

profile

Number 72, December 2010

Republic of Yemen Raymah Area Development Project

The objectives of the Raymah Area Development Project (RADP) were to: (i) improve living conditions in Raymah through the provision of sustainable rural infrastructure and services, and the establishment of strong community organizations able to express community demands and aspirations; and (ii) improve rural incomes on a sustainable basis by increasing the productivity of smallholdings. The project was structured around four components: support to rural infrastructure, which accounted for 23 per cent of base costs; community development (22 per cent); agricultural development (45 per cent); and project management (10 per cent). The target group comprised approximately 400,000 people living in Raymah Governorate (the area was promoted to full governorate status in 2004), who are among the poorest in the country. Project support for agriculture was targeted at some 12,000 smallholder households. The project formed an autonomous unit within the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, with the project manager reporting to the Minister.

Main evaluation findings

The completion evaluation, undertaken by the IFAD Office of Evaluation in 2009, noted that RADP had played a very important role in opening up the Raymah region to more comprehensive development investment activities on the part of the Government and in bringing critical services to the area. One of IFAD's merits was to assist in undertaking a project in such a remote, barely accessible area that had not previously been the focus of major agriculture and rural development interventions. There is also evidence that RADP was partly responsible for promoting Raymah to full governorate status, thereby increasing its visibility among policy-makers.

The evaluation found that the small-scale infrastructure developed by the project (e.g. small dams, water-harvesting reservoirs, community drinking water supply schemes and feeder roads) provides important benefits to small farmers. However, on the whole, project results were poor notwithstanding progress made in furthering the concept of participatory planning and encouraging community involvement in resource allocation and implementation, drinking water supply, and development of feeder roads. Project design overestimated the Government's capacity at the time, especially in terms of national research and extension, and that of the Cooperative and Agricultural Credit Bank. As far as the project's impact on rural poverty is concerned, the evaluation discerned results in better access to safe drinking and irrigation water, while the construction of roads facilitated access to markets and increased employment opportunities. Despite



Drinking water pump. The provision of drinking water supply systems was one of the most effective activities financed by the RADP

Source: Luigi Cuna

PROJECT DATA

Country background:

- Republic of Yemen: ranked 140th out of 182 countries on the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index (2009)
- Almost 24 million of the total population live in rural areas, most depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.
- Unemployment rate: 37% of the population

Project cost:

- Total: US\$17 million
- IFAD loan: US\$12.1 million
- Government contribution: US\$2.8 million
- Beneficiaries' contribution: US\$1.1 million
- UNOPS contribution: US\$1 million

Cooperating institution: United Nations Office for Project Services

Key dates:

- Executive Board approval: Dec. 1997
- Project completion: Dec. 2007

RADP's positive performance in improving health and human security, especially through the water reservoirs and supply system, its impact with regard to natural resources management and the environment was particularly weak.

The performance of IFAD and the Government as partners in the project is considered to have been unsatisfactory. The Fund shares responsibility with the Government for designing a project that proved unsuitable in light of local conditions and capacity. The problems encountered during project

implementation were repeatedly emphasized both in annual supervision mission reports and in the Mid-term review. The fact that, in the context of its annual internal portfolio review process, IFAD Management classified the RADP as "at risk" for eight of the 9.5-year implementation period is a further confirmation of the severe problems that the project faced. However, no specific measures were taken to improve implementation and effectiveness. Finally, the Government's counterpart funds were not provided in a timely manner and payments to service providers were delayed, thereby severely delaying up implementation.

Key recommendations

Allocate resources necessary to ensure adequate understanding of the country context. In the design of any future projects, care should be taken to ensure that their objectives and activities are commensurate with the institutional, social and economic capabilities of the country. In this regard, Management should allocate sufficient administrative resources in order that adequate analytical work can be undertaken during project design in Yemen to arrive at a thorough understanding of the country's policy and institutional environment.

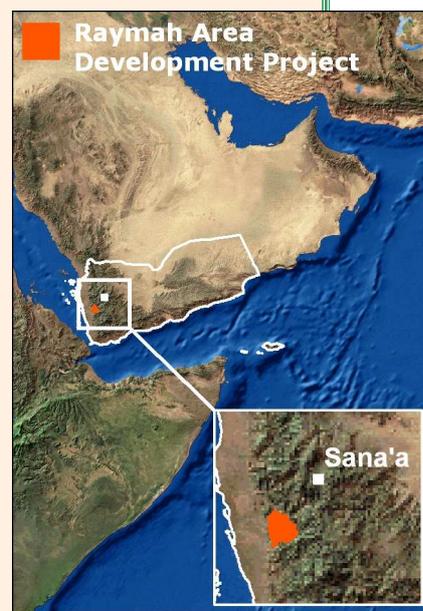
Attention should be paid to natural resource management and environmental issues. Given the concern about the depletion of underground water resources in Yemen, the environmental implications of IFAD-financed operations and the proposed coping strategies should be clearly articulated at design. Construction of large infrastructure projects should systematically include comprehensive and rigorous environmental/social impact assessments, before activities are commissioned. This would be consistent with the Fund's environmental and social assessment procedures, which were followed in designing the most recent interventions in Yemen.

Agricultural research and extension. In light of past experience and the Government's limited agricultural research and extension capacity, it is recommended that every effort should be made to involve producers' associations and other value-chain actors more actively in providing such services to the rural poor. This would be in line with the direction taken, in terms of wider engagement of private-sector entities, in the more recent IFAD-funded portfolio in Yemen.

Focus on development results. Measures to maintain continued focus on development results include ensuring that: project objectives are achievable and measurable; project supervision pays attention to results and the achievement of physical and financial targets; implementation of supervision recommendations are monitored and followed up in a timely manner; project-level monitoring and evaluation systems are well-resourced; and baseline surveys are undertaken during design or at the outset of implementation. During the annual portfolio review process, IFAD Management should ensure that similar "projects at risk" are thoroughly discussed and an action plan devised to ensure better performance in future.

Improve sustainability. In the context of small-scale infrastructure development activities, attention should be paid to building up management capacity for operations and maintenance among beneficiaries and their groups. Exit strategies should be developed early in the process, well ahead of project closure.

Complete the Beit Al-Faqih to Al-Hadijah road. The Government should consider including the completion of the Beit Al-Faqih/Al-Hadijah road in its own development plans as this is critical to further improving connectivity, access to markets and communication.



Further information:

Republic of Yemen, Raymah Area Development Project, Completion Evaluation, Report No. 2109-YE, December 2010, ISBN 978-92-9072-205-2, IFAD Office of Evaluation, Via Paolo di Dono 44, 00142 Rome, Italy. The full report and Profile are available online at www.ifad.org/evaluation; email: evaluation@ifad.org.

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in the map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IFAD concerning the delimitation of the frontiers or boundaries, or the authorities thereof.