



Is GAFSP Reaching Small-Scale Food Producers in The Gambia?

Introduction: The GAFSP-supported FASDEP in The Gambia

The Gambia is a small country in West Africa with a population of approximately 1.8 million. Over the last decade, the population has been growing at a fairly high rate of 2.8% per year. The Gambia is a low-income country with average per capita Gross National Income (GNI) estimated at US\$610 (2011), half the sub-Saharan African average of US\$1,255.¹ According to the 2011 Human Development Index, the country ranks 168 out of 187 countries.² Overall life expectancy in The Gambia is 64.1 years.³

The country has seen a noticeable decline in overall poverty rates during the last decade. The overall poverty head count index, based on an upper poverty line of US\$1.25 a day, is estimated at 48.4%, down from an estimated 58.0% in 2003. The Gambia has had a somewhat strong economic performance in recent years with an average annual real GDP growth rate of 4.3% in 2015 (revised) as compared to -4.3% in 2011.⁴

However, economic growth in The Gambia, no matter how impressive, has not been inclusive. Poverty in The Gambia remains pervasive. There are large regional variations of poverty, with rural areas recording a substantially higher poverty head count (73.9%) than urban areas (32.7%).

Given a relatively undiversified economy and a heavy dependence on rain-fed crops for agricultural production, imports for food security, and tourism receipts and remittances for foreign exchange earnings, the country remains highly vulnerable to external shocks. The 2011-2012 Sahel drought caused big losses in agricultural crop production, with related impacts on household food security and nutrition, the availability of seeds for the following agriculture season, and the balance of payments.⁵

In order to improve agricultural production, productivity, and food and nutrition security, the Gambian Government secured funding from The Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) to finance part of the 2012-2015 Gambia National Agriculture Investment Plan (GNAIP). The project, called the Food and Agriculture Sector Development Project (FASDEP) was approved on May 15, 2013, to the tune of US\$27.3 million. The Project Development Objective is to reduce rural household poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition through increased agricultural production, productivity and commercialization.

The project is being implemented in three of the five Administrative Regions of The Gambia: Lower River Region (LRR), Central River Region (CRR) North and South, and West Coast

1 Policy Research Working Paper 6356, World Bank, February 2013

2 Human Development Report, UNDP 2011

3 The Gambia 2013 Population and Housing Census Preliminary Results, The Gambia Bureau of Statistics, February 2013

4 Gambia Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Statistical Abstract, March 2017

5 Gambia Maternal and Child Health Results Projects Appraisal Document, World Bank, May 2014, page 10

Glossary of Acronyms

AAITG	ActionAid International The Gambia
CRR	Central River Region
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FASDEP	Food and Agriculture Sector Development Project
FBO	farmer-based organization
GACH	Gambia Angola China Global Group
GAFSP	Global Agriculture and Food Security Program
GCCI	Gambia Chambers of Commerce and Industry
GNAIP	Gambia National Agriculture Investment Plan
LRR	Lower River Region
MAM	Moderate Acute Malnutrition
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoBSE	Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NACOFAG	National Coordinating Organization for Farmer Associations The Gambia
NaNA	National Nutrition Agency
TANGO	The Association of Non-Governmental Organization
WCR	West Coast Region
WFP	World Food Programme



AME NDUR CHAM (CENTER) IS THE SECRETARY FOR THE SUKUTA WOMEN'S GARDEN COMMITTEE. WOMEN MAKE UP THE MAJORITY OF FASDEP PARTICIPANTS. SUKUTA, WCR.

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Region (WCR). These regions were identified as the country's most vulnerable and food insecure regions, based on food and nutrition security situation technical reports from WFP, the National Nutrition Agency (NaNA) and the Agricultural Statistical Department of the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA). Findings from the Humanitarian Country Team in The Gambia reported that in 2014, 19.5% of the total population was in need of humanitarian aid, with a significantly high percentage of food insecurity in WCR, CRR and parts of LRR.⁶ Furthermore, the 2013 National Nutritional Surveillance reported that the Global Acute Malnutrition rate, particularly Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) rates for children under five, was highest in the targeted regions: a MAM rate of 6.6% in WCR, 10.9% in LRR and 8.9% in CRR.⁷

The project is expected to reach 240,000 people: 150,000 women, 60,000 youth and 30,000 men. The projected reach is 30,000 households (8.0 persons per household), representing about 42% of total households in the project areas and about 20% of the population involved in agriculture.⁸

The project has four components:

COMPONENTS	SUB-COMPONENTS	COST ALLOCATION (US\$)
Improve agriculture infrastructure development	(i) Land management	9,974,772
	(ii) Expanding market access through improved infrastructure	
Agricultural diversification and commercialization	(i) Support to aquaculture, small ruminants and poultry	10,928,011
	(ii) Promotion of improved horticultural practices	
	(iii) Promotion of agro-enterprises	
	(iv) Linking producers to markets	
Improved approaches to national food and nutrition security	(i) Addressing malnutrition	3,952,087
	(ii) Building household resilience	
Project Management and Capacity building	(i) Capacity building for Central Projects Coordinating Unit	2,445,130
	(ii) Project Support Unit	

6 WFP Country Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment Report 2014

7 Gambia National Nutritional Surveillance Final Report 2013, National Nutrition Agency

8 FASDEP Proposal Document, March 2013, page 1



Scope of this study

ActionAid USA, in collaboration with ActionAid International The Gambia (AAITG), commissioned this case study in The Gambia. The case study was primarily a qualitative one and made use of project performance data and information, as well as key interviews with stakeholders such as small-scale producers, farmer-based organizations (FBOs), policymakers, and technical officials who participated in the design or implementation of the project. A total of 334 people were interviewed in 30 interview sessions across the project areas. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.

Field observation visits to project sites were also conducted. The research also included reviews of project literature and other related policy documents.

Key findings on the project implementation

FASDEP was implemented in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). WFP was allocated US\$3.4 million to pilot local procurement of home-grown food commodities such as rice, cowpea, and salt for a school feeding program in 87 Lower and Basic Cycle Schools in selected regions. FAO was allocated US\$1.4 million to undertake technical assistance and capacity building for farmers and FBOs. Both signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the project.

USING FASDEP'S MATCHING GRANT TO IMPROVE HER GARDEN, MARIE MENDY HAS INCREASED CROP PRODUCTION AND SUBSEQUENTLY HER INCOME. PACHOLU, WOR.
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At the MOA level, individual departments were assigned activities based on their technical expertise.

So far, the project has reached an estimated 3,926 households and 26,697 individuals. Most of the interventions are quick-win subprojects supporting small-scale producers, the majority of whom are women and youth. There are 14,390 women, representing slightly more than 50% of all participants.

The project includes a matching grant program that aims to finance productive investments along the value chain. Featuring a 60:40 cost-sharing ratio, the matching grant uses an open call for proposals and is targeting 150 FBOs. These FBOs are mixed-gender and female-dominant and were formed either by previous projects or by the community itself. They vary in size depending on the community but largely consist of 20 to 120 members. Some of these FBOs operate as agriculture cooperatives while others are thrift and savings associations.

A Regional Technical Advisory Committee is assigned to review and approve matching grant proposals. So far, 69 proposals have been financed for horticulture gardens, poultry production schemes, sheep fattening schemes, pig farms, farm machinery (tractors and power tillers), millet milling machines, and borehole systems.

FASDEP experienced major challenges, including a two-year delay due to changes in the leadership positions of the Project Director and the Financial Controller. Another challenge was the complex procurement method, in which one consultant was supposed to undertake the design and supervision of all the civil works components of the entire project. It took 24 months to recruit the consultant. Underbudgeting for some milestones and components at appraisal also presented a challenge, as it led to cost overruns during implementation. Although the National Coordinating Organization for Farmer Associations in The Gambia (NACOFAG) played a leading role during the design, there were no activities that specifically targeted NACOFAG during implementation. This was a major design error and an implementation challenge in view of the project's desire to foster active farmer-based participation, ownership and sustainability.

Nonetheless, FASDEP has accomplished remarkable achievements, including the rehabilitation of **87.8 km** of access roads and the establishment of (i) **44** small ruminant schemes, (ii) commercial poultry schemes for **15** schools and **5** communities, (iii) **10** improved horticultural schemes for communities and **30** school gardens, (iv) **45** fish ponds, (v) **30** backyard poultry farms, (vi) **4** community market structures, and (vii) **69** agro-business enterprises. The project also improved **300 ha** of upland soil erosion control and water conservation, **100 ha** of infrastructure development and land management, and **100 ha** of tidal access.

1. Does the project target small-scale food producers?

Nearly three-quarters of project participants practice small-scale farming with farm holdings of less than 1 ha. Most of them depend on rainfall. Before the project, these smallholder farmers were constrained by:

- inadequate annual rainfall
- salt intrusion

- depleted upland soil fertility
- soil erosion
- lack of access roads to markets
- inadequate production inputs such as seeds and fertilizers
- inadequate capacities in post-harvest handling, management, packaging and labelling
- limited entrepreneurship skills
- limited practice of intensive livestock fattening schemes, horticulture, family farming promotion

These constraints compounded the existing problem of low production and productivity. Average yields for upland crops such as millets and groundnuts were 0.8 tons/ha and 1.2 tons/ha respectively, while lowland rice yields ranged from 0.6 to 1.2 tons/ha.

The project invested in lowland development to facilitate access to markets, retain water for optimum crop growth, and promote upland conservation to reduce erosion and improve soil fertility. It also provided farm machinery, public support for infrastructure (e.g. roads, markets, food banks), and animal and vegetable production to diversify and enhance livelihoods.

2. How has the project reached small-scale food producers?

a. Increase in agricultural production

Farmers in the project areas produce mainly vegetable crops in the gardens, rice in the swamps, and millets and groundnuts in the uplands, along with traditional rearing of livestock, particularly small ruminants and local poultry. Production and productivity were constrained by poor infrastructure and inadequate support systems for resources such as water, seeds, fertilizers, and technical know-how.

Findings from this case study show that small-scale producers participating in the project have now increased their farming activities, both in the crop and livestock sectors. Gardens have been provided with (i) free one-off supplies of additional improved, non-genetically modified seeds for vegetables such as carrots, lettuce, and early maturing tomatoes, (ii) solar-powered boreholes and reservoirs, and (iii) fences to keep animals away, thus enabling increases in production.

For example, farmers at the vegetable garden in the community of Sukuta are now able to cultivate the garden's entire 15 ha year-round and in full scale, which previously had not been possible.

"Before the project, we were only able to cultivate 10 ha out of the 15 ha, but with the coming of the project we can cultivate all of the land. Our crops are also safe from animal pest due to the good fencing material as compared to before when we used to suffer. In fact we used to collect animal blood from the Central Abattoir at Abuko and sprinkle it on our beds as a means to scare them."

– Jonkunda Bojang and Amie Colley, members of Sukuta Women's Garden, WCR

Farmers in Sare Babou, CRR South, shared a similar story.

"Our garden situation was very bad. When we grew our crops, animals came and ate



some of them due to our weak fence. Water was very difficult to get. I used to have only two or three garden plots. But now with the project fence, I have eight plots, and we can grow during both the dry and rainy seasons."

– Fatou Kebbeh, farmer in Sare Babou, CRR South

Small ruminant and poultry schemes provided by the project are enabling intensive production as opposed to the traditional free-range system.

The construction of 87.8 km of rural road networks across the regions to link farms to markets is also facilitating access to farms and increased production. Due to the improved roads, most of the small-scale producers can now access their distant farms and transport their produce with ease.

"We used to find it very difficult to travel to work on the swamps and also transport our produce. Sometimes our donkey would get stuck in the mud and potholes, and sometimes our rice produce would get wet, or the donkey would get hurt. But now it is not happening anymore. The road is good. But we still need another one leading to our deep swampy fields."

– Isata Cham, farmer in Chamen Nianija, CRR North

In the rice growing areas of CRR South, CRR North and LRR, the development of 95 ha of tidal irrigation schemes with dykes (belting) is providing a low-cost way to increase rice production. In the upland areas, production is also increasing as a result of the project's

FENCING AND BUSINESS TRAINING PROVIDED BY FASDEP HAVE HELPED FARMERS AT THE WOMEN-LED SUKUTA WOMEN'S GARDEN TO GROW AND SELL VEGETABLES YEAR-ROUND. SUKUTA, WCR

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support systems. Rainfall reports in 2018 show that cowpea and millet are the only two crops with increased production, due to increased demand and available markets facilitated by the WFP Home Grown School Feeding Program that was initiated by FASDEP.⁹

In the area of animal production, the project financed commercial broiler production and ram fattening and breeding schemes. Not only are these initiatives increasing and supporting diversified production, they are also strengthening the livelihoods of small-scale producers who used to only do monoculture farming, such as rice in the swamps and millets or groundnuts in the uplands.

"We had been growing maize and sesame for three years before FASDEP, and our income had been limited by poor harvest. But now we have a broiler production scheme, so we can sell every six weeks and have a little income. Also, with the poultry waste, we can improve our backyard garden located within the broiler farm."

– Mam Jawara, Secretary of Group Juboo Poultry Farm, Sinchu Madado, CRR South

In Balangharr Benteeki, CRR North, and in Kumbanye, CRR South, the small ruminant breeding schemes have reproduced and multiplied from an initial stock of 30 to 42 and 45 animals, respectively, in just two and half years.

b. Access to improved production and processing technologies

Capacity building activities aimed at improving crop and livestock production along the value chain, as well as organization management (governance) conducted by the project, are expanding knowledge and skills among small-scale producers. Producers have expressed that the capacity building activities are helping them improve their production.

"We used to call a Livestock Assistant to help us with diseases and other management problems, but now we know what to feed our animals, how to diagnose and treat disease and how to determine our profits and losses. This year we bought animals, fattened them before Tobaski [Eid al-Adha] and sold all of them."

– Fama Njie, member of Panchang Women's Group, CRR North

In addition, the financing of small machinery such as 25 power tillers and rice milling machines is (i) reducing labor and time spent on labor, (ii) contributing to food processing and preparation, and (iii) transferring technology and skills to machine operators, most of whom are youth. Solar-powered boreholes and reticulation systems in horticultural gardens are also examples of how the use of technology is improving production, reducing production-related drudgery on women, and enhancing livelihoods.

"Before the project we used to fetch water manually from the mud well, and it was laborious. Some of the plots used to dry up because of lack of water. When the project came and fenced this place and installed pipes and a reservoir, it [the work] is much easier for us."

– Sasseh Bojang, mobilizer, Sukuta Women's Garden, WCR

Beyond strengthening the production and productivity of FBOs, the project was also designed to support the commodity value chain and agroprocessing investments as part of diversification and commercialization efforts, in line with the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and the 2012-2015 GNAIP. Under component two of the project,



250 FBOs were targeted for various agroprocessing initiatives to build their organizational capital and asset base.

For example, the Gambia Angola China Global Group (GACH) is working to enhance the value chain through a FASDEP matching grant. GACH established a local tomato factory in The Gambia to boost employment opportunities, curb post-harvest losses, and eventually ensure a market for tomatoes, a crop that is currently not lucrative in The Gambia.¹⁰

The factory purchased a boiler for the sterilization of tomatoes, which is required for quality assurance and for ensuring hygiene and sanitation in tomato paste production. They are contributing to the creation of a ready market for small-scale producers with two additional machines, which operate in two shifts and have the capacity to process two tons of tomatoes per day. The factory has also signed an MoU with women's FBOs to ensure a ready market, since these organizations have entered into some form of contract farming with the factory. The MoU provides decision-making frameworks and roadmaps on what to produce and whom to sell to.

Plans are also in place to install a solar drying machine to store more produce by reducing moisture content and improving shelf life. This would increase the marketed volume, increase production, and raise income levels in the horticulture subsector, with more plans to supply hybrid seeds and fertilizer. It would also provide support for capacity building and create jobs for youth. To this end, the company is producing tomato paste locally and employs up to 40 youth, most of whom are women.

ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS ARE SUPPORTING RICE FARMERS INCLUDING ADAMA CHAM, WHO IS SENDING HER SON TO SCHOOL WITH MONEY SHE'S EARNED FROM RAM FATTENING, SINCHU MAGAL, CRR SOUTH.

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9 Nationwide Farmer Consultation and Rainfall Situation Rapid Assessment Report July-August 2018

10 GACH also runs a mining company and a security company. The tomato factory is managed by a team of business professionals.



However, a critical look at the 69 funded investments shows a departure from this approach. More than 80% of the funded proposals are production- and productivity-related, leaving little opportunity for agroprocessing along the value chain. This focus towards funding primary production typically supports and aligns with classical productionist views that farmers belong to mass food production. With few opportunities to engage in other commodity value chain enhancement activities such as processing, preservation and storage, which are mostly seen as the domain of the formal sector, FBOs have been denied huge contributions to the informal sector and off-farm activities for expanded income and employment creation.

c. Increase in income

The support given to small-scale producers engaged in horticultural gardens, ram fattening schemes and commercial chicken broiler productions for communities and individuals has started to generate income. Producers at the Bakau Women's Garden have reported doubling their incomes from the sale of their produce, as a result of FASDEP's investment in farm infrastructure. The construction of fencing prevents animals from intruding into the garden. Water reticulation systems and reservoirs provide stable access to water, making it possible to produce year-round, both for consumption and for the local tourism industry.

Increased incomes from ram fattening schemes have also been reported by Adama Cham, president of a women's group in the Sinchu Magai community in CRR South.

"Before FASDEP came we used to work on the farms, got paid, and gave each other small loans from our own savings. When FASDEP came and brought us 33 rams, we

fattened them, sold them and kept a good account. We have GMD120,000 now, but before FASDEP we had less than GMD20,000."

– Adama Cham, President of Jokereh Endam in Sinchu Magai, CRR South

Furthermore, the WFP Purchase for Progress initiative, which buys homegrown food commodities such as rice, groundnuts, cowpeas and iodized salt, is opening up new partnerships with small-scale producers to increase their production and earning capacity. As stated previously, the production of cowpeas has increased in the project area as a result of growing demand from the school feeding program initiated by the project.¹¹

Small-scale producers benefiting from commercial broiler production have also reported an increase in their earnings as a result of the project's support. In Sinchu Alagie, CRR South, the income generated from the sale of broilers over seven production cycles was GMD954,570, equivalent to US\$200,000 for the group.¹²

"We used to belong to the Rural Poultry Farmers Association CRRS, and this went on for many years. The Association used to help us; two of us had once received some support with a few birds. We saw that poultry rearing was good for us. In this village we have 19 women and 8 men rearing [poultry]."

"When the FASDEP project came, we sent two proposals, one for poultry and another for ram fattening, and they approved the one for poultry. FASDEP built us a correct house with two blocks, one for rearing and one for storage, and provided us with birds. We raised 400 broilers, sold them before Ramadan, and have money in our bank."

– Amie Secka, President of the Poultry Farmers Association in Sinchu Alagie, CRR South

d. Food security and nutrition enhancement

Investments in diverse food products, such as ram fattening, horticulture gardens and broiler production within the project regions, are providing access to dietary diversity and foods that would otherwise have been obtained from imports. For example, farmers in Kerr Sait Saloum in CRR North are engaged in broiler production for the first time, and their primary market within their immediate community is contributing to their food and nutrition security.

"I have two wives, and when they are pregnant, I take a broiler to cook for each of them, and I do not [have to] pay. This has been helpful. It would be difficult without the poultry here. The poultry is good for all the area."

– Modou Leigh, farmer in Kerr Sait Saloum, CRR North

The initiatives are also enabling small-scale producers to generate income which they can use to purchase foods they cannot produce themselves.

The increase in the local production of cowpeas, triggered by the WFP school feeding program, is supplementing a trending switch in eating habits: Instead of four rice-based square meals a day, the inclusion of cowpeas, a crop rich in protein, is becoming more common. In most rural areas, cowpeas are often cooked with cassava for evening meals.

Increased consumption of foods rich in vitamins and minerals is crucial considering that all forms of anemia (mild, moderate, and severe) are more prevalent among women in rural areas than in urban areas. Overall, 68% of rural women were anemic, compared with 53% of

FATOU SIDIBEH-CEESAY, LONG-TIME MEMBER OF BAKAU WOMEN'S GARDEN, SAYS THE CONSTRUCTION OF FENCING, BOREHOLES AND A WAITING SHED HAS MADE WORK EASIER FOR HER AND OTHER GARDENERS. BAKAU, GREATER BANJUL AREA.

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11 Gambia Maternal and Child Health Results Projects Appraisal Document, World Bank, May 2014, page 10

12 FASDEP Statistics June 2018



AMIE SECKA AND HER VILLAGE'S POULTRY FARM ASSOCIATION HAVE INCREASED THEIR INCOMES THROUGH POULTRY FARMING, SINCHU ALAGIE, CRR SOUTH.
CREDIT: MOHAMED LAMIN TOURAY/ ACTIONAID

urban women.¹³ Producers in all the sampled horticultural gardens reported consuming their locally produced vegetable products before selling them or sharing with their neighbors. This is possible because the project has provided free supplies of additional varieties of vegetables seeds, improved water situations, and capacity building activities.

"We used to eat produce from our vegetable gardens for only a few months during the dry season, but now we can grow in both seasons, and we [have enough to] eat and give to our relatives."

– Fatou Kebbeh, farmer in Sare Babou, CRR South

According to the WFP, the market plays a major role in facilitating access to food in The Gambia, especially rice. Its comprehensive food security assessment reveals that over 87% of respondents depend on the market for their main source of food.¹⁴ The construction of 87.7 km of road networks under the project is linking big farming communities, such as those in Wassu, Jakaba, Kuntaur, Fula Kunda and Bakadagie Jailan, to markets previously inaccessible due to poor road conditions. Farmers reported that these roads are helping to (i) increase access to productive land for year-round rice production and (ii) decrease the cost of transporting goods and services to the hinterlands.

Food and nutrition security is also being enhanced by the community markets in Wassu, Busumba and Brikamaba, where farmers now have access to assortments of foods. In rural areas, weekly markets called *lumo* are especially important. These are places where many people purchase their weekly food items and where retailers buy wholesale foods to resell to remote communities.

¹³ Gambia Demographic and Health Survey 2013

¹⁴ WFP Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis Report 2016

Across WCR and LRR, the school feeding program implemented by WFP in targeted pre- and primary schools is contributing to the enhancement of child and adolescent food and nutrition security. Its success has resulted in oversubscribing the baseline target of 22,924 pre- and primary school pupils in 87 schools to 192,012 in 117 schools. It is widely recognized as a contributing factor in boosting enrollment and attendance and reducing short-term hunger in schools. It is also acting as an extensive "social safety net" for poorer families who benefit from income transfer, through reduced household food consumption at home: Since students are eating at school, they may not need to consume as much food at home. This represents a cost saving for households.

As a result of the project partnership with NaNA, which collaborated with the Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE), nutrition education is now incorporated in school curricula. It has the potential to expand knowledge among children and parents about the importance of improved hygiene and sanitation and encourage practices such as handwashing with soap before eating and after using the toilet. Nutrition education is also enhancing nutritional awareness and behavioral changes at the community level. Both interventions may have positive spillover effects on society, increasing awareness and prompting behavioral change towards nutrition.

Under the matching grant window, the project partnered with one of the most successful youth associations in the country, Youth Farmers Association. It provided fencing along the perimeter of their poultry farm, along with training in poultry management and the procurement of an initial stock of birds and feed. The Association now employs 22 youth and has a bird capacity of up to 28,000. It is the main supplier of eggs for almost all the major hotels in The Gambia and for neighboring communities, which receive reduced prices. The Association is creating access to protein-rich, wholesome food and income for other livelihood investments.

"The project is helping us to motivate other youths to stay in the country and not take the 'back way' to Europe. Because of the support from the project (GMD2 million), which we used to purchase 15,000 birds and equipment, we are able to construct additional layers [to the] house and procure quality feeds from our previous sales. Today, we are the biggest commercial poultry farm in the country, thanks to the project; we supply the biggest hotels and supermarkets in the country."

– Muhammed Sanyang, President of Youth Farmers Association in Sambouya, WCR

e. Strengthening of local farmers' groups

The project uses a group approach to reach small-scale producers. A total of 30 existing FBO members have been reached. NACOFAG played a role in reorganizing, mobilizing and coordinating the members to benefit from various capacity building activities related to agricultural production techniques, organization, and governance management. According to NACOFAG Coordinator Alieu Sowe, these activities are contributing to greater awareness and understanding of issues related to policy consultations and dialogues and project implementation.

The approach of engaging farmers collectively in project design and implementation is also contributing to the creation of networks among farmers. Farmers are building their confidence in community development and improving their negotiation and consensus-building skills as they implement FASDEP initiatives. For example, the Rice Farmers Association is receiving input support from the WFP as well as training on warehouse

management and skills related to rice production so that the school feeding program would start purchasing locally cultivated rice. These training sessions have helped farmers produce high-quality rice to meet program standards.

Overall these engagements have been reported as empowering. They could lead to improved community ownership of their investments and foster social cohesion and safety, as noted by Musukuta Badjie, former Project Manager of Agroecology and Resilience at AAITG.

3. How does the project engage small-scale food producers, farmer organizations and civil society organizations?

Findings from the case study interviews and a review of project design documentation and progress reports show that there has been wide-ranging engagement and participation of civil society organizations. Among these are The Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO), Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI), AAITG, and NACOFAG, including its 16-member farmer organizations and federations.

Both AAITG and NACOFAG played key roles in project design. NACOFAG was instrumental in organizing farmer-based consultations, inviting expert support from a sister body in Senegal and hiring a local consultant to lead the consultation process. AAITG also provided valuable technical and organizational input through their Executive Director's participation on the Steering Committee at the national level.

When it came to implementation, however, both organizations fell short of expectations, while others such as TANGO and GCCCI played active roles at the project steering committee level. Based on the design document created during appraisal, AAITG was assigned to implement the Seed and Cereal Banking initiative, a revolving savings and credit scheme whereby community members collectively purchase seeds and cereals during the harvest season, when prices are relatively low, and loan them to community members during the rainy and hungry or lean season. Loans are then repaid with incremental increases in quantity, as part of an effort to build resilience. However, AAITG was not consulted in the targeting of the sites or in any implementation-related activities to date.

Alternatively, NACOFAG has been assigned to spearhead farmer networking (farmer-based consultations) and integration, monitor progress towards sustaining the interventions, and take aspect of the Seed and Cereal Banking initiative post-FASDEP. NACOFAG has already submitted a concept paper and is working to implement the Seed and Cereal Banking initiative in collaboration with key stakeholders such as the Department of Agriculture, nongovernmental organizations, established village community cooperative groups, champion farmers, and seed producers. NACOFAG has also started linking producer groups and individual farmers with donors to foster partnerships and strengthen local ownership.

4. How does the project reach and benefit women?

More than 90% of agricultural production in The Gambia is done by small-scale producers, 70% of whom are women. FASDEP supports activities in horticulture, small ruminant fattening and breeding, and poultry production, which mainly benefit women due to a gendered division of labor common throughout Africa: men primarily grow sorghum, millet, maize and groundnuts in the highlands, while women primarily grow lowland rice and

vegetables. Strict divisions of labor also exist in livestock rearing: women are in charge of small ruminants and chicken while men deal with cattle for reasons of prestige, hence their active engagement during design and implementation.¹⁵

"I heard that FASDEP [was] helping women. I went to the office, and I asked [about] their procedures. They explained [it] all to me, and I applied. It was [a] good consultation."

– Jainaba M. Camara, ram fattener and owner of Tiana Farms in Tujereng, WCR

The role of women has been very prominent given that they constitute the majority of agricultural workers in The Gambia. Consolidated progress reports from the project show that more than 70% of the interventions implemented and used so far are dominated by women farmers. Of the 30 existing FBOs supported by the project, 25 are women-only groups representing 83% women coverage.

"If you look at the current investments supported by FASDEP, you will find out that women are benefiting from the small ruminants schemes, seeds and fertilizers for horticulture production, broiler production schemes, and in the fish ponds and market structures."

– Musa F. Sowe, National President of NACOFAG

a. Engagement and participation of women producer groups

During design and implementation, the project worked with existing producer groups called *kafoos* as well as individual producers. The membership of each kafoo varies depending on the community, but the executive comprises an average of eight to 10 members, 90% of whom are women. The President, Treasurer and Auditor are all women. Men who are part of a group take only advisory roles. The project provides opportunities for women to take leadership roles in (i) decision-making about production, (ii) the purchase, sale, or transfer of assets, and (iii) public speaking (with extension agents and other government officials including those on donor missions). The engagement and participation of kafoos are contributing to a break from social norms in local development, where men usually dominate.

"I do not have much, but there was full participation and consultation with the farmers. I also attended a workshop where more than 100 farmers were invited, and most of them were women."

– Daba Ndong, Admin and Finance Officer at NACOFAG

In The Gambia, one of the main constraints affecting small-scale producers, especially women, is access to land. FASDEP's intervention, facilitated by Village Development Committees, enables women to access and control land collectively through community horticultural gardens and commercial broiler schemes. Members who would have been landless are able to acquire farming space by using the allocated communal land, as is the case with the vegetable gardens, or by registering under the name of their group, as is the case with the commercial broiler schemes. Each woman has the opportunity to make her own decisions about production and benefits from economies of scale. By empowering kafoos to collectively acquire and register land, and by providing spaces for women to make decisions about what to produce, both for income and for consumption, the project has changed the gendered process of decision-making on access to land for collective use. As a result, all kafoos have land ownership transfer and registration documents.

15 Programme Building Resilience Against Food and Nutritional Insecurity in the Sahel/P2RS, appraisal document 2014

b. Reduction in unpaid care work and capacity building

A positive spillover effect from the commercial poultry and sheep breeding schemes is the reduction of time and energy spent on manual labor. Solar-powered boreholes and hand pump wells are indirectly providing access to safe drinking water for household use, thereby reducing the burden of unpaid care work on women.

Matching grant investments to support the acquisition of agroprocessing equipment such as rice milling machines are also reducing drudgery and contributing to cost savings for the processing of staple foods. The milling machines in Bangherr and Bantanto Jawara Jallow in CRR North are classic examples of women reaping the benefits of technology.

"Before the project we used to pound our rice [by] using our hands and winnowing it... Now we can just take it to the machine and it will grind it quickly."

– Suba Jallow, farmer in Bangherr, CRR North

The capacity building activities in horticulture and animal production practices undertaken by the project also targeted women, by selecting certain kafoo members. Women producers interviewed for this case study reported being part of many trainings organized by the project, which NACOGAF has also confirmed.

Access to markets has also been created for several women producers so that they can participate in the yearly trade fairs organized by The Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Such avenues have provided opportunities for these women to sell their produce, network with other business entities, and establish new contacts.¹⁶

A report for the WFP shows that women entrepreneurs are demonstrating that they have the appetite, skills and vision to take advantage of opportunities provided by the Home Grown School Feeding Program. Companies like YAMS Enterprise have busted the common myth that "women-led businesses" do not grow beyond a certain scale. From an initial 15 metric tons of locally produced beans, YAMS has increased the quantity to 67.7 metric tons for the Home Grown School Feeding Program.

5. Does the project make communities more climate resilient?

Like all other sub-Saharan African countries, The Gambia is prone to low precipitation and unpredictable annual fluctuations in rainfall. As a consequence, dry spells and drought occur frequently. The 2011-2012 Sahel drought was a classic example: nearly two-thirds of the farming population experienced crop failure, leading to requests for international humanitarian assistance.

FASDEP was intended to complement the 2012-2015 GNAIP, which was part of the Agriculture Sector Strategy to implement projects providing mechanisms to adapt to or mitigate the effects of climate change. The project's investments have promoted communities' resilience to the vagaries of the physical environment. Initiatives included the provision of early maturing seed varieties and irrigation for gardens and the use of solar energy systems.

The project also supported the improvement of 30 local poultry production schemes for the management of indigenous fowl, which are adaptive to the local environment. The schemes



aimed to use free-range feeding systems, thus providing a means of improving and promoting external, low-input, local food production. Furthermore, the project has developed simple, low-cost production techniques that contribute to climate resilience, including the 95-ha tidal irrigation schemes and light farm machinery (25 power tillers) used for land preparation to minimize soil degradation and erosion.

As part of the school interventions, tree nursery sites and environmental conservation technologies such as composting have been established. In addition, school clubs and youth farmer clubs are contributing to ongoing environmental education and literacy initiatives in schools and communities. School environmental clubs work with youth farmers to conduct popular, educational theatrical productions in schools as well as outdoor community events on waste management, the benefits of agroforestry and agroecology, and the need for environmental stewardship.

Data from time-use studies show that water collection is a significant burden on women, particularly in areas with a shortage in water infrastructure. The provision of solar-powered water reticulation systems, as part of some of the commercial poultry production and sheep breeding schemes managed by women, is climate resilient and is also indirectly providing access to safe drinking water for domestic use and reducing the burden of unpaid care work on women.

WITH RICE MILLING MACHINES LIKE THIS ONE OPERATED BY CHOFY LEIGH, WOMEN FARMERS NO LONGER HAVE TO POUND RICE BY HAND AND CAN HAVE MORE TIME TO REST. BANGHER, CRR NORTH.

CREDIT: MOHAMED LAMIN TOURAY/ ACTIONAID

¹⁶ FASDEP Project Management Progress Report, June 2018

Recommendations

On the general project's approach and overall strategy:

Small-scale producers have long been relegated to the horizontal aspect of food and nutrition security. Entities like NACOFAG have attempted to engage them along the vertical aspect of agricultural and rural development. However, these engagements only focus on strengthening the organizational and networking capacities of farmers. Although this is an element of empowerment, it still relegates farmers and their member organizations to being "takers" in their domain.

To address these issues, FASDEP and future projects should:

- Recognize farmer participants and organizations as leaders in their own right. They are not only producers but can also take part in more activities along the value chain.
- Improve the involvement of NACOFAG and AAITG throughout the design and implementation processes.
- Attract and encourage private investments through public-private partnerships. The GACH Tomato Factory shows how increasing private sector participation, particularly small and medium enterprises and farmer-based private investments, could bridge the processing, storage and marketing gap for small-scale producers and enhance the value chain. The factory is now poised to create a stable market for vegetable producers, which will increase their production and incomes.
- Assign specific project components to non-state actors through delegated management contracts, and use MoUs based on results and comparative advantages. This would increase public-private partnerships and improve social and institutional development.
- Extend partnerships with non-state actors beyond capacity building to post-production activities. Such partnerships could be implemented in areas such as post-harvest technologies and management; the processing, storage and transportation of produce; and linking producers to markets.

On women's empowerment:

Many of FASDEP's current investments provide limited opportunities to reduce women's labor in post-harvest technologies at the community and household level. Most project components are related to production and productivity, except for the matching grant subcomponent where less than 15% of the 69 funded proposals relates to food processing and value addition equipment. Wide gaps remain in relieving women's unpaid care work and leveraging food preparation for consumption to improve health and wellbeing.

To improve impacts on women and other vulnerable groups, future projects should:

- Introduce available and affordable climate-friendly technologies such as improved cooking stoves to decrease time spent collecting wood for fuel.

- Reduce women's workloads in processing and preparing foods by investing in family support structures such as early childhood education-friendly day care centers, small-scale technologies and post-harvest labor-saving equipment and strengthening their adaptability. This would open up opportunities for women to engage in leisure or public meetings and campaigns.
- Include a detailed gender analysis of target areas when determining eligibility criteria of participants, in order to reach the most vulnerable groups, including women. Such a study should be done in collaboration with national gender-based institutions for better integration and to enhance proper consultations and engagement.
- Engage well-recognized primary farmer's producer groups, e.g. Women's College under NACOFAG and Mother's Club under MoBSE, to better identify groups that are most at risk. This would yield greater impacts of project outcomes. It was reported that these structures were underutilized during the implementation of FASDEP and played no role in the selection of participating groups at the community level.
- Provide women with affordable and accessible microfinance resources and with cash transfer opportunities. This would enable them to purchase immediate or short-term household needs. This would also allow women's groups to safeguard investments and accumulate financial resources that can be invested in long-term assets, growth and development.
- Ensure that kafoos and smaller, smallholder-run FBOs, not just large factories like GACH, can acquire matching grants. Many women's groups reported they could not benefit from FASDEP's matching grant because of a low financial resource base. For them, the cost-sharing ratio of 60:40 was very expensive and bureaucratic and amounted to a missed opportunity. Future matching grant programs could reduce cost-sharing ratios and bureaucratic barriers. They could also have two tiers, one targeting larger entities such as the GACH tomato factory with a 60:40 cost-sharing ratio, and another that targets women smallholder farmers.

On climate resilience:

- Partner with FBOs to implement and reinforce activities such as agroforestry and agroecology.
- Adopt climate-adaptive, sustainable farming practices, such as water harvesting, to promote backyard vegetable production during the dry season.
- Strengthen the capacities of small-scale producers to use gender-sensitive, indigenous early warning systems and risk mitigation measures. This work should be done with relevant stakeholders, such as the technical departments under MOA and Village Development Committees.
- For tidal irrigation schemes still under development in the lowlands, early maturing varieties of vegetable and semi-dwarf, early maturing, high yielding, and salt tolerant rice varieties should be introduced to maximize production and crop diversification.
- Package group-based investments into multiple subprojects such as (i) ram fattening and poultry rearing, (ii) gardening and poultry rearing, or (iii) milling machine and ram fattening scheme – formed based on each group's needs. Doing this would enhance local food diversity and improve production.

On project sustainability:

- Partner with AAITG and the Department of Community Development, given its extensive knowledge in community-led social engineering and countrywide representation, to build community-driven approaches in the implementation and ownership of projects at the local level.
- Promote the adoption of not only indigenous sheep breeds (for breeding and fattening) but also goats and other local poultry (e.g. fowl, ducks, geese) for vulnerable households within eligible kafoos. This would support them to build their asset base, with an inbuilt redistribution plan for other kafoo members. This would also strengthen social safety nets and the social capital of kafoos.
- Promulgate a policy in the national budget to support free meals at school. In the short run, food safety nets should be provided for vulnerable groups at schools through the strengthening of community-based school canteens and the adoption of the WFP's Purchase for Progress initiatives.

COVER PHOTO

FARM OWNER JAINABA M. CAMARA WAS ABLE TO SCALE UP HER BUSINESS SIGNIFICANTLY WITH ADDITIONAL SHEEP FROM FASDEP. TUJERENG, WCR.

CREDIT: MOHAMED LAMIN TOURAY/ ACTIONAID

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