

Local Extension Services for Agricultural Development (LEAD) Project

Introduction

The northern regions of Ghana are the poorest part of the country, with a high proportion of the population living in poverty. The majority of people are dependent on farming for their livelihoods, and alternative income generating strategies are limited. Achieving livelihoods security is increasingly difficult as a result of climate variability, decreasing soil fertility, increasing desertification and deforestation, and inequitable access to and control over resources. The impacts of climate change will exacerbate existing conditions and present further challenges for vulnerable people in northern Ghana.

The Local Extension Services for Agricultural Development (LEAD) Project aims to improve the livelihoods of poor and marginalized women and men in Northern Ghana by supporting community-based agricultural extension systems. LEAD was selected as a test project for the Toolkit for Integrating Adaptation into Projects based on its focus in the agricultural sector, the target groups which include poor and marginalized farmers, and the fact that the project was in the design phase, and therefore had flexibility to review its analysis and to incorporate new or modified activities. Further, the project team had identified climate change as a priority issue to address, based on a review of a previous similar project.



This case study is the result of a process undertaken from August-November 2009. The recommendations are based on discussion with the project team, review of project documents, and the application of the Toolkit key issues and focus questions. It also included CRISTAL analysis on proposed project activities. The analysis was informed by documents from other projects in the area, including the Community Land Use Responses to Climate Change (CLURCC) project, which is focused on integrating adaptation into local planning.

The Project

The goal of LEAD is to improve the income of poor and marginalized women and men in rural areas of Northern Ghana, through equitable and sustainable community-based agriculture and natural resource management. The project launched in January 2009 and will run for six years, to December 2014. LEAD will target the poor, especially women and marginalized rural farmers in the Brong Ahafo, Northern, Upper East, and Upper West Regions of Ghana, which fall in the Transitional and Savannah ecological zones.

The project is implemented through three components:

Sustainable and equitable community-based agricultural extension systems

This component of the project builds on CARE's successful efforts to develop community-based extension systems (CBES) that addresses the rights and responsibilities of poor and marginalized people. CBES build on indigenous knowledge and existing systems and institutions to deliver extension services, focusing on local ownership of knowledge. CARE's previous experience with CBES has proven the willingness of farmers to try new products, technologies and markets to improve their food and livelihood security.

The LEAD project focuses on developing and implementing an "enhanced" model for CBES which will address evolving challenges such as land access, sustainable natural resource management, climate change and disaster risk reduction. This is intended not only to improve sustainability of livelihoods of vulnerable people and communities, but also to demonstrate a model for pro-poor service delivery that promotes empowerment of rural communities.

Duty bearers responsive to poor and marginalized people

Through capacity building and information sharing in the communities, this component aims to help communities develop their own action plans. Action plans in hand, chosen community leaders, including poor and marginalized people, will voice community experiences and action priorities, including appropriate extension services, to area planning units, district assemblies, traditional authorities, and other development actors to influence local decision-making and development planning in favour of rural poor and marginalized people.

These efforts will build on previous CARE experiences in Northern Ghana supporting the development of inclusive district development plans and increasing the effectiveness of relationships between the district authorities and communities to ensure that community priorities are reflected in district medium-term development plans. This will include supporting area councils, district assemblies, and traditional authorities to accept and incorporate communities' inputs through encouraging open and inclusive dialogue.

Advocacy for sustainable, equitable and effective agriculture and natural resource policies

In addition to enhancing and scaling up CBES and helping communities channel their development priorities into local development planning, the LEAD project will focus on developing networking and advocacy skills to increase sustainable, equitable, and effective ANR policy uptake and more strongly engage the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) and District Authorities (Das) over issues of extension and farmers' livelihoods. The component will support civil society to influence policies and implementation that increase sustainability and equity through increasing sharing and learning with MoFA and research institutions, ensuring dissemination of field experiences to stakeholders, and establishing platforms for dialogue between civil society and government at all levels.



Vulnerability to Climate Change in the Project Area

The livelihoods of people in Northern Ghana are largely dependent on an increasingly hostile environment. While there are some forests and rich agricultural land in the north, more and more land is becoming infertile or degraded. The entire region is subject to increasingly severe climatic episodes that can alternatively cause floods or drought. Farmers have noted that their climate is changing, and that their traditional farming systems are bringing less returns. Human-induced disasters are also prevalent, in particular bushfires and indiscriminate deforestation causing widespread erosion. All of these hazards affect the poorest and most marginalized people most, as they have greater reliance on natural resources and fewer physical, financial, social and human resources.

Climate projections are available for the northern regions of Ghana. They suggest:

- Mean daily temperatures will increase by 2.5-3.2 °C by 2100.
- Annual rainfall totals will decrease by up to 27% by the year 2100, causing increasing droughts.
- Increasing desertification.
- Decreasing river flows and recharge rates.
- Potential for increased floods as a result of increasingly erratic rainfall¹.

Examining the underlying causes of vulnerability exposes the fact that smallholder farmers, including poor and marginalized men and women, do not have voices in local development policies, voices that could advocate for shared solutions to these problems, including dependable access to agricultural extension services and agricultural land for women and settler groups. Decentralization presents an opportunity for inclusive decision-making, but it is essential to decentralization and equitable development planning that community-based organizations representing poor and marginalized people participate in and impact decisions. Currently, district development planning does not address the priorities of the poor and marginalized, and inclusive and self-sustaining farmer-based organizations are few.

Those that exist have very little capacity to represent and negotiate on behalf of their members. Other constituency-based organizations are also practically non-existent outside of church groups.

Further, policies – or the just implementation of policies – do not reflect the rights of poor and marginalized people. Nationally and regionally, policies that aim to improve rural people's livelihoods, such as equitable access to services, including agricultural extension services, and access to land or royalties from mining on community land, are not widely known or implemented. Often, just policies exist, but no laws have been passed around them, or local implementation of the policy through by-laws, etc. is non-existent. Civil society advocacy for the rights and priorities of rural poor and marginalized people to be reflected in national, regional, and district policies – and their implementation – is in its infancy.

There are also strong gender dimensions to climate change vulnerability in the region. Women are disproportionately food crop farmers: women form 52% of the total agricultural labour force and produce 70% of food crops.² And women are disproportionately poor. Due to urban migration and other reasons, women are increasingly responsible for their own and their children's livelihoods, though they have not gained significantly more access to productive assets from either government or traditional/cultural systems. By 1999, 35% of all household heads were women, and 53% of female household heads in rural areas were amongst the poorest 20% of the population.³ The culture and traditions of many of the cultures in Northern Ghana limit women's access and control over important livelihood resources, such as productive land and forest resources and the ability to adapt livelihood activities to the reality of climate change. Many of the cultures and traditions also

¹ Government of Ghana, First National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), December 2000.

² Duncan, Beatrice Akua (2004). Women in Agriculture in Ghana.

³ Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy, 1999.

largely reserve decision-making rights for men and limit women's participation in the process. This poses a challenge for women's participation in community decision-making processes, especially when the issues involved are considered very important⁴.

Integrating Adaptation into the Project

This section summarizes the key recommendations that resulted from the process of applying the Toolkit for Integrating Adaptation into Projects on the LEAD project.

Recommendation #1: Improve analysis of current and future climate context and linkages between climate and livelihoods

The project document notes that the region is subject to increasingly severe climatic episodes, leading to droughts and floods. It suggests that farmers have noticed that their climate is changing and that traditional farming systems are bringing less returns. However, it does not describe what trends are being observed, nor does it provide information on what climate change is likely to bring in terms of future scenarios. This applies to both events and changing conditions. Further, there is no discussion of how climate hazards affect the livelihoods of different groups, or how this may change in future.

The analysis would be significantly improved by more detailed analysis of the observed changes in climate, predicted changes based on available climate scenarios, and on the potential interactions between climate hazards and other hazards, such as bushfires or conflict.

In addition, given the focus of the project on sustainable livelihoods and natural resource management, it would be helpful to analyze the impacts of current climate hazards such as drought, floods and changing rainfall patterns on livelihoods of different groups within the target communities. Evaluation of the effectiveness and sustainability of the current strategies people are using to cope with these shocks could help in identifying existing strategies to build on, and priority needs.

Recommendation #2: Strengthen analysis of vulnerability, including participatory approaches

The context notes that disasters, including climate change, affect the poorest and most marginalized people more severely, due to their reliance on natural resources and lack of other resources. It identifies women, ethnic minorities, people living with HIV/AIDS and their family members, the elderly (especially unmarried) and youth (pre-marriage) as marginalized groups. It does not identify groups based on how they gain their livelihoods.

There is significant focus on women and marginalized people throughout the context description, but the analysis is generic and does not demonstrate knowledge of the specific challenges faced by women and other marginalized groups in the target communities. There is no discussion of men's roles or concerns, or of male-female relations with respect to livelihoods, other than to note that men traditionally make decisions. Similarly, land tenure is mentioned as a challenge, but there is no analysis of the situation and what the specific issues are.

This suggests that the analysis is primarily from secondary sources, vs. from participatory analysis involving project stakeholders. The analysis would be improved by the integration of participatory analysis to validate the generalizations about gender, land tenure, and impacts of climate on livelihoods. The [Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis \(CVCA\) Handbook](#) provides guidance on how this could be done.

Socially inclusive and equitable CBES will need to ensure not only that woman and other marginalized groups have access to the services, but that the strategies and technologies promoted by extension agents are appropriate to the specific needs of women and men or of other vulnerable groups. This may require different strategies for different groups based on their resources and capacity. Without comprehensive, participatory and gender-sensitive analysis of vulnerability, these efforts are unlikely to be successful. This analysis will also ensure that the rights and advocacy elements of the project effectively address issues of gender inequality and marginalization, insecure access to and control over resources, and resolution of resource-based conflicts.

⁴ Summarized from LEAD Component Description, December 2008.

Recommendation #3: Analysis and design processes

The analysis process hasn't been documented, other than to reference the midterm and final evaluations of the first phase of the Agriculture and Natural Resource (ANR) program. There is no evidence that stakeholders have been involved in the analysis, or that the conclusions have been validated.

The design process is briefly described in terms of the meetings held. Project partners were involved in some of the planning meetings, but there is no evidence of involvement of target communities in the design process.

There are references to the final evaluation of the previous phase of the programme and some of the recommendations made, but there isn't a clear link between these recommendations and the proposed component, except in a very general sense.

There is very little information on what the enhanced CBES will look like, except to list issues that the systems will address. Elaboration of this, and documentation of the rationale, will be very important in ensuring that the systems are appropriate and sustainable.

Involvement of communities, and of particularly vulnerable members of communities, in the design of enhanced CBES will be critical to ensuring that they are responsive to the needs and priorities of these groups.

Recommendation #4: Defining important concepts

There is a need to define key concepts which are used throughout the logframe and description of project activities. In particular, clarity on what is meant by an "enhanced CBES model" and "equitable and sustainable" agriculture and natural resource activities. The project description doesn't go into details on what the enhanced CBES model will look like, it is difficult to assess this. It describes best practices, but these are all practices related to the development and implementation of the CBES model, vs. livelihoods practices that will be promoted through the extension systems.

An "enhanced" model that would be appropriate in the context of climate change adaptation would consider:

- Diversification of livelihoods strategies (both within and outside agriculture)
- Facilitating access to climate information for risk analysis and planning by project stakeholders, in particular the community-based extension agents
- Facilitating access to savings, credit and market services to support risk management and adaptation

Similarly, "sustainable" would need to be defined in a way that incorporates future climate scenarios. What this means is that sustainability should not only be pursued in terms of the systems themselves, but also in the types of practices promoted.

Recommendation #5: Promoting climate-resilient agricultural strategies

There is no discussion in the analysis sections of specific crops or technologies being used by target populations and how these are or aren't appropriate to current and projected climate conditions. Further, there is no information on how people make decisions about livelihoods strategies. These gaps make it difficult to identify the needs and priorities that must be addressed by an appropriate and sustainable community-based extension system, especially if it is to address climate change as suggested in the project document.

The project activities as described do not seem to be particularly vulnerable to climate change, as they mostly relate to capacity development and advocacy activities. Having said this, the types of actions promoted both through community-based extension and in the advocacy component will be critical in ensuring that the project is sustainable in the context of climate change. The project document does not provide sufficient detail to analyze this. However, the project team has provided some information on the types of activities that will be promoted in the communities.

Key issues to consider in selecting agricultural strategies to be promoted through the CBES will be the appropriateness of the crop and livestock types and the sustainability of agricultural practices in the context of current and future climate change, with particular emphasis on the impacts of droughts, floods and changing rainfall patterns. More detailed information can be found in the [CRiSTAL analysis](#) for the project.

Recommendation #6: Disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness: clarifying strategies

Clarity on concepts and approaches for DRR and emergency preparedness is needed. The project team must understand the differences between integrating adaptation and DRR into project activities (which would focus on building the resilience of target stakeholders) and into project operations (which focuses on emergency preparedness at the project/office level).

DRR should not be treated as separate activities or strategies, but should be integrated into all activities of the project, including the community action plans (CAPs), and the CBES model. The success of the integration of DRR into the project will depend on how effectively the CBES model and CAPs incorporate:

- Household-level risk reduction strategies, including protection of assets such as livestock, and saving reserves of food, water and agricultural inputs
- Disaster risk management planning, including early warning systems, at community and district levels
- Capacity development for emergency response by local stakeholders
- Linking local stakeholders and strategies to national disaster risk management efforts

In terms of emergency preparedness at the project level, the following issues should be considered:

- An emergency preparedness plan for the sub-office that staff and partners are familiar with
- Training for staff and partners in emergency response and humanitarian accountability
- Ensuring the project team have access to early warnings for hazards affecting the project area
- Incorporating a contingency plan for emergencies in the project strategy
- Ensuring flexibility in funds and activities to respond to crises efficiently

Conclusions

The LEAD project team has found the process of using the Toolkit to integrate adaptation into the project very useful. The following are reflections on the process from the LEAD Project Manager:

“Coming from a background of limited capacity in climate change adaptation, I feel that the exercise has contributed to improving the team’s understanding about the issues.

One of the most important things learned through the process is the need to screen project activities to be sure that one is promoting the right strategies in the context of climate change. The exercise also stresses the importance of doing a detailed analysis of vulnerability to climate change at the design stage of a project with input from communities, partners and key stakeholders. Coupled with this is the need to constantly update these analyses to address changing climate risks and hazards.

The CRiSTAL analysis of some project activities has been very useful, as it gives an indication of the specific types of initiatives that the project should be promoting to improve resilience of stakeholders’ livelihoods to climate change. Although some of these activities have been promoted for some time, they were not consciously implemented as adaptation initiatives. Another helpful outcome of the process is that we will consciously incorporate adaptation considerations in the project’s M&E system to ensure that we collect the necessary information to ensure that the actions are appropriate and sustainable in the context of climate change.

In April 2010, we will hold a training session on climate change adaptation for project staff and partners, and we will share some aspects of this analysis as part of the training. As well, we will be reviewing the project document and some of the strategies in order to ensure that the issues around adaptation are more comprehensively integrated.”