

Summary of the Evaluation Results

Country:	D.R. Congo
Project title:	Sustainable improvement of food security of the conflict-affected population and stabilization of the Kitchanga Region, North Kivu, D.R. Congo.
Project No.:	COD1114-15 (P04850) BMZ PN: 2015.0147.7
Project holder:	Welthungerhilfe
Approved budget:	€3,244,083
Committed funds:	€2,919,675 – BMZ; €324,408 – WHH
Institutional donor:	BMZ Private Träger SEWOH
Project period:	01/11/2015 – 31/12/2019

Country:	D.R. Congo
Project title:	Improvement of nutrition and food security of the conflict-affected population bordering the Virunga National Park.
Project No.:	COD1115-15 (Funds Pro Number 000122) BMZ PN.: 2015.0146.9
Project holder:	Welthungerhilfe
Approved budget:	€2,639,250
Committed funds:	€2,375,325 – BMZ; €263,925 – WHH
Institutional donor:	BMZ Private Träger SEWOH
Project period:	01/10/2015 – 31/12/2019

Project title:	Long term improvement of the food security situation and resilience of conflict-affected population and stabilization of the region Kitchanga, North Kivu, eastern D.R. Congo.
Project No.:	AF 2092/ COD1117-16 (P05015) BMZ PN: 2016.0125.1
Project holder:	Welthungerhilfe
Approved budget:	€3,500,000
Committed funds:	€3,500,000 – BMZ
Institutional donor:	BMZ Account 687-06 ENÜH
Project period:	01/07/2016 – 31/12/2019

Evaluation:	
Name of Evaluator:	Hendrik Hempel
Evaluation Type:	Midterm evaluation
Evaluation Time Frame:	Sep.–Oct. 2018

1 Brief programme/ project description and context conditions

Welthungerhilfe is implementing two BMZ-financed projects in the Masisi region (COD1114 and COD1117) and one BMZ co-financed project in Beni region (COD1115), but under different funding lines, all in the North Kivu province of eastern Congo. COD1114 and COD1115 are financed under the title SEWOH, COD1117 is funded under ENÜH. Due to the similarity of the three projects in terms of project content and design, it was decided to evaluate all three projects together to see links between the projects in Masisi region and the project in Beni/Kamango and to generate more relevant, aggregated results for the overall country programme development. The Welthungerhilfe Programme in Congo focuses on infrastructure rehabilitation, water and sanitation, support of smallholder agriculture and food and nutrition security, participatory village planning, and provision of intensive training programmes for partner organizations.

The aim of the projects is to improve nutrition and food security in the Kitchanga/Mweso region and to contribute to socio-economic development. The main activities are: rehabilitating feeder roads generally

carried out through cash for work (CFW), supporting smallholders and farming cooperatives to increase, diversify their agropastoral production and marketing. In addition, national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) should be strengthened and involved in project implementation.

Both intervention areas are frequently affected by militia robberies and criminal gangs and inter-ethnic clashes, followed by recurrent refugees movements and a general tense security situation. About one million people had to flee because of armed conflicts between militia and rebels in 2015 and 2016.

The region of Masisi province is fertile with good soil quality and favourable climatic conditions, but is characterized by rather extensive farming, very poor infrastructure and considerable malnutrition. The increased demand for food due to return migration threatened to exacerbate the already critical food situation in the region and to add additional conflict potential to existing inter-ethnic conflicts, and conflicts over land and pasture rights between farmers and livestock owners. Agriculture and animal husbandry are the only sources of income for 85% of the population, while 14% of the population live mainly from market trading.

The COD1115 region (Kamango and Watalinga chiefdom) lies at the foot of Rwenzori Mountain, surrounded by Virunga National Park to the west and Uganda in the east. Agriculture with cash crop production (coffee and cacao) is the main activity in the region. The fertile black volcanic soil and the numerous water springs on the slopes of the Rwenzori guarantee an enormous agricultural potential. The projects' target group consists of smallholder families of the various ethnic groups in the rural communities, returnees and IDP families living in host families.

As a midterm evaluation, the focus of the evaluation is less on the outcomes achieved than on the analysis of the relevance, effectiveness and the sustainability of the measures implemented in order to propose necessary changes and concrete recommendations for the final phase of the projects.

2 Relevance of the project

The relevance of the interventions in eastern Congo is absolutely undisputed. The suffering population in the rural areas actually has the best prerequisites for productive, diversified and lucrative agriculture. Project planning was based on various studies and experiences from previous projects, but the feasibility and baseline studies have left out relevant aspects (e.g. land rights, post-harvest management, and partner promotion). The planning matrixes of all projects have emerged with a very broad portfolio, but without a focused intervention strategy. The result chain appears very superficial for the professional eye and is less coherent and not easy to understand in its logic. The selected indicators are not very meaningful, especially with regard to the overall objective, sustainability and lasting impact. There is a lack of a profound component to focus on smallholder agricultural production and marketing. The relevance of the agricultural activities carried out is, of course, given, but it does not go consistently and far enough. With the approach "Making markets work for the poor" (M4P) a lot of information could have been collected to sharpen the intervention strategy and to professionalize implementation concepts.

The targeted outputs of all three projects in terms of quantity will certainly be achieved almost completely. But with the existing project concepts it seems unlikely that the project objectives can be achieved, especially with regard to sustainability and lasting impact. The concepts of several measures appear insufficient conceived.

3 Effectiveness of the project

The target group is involved into project activities and is very well known on account of numerous studies, baseline and other surveys. WHH has an excellent reputation among the different groups. They trust the organization and their staff. The projects COD1114/17 started with delay due to security problems and had to change personnel frequently. The current project management took over with the second half of the project and concentrated more on road rehabilitation and agricultural measures and less on software components like conflict mitigation and partners' capacity development. The road rehabilitation is moving on and most likely more kilometres will be rehabilitated than planned. Due to geographic conditions (mountainous scenery) more heavy machinery is needed to accomplish the work under COD1114 and shows the limits of CFW in road rehabilitation.

However, the semi-professional road rehabilitation is appropriate to the situation, considering the available budget and preliminary outcomes. For the time being the accessibility of the respective areas are significantly improved. Motorized traffic is growing. People's income due to CFW contributed tangibly to improve their livelihood. People invested the money in basic needs as well as things that improve one's standard of living.

The envisaged "community-based road maintenance and control" is obviously unrealistic, simply because of their general management incapability (regarding funds, machines, vehicle control, etc.), which can neither be simply enhanced through some trainings, nor with more money. Especially the limit of 3 tonne trucks for the roads seems naive considering the ordinary way of life and circumstances. Hence roads are presumptively of short lifespan and quickly destroyed.

Regarding agriculture (seed distribution) beneficiaries' complaint regarding quantity and quality to actually generate seed reserves for the next sowing operation and beneficiaries are demanding repeatedly for further seed and tools distribution. Obviously seeds and tools (agri-inputs) availability and accessibility remains difficult and depends on the project. The ownership of the farmer field groups appears very weak and does not seem sustainable. The farmer field schools (FFS) do not contribute efficiently to smallholders' need for extension service and knowledge enhancement. This is an observation that has already been gained in many other projects since 2009. To date, the vegetable growing with woman groups seems successful. Women cultivate their fields together in groups of different sizes and use new varieties like beetroot, spinach, etc. for home consumption; but apparently even more for sale and income generation.

In terms of nutrition the interviewed people reported on increased nutrition knowledge. Women appreciating the training they received regarding the value that the new vegetables have for their nutrition and health and they asked for more frequent nutrition lessons. Apparently, staff and partners were insufficiently trained with the Linking Agriculture with Nutrition and Natural Resource Management (LANN) module, and family and gender issues less strategically addressed. All projects aimed to improve the consumption of animal protein to fight against widespread anaemia. So far, COD1115 executed successfully a restocking programme with guinea pigs. The Masisi projects are still searching for the right approach on how to distribute. Many people used their CFW money to buy themselves local small ruminants. This activity seems redundant in the context of this kind of project and its portfolio. Rather, it is contributing more to beneficiaries' dependency and laziness. The objective to enrich people's diet with animal protein will not be achieved with this approach. In comparison, chicken farming is much more effective and efficient and very suitable for nutritional purposes due to its easy handling in the household. Here WHH has developed an effective and efficient alternative with a so-called vaccination service provider (VSP) model in Angola (in 2009).

The concept of local partner promotion is insufficient and obviously it does not have the meaning and weight it should have. So far, few NGOs are selected, trained and are carrying out activities in the context of the project. However, there are NGOs that are interested to work more with WHH and want to be involved in further project design and planning. WHH has a due diligence process for local partners, but apparently no focused and staggered training programme. This fact can be found in many WHH country programmes. The major constraint of national NGO's performance is, of course, the corrupt and criminal environment in the country. Not being taken in by it is a huge challenge. Much is based on doing each other a favour. Local NGO staff qualifications and capabilities are generally very low, due to the fact that local NGOs cannot pay adequate salaries compared to international NGOs. Furthermore, local NGOs are highly dependent on external donations. The biggest problem for them is the reliable advertising of funds. It is not their charitable and philanthropic commitment, or the demand for a strong civil society, that is the focus; rather entrepreneurial and prestigious reasons.

The agricultural vocational institute supported by COD1115 is operational. It has fields in which organic farming (mixed and intercropping) is applied. Different animal husbandry systems (goats, pigs, chicken and guinea pigs) can be studied and basic veterinary equipment is available. Challenges for the vocational training institute (VTI) are that only 10–15% of students can pay the study fees. The number of applying students is rapidly growing. The classroom conditions are very poor.

All projects are obliged to strengthen the cooperation with the public sector. However, it is difficult to get any support for technical services or others. In principle, the project management only receives support if it pays for services or mission fees.

4 Efficiency

With the current country programme management based in Goma, a major step has been taken to be closer to the various intervention areas again and the focus is on further developing the programme in terms of content and topic and to sharpen the respective project profiles. COD1114 and 17 are managed by one HoP, COD1115 as well. Project administration works carefully and foresightedly and is supervised by the country office administrator. An internal WHH audit did not discover any incorrectness and has attested that funds are being used in compliance with the principles of proper accounting and in conformity with the rules and regulations of WHH. The support from the 'Sector Strategy, Knowledge and Learning' unit was good regarding conflict mitigation and do no harm. In terms of agricultural advice and support could have been better. The support in implementing budget amendments also takes too long and it was not clear why.

A comprehensive budget revision was recently conducted, but BMZ still did not officially approved the requested budget revision. As emphasizes by the HoP, a non-approval of the budget revision would become a big problem for justification of national staff salaries, as well as for some activities. Budget problems mainly exist in COD1114. Personnel costs were definitely underestimated and disproportionately spent at the beginning of the project. The required funds are estimated at up to €100,000 until end of project.

The collaboration between COD1114 and 17 is running quite well. At the beginning of the evaluation, it looked as if it might be necessary to shift budget funds within the two projects. Since COD1114 is SEWOH financed and the other via ENÜH, it would have been very difficult to get this to the donor and to get permission for it. With current budget check there is no necessity to go for that. COD1114 will stay within the budget line for road rehabilitation, even with a very little plus regarding the rehabilitated km. COD1115 and COD1117 are doing well and will rehabilitate significantly more kilometres than planned. COD1117 could, instead of rehabilitating even more km, use the funds for much-needed water catchment constructions.

The budget for local partner support was significantly underestimated and gives the impression that this package of measures belongs to the "unloved" children of the last programme management. Apart from the argument of socio-political outcome, a professional partner promotion programme can significantly reduce personnel costs. Summarising a sum of €214,863 would be available to be used for the proposed partner qualification and operational programme including change of experiences with other WHH country programmes.

Programme and project management have established a functional monitoring system that is working at various levels. Internal project monitoring is carried out by the project management team, the agriculture team and the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officer. Monitoring of some use of outputs is established, but the monitoring of impact is still insufficient.

5 Outcomes

People use their money for house improvements (e.g. to cover their houses with corrugated iron sheets), buying small ruminants, paying bride price, renting land, paying school fees, and for health costs. The expenditure (up to 31%) for the purchase of small ruminants represents the largest share.

As in other projects, it is highly plausible that the rehabilitated roads will contribute to the flow of more traffic, more marketing and job opportunities. Improved transport conditions help to make goods cheaper in remote areas. And safety also increases. The extent to which this has already happened and will happen in the project areas will be analysed in the final end-line survey. The distribution of seeds has also helped to increase agricultural production and diversification and hopefully also to improve food security. To what extent could not yet be assessed. The contents of the training for improved cultivation are not up to date and are hardly replicated by the target group at home. COD1115 project started with value chain development for cash crops like cacao and coffee. Large fermentation plants were built for the cocoa. In Kamango, the agricultural vocational training institute is an excellent institution to offer young (and old)

smallholders a good demonstration opportunity; to try out new techniques and concepts and to analyse it, to test new appropriate mechanical devices, and if possible of course to produce quality seeds, to multiply new varieties, and to teach future farming as a business. WHH is one of the most important NGOs in the project areas. Stakeholders appreciate activities and the reputation of the projects are good.

6 Sustainability

The sustainability of the various measures is certainly the greatest weakness of the projects. No evidence could be found to support a positive assessment. Of course, the target group would like to continue to be supplied with seeds and hoes for free. For the core problems of the target group (reliable access to agro-inputs, solutions for the post-harvest management, appropriate transport facilities, as well as sustainably improved and fair marketing options) no corresponding permanent preconditions were created. Definitely, the improved accessibility and commercialization will especially serve the middlemen. As a rule, smallholders tend to benefit less from it. The impact and sustainability of community development plans and empowerment measures are very difficult to assess. During the evaluation they were neither visible nor tangible. As explained in detail above, the sustainability of local partner promotion and cooperation is so far not recognizable.

7 Most important recommendations

Following recommendations are suggested to the project COD1114/17: 1. Intensify the dialogue regarding road rehabilitation and maintenance, as well as consider the reallocation of COD1117 funds for water spring catchment, 2. Transform the farmer field school (FFS) into a lead farmer to farmer training approach, 3. Improve smallholders' commercialization, 4. Change implementation of processing devices (machines), 5. Change animal distribution approach, 6. Start with a partner promotion programme, 7. Strengthen conflict mitigation, 8. Slow down the village development plans, 9. Intensify nutritional education and trainings, and 10. Enhance rehabilitation of water source catchments. Specific recommendation for COD1115 are: 11. Complete the fermentation plants.

In principle, general recommendations to the WHH aim at transforming the individual measures into professionally developed modules and at the same time to take up and further develop (standardize) the good examples from other country programmes (e.g. Mozambique, Angola, Uganda, and Sierra Leone). Last but not least, M4P¹, FAAB², VSLA³, LANN⁴ and GMF⁵, and value chain development approaches should become common modules in every project that is working for increased agriculture production & marketing, food and nutrition security.

8 General conclusions and "lessons learnt"

Rural development and the fight against hunger and poverty needs a different attention and approach than exemplified with the evaluated projects. An effective programme must concentrate on the promotion of rural economy and agricultural marketing, especially in regions like North Kivu and Ituri, which are characterized on one side by an unstable security situation, displacement and many jobless people, and on the other side having a huge regional and agricultural potential. The aim must be to modernize medieval agricultural practices and support smallholders in finally overcoming their core constraints. With a little more effort in planning and conception, significantly better and even ground-breaking results could be achieved.

Many projects in the various WHH country programmes have developed very professional modules for specific rural and smallholder topics. However, these are apparently neither comprehensively explored and evaluated, nor included in an overarching concept for rural development and the promotion of the disadvantaged smallholders. A module system would surely contribute to improve and accelerate new project proposal elaboration, while at the same time reducing preparation costs.

¹ Making markets work for the poor.

² Farming as a business.

³ Village Saving and Loan Association

⁴ Linking agriculture Nutrition and natural resource management.

⁵ Gender model family approach.