

# Findings

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Good Practice  
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## Cameroon: the National Agricultural Extension and Research Program Support Project

*As a follow-on intervention to the National Project for Agricultural Extension (PNVA), this project undertook to finance – jointly with the government, IFAD, and AfDB – implementation (2001-2004) of the national agricultural extension policy and agricultural research in Cameroon as follows : competitive research grants (IDA); linkages between agricultural research and extension (IFAD); and on-station agricultural research ( AfDB). While providing services to all farmers, the project sought to prioritize «resource-poor» farmers, and women farmers.*

### Impact on the ground

- An estimated 80% of the farming population was reached: the 58,699 contact groups created represented at least 50% of farm families; after midterm, 13,277 were formed as micro projects, representing about 488,000 families ( 39% of the farm families ), of them 46% women..
- While average crop, livestock and fisheries yield increases of 10% had been projected in the SAR, the increases by and large exceeded this figure – some of the yield increases per year were as follows : maize – 17.5%; cassava – 23.2%, potatoes – 30%, plantains – 21.3%.; milk – 10.1%; cattle – 9.1%; poultry – 7%.
- The adoption rates reached during the second half of the project commonly exceeded the target of 62%. Out of 36 new technologies reviewed in the Impact Study, the adoption rates were over the target in 28.
- Fifty-six SOAPs were in place providing the necessary support to farmer organizations and links with the private sector; 3 contracts were entered into with NGOs for agricultural extension covering 31 zones; 474 production contracts were made between farmer groups, microfinance institutions, and input suppliers or produce marketers; 79 professional associations and 12 produce-specific federations to support local farmers groups were established, involving 23,123 farmers.
- The pilot operation relating to the Village-based Community Development component helped educate 184 trainers who covered 320 villages which prepared diagnostic analyses and activity plans. The plans implemented included improvements in getting potable water (40%), rehabilitation of schools and their equipment (25%), rehabilitation or construction of sanitary infrastructure (10%) and others (25%).
- Three hundred and twenty villages were covered under the community development pilot component, each having a comprehensive diagnostic plan – this exceeded the target of 70-100 villages.
- Compared to the target of 700 subprojects to be satisfactorily implemented, 1,250 subprojects were satisfactorily implemented, of which 520 were by women.

- AVZs became more like rural development facilitators in assisting Producers' Organizations ( POs ) – 13,877 of them - in the planning and implementation of their “micro projects”, consisting of activity plans for productive small infrastructure and equipment, and the delivery of related agricultural extension advisory services as requested by farmers.
- The beneficiary assessment carried out at the end of the project indicated that 93% of women in the project had received assistance from the project.
- AVZs advised farmers on topics and problem areas identified by the farmers rather than imposing their own or public sector preferences. More than 300 farmers' problems were identified and prioritized at participatory committee meetings at different levels.
- As many as 196 agricultural, livestock and fisheries technical messages were demonstrated and conveyed to farmers - the rate of adoption was 48.5 % and there was demonstrable improvement in most of the crops and products. The media was also used quite intensively to disseminate extension messages – a special program “Radio Rural“ broadcast more than 2,000 hours of agricultural sector programs over the last 2-3 years of the project.
- Eight hundred and seventy nine farmers in 16 regions were trained in the multiplication of seeds and animal materials.
- The 49 joint participatory diagnoses of farming systems helped to identify numerous problems that farmers regarded as high-priority issues in their agricultural, livestock and fisheries activities. Three different methods were used to resolve these problems: tests on farmers' fields, on-station research, and competitive research grants. This helped farmers improve the productivity of various crops and animal produce, conserve the fertility of soils, and protect crops and animals against diseases, parasites and rodents.
- Those problems that could be resolved through competitive arrangements were selected and formulated into «research packages» prior to advertising bidding documents and awarding contracts. By the end of the project, 20 research contracts were signed, averaging about \$50,000 per contract.
- The project was able to finance 1,277 subprojects specifically for the provision of equipment and small infrastructure.
- By the end of the project 1,407 AVZs were in post, 189 of them female. In addition, there were some 300 subject matter specialists at the regional level and 80 technical specialists at the provincial level.
- By midterm, the AVZs, including staff from the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Industry ( MINEPIA) received training through 3,450 sessions and the specialists through 95 workshops. After midterm, when the T&V approach was modified to a «microprojects» approach, training activities were re-oriented suitably.
- The specific emphasis on getting women involved in extension groups and training them in selected trades resulted in substantial improvements in this area.
- The inclusion of HIV/AIDS education into extension work over the years 1999-2002 resulted in extension agents being trained in preventive measures; these messages were then disseminated to more than 800,000 contact groups in 10,000 villages, covering two-thirds of the rural families with the program.
- One thousand, six hundred and five of the 13,877 POs mentioned earlier joined 79 new “Associations Professionnelles de producteurs”, most of whom linked with produce-specific, vertical organizations and “filieres”.
- The project facilitated the development of collaborative arrangements between the Ministry of Agriculture, MINEPIA ( including in unified extension services, the Ministry of Scientific Research and IRAD (the Institute of Agricultural Research for Development).

### **Lessons learned**

- Substantial increases in yields and livestock productivity can be achieved with an effective extension management system if linked with adaptive agricultural research and modified to the conditions in a particular country. However, whatever system is used to support producers, adequate mobility for the extension and research staff is a precondition for obtaining results that will largely derive from the rural population.
- Adding a provision for funds for productive equipment and infrastructure can improve the motivation to

- produce more, make produce more marketable, and also incentivize the willingness to form associations.
- In order to benefit more from producer organizations, more activities such as marketing, rural finance, feeder roads, education and other capacity building activities need to be supported.
  - Reorientation of farmer support from a mass extension system such as the T&V system to a more targeted and comprehensive approach of advisory assistance to registered producer groups initially reduces the number of benefiting families, because the producer groups, with their multitude of needs, require more time from support agents. This could be offset by a phased approach whereby the first groups graduate, thus freeing up funds for the next set of groups.
  - NGOs and consulting groups capable of carrying out extension work tend to be few, and seldom have the skills acquitted by the civil servants over the years. Consequently, when involving NGOs in such tasks, project planners should set aside sufficient funds for capacity building in these organizations before they are allowed to take over tasks from the public sector. Also, a financing system for the pre-payment of services is necessary as NGOs do not normally have funds to start new activities or enter new areas.
  - Using POs as a basis for village investments provides economic incentives to village populations, but also offers benefits beyond the purely economic – the approach provides a forum to fight against HIV/AIDS, promotes the position of women, and improves the villagers' understanding of the changing environment they live in and measures to maintain or improve it.

*This Infobrief has been excerpted from Implementation Completion Report No. 30950. For more information, e-mail Ousmane Seck at: [oseck@worldbank.org](mailto:oseck@worldbank.org).*

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