Emergency response for Liberian families hosting Ivorian refugees in Grand Gedeh and River Gee Counties, Liberia

LBR 1033 – ECHO/ LBR/BUD/2011/91002
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European Commission
Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection
I. Summary

1. Brief description of the project and framework conditions

The “Emergency Response for Liberian families hosting Ivorian refugees in Grand Gedeh and River Gee Counties, Liberia” – Project (LBR 1033) was funded by the European Directorate General – Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) with 1.593.808 EURO between July 2011 and March 2013 to contribute to resolve the humanitarian crisis caused by the presence of refugees from the Ivory Coast in Southeast Liberia. It’s specific objective was to improve the access to safe drinking water and basic health facilities and the food situation of Liberian host families and refugees, and herewith to contribute to the improvement of the living situation of both groups in Grand Gedeh and River Gee counties. The project’s strategy included the securing of food production (Result 1), the improvement of access (Result 2), the availability of safe drinking water and sanitation facilities (Result 3) and the rehabilitation of basic health care facilities (Result 4). The target group consisted of 1.800 host families and in addition the refugees in 39 villages in four districts of the two counties close to the border with the Ivory Coast.

Although Liberia follows a peaceful development since 2003, the volatile political situation in the Ivory Coast puts a threat on the stability in the East of the country. The project area is a very remote and scarcely populated forest area with difficult road access and a very limited access to services. The violent turmoil in the context of the Presidential elections in the Ivory Coast resulted in the displacement of refugees to Liberia. The United Nations counted 224.067 refugees in May 2011, but which reduced to 67.308 refugees in April 2012 and about 49.000 refugees in February 2013. Many refugees spent several months in host communities to which they have close social tights. Some of them preferred staying in the communities instead of moving to the camps despite the food and social services offered in the camps. The high number of refugees in the communities in 2011 resulted in a food crisis and an overuse of drinking water sources. The project implementation conditions in rural Liberia are extremely difficult with regard to road access, availability of qualified staff, as well as omnipresent corruption.

2. Relevance

The intention to support host communities of refugees is very relevant and complementary to the supporting of refugees in camps. The project was planned on the basis of short needs assessments and an in-depth survey on water and sanitation. It took into account the different needs expressed in four sectors with rather isolated activities in three sectors than a comprehensive strategy, but quite ambitious expectations towards the outcome. Only the water, sanitation and hygiene sector showed a consistent planning. The health sector shows a critical result chain with insufficient plausibility. The budget was well planned, except for transport requirements. The main problem of the planning was the squeezing of the project into an unrealistically short timeframe.
The most important needs referred to the food crisis in 2011, but the project could only produce services from April 2012 onwards. Many of its services refer to a compensation of damage or rehabilitation instead resolving emergency needs. Some activities are strongly development oriented, but cannot succeed in the narrow time frame and the emergency implementation conditions with less participation, ownership and sustainability considerations. Host communities and refugees were assumed having the same problems and requiring the same solutions.

The project is in line with Welthungerhilfe’s vision and strategy, the (more development oriented) country strategy, and the Humanitarian Implementation Plan Liberia of April 2011. It contributes to the forth pillar of the Liberian Poverty Reduction Strategy (infrastructure and basic services). The national technical guidelines were well respected, except for a newly developed “Community Led Total Sanitation” approach that could not be followed, but the authorities accepted the present approach that was planned before.

Welthungerhilfe has currently two other projects in the two counties, the “Reintegration and Recovery Program” since 2005, which worked in the present project area until 2010 on road rehabilitation, agriculture and drinking water and education services, and the “Support for Refugees and Host Communities Project” since 2012. The latter project was planned in complementarity with the present project, but with a delayed implementation, thus not improving it’s effectiveness and efficiency, but rather it’s sustainability in the overlapping area in River Gee County. The setting of the three projects corresponds to the “Relief – Rehabilitation – Development” concept. The competing way of intervention (participation, ownership and sustainability) resulted in a geographic separation of the project areas to avoid problems in the communication with target groups.

3. Effectiveness

The project succeeded distributing upland and swamp rice seeds to 1,000 farmers and to train most of them on agricultural techniques. The delivery of seeds was just in time in Grand Gedeh, but too late in some areas of River Gee, and the tools did not serve any more for the field preparation in 2012. The seeds were of good and the tools of variable quality. The trainings were conducted at the end of the project, but with partly ambitious topics such as vegetable production. A field monitoring was not possible any more.

The road works succeeded well on the strategic 54 km Ziah Town – Tempo Border axes connecting Ivory Coast and Liberia, as well as for the repair of a ferryboat. The construction works provided salaries to a number of workers in the villages on this axes. In addition, the infrastructures on the road, the wells, latrines and washing spaces also engaged a number of people for their construction through local contractors. In total, 34 wells, 422 latrines and 30 washing spaces were constructed, corresponding to 60 – 85 % of the planned outputs completed until the end of the present evaluation mission. The quality of construction is generally good. The construction activities connected to the health sector started late with incinerators in six clinics. Mosquito nets
were distributed to the supported clinics. Water supply systems were not developed. The project also trained community health promoters and health committees on hygiene and sanitation issues.

The project cooperated with the county coordinators of the Ministries of Public Works, Agriculture and Health in the planning of activities, the bidding procedures and – at least by good will but without fuel – in the monitoring of activities. District authorities, which are closer to the working sites, were not intensively included in the monitoring.

The implementation of the project met a huge number of challenges, many of them connected to the remoteness of the area, bad road conditions and a very limited implementation period including only one dry season (and another dry period for completion during the winding-up phase in 2013). The rainy season in 2012 caused unusually difficult road conditions on the main supply road. For security reasons, the Liberian Army did not allow the cutting of the road for the construction of three planned bridges. There were also a number of internal reasons for the delays with late recruitment of staff – wasting parts of the construction season in 2012 –, latrine models requiring heavy loads of cement from outside, as well as problems in warehouse and logistics management. The management and monitoring of warehouses did not correspond to the standards.

4. Efficiency

The efficiency of the project was limited by its nature due to the high transaction costs to reach beneficiaries in the scattered and remote project area. Various obstacles impeded a smooth implementation and challenged the project’s efficiency. The costs – benefit ratio therefore was medium, and even critical when considering the reduced number of outputs compared to the plans, and the limited outcomes, impacts and sustainability.

The monitoring system was largely oriented towards the implementation of activities and outputs. Deeper investigations on the outcomes could not be carried out since the time at the end of the project was short.

5. Outcomes and impacts

The objective to improve access to safe drinking water, basic health facilities and the food situation of host families and refugees has partly been achieved. This achievement is partly attributable to the project interventions, and partly to other organisations, especially for the latrines. Economic outcomes were good on the Tempo Border axes with salaries on road rehabilitation and good seeds delivered in time. They were not really obvious in the area where the seed was delivered late. The economic outcome of the road might realise as soon as the border with the Ivory Coast will be reopened and petty trade will resume as in the past. The outcome of the water and sanitation works are good, since many people who used water from the creeks before have now access to safe drinking water. The coverage with toilets in the village centres has strongly increased. People use the facilities to an increasing extent. The awareness on hygiene issues has also improved and brings
about some changes of practices. The refugee crisis has initiated the presence of international organisations with many development services and salaries, and therefore had an overall positive development impact in the region.

6. **Sustainability**

The overall sustainability of the project is limited, since its short duration did not allow focussing on participation, ownership and sustainability aspects. The Afridev pump well model is solid and spare parts are available, while the organisation of water committees has not reached far. The road will require external funds for maintenance in the future.

7. **Most important recommendations**

The project should complete as much of the planned interventions as possible. It should work out plans on the allocation of remaining materials. Inventories of the activities should be handed over to the local authorities and Welthungerhilfe, allowing good management of the infrastructure by the target groups, but as well allowing future projects to build on the achievements and initiatives and to work on sustainability issues. The achievements in the WASH sector produced interesting results so far, that should be further consolidated.

8. **General conclusions and “lessons learnt”**

Welthungerhilfe should take lessons on the management of such type of emergency projects regarding the planning, implementation and monitoring. It should foster a program approach instead of isolated project implementation. It should also be ensured that all type of technical assistance developed by Welthungerhilfe is available at project level in remote conditions through a pro-active system (e.g. guidelines, quality management systems, staff support in critical periods).