

Social Safety Nets for Food and Nutrition Security in West Africa



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Strengthening Livelihoods and Resilience of Vulnerable Rural Households, Prevention of Food Shocks, Crises and Climate Hazards and Gender Mainstreaming

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1 LESSON OR GOOD PRACTICE

- Combination of instruments targeting income generation for the most vulnerable households and job creation (cash for work-HIMO, conditional cash transfer and IGAs) and securing livelihoods through access to natural resources and women's empowerment

TYPE OF LESSON LEARNED

POSITIVE/POINTS
FOR IMPROVEMENT



Project from which the lesson is drawn

1. Project to support social protection through pilot targeting of vulnerable people and selective social nets in Burkina Faso, carried out by OXFAM (Burkina Faso),
2. Protection of the reproductive nucleus for the benefit of poor agro-pastoralist households in the Sahel region of Burkina Faso, carried out by AGED (Burkina Faso),
3. Empowering communities to become more resilient to the effects of climate change to improve food security, carried out by SONGTABA (Ghana),
4. Integrated Community Nutrition and Poverty Reduction Project (PINCP), carried out by Afric'Mutualité (Benin).
5. «Gender Mainstreaming in the Implementation of Social Safety Nets in Vulnerable Areas of Senegal and Guinea» by NGO AFAO.



Impact/effect

Cash For Work (CfW) has significant effects on increasing incomes and protecting the livelihoods of vulnerable populations. It is first of all a basis for economic revival through monetary or quasi-monetary transfers (vouchers, coupons, etc.) to beneficiaries and job creation. The CfW also helps to strengthen food security through the recovery of degraded land and rehabilitation of water boreholes for access to water, among others, with the dual benefit on agricultural systems and food security of communities, and an impact on support to communities and the most vulnerable families. The project implemented by AGED in Burkina Faso has, despite security constraints, carried out CfW activities for the recovery of degraded land. This project activity targeted women from very poor and poor households and organized in groups.

The results were positive, with significant involvement of the authorities and technical services, 40 hectares of land reclaimed through the CfW approach, and improved access to basic foods by households benefiting from the income generated by this instrument.

SONGTABA has also mobilized a CfW instrument for the rehabilitation of 3 water reservoirs to develop agricultural activities during dry seasons. The related actions favoring the development and strengthening of income-generating activities have an impact on the beneficiaries in terms of increasing their purchasing power and the sustainability of their activities. The economic activities practiced by women are essentially non-market activities or carried out under dependent employment status.

Other actions related to these programs targeting the financial inclusion of the vulnerable were experimented with the Afric'Mutualité project, which set up a system of micro-credits to support women from extremely poor households in the creation or development of their IGAs to increase their purchasing power. The targeted women, organized in solidarity groups, received micro-credits and were accompanied by community leaders to build up savings.

The gender dimension has been considered in the intervention carried out by AFAO. This is AFAO's core business, with women being the main beneficiaries of the targeted actions in Senegal and Guinea. In addition to the distribution of cash and food kits, the awareness-raising actions aimed to ensure the integration of the gender dimension in the implementation of social safety nets and to build resilience mechanisms around women and children.

The intervention had short-term effects, but its long-term impact is limited given its emergency nature. However, there are achievements that can promote the institutional sustainability of the project, such as the involvement of public services and structures in the overall project dynamics.



Actors and partners

A wide range of actors is usually present in this type of intervention given the multi-sectoral nature of the action. This characteristic requires strong community consultation mechanisms to validate the different processes, such as targeting, allocation of transfers, target audience of each activity,

the role of women, among others.

The main actors and partners involved are public administrations, decentralized technical services, communities and grassroots groups (women, processors, producers, etc.), private actors (including

agricultural producers), NGOs and local civil society organizations, research institutes, training centers in the implementation of projects, other national or international technical and financial partners.



Technological and technical innovations

The main innovation of these interventions has been the targeting of women as the main beneficiary groups of CfW and economic and financial inclusion activities. They seek the empowerment of women as the main key actors in local development.

And for this purpose, targeting approaches and methods have been mobilized to identify these vulnerable groups.



Validation

In the absence of final evaluation surveys based on indicators of progress in relation to the baseline situation at the outset, the impacts of this type of combination are based on the evidence found in the literature and the testimonies of the promoters and beneficiaries from the annual and final reports and interviews that validate the impact of the actions on the beneficiaries. All the stakeholders involved confirm the impact of this type of intervention, which combines social transfers with a productive approach, and stress the multiplier effect on the beneficiary communities.



Success factors

On the other hand, it is crucial to accompany social transfers with consumption and dietary diversity surveys, making it possible to observe whether the cash from the transfers has indeed been used for household welfare.

It is therefore important to note the importance of cash transfers in increasing sources of income and to accompany these transfers with other social safety net instruments that can help households escape vulnerability. The PRODEM project, for example, has coupled cash transfers with production activities (distribution of improved seeds and technical support to women), awareness-raising campaigns and social marketing, and this hybridization can allow for preventive action that goes beyond defence in the face of structural needs, but by formulating a response and a solution. It is therefore important to accompany cash transfers with diagnoses to identify the major causes of low income in poor households.

Difficulty in accessing water resources is one of the key aspects for the prevention of food and nutrition insecurity and it is crucial to adopt a holistic and systemic approach in order to address one of the major obstacles leading to household vulnerability. Indeed, prevention is about overcoming the difficulties associated with the lack of water in the West African region and particularly in the Sahel, where boreholes and wells are rare or non-existent, damaged, or empty. It is crucial to address one of the major constraints to the development of the target households, i.e. the management of the limited water resource, with activities focused on the construction or rehabilitation of boreholes and wells (through labor-based programs for example), so that prevention is accompanied by measures offering solutions.

One of the steps towards greater recognized participation and empowerment of women is economic inclusion and access to income-generating activities, giving them access to personal income that can give them some social autonomy.

The micro-credits have enabled women to use the amount distributed monthly to strengthen their IGAs (retail, small matting businesses, hairdressing, etc.),

and to give meaning to the investment and savings dynamics.



Challenges

Definition of access criteria and triangulation with local and traditional authorities to minimize inclusion errors.

It is important to determine how households that are unable to participate in CfW due to work constraints such as injury, disability, or chronic illness of the elderly can be supported.

Where the context allows, consider alternative means of assistance for those without able-bodied members in the household, such as unconditional cash transfers.

In addition to targeting criteria, criteria should be put in place to determine who has the constraints (e.g., doctor's certificates, age above a certain threshold, etc.).



Conditions for scaling up, replicability or dissemination

The involvement of communal and regional authorities in the implementation of the project and the adherence of the beneficiaries to the project's actions are elements that will facilitate the sustainability of the project's achievements. The participatory involvement of community leaders and decentralized services allows for positive community mobilization. To ensure effective involvement, it is advisable to do so through a collaboration protocol with the state authorities involved.

This is a combination of relevant tools (in-kind transfer plus technical training and other related actions such as veterinary monitoring) with a high potential for transforming livestock production but applicable to limited contexts and controlled experiments.

This type of intervention, as well as the combination of previous instruments, are often limited in scope both in terms of target and geographical area. Scaling up conditions is one of the major challenges of this type of intervention, given the intensity of resources required and the mobilization of several related instruments and actions to achieve the objectives and target beneficiaries from different entry points (in-kind transfers, CFW, awareness-raising, economic and financial inclusion through IGAs, etc.).

To this end, the implementation of these actions must necessarily be carried out by organizations with extensive experience in the mobilization of these SSNs instruments and working with women's organizations as the main vulnerable beneficiary group.

While many women have seized opportunities that provide them with a certain degree of monetary autonomy, several major dimensions must be taken into account for the success and scaling up of actions targeting the development of women's IGAs:

- (i) the need to consider women's time use, especially their time allocated to non-work and domestic work, in order to avoid overwork, coordination difficulties, negative disruptions to the economic sphere and to generate positive effects and limit negative ones,

- (ii) the need to support and supervise women more, particularly with literacy and accounting training, and to guide them towards strategies for developing their IGAs,

- (iii) The importance of integrating an awareness-raising aspect for men and community leaders, so that all understand the active role of women in IGAs, and the potential that the development of this activity offers for improving household livelihoods. The role of men is particularly key in the acceptance of the management of IGA resources by women.



Documents

- **Cash for Work (CFW) Guidance Note. Food Security Cluster 2019,**
- **Income-Generating Activities, Time Constraints and Women's Participation: Contradictory Dynamics, 2005.**



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