Evaluation Report

East Africa Fund Evaluation: Restoring Livelihoods Amidst Climate Change and Conflict

Swiss Solidarity

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Executive Summary

The East Africa Fund supported 32 projects aimed at restoring livelihoods and re-establishing food security for affected people in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia. To assess the Fund's effectiveness, relevance, and economic sustainability, this evaluation reviewed ten selected interventions. A mixed methods approach was used, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques, to collect information from primary and secondary data sources. In total, 68 documents were reviewed, 44 KIIs and 16 FGDs were conducted, and 1,395 quantitative surveys were completed with project participants. The evaluation team analysed the quantitative data using Python to produce the required tables, charts, and statistics. An in-depth analysis of the qualitative data was conducted in line with a pre-defined analysis plan, following the completion of translation and transcription. Findings from the FGDs were triangulated with those from KIIs and other secondary sources to minimise reliance on any single source, thereby reducing the potential for bias to influence the results.

Effectiveness

The projects led to a moderate level of improvements[1] in food security and a significant increase in seed production in target areas (42 per cent among men and 52 per cent among women), as evidenced by logical frameworks and evaluation findings. In addition, the livelihood interventions supported by the East Africa Fund resulted in moderate to high improvements in food security. Participants in eight FGDs reported that the projects they engaged in enabled them to secure sufficient food to feed their families for extended periods. Financial support mechanisms, such as cash transfers and micro-grants, helped project participants meet basic needs until income from agro-pastoral or business activities became available. Participants received training in entrepreneurship and business management, which positively impacted their income, as the training improved participants' understanding of how to effectively manage their businesses, generate profits from entrepreneurial ventures, and pivot toward business growth and expansion. The business training also made them more aware about risks to their business and how to manage them, how to target more markets and how to reduce losses. The projects helped address key barriers like limited access to finance and lack of business knowledge. Training programmes in areas such as financial planning and marketing were particularly effective. Financial inclusion efforts, such as VSLAs and financial literacy training, were provided to project participants. The financial literacy training engaged experts from banks and microfinance institutions to deliver the training. While financial literacy training enhanced project participants' effectiveness, inflation adversely influenced the outcomes of financial inclusion efforts. For agricultural support, coordination with government stakeholders, accurate targeting of project participants, and active participation were key to success. However, extreme weather events such as droughts and heavy rains affected participation in agricultural support activities, compounding accessibility issues related to poor road conditions. Key drivers of the effectiveness of pastoral support programmes included involvement of government administrative and veterinary extension officers, selection of the correct project participants who were in need of pastoral support programmes and the willingness of the participants to strictly follow practices they learnt during the training.

Relevance

New businesses and agriculture-based initiatives contributed positively to the growth of local markets and economies. Organisations implementing activities procured resources such as labour, feed, local seeds, and vaccines from local vendors, which boosted sales for local businesses. Moreover, several mechanisms were employed to understand the local context and adapt to changes. These included vulnerability analyses, review meetings, the use of drought early warning bulletins, and coordination with government bodies and working groups. However, poverty and prolonged drought significantly hindered financial inclusion efforts. For instance, in Borena (Ethiopia), most VSLA activities failed to

[1]'Not at all' corresponds to 0–20% improvement, 'Low' to 21–40%, 'Moderate' to 41–60%, 'High' to 61–80%, and 'Very high' to more than 81% improvement.

launch as participants had to use the funds they received to meet immediate basic needs such as food, water, and other essentials. Agro-pastoral[2] support activities also faced limitations due to unpredictable weather patterns, particularly droughts and floods, which negatively affected crop yields and livestock health. A lack of adequate water during droughts severely restricted the ability to sustain both crops and livestock. This was further exacerbated by poor infrastructure, including limited mobile phone and internet connectivity. Due to these challenges, some projects were unable to effectively reach project participants, making it difficult to promote their participation and conduct regular progress monitoring.

Economic Sustainability

Diversified livelihoods are being pursued beyond the support provided by the projects, suggesting a degree of economic sustainability. The evaluation found that 76.6 per cent of diversified livelihood activities continued after project completion. The East Africa Fund projects also provided comprehensive support, including the establishment of VSLAs, distribution of VSLA kits, and training. Most of the VSLAs remain active, and currently, 41.1 per cent are engaged in the commercial sale of foodstuffs. This is a positive and unexpected outcome, with potential for further growth due to the continued operation of the VSLAs and the improved livelihood skills gained through the intervention. Several projects funded by the East Africa Fund delivered veterinary interventions in the target areas. These led to great improvements in the health of livestock, including goats, cattle, sheep, camels, and poultry. As a result, milk production in the target locations increased by an estimated 20 to 60 per cent. In this context, project participants were able to maintain the resources provided through various interventions, including DRR, WASH, and veterinary support. However, challenges were noted in sustaining access to improved water sources established through WASH initiatives. The outcomes of the interventions varied between women and men, influenced by cultural norms and community dynamics. In the target locations, men often own land and dominate pastoral and market activities, benefiting more from animal health interventions due to their mobility. Women, who are primarily responsible for domestic duties and managing small livestock, have more time to participate in training sessions and group activities such as VSLAs and agricultural work. Increased milk production also benefits women and children, as women play a key role in milking, using milk for household consumption and sales, and managing the income generated from it. Although women may have benefited from these supports, decisions on how proceeds were used were still mostly made by men, in line with cultural norms.

Recommendations

Based on the lessons learned and key findings, the evaluation team proposes a set of medium and high-priority recommendations. The following are the high-priority recommendations:

- The projects should continue providing livelihood support while integrating nutrition programming into the training modules to ensure that participants in early recovery consume balanced diets, helping to prevent nutritional deficiencies and lifestyle diseases.
- Future interventions should place greater emphasis on improving access to safe water sources and ensuring their sustainability.
- The project should concentrate more effort in creating market linkages with stockists and offtakers of agricultural goods produced.

[2] This is a way of life or form of social organisation centred on agriculture, specifically the cultivation of crops and the raising of livestock, as the primary means of economic activity and livelihood.