



End of Project Evaluation

Strengthening Resilience of Food and Nutrition Insecure Rural Households, Including IDPs and Returnees, in Panijiar County, South Sudan

Project Code: SSD 1040

January 2019

Produced by:



On behalf of:

Welthungerhilfe South Sudan

1. Executive Summary

The main purpose of this endline evaluation was to assess the extent to which Welthungerhilfe's project titled '*Strengthening Resilience of Food and Nutrition Insecure Rural Households, Including IDPs and Returnees, in Panijiar County*' (Project Code: SSD1040) has achieved its objectives and results, while documenting important lessons and exploring possibilities of improving similar projects. The project, which was funded by the Auswaertiges Amt (AA), or German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO), began in March 2016 and concluded in December 2018. It targeted 24,000 people with the overall objective of improving the food and nutrition security situation of vulnerable groups in conflict-affected areas. The overall project budget was 2.9 million euros.

Three main data sources were utilized in drawing the conclusions for this report: a desk review, a quantitative survey conducted with 144 households, and qualitative interviews with both key informants and beneficiaries. The results from these three main data sources were used to assess the project by the OECD-DAC indicators of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. An overview of the results, organized by OECD-DAC indicator, is provided below, followed by a list of recommendations.

Relevance

In project target areas, the baseline assessment found that WASH and FSL needs were high at the start of the project. Most community members did not have access to safe water sources, functional latrines, or adequate land or food. The project was also proposed in the context of the Food Security Cluster Response Plan for South Sudan for 2016, which called for activities that are aligned with the Welthungerhilfe project activities.

The evaluation found that poor WASH conditions, insecurity, disrupted markets, high operation costs, and currency fluctuations have contributed to the dire situation in Panijiar County, which includes severe food insecurity and high levels of global acute malnutrition. These conditions were in place before the start of the project and are expected to worsen in Panijiar County as a whole in the first quarter of this year. Beneficiaries stressed in interviews that the need for assistance is still great in target areas and that there is a need to expand activities to areas that were not covered under this project.

The one major area that was not covered under this project but that the evaluation found to be an important area of concern for beneficiaries is the livestock sector. Sale of livestock is the top livelihood activity among community members, according to the quantitative survey results, but was not covered under this current project, suggesting that there is a slight disconnect between activities and needs in the livelihoods sector.

Effectiveness

The following three results were expected under the project: (1) Improved and diversified agricultural production of targeted households, (2) Improved knowledge of healthy nutrition and nutrition security and hygiene, trained groups and individuals apply learned techniques and practices in target communities and schools, and (3) Strengthened resilience of the target group against negative environmental impact and climate change. The results of the evaluation suggest that activities targeting certain sectors have been more effective than others.

The results suggest that the project has had a considerable effect on access to safe water among community members. Since the project began, the proportion of surveyed community members using unsafe water sources has decreased from 27% to 3%, and queuing times at water sources have decreased such that 51% of surveyed respondents are now determined to be within the sphere standard of less than 30 minutes. These changes suggest that borehole coverage has improved and, as a result, use of boreholes has increased. Almost all community members report that there are Water Management Committees (WMCs) at water points, and these WMCs appear to be functioning relatively well. There does appear, however, to still be a need for borehole construction activities to be expanded to other areas and continued in existing areas. There is also a need for additional trainings for WMCs and provision of materials to WMCs to ensure their sustainability. Although the project does not appear to have had an effect on the overall proportion of community members who treat their water, chlorine and aqua tabs are now the most commonly used water treatment method, whereas boiling and waiting for the water to settle were the most common methods before the project was implemented. It should be noted, however, that Welthungerhilfe did not distribute chlorine/aqua tabs as part of its activities.

Sanitation and hygiene activities were also effective in some areas, but not as effective in others. Latrine access does not appear to have improved at all since the baseline (77% to 80%), although this finding is somewhat contradicted by the findings from the qualitative interviews, in which participants confirmed that households received lining and most households have latrines. Latrine usage is high among those who have a latrine (97%), but for those who do not have access, almost all (99%) defecate in the bush. A plurality of respondents (44%) throw their children's faeces in the bushes, though it should be noted that this is almost exclusively true for those who do not have a latrine. In the baseline, only 24% of respondents had received trainings, whereas in the endline, 86% of respondents have received trainings, although nutrition topics are not covered as heavily as WASH topics. There also appears to have been a substantial increase in the proportion of households that have a handwashing station (0% were observed to have handwashing stations in the baseline whereas 52% reported having handwashing stations in the endline) and usage is high at 99%. There is also room for improvements in handwashing, however, as using water only is still the most popular handwashing method.

Since the baseline, there has been a 51% increase in the proportion of households who planted during the last rainy season (62% to 94%) and the majority of respondents (61%) said their harvest improved in the last year. Conflict and flooding appear to be the most significant barriers to planting. The reach of agricultural production and livelihoods activities suggest that improvements may be attributable to project activities—the majority of households received crop kits and agricultural toolkits, lead farmer training, training on post-harvest management, and have received extension services, while the baseline results suggest these services were almost non-existent before the project was implemented. Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents (95%) have applied their training on post-harvest management. The qualitative interviews suggest that the higher yield, lower field time varieties distributed by Welthungerhilfe were partially responsible for improvements to harvest, and that irregularity of rainfall was the biggest issue this season. However, some FGD respondents did complain that the seeds they received did not germinate, suggesting room for improvement in this area. Vegetable production activities and fisheries activities appear to be improving food security, as large proportions of respondents consume all of their yields but many also reported being able to sell their surplus in the market.

Despite the fact that the project results suggest there is room for improvement in sustainability of project initiatives, the project does appear to have had a positive effect on community resilience. The vast majority

of respondents feel that dyke construction activities have improved food security and income in the community. Agroforest activities have reached 61% of surveyed households and the majority of those who received seeds planted them. Although community members most commonly mention the benefits of tree planting for improving access to food, there also appears to be understanding among community members of the benefits related to preservation of the environment and prevention of soil erosion as a result of Welthungerhilfe's trainings. The majority of respondents have also received trainings on FES, all expressed satisfaction with the trainings, the majority reported applying their knowledge, and the majority feel confident transferring it. Although the majority of respondents still collect firewood, they feel they are saving time each day with their fuel efficient stoves.

Efficiency

Elements that reduced efficiency were largely outside project control, including the need to ship all goods through cargo flights, which leads to high transportation costs in Panijjar County. In terms of specific activities, the training of trainers activities appear to have maximized impact, ensuring that training coverage for all topics was high among community members.

The project utilized a simple M&E system, which was effective in providing final indicator values but may have been less effective in providing beneficiaries with mechanisms through which they could provide feedback on the project.

Impact

As can be seen in the logframe in the annex of the report, all but one of the project's indicators were either fully realized or overachieved, but there is mixed evidence on whether or not food security has improved. In the qualitative interviews, respondents shared that access to goods is improving at the market, yields are improving, and crop varieties are improving. However, the quantitative interviews suggest that goods are still limited at the market, and despite improvements in harvests, food security is still a major concern for households. For other activities, the impact is clearer – dyke construction activities have reportedly reduced flooding and seed distributions and trainings on planting trees and vegetables have resulted in the diversification of livelihoods activities. Training coverage is high and knowledge has reportedly increased among community members on WASH, NRM, and DRR.

Sustainability

The main sustainability concern is that there is a heavy and growing reliance on NGOs for aid in target communities – a finding confirmed by all three main data sources. Beneficiaries note that they rely on NGOs for direct food assistance and also on inputs, such as construction materials, to continue implementing project activities. However, other project activities, such as the training of trainers components and self-help approaches incorporated into construction activities, resemble more traditional long-term development approaches and encourage sustainability of results.

Recommendations

In light of the findings outline above, the following recommendations have been made to inform Welthungerhilfe's future strategy:

Relevance

- Consider implementing activities related to livestock, as this is the main source of income among households.

- Conduct barrier analyses for future projects to understand why some community members adopt best practices (e.g. handwashing) and others do not.

Effectiveness

- Continue and expand hand pump construction activities to further reduce congestion and improve access to and use of safe water sources.
- Explore reports of conflict and equip WMCs to address conflict through trainings.
- Continue and expand distribution of water treatment materials, and place a greater emphasis on the importance of treating drinking water in trainings.
- Continue and expand distribution of storage containers, and place a greater emphasis on the importance of covering water storage containers in trainings.
- Provide extra focus on improving access to latrines, including public latrines, to improve usage and discourage open defecation.
- Increase focus of trainings on nutrition topics.
- Provide extra focus on improving access to handwashing stations and soap to improve handwashing practices.
- Explore complaints of poor seed germination among beneficiaries.
- Examine staffing numbers to ensure there is not a shortage of staff to oversee lead farmers, and ensure proper recordkeeping of supervisory activities to ensure staff are available for and consistently overseeing community members involved in activities.

Efficiency

- Establish clear feedback mechanisms to allow beneficiaries to channel their concerns to project staff. Additionally, establish procedures for systematically responding to feedback and incorporating learnings during project implementation.
- Include monitoring of community members' safety in future projects.
- If budget allows in future projects, focus refresher trainings on community members who can train others in the community once the project has closed.

Impact

- Address community concerns around the presence of mosquitos and pests near dykes.
- Consider community members' concerns about long hours in future CFA activities.
- Closely monitor the effect of CFA activities in local markets and develop approaches to mitigate the effect of price fluctuations on non-targeted community members.

Sustainability

- Provide WMC members with gumboots and raincoats and provide extensive training on hand pump repair and maintenance. Ensure each community has access to hand pump repair tools.
- Retain focus on training activities, but increase support for farmer groups and emphasis on the importance of these groups in trainings.
- Incorporate refresher trainings into future budgets to ensure training activities are reinforced and can continue following project close.

- Explore strategies for reducing competition among fishermen in the market to maximize income for fishermen bringing their surplus to market.
- Provide protective materials to community members working on dyke construction.
- Explore solutions for increasing community ownership of dyke construction activities and decreasing dependence on outside assistance.