



Ensuring Food and Nutrition Security and Peaceful Co-Existence of Farmer Refugees and Host Communities in Gedaref State Eastern Sudan Program

Midterm Review

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*Prepared by Ali A Karim
M Osman Hederbi
Mohamed A Faki*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Description

'Ensuring food and nutrition security and peaceful co-existence of former refugees and host communities in Gedaref State, Eastern Sudan' project is implemented by SRCS Gedaref branch with support from SRCS HQ and wide participation of local structures formed at state, locality and community levels. The project has duration of 38 months that started in 01.11.2017 and will end in 31.12.2020. The project targets indirectly a population of 6,000 HHs, of refugees and host community, of whom 1,200 HHs are expected to benefit directly from the project.

The program aims to contribute to strengthening the resilience of target communities towards food security as well as peaceful coexistence of former refugees and host communities in the target areas. To attain this, the program works on a set of outcomes and outputs hierarchy, each associated with and to be achieved through a group of activities based on pre-set indicators.

The expected results from the program at outcome level are summarized in the following;

- Sustainable use of NR and resilience to climate change are induced in target groups practices through increased knowledge and awareness.
- Target groups livelihood is sustainable and environmentally sound.
- Peaceful coexistence between the communities is enhanced and,
- The LAs and local committees have the capacity to serve the communities.

Key Questions of the Evaluation

The MTR evaluation seeks to measure the progress of the program towards achieving its stated output and outcome targets and, assess the strengths and weaknesses of the program in respect of the evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impacts and sustainability. The MTR is also expected to inform SRCS, GRC, BMZ and other stakeholders about the overall performance of the program.

Key Findings

In the first stage, the evaluation identified and measured the activities the project has implemented. In the second stage, the methods of implementation and evaluation criteria are discussed, and in the third and last stage, the MTR measured the output and outcome indicators resulting from the implemented activities.

The information needed for the midterm evaluation is obtained from different direct and indirect sources that included the project staff, LAs at state and Locality levels and direct beneficiaries, using different data collection methods, such as; structured meetings, checklists, FGD and individual interview of **randomly selected 291 HHs**. While, the secondary information is obtained from the project monthly plans and progress and final reports.

The Implemented Activities

The project has implemented a wide range of different activities that can be are grouped under; Environment protection and natural resources, General health and hygiene, Agriculture, Animal, Income generation and Capacity development to increase food security and peaceful coexistence between the targeted communities.

The implementation of the activities is guided by prepared activity manuals, where, a manual is prepared for each activity in participation with the concerned technical government departments. The manuals are used for training and ensuring informed participation of the beneficiaries.

The overall project implementation of the planned activities is measured at 85%, which confirms that, the progress made in implementation is adequate and the project will be able to implement all proposed activities in the remaining period. Some activities that need to be of concern for the planning for the remaining period include; support of marketing of beneficiaries

products, cooperative training, the advocacy plan, intellectual events and capacity development of LAs.

Implementation Modality and Performance

Relevance; The project has started well informed by the Baseline Survey and VCA studies that set solid grounds for design of activities in accordance to the actual needs as well as identification of beneficiaries' selection criteria. The project addresses actual needs of the beneficiaries, complement the local development plan and its objective will remain valid for the remaining duration of the project. Beneficiaries as well as LAs expressed satisfaction with the project and will support replication of the project in other locations in the state.

Efficiency; the payments are made to the project by the HQ on monthly basis, according to the monthly implementation plans submitted by the project. Such arrangement has shortened the planning horizon and eliminated uncertainties and unexpected risks and paved the way for smooth implementation and follow up. The impression of the LAs and satisfaction of communities and outcomes achieved justifies the expenditure and that resources made available to the project are efficiently allocated to achieve the project objective.

The specification and quality of the implemented activities are ensured through participation of the concerned stakeholders and under their technical supervision; for example, the SMOA extension inspectors delivered the FFS training and supervised the demonstration plots, the SMOAWF veterinary doctors inspected and vaccinated the purchased animals, including input materials, such as seeds and animal drugs. In general, inputs are supplied by local vendors and adhered to transparency of bid announcement and selection of vendors' procedure.

The review of expenses by budget lines shows that there are no deviations, even within the allowed limit of 30%. This has been a real achievement considering the challenges the project faced during the country lack of liquidity period and high inflation of the prices, a period, which the project has been able to overcome with no significant delays of plans implementation, except for interruption of the State PMC meetings during the long period of political unrest the country witnessed. The insignificant delay in some activities as well as the benefit from the official increase in the exchange rate has enabled the project to overcome the price inflation as well as return some funds last year.

Effectiveness/ Progress towards Achieving Outputs

The analysis of the outputs indicators rated progress towards achieving outputs at 67%. This is an adequate rate considering the project is in the middle of implementation period and that the remaining duration will be enough to achieve the stated outputs indicators.

The messages distributed to communities for sustainable use of natural resources has increased the use of LPG and improved stoves by 15%, which suggests for the project to speed the introduction of improved stoves to enhance sustainable use of NR. While 71% of the beneficiaries indicated existence of customary bylaws that regulate tree cutting and 88% of them have grown trees inside or around their houses.

All beneficiary farmers interviewed indicated having access to improved seeds and animals but, considering after the project access to seeds, 52.2% of the farmers stated that, they will have good or adequate access to seeds after the project end. This rate may be attributed to the relative low productivity this season compared to the previous one as a result of insufficient rain. However, with good rains of adequate precipitation and balanced distribution over the cultivation season, and introduction of more improved farming techniques, such as deep plough, farmers anticipate that they would be able to secure seeds for crop cultivation and the target may be approached if not fulfilled

About 28% in the two communities confirmed benefiting from the skills training for income opportunities and 57% has increased their income from crops and animals opportunities,

making the percentage of those who benefited from income options made available by the program to be 85%.

The indicator still to be achieved is the one that is associated with the advocacy plan, which is not yet materialized in final form and expected to face some challenges due to the miss interpretation of the plan purpose by the LAs that need to be clarified to them to overcome any concerns LAs have regarding the purpose of the advocacy plan with respect to refugees settlement. Nevertheless, positive signs of parts of the plan are started to manifest on refugees, such as having access to driving license which was not possible for them before the project.

Impacts/ Progress towards Achieving Outcomes

Adoption of suitable use of natural resources needs to be further enhanced by provision of the planned solar stoves to fully achieve target indicator by end of the project. Addition of new ingredients to meal is progressing and mentioned by 40% of the beneficiaries, this is considered a real progress in achieving food diversity and reducing malnutrition, particularly in the current economic hardships and high poverty rate.

The supply of improved seeds, FFS and demo plots has improved the farming practices, but considering the type of farming which is entirely subject to climate condition, require introduction of technologies for water harvesting, use of fertilizers and pesticides to maintain increase in productivity and withstand unfavorable climate conditions.

Though the host and refugees communities have been living in peace over years, the social and cultural interaction between them used to be very limited and confined only to the exchange visits that take place during the village ceremonies and important events such as weddings and sympathies, but, according to beneficiaries, particularly the refugees, the exchange visits become common and frequent, particularly between the youth and are no longer confined to big events. Some refugees mentioned that they are not used to allow their girls to visit hosts HHs, but now social visits are common and take place daily.

In overall the achievement of the set output and outcome indicators are evaluated at 73% and 76% respectively, which are satisfactory to achieve the stated target fully during the remaining duration of the project.

Sustainability; A number of sustainability elements are addressed by the project that encourages community ownership and include participation of communities in the initial studies and formation and training of PCCs to undertake community responsibility. Also, the involvement and close work with the SPMCs has increased LAs interaction with the communities and acquainted LAs with the project activities that will form a ground to continue working with the communities.

Lessons Learned

Of the lessons learnt are;

- The use of organic fertilizers that meet the interest of the beneficiaries in the home gardens, increases productivity and improves the environment and hygiene.
- Ensure the permanent presence of local volunteers at community level to provide prompt support is maintained after the project end.
- Use of collective water storage pools, instead of individual, for irrigation of home gardens to avoid multiplication of mosquitos.
- Distribution of female pregnant animal to speed animal ownership, rather than distribution of improved males to improve animal breed, particularly for the beneficiaries who lack animals.
- Establishment of quarantine for keeping the animals purchased from outside the state to be under vet doctor supervision for longer periods before distribution to the beneficiaries. This will ensure the adaptation of animal to the new climate and it is free of any diseases.

Major Recommendations

It is concluded that, the project implemented activities monthly planned by the project staff are in line with the project Log frame and communicated to the stakeholders. Hence, all planned and implemented activities contributed to the project expected output and outcome indicators and is anticipated that, maintaining the same level of implementation during the remaining period would lead, at the least, if not exceeded, to realization of the target indicators. Below are some of the recommendations suggested.

1. The planning for the most of the remaining period is advised to be geared to consolidate the outcomes realized so far and more focus is to be awarded to the awareness raising on hygiene, safe drinking water and practical oriented on job training for the PCCs on management and monitoring issues and small business for women groups.
2. On health, improvement in hygiene behavior and villages environment is expressed by the health officers and communities, however, some further improvement can be attained in Um Rakoba by cleaning of the main water source that feeds Doka, distribution of cleaning materials and more dustbins.
3. In Um Gulja, the old Haffir poses serious risk to the communities and drawback the project WASH efforts, being a source of continuous diseases and vector multiplication and some action will need to be taken, such as a workshop in which the project, LAs and community participate, to address the challenges the Haffir poses as well as shortage of safe drinking water in the village
4. The LAs are enthusiastic and expressed unbounded interest to support the project and be more involved, particularly in the community farm and in support marketing of women products, however, the lack of work facilities, cripples the localities and suggests paying the most possible attention to capacitate the two localities.
5. Preparedness of the localities should be carried forward to organize exhibitions for the women products in the locality as well as to have permanent exhibition in the community centers, and deliver added value training on processing of animal products may be considered to maximize women returns and provide necessary cooperative training for Um Um gulja to go ahead with the establishment of the cooperative society.
6. Attention should be awarded to the volunteers who are key catalyst for implementation of the project activities and sustainability of benefit by strengthen the volunteers' linkage with the LAs department officers.
7. The driving training targeted men only, as it represents income opportunity for them, but some girls in Um Gulja, stressed on their interest to be trained, hence, the project may consider 4 or 5 girls for car driving training.
8. The community farms are great investments and attention will be necessary for the management of the farms to minimize any possible disputes regarding the investment operation and returns use.
9. Workout unified monitoring formats and reporting frequency for the two locations to act as a base for information system necessary for informing the PMCs meetings and decision making.

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List of Abréviations/ Acronymes

BL	Baseline
CC	Climate Change
COR	Commission of Refugees
FFS	Farmers Field Schools
GRC	German Red Cross
HH	Household
IGAs	Income Generating Activities
LA	Local Authority
NR	Natural Resources
PCC	Project Community Committee
SMOA	State Ministry of Agriculture
SMOAWF	State Ministry of Animal Wealth and Fisheries
PMC	Project Management Committee
SPMC	State Management Committee
SRCS	Sudanese Red Crescent Society
TSI	Transitional Solution Initiative
UNICEF	United Nations Child Education Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
VCA	Vulnerability Capacity Assessment