purposes. An LCD projector lent by WAO would work better than small TV screens.

PROJECT'S COSTS PER DIRECT BENEFICIARY

160 USD

HIGHEST VALUE FOR MONEY: WORTH SCALING UP

- ✓ **Adequate training facilities**, especially small plots with a high variety of promoted crops, enabled DAs to change FTCs from being nearly vacant buildings to service delivery centres which then provide farmers with the know-how and assets they need.
- ✓ **Technical trainings for DAs** were essential, albeit they were only provided on a limited scale. Farmers' most common suggestion for making FTCs' services even more useful was to keep increasing DAs' know-how and to share it with farmers.
- ✓ **Systematic mentoring of DAs by WAO and PIN staff** on farmer training and FTC management was crucial for lifting FTCs to their existing level and could not be achieved if only a few one-off trainings and material assistance were delivered.
- ✓ **Sustainability of FTCs' services** was increased through raising their income (by growing more profitable crops), DAs' motivation and support provided by WAO.
- ✓ **Rental farm tools** enabled farmers to practice the techniques learnt in FTCs and in their own fields.

WHAT IMPACTS PIN DID (NOT) ACHIEVE?

- ✓ The project assisted FTCs in raising the size of demonstration plots by 240% (from an average 0.76 ha to 1.82 ha per FTC), enabling FTCs to more than **double the number of in FTCs grown and promoted crops**.
- ✓ It significantly increased the number of farmers using DAs' services: in the past 2 years, **85% of interviewed farmers received a technical training from DAs**.
- ✓ 86% farmers claimed to receive "large benefits" from DAs' services, appreciating the work they're doing.
- ✓ **94% of farmers reported growing a greater variety of crops** as a result of improved service delivery of local FTCs.
- ✓ Nearly all farmers reported **using a new farming technique** as a result of FTCs' services. The most commonly mentioned were ploughing in line and sowing specific crop varieties.
- ✓ According to official data, in the past 3 years, **the number of PSNP beneficiaries decreased by 28%** though there is no clear evidence which would let us determine the extent to which it can be attributed to PIN's project.
- ✗ While there is solid evidence of farmers diversifying their production, **the lack of baseline data made determining the project's impact on farmers' food security impossible**.



DID THE KEY STAKEHOLDERS HAVE THEIR SAY?

- ✓ Relevant DAs, WAO, and Kebele officials holding their positions in 2011 largely claimed to be involved in the identification of the main needs, formulation of relevant activities and implementation of the project.
- ✗ Installed "complaint boxes" implemented as PIN's Complaint and Response Mechanism were not used by local farmers. Due to the project's focus on FTCs, feedback was primarily sought from DAs and WAO staff, less than from local farmers.
- ✓ Out of 320 trained model farmers, 38% were women.

MOVING FORWARD

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS vs. PIN'S RESPONSE 1 YEAR LATER



PROVIDED RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 VALUE FOR MONEY:** Deliver even higher value for money through **narrowing down the focus of your assistance**; scaling up the most impactful types of support and eliminating activities with unclear benefits or high risks.
- 2 SUSTAINABILITY:** Focus on further **increasing FTCs' financial sustainability** through building DAs' financial management and planning skills; helping them to grow profitable crops and enabling them to grow year-round.
- 3 DAs' CAPACITY:** Work with WAO on addressing the key gaps in DAs' know-how by providing more high-quality trainings; on-the-job coaching and providing books in Amharic language, not English.
- 4 KNOW-HOW TRANSFER:** Work with DAs on providing **more training to (ordinary) farmers; supervise and help building their training quality** through using standardized checklists; develop simple visual aids with DAs (and encourage their use); and promote greater participation of women.
- 5 GREATER INCLUSIVENESS:** Do not rely on the model farmers-based "1:5 system" - the assumption that ordinary farmers will gain sufficient know-how from better-off 'model' farmers largely does not work. **Ensure that FTCs' services benefit all, not only model farmers.**
- 6 QUALITY OF INDICATORS:** Make indicators more **results-oriented**, focusing more on the practices of ordinary farmers and ensuring that all baseline data are collected.
- 7 IMPACT ON NUTRITION:** Ensure that PIN's agricultural projects improve nutrition by training staff on nutrition-sensitive food security programming, **incorporating nutrition-sensitive activities** (primarily WASH and IYCF) and using relevant indicators.

PIN'S MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

- ✚ PIN's follow-up project focused primarily on the quality, accessibility and sustainability of DAs' services and excluded the types of support which did not yield sufficient benefits in the past
- ✚ it is planned that all targeted FTCs will be supported with improved access to water, enabling year-round production
- ✚ FTCs are supported to create business plans and establish bank accounts
- ✚ learning materials were provided in Amharic
- ✚ four types of technical training were provided, including field-based practice
- ✚ PIN's Advisor for Education initiated a system for improving DAs' training skills – follow-up is pending
- ✚ development of visual training aids was initiated
- ✚ work with DAs on increasing the number of trainings for farmers has been limited
- ✚ PIN's follow-up project targets 200 vulnerable women, links them with DAs' services, and supports them in diversifying their agricultural production
- ✚ formative research on the 1:5 approach is planned in partnership with the Awassa University, and a tool for monitoring the transfer of knowledge and skills to ordinary farmers is under development
- ✚ all indicators of a follow-up project are results-oriented; 2 specifically focus on farmers' practices; all baseline data were collected
- ✚ follow-up project includes a specific focus on diet diversification and 2 nutrition-sensitive indicators
- ✚ IYCF and WASH activities integrated into PIN's new agricultural project in Gedeo and Sidama Zones
- ✚ 15 PIN staff were trained on nutrition-sensitive programming

Linking Agriculture and Nutrition



In 2014, PIN Ethiopia launched its Integrated Programming for Improved Nutrition (IPIN) approach focusing on maximizing the nutritional benefits of its work. Recognizing that the **multiple causes of undernutrition can be addressed only by well-designed multi-sectoral interventions**, PIN's agricultural programming includes proven WASH and infant and young child feeding (IYCF) activities. Its main focus is on diversifying families' diets, reducing the prevalence of diarrheal diseases, and improving specific IYCF practices.

Learn more at www.peopleinneed.cz/ipin

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

HOW WELL DID PIN PERFORM?

PIN's project was successful in raising the quality and scale of agricultural extension services in the given areas. This has demonstrably assisted farmers in diversifying their production and adopting more effective farming practices. Although farmers reported an increase in their production as a result of the improved services FTCs provide, due to lacking baseline data it was not possible to objectively verify the extent to which PIN has contributed to strengthening their food security.

The costs at which this was achieved were reasonable, although several options for increasing the value for money invested were identified. The sustainability of the project's outcomes is likely to be largely positive, depending primarily on the FTCs' financial performance, support received from WAO and commitment of the DAs.

LESSONS (NOT) LEARNT?

PIN's best decision was to conduct the project evaluation before it designed its follow-up project with a very similar focus: strengthening agricultural extension services for improving farmers' food security. The vast majority of the evaluation's recommendations were incorporated into its design and also in PIN's new nutrition security project. In practice, one year after receiving the final evaluation report, PIN actively used approx. 75% of the key recommendations, a sign of a good ability to use the lessons the organization learnt. At the same time, two weaknesses remain to be addressed: increasing DAs' knowledge and skills transfer competencies, and ensuring that more ordinary farmers, especially the poorer ones, have adequate access to FTCs' services. These two points should rank high among PIN's priorities for the remaining duration of its follow-up project.

PEOPLE IN NEED ETHIOPIA

PIN Ethiopia is represented by a team of 101 staff working on **addressing the root causes of poverty and inequality**. Since 2003, PIN in cooperation with relevant authorities assisted over 1.5 million people living primarily in the rural areas of SNNP Region. The total financial value of its assistance has been over 20 million USD so far, funded primarily by the Czech Development Agency (CZDA), the European Commission (EC) and private donors.

This project was funded by the Czech Development Agency and PIN's private donors



Resilience and Nutrition Security



Social Inclusion and Protection



OUR CORE FOCUS



Sustainable Production and Consumption



Education and Skills Development

About PIN's Learning Series

PIN Learning Series share the results of PIN's work, its expertise, research findings and practical recommendations in an easy-to-read format. In doing so, PIN strives **to maximize the overall impact and accountability** of its relief and development work.

About People in Need

PIN is a Czech relief and development INGO operating in 18 countries. With a global annual turnover of 40 million USD and over 1,000 employees, its agricultural, nutrition, WASH and other programs **assist millions of vulnerable people worldwide**. PIN's work is funded by EC, CZDA, UN agencies and private donors. PIN is a member of Alliance2015, a European NGO network.

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