

Executive summary

Introduction

1. The main objective of the project was to improve rural poor people's access to land and water resources, optimize their agricultural production and boost their incomes sustainably while limiting exodus towards urban centres. The project was structured in three components: providing support for local governance and land security; supporting sustainable agriculture development; and project management and monitoring and evaluation (M&E).

2. The project targeted 19 rural communes in the regions of Menabe and Melaky in West Island, located in the four districts of Mahabo, Miandrivazo, Belo sur Tsiribihina in Menabe, and Antsalova in the Melaky region. The project actions were to reach 40 per cent of rural households in the intervention area, for 40,000 direct beneficiaries living in 16,000 households. The beneficiary households were identified on the basis of two criteria: vulnerability and the development poles concept.

3. In April 2006, IFAD's Executive Board approved a loan for US\$13.13 million and a grant for US\$0.365. A supplementary loan in the amount of US\$5.170 million was added in 2012. AD2M concluded in 2015, one year after the scheduled date, with a financial execution rate of 99.8 per cent. The implementation of AD2M was marked by a political crisis, with a series of de facto governments in place beginning in March 2009. This led to several donors withdrawing from the country, slowing down public policy implementation by the administration both nationally and regionally. The country did not overcome the crisis until January 2014 with a return to constitutional order.

4. The evaluation was an independent exercise conducted by IOE, which has final responsibility for the evaluation report. Nevertheless, throughout the evaluation process, the evaluators consulted and exchanged views with the evaluation stakeholders to involve them as much as possible in reflection and learning based on their experiences, and to ensure that their concerns were taken into account in the evaluation. The evaluation analysed the project's results and impact by comparing them to initial and revised targets, and also attempted to account for project performance to the extent possible. The former approach served the objective of accountability, and the latter contributed to the learning objective.

5. A relatively abundant range of data exists on AD2M, including a project completion report containing quality information. The project archives include the Results and Impact Management System (RIMS) report for the period 2011 to 2015, and the project's internal M&E system maintained a consistent database. The country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE)¹ carried out in 2012 and published in 2013 is another source of interesting information, as the AD2M project was visited on that date. The CSPE stated that AD2M was on the right track, with ratings within the satisfactory range, with the exception of environmental and climate change impact. For this reason, special attention was paid to these two aspects to enable a comparison of impact over the five-year period.

Main evaluation findings

6. The project at design was fully consistent with actions under the poverty reduction strategy paper finalized in 2003 and revised in 2005, as well as with the national policy letter on Watersheds and Irrigated Perimeters approved in July 2006. A highlight of AD2M design was to combine access to greater land security with agricultural development and better value chains integration.

7. According to the theory of change, the hydro-agricultural improvements were attractive only within a context of increased land tenure security. Despite this well-founded paradigm, AD2M was unable to respond to the everyday existential demands of people living in the two intervention areas. They are extremely hard hit by insecurity owing to cattle thefts. Access to safe drinking water, health care, education and channels of communication were also high on the list of concerns among men and women living in the project areas. Although AD2M obviously cannot be held responsible for the overall deterioration in security, the inclusion of drinking water, sanitation and hygiene could have been considered – at least in terms of environmental health – and might have had a positive effect on the indicator of chronic malnutrition among children under five.

8. Although the number of land titles issued under AD2M was lower than planned, component 1 is considered effective, especially in comparison with performance at the national level. Productivity for the 13 land title units supported by AD2M was 2.7 times higher than for the 458 operating nationally. The average number of titles issued by each was 680 for AD2M and 262 nationally, over the observation period of 2007 to 2017. This is an indicator of relative efficiency.

9. In terms of agricultural development, the project exceeded the targets set for the amount of area receiving hydro-agricultural improvements to provide landless households with access to land, with the extra security provided by land titles. The hydro-agricultural improvements led to an increase in cropping intensity with the addition of a second rice-growing season and the insertion of a market gardening season between the two were permitted by water availability.

10. The project was able to make up for an initial implementation delay and closed with a very high execution rate. Owing to the increased coverage of beneficiary households (26,000 rather than the 16,000 initially projected), the internal rate of return for AD2M upon completion exceeded projections at project design. In terms of rural poverty impact, these are significant results on household incomes and assets, and higher agricultural yields. Human and social capital formation was satisfactory thanks to the water users associations and a simplified farmer field school model that reached thousands of men and women farmers.

11. Although the project focused on ways to enhance the sustainability of its achievements in terms of incomes, farm productivity and human and social capital, sustainability was deemed just moderately satisfactory. The main reason for this result was rampant insecurity owing to cattle thefts and other forms of rural banditry.

12. Women accounted for 34 per cent of the project beneficiaries, with a relatively high level of women's participation, for instance, in the management bodies of local banks and credit unions (CECAM). AD2M also endeavoured to promote environmentally friendly farming techniques, while disturbing the watersheds feeding hydro-agricultural improvements only in exceptional instances. In addition, the project showed an awareness of the challenges of climate change by contributing to sustainable actions to adapt to its effects.

13. AD2M was a laboratory for innovations. The development poles paradigm helped to avoid spreading interventions too thinly. The use of local non-governmental organizations made it possible for efficient proximity arrangements to be set up. The project also played a pioneering role in securing secondary land tenure rights, thus providing landless households with greater legal assurances. Some of these innovations were scaled up beyond IFAD-supported projects, but without achieving a scaling up on a mass scale that would have an impact on other operations by the Government and other donors.

Conclusions

14. AD2M was based on a relevant and coherent design that did not however remain unchanged during implementation. On the contrary, the project's capacity for adaptation in general, and the steps taken to remedy deficiencies of internal organization in particular, were decisive in achieving satisfactory results on effectiveness. The land security component performed well compared to the national benchmark, despite issuing fewer land titles than initially targeted. Component 2 exceeded projections overall in terms of both the number of households supported and higher agricultural production and productivity.

15. The project's efficiency and detectable impact are also ranked satisfactory. The same is true of the remaining evaluation criteria – including sustainability, where externalities carry a heavy weight, including insecurity owing to cattle thefts and rural banditry, and climate change hazards. Apart from its internal agenda, the project has invested in considerable sustainability factors, such as irrigation infrastructure that could be maintained by water users associations, and above all in human and social capital formation. Expanding the CECAM network within the AD2M areas could also be considered a factor of sustainability. The overall rating for the project is *satisfactory*.

Recommendations

16. Recommendation 1. Design projects with a limited number of synergetic themes. This is a general recommendation that applies to a large number of IFAD-supported projects. It is meant to counteract the inclination to include too many dimensions – which may reflect the people's needs but tend to require complex arrangements that are difficult to manage. Consciously staying within the bounds of well defined, coherent interventions is synonymous with simplicity, which is often the most effective approach in development projects and beyond.

17. Recommendation 2. Combine land tenure security with agricultural development. In countries with land tenure reform agendas, exploring synergies between land tenure and agricultural development is recommended, particularly in view of the hypothesis that secure land tenure tends to lend momentum to agricultural development.

18. Recommendation 3. Plan more systematically, from the time of project design, for potential scaling up opportunities. This recommendation relates to all contexts where IFAD is present, for there are two IFAD-supported projects in Madagascar that already respond to this recommendation: AD2M II and the Support Programme for Rural Microenterprise Poles and Regional Economies (PROSPERER). More specifically, it is recommended that a review be done to determine whether extending a project into a scaling up phase could lower the transaction costs inherent in concluding a project after a single phase and starting another in a different context.

19. Recommendation 4. In the case of AD2M II, environmental health promotion in villages should be included, since one of the indicators for the AD2M II goal is to lower chronic malnutrition among children under five. This takes into account recent learnings deducing that the critical factor is to reduce constant faecal contamination among children rather than nutrition as such.

† IFAD. Republic of Madagascar, country programme evaluation, Rome, October 2013.