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Building local institutional capacity to improve food security: using the SATISFY approach

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Building local institutional capacity to improve food security: using the SATISFY approach

Abstract

The paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the transformation of communities through the Systems Approach to Improve and Sustain Food Security (SATISFY) programme, an initiative that seeks to make rural communities in West Africa self-sufficient in food security, income-generation and health. In exploring the SATISFY initiative, the paper seeks to obtain a clear understanding of the milieu in which it can be carried out, the level and intensity of such interventions and also draw on the challenges and lessons learnt by stakeholders in the process of implementing the planned activities. The paper makes a very valuable contribution to the work of development practitioners and researchers alike by outlining key areas that make for interventions and strategies needed to ensure community participation in projects.

Keywords: rural development; SATISFY; Ghana; poverty; NGOs; resource management.

Introduction

Ghana has, in the last few years, made enormous strides in the reduction of undernourishment of her people. From seven million in the early 1990s, Ghana now has less than a million people being undernourished at the moment. The country was recently adjudged by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) as one of 12 countries among 72 that had maintained their hunger rates below five per cent since 1990. In 2013, Ghana was again honoured for the outstanding progress it had made in fighting hunger, particularly in reaching ahead of time the 1996 World Food Summit target of reducing by half the number of hungry people in the country by 2015.

The huge success the country has chalked stems partly from key aspects of the broader national development policy, the ‘Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda’, which sets out among others to achieve inclusive growth through agricultural modernisation and sustainable natural resources management, increased infrastructure development, energy and human settlement development, among others. It is also through the interventions of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working assiduously to alleviate poverty in the country, especially in the rural areas. One of such programmes is the five-year Systems Approach to Improve and Sustain Food Security (SATISFY) Project, an initiative of World Vision Canada which is being implemented in West Africa. The project started in 2012 in three West African countries.

The paper seeks to examine the SATISFY approach. It looks at the various initiatives taken in line with the objectives of the programme. Critical to this would be the need to evaluate the methodology adopted for such interventions. It also looks at the outcome of the said initiative in the past two years of implementation and assesses the impact of the intervention. The paper explores the SATISFY strategy in order to obtain a clear understanding as to how such interventions can be carried out and whether such initiatives can be replicated. It is also intended to draw on the challenges and lessons learnt by stakeholders in the process of implementing the planned activities.

The paper is organised as follows. It starts with a brief on the SATISFY project. The paper then provides an overview of the conditions in Ghana which, in effect, necessitated the intervention under review. The next section draws on the project’s constituents and mode of

training. The paper then establishes its methodological framework. Subsequently, an attempt is made to look at the impact of the intervention and its resultant effect. There is also an account of the achievement of planned outcomes and the lessons that can be learnt from the project. The final stage is the conclusion.

The SATISFY Project

The SATISFY project is an initiative of World Vision Canada which is being implemented in West Africa. Ghana, Mali, Sierra Leone and Senegal are the beneficiaries of this project. The project is aimed at improving the food security status of people living in poor rural communities in the beneficiary countries. It is working to increase the adoption of agricultural practices that promote sustainable livelihoods; improve the utilisation of health food especially by women and children; and, increase the effectiveness and use of agricultural extension services. Specific activities include: training farmers on best animal husbandry practices, seed production, pest management and early disease detection; as well as the training of government rural extension service staff in planning, implementing, and monitoring projects together with the participation of local communities and farmers.

The catalyst for this project is that by the mid-1980s, many governments and donor agencies came to the realisation that though traditional approaches to development in Africa had frequently failed, many community-based initiatives were succeeding. But while many African communities are already involved in effective self-development, the resources, skills, and experiences of the rural majority remain chronically underutilised. Another major constraint too is that the factors and conditions upon which effective community-based development and resource management depend have woefully been pursued. Some northern NGOs saw the need to initiate programmes to increase local capacity in order to promote community-based management practices as a means to redress this. Reforming agricultural practices has been the priority area because most of the rural poor depend directly or indirectly on agriculture. Agricultural growth is deemed beneficial in terms of poverty reduction than growth in any other sector. The focus on agriculture is also in line with the fact that food security has been critical to equitable and sustainable development, more so, at a time when there has been unprecedented turmoil in global commodity markets.

Alongside the afore-mentioned, the SATISFY project is also looking at climate change in view of its importance to the rural folks. Rural areas have been exposed to the ravages of climate change, a condition that requires particular attention on the part of rural dwellers. Whilst the project illustrates the difficulty of identifying, understanding and thus acting on poverty, it also highlights the importance of listening to the opinions of those to whom the issues it is working on most affects.

The Ghanaian Situation

Despite some significant improvements in the performance of the Ghanaian economy in the last two decades, the last three years have been quite difficult for a teeming number of Ghanaians. A number of macroeconomic and structural challenges have limited the capacity of the economy to achieve sustainable improvements in the livelihoods of the people. About a quarter of Ghanaians are poor whilst under a tenth of the population are in extreme poverty. Those deemed to be in the extremely low category could be located in the upper regions of the country where conditions are precarious (GSS, 2014). Malnutrition among infants and children is prevalent in Ghana and a number of children under the age of five display stunted growth. The major drivers of child deaths in Ghana stem from poverty, quality of care and unequal access to basic services. Children from Ghana's poorest families are nearly 40% more likely to die before the age of five, compared to children from Ghana's richest families (http://www.unicef.org/ghana/health_nutrition.html). Overall, the dynamics of poverty in Ghana over the past years indicate that poverty is still very much a rural phenomenon.

Conditions at the rural level are often precarious. Access to resources, information and financial services to enable rural dwellers especially women earn a living, has been painstakingly difficult. Although rural women produce more than two-thirds of Ghana's food, they are particularly hard hit by poverty. Their lower education levels make it more difficult to seek better prospects and demand their rights. A consequence of their plight is that these women are forced to look for various avenues in order to help run their families. Given their wide range of tasks and responsibilities, women in Ghana are crucial to the implementation of effective environmental and poverty reduction programmes. This is more so when poverty and environmental degradation have become mutually reinforcing. The high rates of deforestation and desertification in Ghana are reducing the quality and fertility of

land and leading the poor into poverty. Environmental resources over-exploited and this puts many rural dwellers in a vicious cycle of reduced resources and increased poverty.

Poverty in Ghana is largely seen as a rural phenomenon. Poor people, especially those in the upper part of the country, generally own or occupy marginal, infertile land that is prone to erosion and desertification. The majority of farmers are subsistence farmers who work with simple tools and are on very small plots of land. Their crop yields are low due to the limited use of fertiliser and other inputs and the fact that they are subject to the vagaries of the weather. A common spectacle is that when there is lack of rainfall, farmers suffer excessively, likewise when rainfall is intense, it leads to huge crop losses. The inadequate marketing and transport systems in the country also contribute to the difficulty in getting their produce to the market. Ghana's health system, like education, has traditionally also been highly biased towards the southern and urban areas of the country, to the neglect of the rural dwellers.

In recent times the government has reiterated its commitment to redressing the huge imbalance between rural and urban areas. It has drawn up a number of development initiatives which include the development policy framework, Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda, which provides a consistent set of development policy objectives and strategies towards the country's advancement. Ghana and its principal development partners have also committed to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of external assistance for stronger development impact and better results. Specific policies and down-stream interventions are being put in place to ensure equitable economic growth, constructive social protection, equal political and social participation, and multiple layers of human development through the government and NGOs alike.

The Ghana project

The Ghana project is expected to reach around 45,000 subsistence farmers and their families and around 1,400 members of farmer associations and purchasing groups, as well as local agriculture authorities when it comes to an end in 2017. Two districts, Atebubu-Amantin District and the Kintampo South District, in the Brong-Ahafo region of Ghana have been selected for the project. The Brong-Ahafo region is in the middle belt of Ghana. It lies between the regions in the north and south of the country and it is one of the ten regions in Ghana. The Brong-Ahafo region serves as the transition between the forest zone in the

southern regions and the woody savannah in the northern part of the country. A glaring pattern of inequality manifests itself in the North-South dichotomy in Ghana's development. A number of studies have emphasised the broad disparity between the North (comprising the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions) and the South of the country (comprising the remaining seven regions) in terms of levels of economic development and the general quality of life, with the northern part of Ghana falling relatively behind (Songsore, 1989).

The relatively fertile soils and good rainfall pattern in the Brong-Ahafo region attract a lot of agrarian migrant communities to the districts. The area experiences a bi-modal rainfall pattern. This increases the agricultural potential of the communities in the area since they can plant twice in a year. However, in recent years, rainfall in this area has been erratic, sometimes experiencing a uni-modal pattern. The situation is affecting the farmers who now rely on a short rainfall period in a year, a situation which is driving them into poverty too. Major crops grown in the districts include maize, cowpea, cassava and yam. Due to the increasing demand for fertile lands, forested lands have been encroached upon and used extensively over the years leading to declining soil fertility, depleted forest and tree cover.

The SATISFY project is in its third year. So far, it has been able to train 12,046 people made up of farmers, staff of government institutions, women and community members and school children. These include 6,546 women and 5,500 men. The beneficiaries were engaged in training sessions on improved crop practices, animal rearing, savings, natural resource management training, post-harvest management trainings, local extension service provision, food utilisation and business management to enhance their capacity and skills in improving their livelihood activities. The project also targeted care-givers who were given training on how to provide for the needs of their families.

Table 1: Project participants

Participants	Male	Female
12,046	5,500	6,546

The project particularly targeted women who were provided with key training sessions in order to improve their lot. Women form a key component in the project because of the

singular role they play in African societies. Although women are major contributors to agriculture, they are often constrained from achieving optimal production and development. Limited access to land and credit as well as inadequate information on prices of marketing systems provided by extension agents, often make it difficult for them to access and maintain profitable market niches and generate more income. Notably, access to information seems to be limited for them as they are already marginalised by their limited access to resources. Aside from that, the women also have limited decision-making powers because of unequal power relations within the household (IFAD, 2009).

These women are further constrained by socially constructed gender roles and relationships that further hinder their ability, relative to men. These gender-specific norms limit women's access to information by constraining their access to education, their mobility and their interaction with members of the opposite sex. They also limit women's ability to make use of the information that is available to them.

Table 2: Key Project outlines

Improved crop practices training
Animal rearing
Savings account holdings
Natural resource management training
Local extension service provision
Post-harvest management
Food utilisation training
Business management training
Training for care-givers

Progress and Results Achieved

(1) More than 10 workshops have been organised for crop farmers on cultivating improved varieties of maize, cassava, rice, cowpea and green peppers (selected for their drought tolerance, high yields and pest and disease tolerance) and 80 per cent of the trained farmers adopted the improved varieties;

(2) More than a 1,000 livestock farmers have been trained in improved livestock production;

(3) Yam, cowpea, rice, mushroom, honey, and cassava flour production were selected by the communities as value chains with the capacity to significantly increase household income levels, and nine groups (made up of 145 women and 124 men) developed business plans for their selected value chains; and

(4) Community members have also been trained to improve the diversity of their diets diversity and to prepare nutrient-dense foods for children and pregnant women.

The project is collaborating with government departments and agencies that provide technical support for the implementation of the project activities. The seven partners include Non-Formal Education Division (NFED), District Agriculture Development Unit (DADU), National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI), National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO), Ghana Health Service, Forestry Commission and the Department of Cooperatives. The partners provide technical support in various trainings and sensitisation activities in the communities. About 200 Farmer-based organisations and 15 Non-formal education class units have already participated in various trainings of the project from over 60 communities across the two districts selected for the programme.

Agriculture

The project has promoted 10 improved varieties of maize, cowpea, rice, cassava and green pepper in 20 communities within the two districts. As part of the initiative community members were also trained in bee-keeping and oyster shell and mushroom production. Community members also received training on measures and strategies to improve adaptation to climate change shocks and stresses. Sessions were held at which community members identified and discussed activities that impact and undermine their livelihoods and increase their vulnerability to climate-change shocks. The communities also discussed strategies to initiate a concerted effort to mitigate climate change and enhance management of environmental resources. The improved varieties adopted for cultivation by the farmers included for maize, cowpea cassava and rice and green pepper.

Health care

Caregivers were given training on the importance of dietary diversity, home-based food fortification and methods of food preparation and preservation. The nutritional status of 989 children under 5 years of age was also assessed. The significant cases of malnutrition that

were observed thereafter, led to the training of 192 caregivers on how to prepare nutrient-dense diets with local food stuff. The caregivers were educated on the importance of essential micro-nutrients like iron, vitamin A, iodine and zinc. They also received education on how to ensure children receive adequate amounts of these nutrients for proper growth and good child development outcomes. The training provided them with the basis upon which they improve the protein content of *garri*, a common staple used in households, and which has a high starch content. This is part of the multiple approaches the project used to improve the nutrition of children in the various households.

Mode of training/education

Farmers were educated in 10 workshop sessions at the district and community levels on the characteristics of the varieties, the cultural practices and inputs required for their cultivation. Through the use of these approaches, farmer-to-farmer transfers of knowledge were enhanced. Farmers also had their knowledge increased about certified improved crop varieties and their advantages over their own varieties. The farmers acquired additional skills and knowledge in the areas of feed preparation, housing, pest and disease management as well as management practices for animal husbandry. Demonstration sessions were also conducted to train livestock farmers on the preparation of supplementary feed.

All trainings centred on the preparation of crop budgets, crop calendars, land preparation and planting of various improved crop varieties. Approaches used to reach out to farmers were mainly through community awareness campaigns, farm demonstrations, evaluation workshops on farm demonstrations and farmer-field trials. The evaluation workshop sessions of farm demonstrations saw farmers identifying qualities observed about the improved crop varieties they had been trained on. Some of the qualities observed by farmers were on yield, price, palatability, aroma, nutrition, nitrogen fixation, weed management potential and disease/pest management potential.

Table 3: Approaches used to reach out to farmers

Community awareness campaigns
Farm demonstrations
Evaluation workshops on farm demonstrations and farmer-field trials

Care and health provisions

Two hundred and thirteen (213) caregivers made of 174 women (82%) and 39 men (18%) were trained on new skills, knowledge and production technologies that will enable them to undertake home-based food fortification. The trainees selected were members of associations that are interested in processing cassava into *garri*, a common staple in Ghana. The trainees received skills in the use of soybeans to fortify *garri* and improve the protein content.

Volunteer training

The project engaged and equipped 30 community-based animal healthcare volunteers (CAHVs). The community-based animal health care volunteers after being trained had their knowledge improved in basic animal healthcare delivery. Veterinary officers from the District Agricultural Development Unit (DADU) of the project areas were the key facilitators of a two-day workshop session organised for the CAHVs. The volunteers had another one-day refresher training session after two-months to consolidate the skills and knowledge impacted in the first training. This included practical sessions for the volunteers to demonstrate the skills acquired. The selection of the volunteers was done in collaboration with DADU and their respective communities.

The community-based animal health care volunteers were equipped with basic kits such as drenching guns, hand gloves, syringes, cotton wool etc. The provision of these kits increased the availability and accessibility of animal healthcare services to farmers in 30 communities in the districts. This augmented the efforts of veterinary staff in delivering animal health care services in the communities. To ensure the sustainability of the volunteer service, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) would be providing supervision and the volunteers are also expected to charge a fee for their services. This fee would be used to replenish stock medications and equipment used in the service delivery.

Strategic alliances

A series of fora were organised for the participants on their financial dealings and cooperative formations. These provided an avenue for women especially to learn how to access financial support from the financial institutions. The fora were also designed to create strategic alliances with farmer groups and input dealers. Based on the recommendations at the fora, the project collaborated with the Department of Cooperatives (DoC) to register farmer based

organisations as cooperative societies. A total of 10 existing Farmer based organisations have had their capacities built and strengthened in group formation and dynamics, record keeping, conflict resolution, and management and market opportunity identification. Others have engaged have opened and started operating accounts with financial institutions.

Building a savings culture

A microfinance model for the rural poor was also adopted and implemented by the project. Thirty seven groups have so far received training in the implementation of the savings model. Currently, these groups have access to basic financial services that are safe, reliable and profitable. Women's access to markets and invest in assets have also been enhanced. Basically, a higher relative income improves women's ability to influence the amount of saving out of household income.

The gender equality strategy

The project also developed the Gender Equality Strategy (GES) which engaged women in the implementation of project activities. As part of the strategy, the project worked to improve the number of female extension agents in the communities. These women were provided with technical support to extend their knowledge on issues affecting women to their fellow women. They also served as extension agents and also conduits for nutrition training and women leadership capacity building.

Natural resource protection

Communities were engaged through plenary sessions and group discussions on natural resource management, causes of climate change, effects and solutions and early warning systems. The communities identified poor soil fertility management which they attributed to annual bush fires (for charcoal production) and poor farming practices e.g. slash and burn methods bushfire, deforestation and poor rainfall pattern which mostly is unpredictable and erratic. Participants were also taken through rural appraisal processes to identify climate-change related impact issues and current mitigating measures taken by households to adapt to the impact. Some of the issues identified by the communities include the erratic rainfall pattern, frequent dry spells, the diminishing distinction between the major and minor raining seasons and the continuous shifting of the rainfall pattern.

Business entrepreneurship

The Department of Co-operatives, the Non-Formal Education Division and the National Board of Small Scale Industries were the key implementing partners of this segment. Community members benefited directly from training in business entrepreneurial skills. They were supported with resources such as drums for sterilisation of oyster mushroom substrates, wellington boots, spawns and wooden boards toward mushroom production. The project also facilitated the training of men and women in honey and bee wax production.

Evaluating the SATIFY approach

Much has been written about popular participation and the relationship between community-based development and sound natural resource management (Scoones and Thompson, 1994; Chambers et al., 1989; Paul, 1987; Cernea, 1985). However, few success stories have been well documented or publicised enough within the nations where they are taking place. Also missing is critical analysis of the key factors behind these successful stories and an assessment of their implications for government and development assistance agencies interested in nurturing community-based development. Carrying out an analysis at the micro-level can help improve growth diagnostics as well as an understanding of the transmission mechanisms that could lead to rural growth and poverty reduction.

Evaluation means 'to assess the value or worth of it' (Rubin, 2000: 13). As Rubin reiterates, it also means to understand the value of something in order to do things better in the future. The reference point here is that evaluation is a learning and management tool which is applied in assessing what has taken place in order to improve future work. Measuring, analysing and interpreting change helps people to determine how far objectives have been achieved and whether the initial assumptions about what would happen were right; and to make judgements about the effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the work (Rubin, 2000). Evaluation, therefore, looks at the relevance, effectiveness and impact of a project, with the aim of improving an existing project or influencing future policies, programmes and projects. Evaluation, therefore, serves both objectives of evaluation: lesson-learning and accountability (OECD, 2001). A properly designed impact evaluation can answer the question of whether the programme is working or not and hence assist in decisions regarding a project.

As the principal resource users and primary beneficiaries of any resource-management activity, local people must be the ultimate judges of success (Skinner, 1989). It is important to realise that development can be seen in terms of their perspective as they are the direct beneficiaries of such projects. How such projects are affecting and shaping their lives remain paramount in any assessment that is made. Evaluation can, thus, provide us with a basis to understand a lot about a project. Our emphasis would be on whether the project has been able to achieve the original objectives that it set itself to achieve.

We can check on the project performance of SATISY by using the framework developed by IFAD. This framework uses three major themes to determine the outcome of projects. They are: the relevance of the project objectives; its effectiveness and its efficiency.

Figure 1: Methodological framework for project evaluation

1. PROJECT PERFORMANCE	
1.1 Relevance of project objectives	The extent to which the project objectives (at the time of evaluation) are consistent with: the rural poor's perceptions of their needs and potential at the time of the evaluation; the economic, social and policy environment; the organization's mandate, strategic framework and policies; and the country's current poverty-reduction policies and strategies.
1.2 Effectiveness	The extent to which the project's major objectives (at the time of evaluation) were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, at project completion. Project effectiveness is measured with respect to the project designer's expectations of project's impacts.
1.3 Efficiency	The extent to which the project achieved, or is expected to achieve benefits commensurate with inputs, based on economic and financial analysis or unit costs compared with alternative options and good practices to determine how economically resources have been converted into results

Source: IFAD, 2003. *A methodological framework for Project Evaluation: Main Criteria and Key Questions for Project Evaluation*, IFAD, Rome

Impact of the intervention

Improved crop varieties identified and promoted

Certified and improved varieties of cassava, cowpea, green pepper, maize and rice were promoted to farmers. The District Agricultural Department (DADU), the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the Wenchi Farmers Institute were the main suppliers of the identified crop varieties. The varieties were promoted in view of their favourable

characteristics which include drought tolerance, high yielding, good taste and aroma, pest and disease tolerance and for some, their high market demand. The approaches used in the promotion of the improved crop varieties were mainly farm demonstrations, farmer-field trials and community awareness campaigns. About 80% of farmers trained to date on the various improved crop varieties have since adopted the improved crop for cultivation. The project spent less on mobilising communities into groups and more resources were also used to provide resource support to more farmers for crops and livestock production. These livestock farmers were supported with improved breeding gimmers and goats.

Agency collaborations

One splendid thing about the programme is that it brought together various agencies and agencies already in place to work in tandem with each other. The synergy that arose from this interaction was pivotal in the realisation of the objectives of the project. The farmers received technical support and logistic services which enhanced their productive contributions. The SATISFY programme brought to the fore the realisation that an effective programme which is well executed can yield dividends. What the farmers needed was a reassurance that what they were being made to use or patronise would be very beneficial to them.

Women's participation

The project also emphasised on women's effective participation in health care. It improved the knowledge of caregivers on nutrition and also assisted in increasing their disposable income through alternative income generation. This has allowed them to improve their spending on quality food in their homes. The project has also enhanced the training of women as voluntary community extension agents on crops mostly grown by women and has also provided extension support to women. These women extension agents would be serving as agents of transformation.

The concentration on women is yielding some results. Women are now beginning to save monies accruing from their farming activities. Designing appropriate financial products for women to enable them to save borrow and insure has been essential in strengthening women's role as producers and also widened the economic opportunities available to them. It is important to understand how women's access to and control over resources shape their need for capital and ability to obtain it. Leading organisations can also be biased against women as their businesses tend to be smaller, more informal, and they lack the necessary

collateral (Fletschner, 2009). Indeed, ensuring that farmers have adequate access to financial resources is a key tenet of successful rural development strategies.

Effective stakeholding engagement

Collaboration with partners and stakeholders has also been very successful leading to enhanced partnership and improved project visibility. One lesson learnt during the period under review is that effective stakeholder engagement improves credibility and wins trust with community members. The project invested time and resources in engaging several stakeholders. The stakeholders were well informed of the project and they, in turn, took keen interest in participating in the project activities. The process of community engagement was valuable and valued. Efforts have been made by the project to engage traditional authorities and village elders throughout the stakeholders' meetings. The adoption of broad participatory approaches in planning and implementation has been widely praised by community members as being appropriate, sensitive and necessary for inclusiveness.

Impact analysis

A total of 63 Farmer-based organisations/community-based organisations have developed linkages with financial institutions in target communities with support from the SATISFY project. These groups are predominantly food crop farmers. The project in collaboration with the Department of Co-operatives facilitated the linkage. Meetings were held with famers and business associations to discuss modalities to improve access for these groups to financing their businesses and production. Members of the farmers' organisations now have adequate knowledge, skills and confidence to approach these financial institutions for credits. A savings model known as the village savings and loans approach has been introduced to assist the beneficiaries.

Caregivers have increased their knowledge and skills in dietary diversity and equitable consumption practices through community sensitisation and food demonstrations. The caregivers received education on the nutritional importance of iodine, zinc, vitamin A and iron. Participants also received information on the sources of these micro-nutrients. The caregivers were also encouraged to add foodstuffs that contain these nutrients to the diets of households and particularly that of children to ensure their proper growth and development.

Households and community members were engaged to determine the availability of nutritious local food stuffs that can be used to improve their nutrition. The analysis reveals that about 60 per cent of mothers can now provide at least two meals per day. A post-training assessment of participant caregivers has revealed that 69 per cent of men and 86 per cent of women have improved their knowledge on balance diets. Most households also reported that they are now able to adequately access food for over a longer period than before. Thus the issue of malnutrition among children could be attributed to the quality of the diets consumed at the household level.

During the training it was found that the farmers did not have appropriate equipment for the processing of cassava to the appropriate grade quality *garri* for fortification. The project assisted the group to acquire the equipment and to facilitate the processing of cassava from farmers in the district. Ten livestock groups have been supported with seeds and land preparation to establish 10 fodder sites in 10 communities to improve the nutritional value of fodder in their communities for livestock feeding. This is to improve the feeding practices of these livestock farmers and ensure that they adopt more environmentally sustainable practices. The livestock farmers participated in grass establishment, which increased their knowledge and skills on pasture establishment and learnt pasture management. This has increased farmers' knowledge on fodder establishment and management. The fields are demonstration sites and the farmers are managing the fields themselves.

Four of the supported groups have started mushroom production and sales in their local community markets. The communities have also formed environmental clubs to help fight the deforestation in their localities. Five communities have prepared action plans to mitigate the impact of climate-change. These include adopting improved and drought tolerant varieties, diversification of livelihood sources and adopting pro-poor resource mobilization strategies including savings groups. There are about 37 savings groups with 1076 members including 188 men and 836 women.

Many farmers have also been assisted with technical support, logistic services and the identification of credible sources of inputs. These technical support and logistic services were in the form of linkages established between farmers and agricultural extension agents and the provision of planting materials and agro-inputs respectively. Farmers were supported with

bundles of cassava sticks, cowpea seeds and agro-chemicals as start-up resources for cassava and cowpea production.

Lessons that can be drawn

Reducing rural poverty clearly requires collective efforts by a range of institutions at the national and local levels whose activities are geared towards ensuring better outcomes from agricultural endeavours. The paper agrees that improving the productivity of the small-holder farmer and creating opportunities along the value-chain will make a significant contribution to reducing rural poverty.

At the household level, decision-making and actions related to land use and resource management are often culture-based. Such processes usually distinguish rights according to gender and age, and, as such, tend to be very inequitable. In most rural African societies, elderly men dominate local decision-making even though women perform most of the work. Although household decision-making is not necessarily participatory, established processes can result in timely decisions about how to mobilise local land, labour, capital, and knowledge quickly and effectively.

The review finds that the policies and programmes like the SATISFY project are relevant to the strengthening of rural institutions, including farmer-based organisations and other types of grassroot organisations. Such projects are able to assist dysfunctional state organisations to function appropriately to aid rural programmes more effectively.

Conclusion

The paper set out to look at the SATISFY project and what it entailed. It analysed the key objectives of the project and brought to the fore the key differences that the project has made. It also drew on the lessons that that could be learnt from such interventions and also outlined the need for development practitioners to adhere to certain conditions in order to be able to achieve the much needed collaboration that matters in intervening in the development of rural areas.

The paper makes a very valuable contribution to the work of development practitioners and researchers alike by outlining key areas that make for interventions and strategies needed to

ensure community participation in projects. It recognises that SATISFY has made significant progress towards laying the foundations for improving food security and building local institutional capacity in its target areas.

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