



Beratung für Management,
Bildung und Technologien GmbH

MISEREOR

RURAL DEVELOPMENT SECTOR EVALUATION WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON FOOD SECURITY

Abridged version of the final report

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1 Introduction

In 2010-2011 MISEREOR had its promotion activities in the rural development sector evaluated, with a special focus on food security. This evaluation combined several sub-studies:

- A desk study which was based on the files of all 258 projects that MISEREOR had financed using German government funds, and whose final accounts had been completed between 2007 and 2009.
- The 258 partners selected were surveyed online. A total of 162 responses were received.
- Field studies were conducted for nine organisations that were legal holders of their projects.

The evaluation was conducted by the FAKT firm of consultants.

By publishing this abridged version of the final report MISEREOR wishes to make the key findings available to its partners, and encourage them to look even more closely at the effects of their work in the future. It is important to remember that agriculture varies widely between different agro-ecological regions, and between cultures. It was necessary to summarise results from quite different projects. Therefore, when studying the report readers should always check whether the findings are applicable to their own situation.

2 Design and methodology of the evaluation

For the desk study the project files were consulted. About a third of the projects reported nothing whatsoever concerning the effects of their work. On the other hand, just under one third provided a great deal of information on effects. One finding of this evaluation of rural development promotion is this: many key effects are not mentioned in the partners' project reports. The reports do not adequately reflect the projects' effects.

In the field studies it was considered very important to hold discussions with target groups and the staff of project organisations. Thus during the field trips 1,270 male and female farmers from the target groups were interviewed. To measure changes an instrument from the participatory rural appraisal toolbox was used (among others) – the trend analysis (www.ngo-ideas.net/analyzing_trends) – which was applied in 34 villages. In trend analyses the population assess the degree to which the selected aspects have affected their reality. These data can be considered highly credible. The project staff consulted also knew a great deal about the effects of their work that often go unmentioned in the reports.

3 Results of the analyses

3.1 Target groups and methodological approach of the partners

Most of the projects studied target, either directly or indirectly, the rural poor. Groups with poor food security are being reached. Many of the groups in question are particularly marginalised.

Most of the project organisations make a blanket assumption that they are reaching poor groups because those sections of the population with whom they work are poor within the context of their society. Often this is true. However, in rural areas and among minorities there are not just two groups, i.e. poor people on the one hand, and a number of relatively well-off individuals on the other. There are also various strata and different types of poor people within a village. However, only very few projects report any analysis of differences in poverty in the villages. Very few general statements or explicit strategies are to be found that indicate

how the project organisations wish to address differences in poverty. Landless farmers are only rarely specified as a target group, for instance where small animal husbandry and home gardens have been propagated. Some organisations did specifically target various poor groups (Box 1). Where partners work systematically with the very poor in a village, the poorer groups do gain particular benefits.

Box 1: Differentiated poverty analysis

Only few projects report having conducted a differentiated poverty analysis. One organisation reports conducting special workshops for families with especially low incomes, for whom a specific approach was introduced that was more successful in generating benefits than the organisation's standard approach. Another organisation placed a special emphasis on undernourished children. One organisation operates in districts of high poverty, where special efforts are made to enable poor groups to use new technologies. In a project for pastoralists it emerged that small herds have a higher mortality and higher costs per head of livestock, but that the situation for the poorer groups in the project is improving in that the difference between them and the better off is being significantly reduced. One organisation has clear criteria for defining and focusing on the poor, while another reports that many tenants were not part of the land rights reform. Yet another reports that switching from single courses lasting a year to several courses lasting weeks makes it easier for poor farmers to participate.

Youth were an explicit target group in only a few projects. Where young people were specifically targeted, their involvement assumed a variety of forms. One farmers' association was the product of youth pastoral work. It was co-initiated by young people, and is designed to counteract rural exodus by young farmers (both female and male). One project succeeded in reducing youth unemployment figures.

Many organisations pursue a participatory approach. There are, however, a wide variety of definitions, approaches and degrees of participation – ranging from highly input-based and directive approaches to those in which the target groups themselves set the priorities of the project activities. It is easier to organise participatory decision-making where self-help organisations exist. Practical expertise in applying participatory rural appraisal methods was low among some partners, even though they were familiar with the concept.

The farmer-to-farmer approach is highly conducive to mutual learning. Farmers are trained, apply new approaches on their farms and transfer their experiences. Project experiences were usually highly positive where farmers were identified as promoters in a selection process.

Exposure programmes for target groups are used to raise awareness and transfer practical expertise.

3.2 Effects

The projects have a variety of effects and make a considerable contribution toward enabling the rural poor to improve their situation. For some of the projects, all the outcomes and impacts described in the set of cause-and-effect correlations (see annex) did occur. Concerning the question of why many partners do not report their effects, we found that only few organisations systematically survey them. Within the organisations, to differing degrees people take a more narrative approach to reflecting on impacts and outcomes. Organisations do learn from the effects they generate. On the other hand, they sometimes fail to draw the consequences from the effects they have either achieved or failed to achieve. Many organisations collect monitoring data at the level of activities or outputs, but not at the level of effects.

Line of intervention I: Legal/government policy frameworks

Many projects take influence on land rights issues and agricultural policy. With some organisations this influence is well documented at the national level. It is achieved partly by applying pressure, and partly by close cooperation with governmental agencies, e.g. participation in commissions. In some cases influence is wielded in networks with other civil society actors. Some project organisations cooperate closely with governmental agencies and maintain a systematic division of labour with them, e.g. in the reallocation of land and protection of natural habitats, where the state pays for patrols against illegal logging that are organised by grassroots groups.

Box 2: Watershed protection

In a rural district of El Salvador, village development committees emerged from the thematic working groups (agriculture, health, small animal husbandry) in nine villages, which then joined forces across their village boundaries. These committees, which represent 1,500 village inhabitants, have assumed joint responsibility for their own resources, and have drawn up rules to protect the watersheds together with the district administration. These rules are being jointly implemented and monitored.

Farmers influence policymaking at the local level. This includes participating in local events, raising demands, appointing representatives on local commissions and having them elected on municipal etc. councils.

Governmental agencies take farmers' interests into account as a result of the influence wielded by projects, usually at the local level but in some cases also at the national level. For example, more local seed is used or the needs of farmers are taken into account in water management (Box 2).

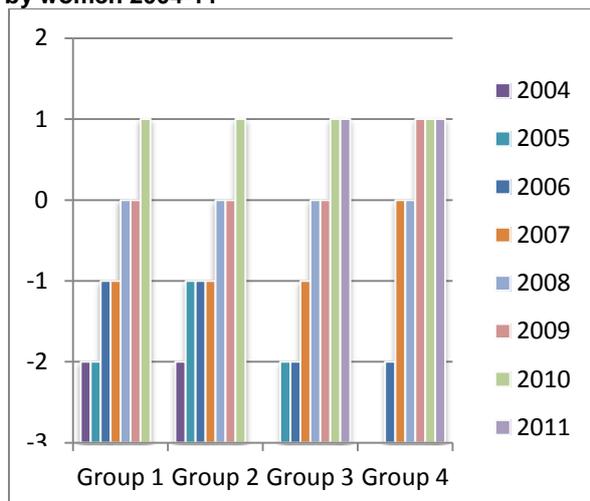
Farmers gain access to government programmes. Government programmes vary widely in nature. Frequently they involve investment subsidies or extension support. In Brazil, together with the farmers' organisations one partner acquired government project funds to build cisterns for the target groups that exceeded the scope of the support provided by MISEREOR. In the Philippines, farmers secured the repair of rural tracks with government support. Farmers often also gain access to social and educational programmes.

Fewer projects report certain access to land or greater legal certainty. Only a small proportion of projects deal with this issue. Resistance is considerable. Many land claims are still being processed, even where projects have been running for three years.

Line of intervention II: organisational development/self-help

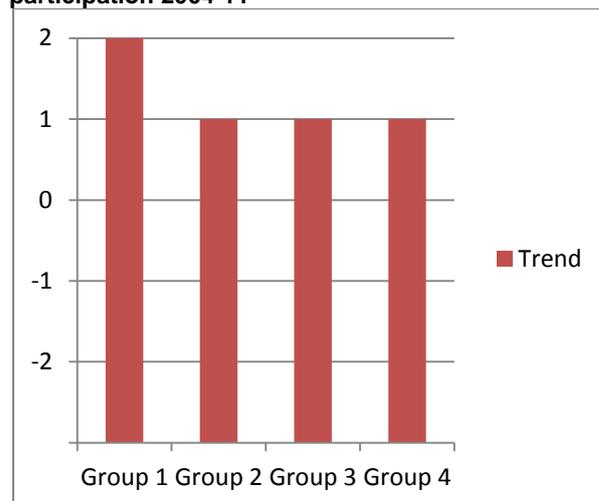
Many organisations report that disadvantaged groups participate on an equal footing. Depending on the project, though, this involves different groups. It is often reported that women's participation improved during the project funding period (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1: Trend analyses of participation by women 2004-11



Explanation: In three villages in Uganda, groups discussed how women's participation in decision-making had changed over the last three years. In villages 1 and 2, mixed groups were interviewed. In village 3, men (group 3) and women (group 4) were interviewed separately. On a scale of 1 (very little) to 5 (a great deal), significant improvements were evident.

Figure 2: Trends in women's participation 2004-11



Explanation: On the basis of the data and further discussions, the evaluators rated the trend on a scale of -2 (major deterioration) to +2 (major improvement). Figure 2 shows the trend for the groups in Figure 1. An evaluation of 30 trend analyses from seven field studies also shows predominantly an improvement in women's participation.

People and groups compare notes, exchange experiences, networks organise themselves.

In some cases this process of exchange is highly intensive and dynamic, in that the members are able to use the group for their own individual ends, which go beyond the ends of the group per se. This often leads to a marked transfer of knowledge by the groups and to a higher degree of organisation, and occasionally also to a process of exchange between villages and at the provincial level. Some of the groups move outside their immediate sphere and contact other groups. Exchange within and among groups can lead to greater mutual respect and reduce mistrust.

Traditional knowledge and knowledge of marginalised groups is integrated and appreciated.

Farmers are supported in returning to old or improved crops, animal breeds and cultivation methods, and in using farming innovations. The devaluation of this knowledge caused by the one-sided promotion of modern agriculture is being overcome. Farmers pass their knowledge on to others, because it delivers valuable contributions to agricultural development. Traditional practices such as seed production are being resumed. In some cases, though, traditional knowledge does not help farmers, e.g. in cases where indigenous groups become sedentary and are forced to abandon slash-and-burn agriculture.

The projects help bolster self-confidence among the farmers. Groups feel that they 'own' the activities. Self-help potential is thus strengthened, and cohesion improved. Farmers' willingness to acquire new knowledge has increased. In some cases this has led to groups developing significant innovative capacity.

Farmers display autonomy of action performed in a spirit of solidarity. This can manifest itself in farmers' associations functioning self-reliantly. Autonomy can also be manifested through advocacy, the claiming of rights and the monitoring of public duties. The population are occasionally willing to take more risks.

Effects on other social spheres are very rarely reported, even though they occur often. For instance, farmers participate in the general development efforts of their local authority or are

elected onto the local administration. Often it is not evident whether their participation in committees and councils is confined to food security issues, or goes beyond that. Farmers are demanding their right to have a say and are developing new economic activities (Box 3). School education is improving (Table 1).

Table 1: School education and literacy

Trend	Rating	Score
Major improvement	+2	5
Improvement	+1	4
No improvement	0	4
Deterioration	-1	0
Major deterioration	-2	0
Total		13

Explanation: In 13 trend analyses, groups discussed developments in children's school education (10) and women's literacy (3). The trends were largely positive.

Box 3: Village initiatives

In a village in El Salvador, committees were formed which in cooperation with the local authority are managing household drinking water supply. They are also taking care of road maintenance in the highly mountainous terrain of the widely scattered village.

In a village in Venezuela, located not far from the link road to Puerto Ayacucho, the highly active village community not only maintains a communal field with fruit trees, but in 2010 also began establishing poultry fattening without external support. Right now the villagers are also considering directly marketing their surpluses with a stand at the side of the road to Puerto Ayacucho.

Line of intervention III: agricultural production

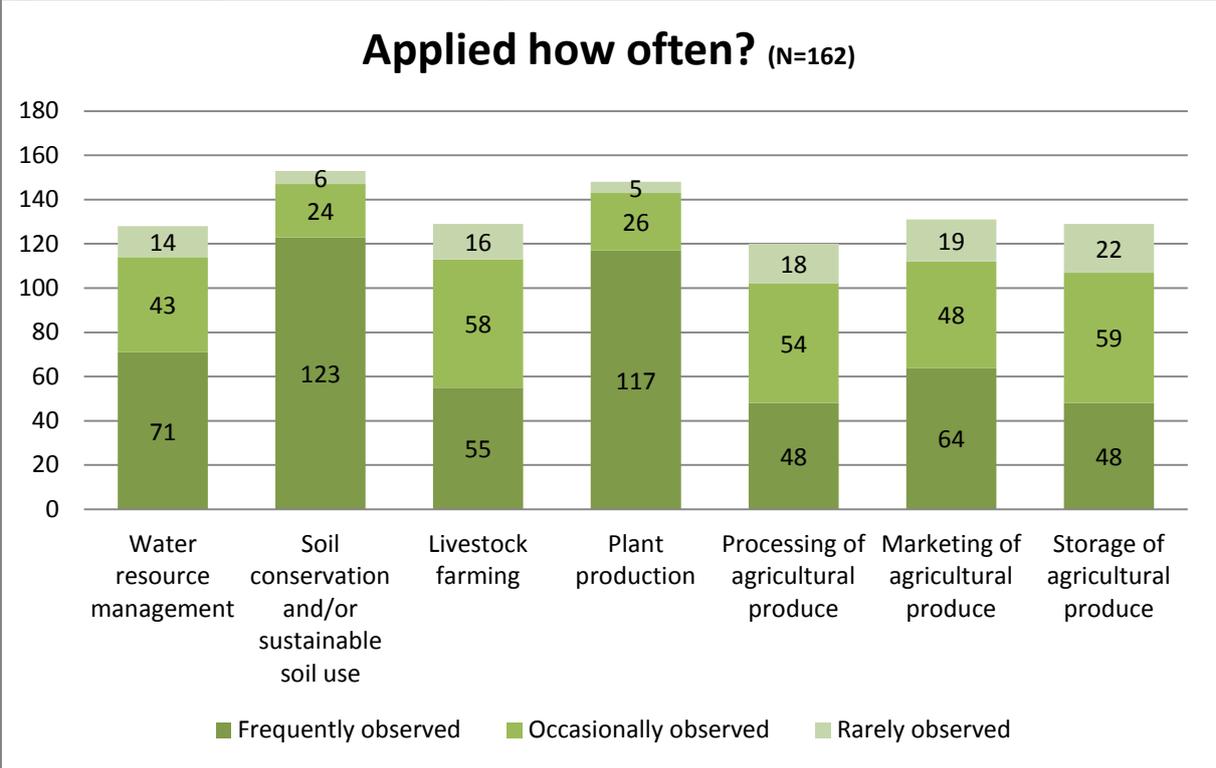
Farmers use services made available to them in agricultural production and natural resource management to improve their agriculture and their life situation as a whole. With one partner 90 % of the target group used the measures, in addition to which there are also dissemination effects in neighbouring villages.

Water availability has increased. Less water is wasted. At many locations, the groundwater level has risen. This greater water availability means that fewer farmers have to migrate for part of the year.

The soil has become more fertile, usually as a result of organic fertilisation and soil protection measures, and occasionally due to reforestation, and the cessation of slash-and-burn practices and burning of crop residues.

The quality or quantity of the animal population has increased. In a study of one project partner, the project target groups report improved livestock health and better fodder twice as often as do a control group not directly involved in the project. Other examples are fish farming and livestock housing.

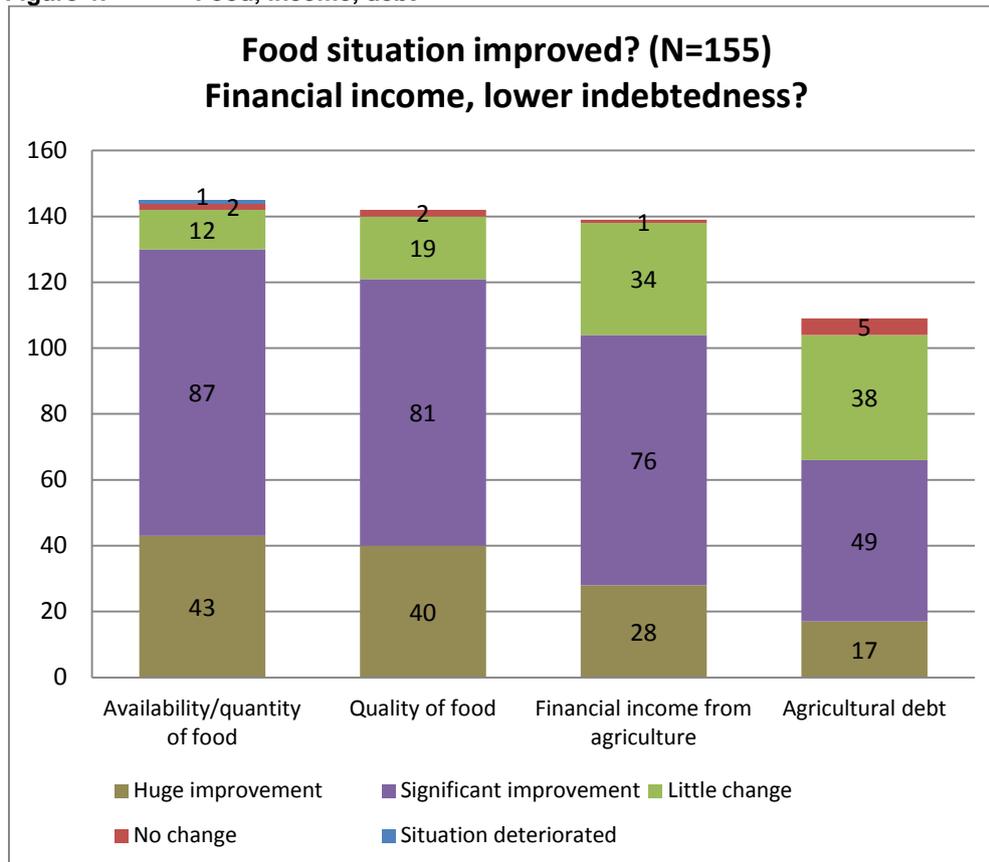
Figure 3: Application of food security measures



Explanation: In the online questionnaire the project implementing organisations were asked whether their activities in the lines of intervention III and IV were used by farmers. There were significant differences between the various activities, but for all the activities more than 60 % stated that they observed the activities being used at least occasionally.

Seed is more readily available or of higher quality. In many project regions local varieties were in decline or about to disappear, until propagation was resumed with project support, and the varieties were once again disseminated in the regional context through organised exchanges. In the field studies in Latin America it was mostly a case of hybrid seed being replaced once again by local or regional varieties. Elsewhere, it was bred high-yield varieties that were replaced.

Figure 4: Food, income, debt



Explanation: Four questions in the online survey concerned the availability and quality of food, income and agricultural debt. Around 80 % indicated that food security had improved significantly or hugely, two-thirds said the same thing about agricultural income and 42 % gave the same response concerning the reduction of debt. No more than 5 (3 %) stated that the situation had remained the same or deteriorated.

Agricultural production is diversified. New crops or vegetable production, or animal husbandry, or new cropping methods such as agroforestry or crop rotation are being introduced.

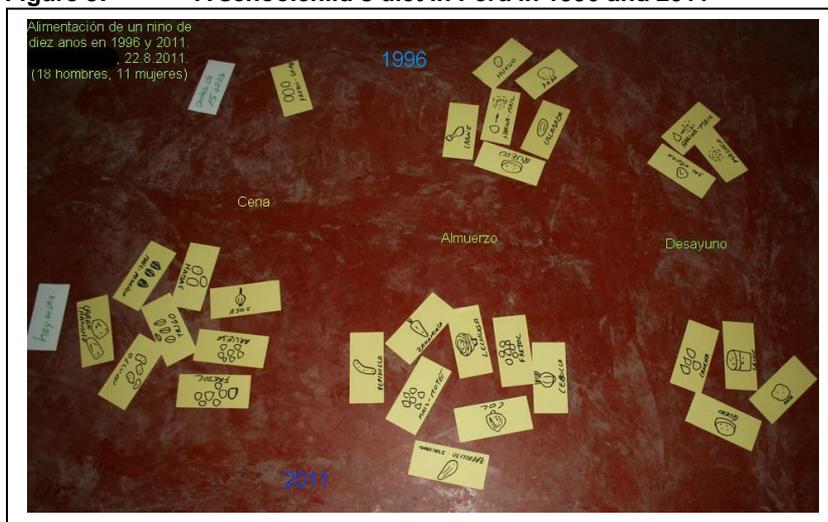
Yields are stabilised or increased. Some farmers remain at the subsistence level, while some yields increase significantly. Some of the projects anticipate higher yields two years after switching to sustainable agriculture, which often means after the project funding period has come to an end.

Expenditure on inputs falls. Farmers need to buy-in fewer external inputs, because they produce seed themselves or obtain it at local costs, or because they are substituting mineral fertilisers with organic fertilisers, and require fewer pesticides due to cultivation measures and plant treatment agents that they have produced themselves. In a number of cases treadle pumps are saving diesel costs for pumping water, while in other cases the costs of veterinary services are being saved.

Farmers have more food. Where only very little land is available (landless farmers who only have vegetable gardens) it may not be possible to achieve full food security, but food security can be improved. Some partners report that higher yields are used by farmers for their own consumption (higher quantity, better quality) (Figure 5).

Income rises. There are many reports of evidence of higher income: more children now go to school, people save up, build houses or install electricity, purchase valuable items or animals, buy land, spend money on health.

Figure 5: A schoolchild's diet in Peru in 1996 and 2011



Explanation: A group of adults were asked what a typical schoolchild's diet would be in 1996 (top row) and 2011 (bottom row). Breakfast on the right, lunch in the middle, evening meal on the left. The components of this diet were illustrated and written down on cards. Over the course of these 15 years, the schoolchildren's diet became richer and more varied. The evening meal in particular became much more varied. This project led to more fruit and vegetables being cultivated in the home gardens.

Debt is reduced or avoided. Loans taken out with merchants are reduced. This is not mentioned often, however. At the same time, savings and credit programmes enable farmers to take out higher loans for investment or income-generating measures.

Line of intervention IV: post-harvest procedures

Agricultural produce is better processed. Some produce is processed by farmers for their own consumption, some for market. Market products with added value include for instance jam, dried bananas, basketry, cassava flour and processed cashew nuts.

Marketing is improved. This occurs partly through urban markets, partly as a result of buying-up by the state. While there are quite a few market successes, problems are also reported time and time again: excessive transport costs, inadequate product diversity, complex certification, too little sold, too little market information. Only few partners promote eco-certification or participate in fair trade. In the field study in Brazil, local non-certified eco-markets were operating that made a contribution to marketing.

Farming families are better able to cope with crisis situations

For 47 out of 65 organisations, the conclusion of the evaluation was that farming families are indeed better able to cope with situations of crisis.

Farming families enjoy more sustainable food security

None of the project implementing organisations conclude that farming families or a proportion of them enjoy sustainable food security. However, we can conclude that the food security of many farming families is more sustainable now than it was before the projects.

Box 4: Strengthening resilience in El Salvador

In 2002, several communities in Jujutla district approached the organisation with a request for food aid. The background to this was the fall in the price of coffee, which led to the owners of the coffee *fincas* stopping production and laying off their workers. In the communities affected, up until then all families had been almost exclusively dependent on this income for food. Losing their jobs thus threatened their livelihoods. In view of this heavy external dependency the organisation strengthened family-based agriculture. Families learned to cultivate home gardens and to appreciate their own produce more highly. Within a few years the farmers succeeded in securing the subsistence of their communities through their own production activities. Today they see the opportunity to work on the coffee *fincas*, which has since returned, as an opportunity to generate additional income rather than as a basic necessity for survival.

Negative effects and no effects

Negative effects were rarely reported, though when pressed, some partners did admit that they occurred. They are context-specific, however. It appears that partners do not focus on negative effects, or do not disclose them. In the two field studies in Mali and Uganda target groups were systematically interviewed about negative effects, and quite a few of these interviewees told of such effects (Box 5).

Box 5: Negative effects in some projects

1. High expectations, demoralisation and low level of self-help in the villages caused by unrealistic local development and investment plans.
2. A section of the forest administration is losing influence and (illegal) income due to community control of natural resources, and is therefore sabotaging the environmental management plans.
3. In some families there is increased consumption of alcohol by both sexes, as well as more domestic violence, and increased income from marketing is being wasted.
4. Increased pressure on natural resources → logging, overgrazing, erosion.

A number of interventions show no visible effects. This relates to parts of projects.

Effects disaggregated by poor strata

When effects are disaggregated by strata of the poor population, it occasionally becomes clear that farming families with very little land profit from the measures and are less dependent on wage labour for earning money, or that their options for wage labour and retail improve. In field studies we established that those poor individuals who are the first to show an interest, and who often have access to rather more resources and higher risk potential, are pioneers in applying measures. Individuals who are poorer than these were then often reached later, once they were able to assess the risks and barriers had been overcome.

In some field studies we found that the poorest of the poor, who do not have the option of providing for themselves through their own labour (people living with disabilities, the sick, the elderly, orphans, victims of disasters), profit indirectly through solidarity. In Mali, orphans received better support. In the Philippines, disaster victims received special help. In Brazil, collections were held for particularly needy individuals. This was made possible by the greater cohesion and the better economic situation generated by the projects. Not a single case of negative effects on the poorest of the poor was found, though in Uganda there was a case of a project creating greater inequality: the situation of livestock farmers improved, while for the large majority of the population who do not possess any livestock, no improvements were evident.

Effects disaggregated by gender

Partners reported clearly positive effects on women's status and self-confidence. In one project, women switched from less profitable wage labour to horticulture. Women were more actively involved in self-help organisations. The indicator for the improvement of women's

status is the increase in the number of women in leadership positions, especially in mixed groups. In one project, for instance, 48 % of the chairpersons of grassroots organisations are women. It was often reported that women now play a more committed role in public debate. In some projects they formed their own women’s organisations, in some cases without this having been planned by the project. They took on political office at the local level, sometimes even rising to national committees. Women whose cultures do not allow them to assume such political positions were now at least able to move around outside of the household.

Even where women are less intensively involved in a project, the activities that are relevant to them can nevertheless bring about a major improvement compared to their previous situation. Conversely, neglecting cultural aspects that are specific to women can also lead to women profiting less from the project.

One partner focused especially on promoting women’s interests, which led to the men, who had only very limited opportunity to participate in the credit programme, expressing their displeasure. The partner had not conducted either a gender analysis or gender sensitisation measures.

Dissemination

Measures are often disseminated beyond the immediate target group (‘multiplier effect’). Questions on this were included in the online survey. With respect to the seven measures of the lines of intervention II and IV, between 46 % and 83 % of surveyed partners stated that they have observed individuals who do not belong to the immediate target group using the project measures either ‘occasionally’ or ‘frequently’ (see Figure 6). Other observations confirm this. Dissemination is seldom mentioned in reports, but occurs frequently.

It occurs spontaneously, and often without the knowledge of project staff. Farmers’ associations gain new members, or new associations are even formed without any input from the project. In some cases, dissemination is practised systematically. In Uganda, groups of livestock farmers were rehearsing songs praising the benefits of vaccinating cattle. In Bangladesh, a project now only goes into villages where farmers have already made a start with certain practices such as seed trial plots or vegetable cultivation. Figure 7 shows an example of how the dissemination of agricultural methods was surveyed in the field study in Peru, and how some of the methods were disseminated while others were not.

Figure 6: Dissemination of food security measures

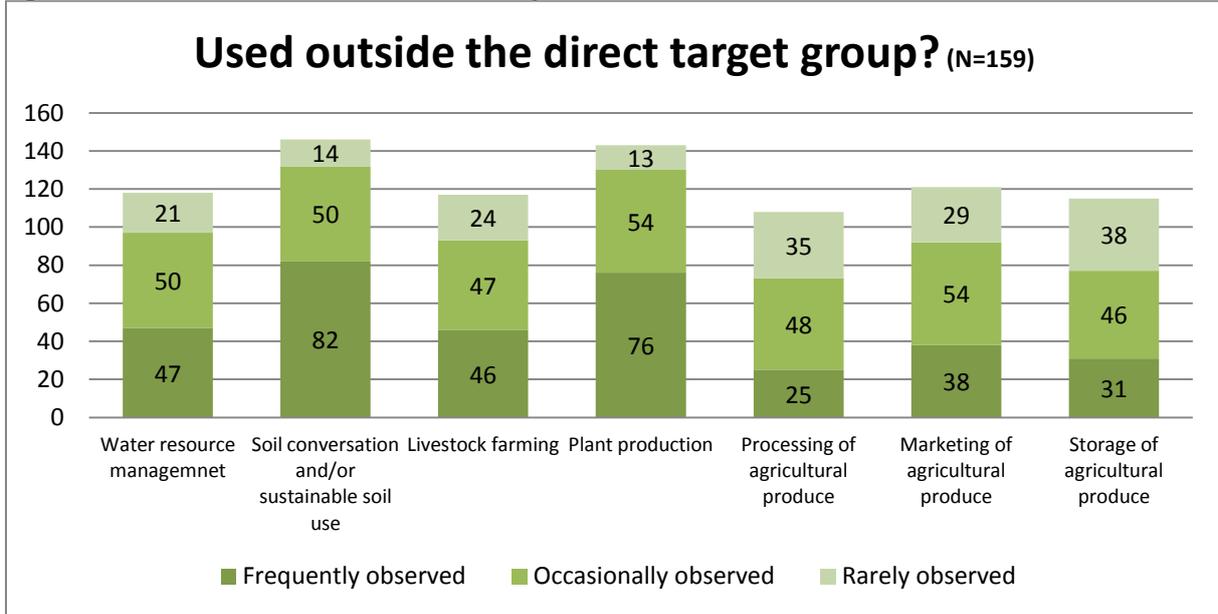
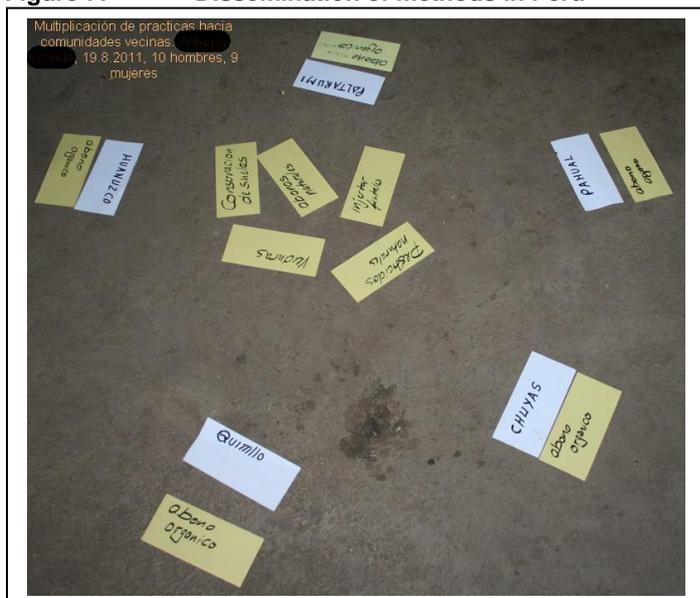


Figure 7: Dissemination of methods in Peru



Explanation: Farmers discussed the dissemination of organic farming methods, starting from their village. In the middle of the floor we see the methods that they themselves use: application of natural pesticides and plant boosters, vegetable cultivation, fruit tree grafting, natural fertilisers, soil protection. These are surrounded by the names of four neighbouring villages. In all these villages one practice was adopted: organic fertilisation.

Macro-effects

Many partners report that their projects have an effect on governmental agencies, other NGOs and in one or two cases the private sector at the local level. Some partners contributed toward a modification of government strategies at the national level.

Box 6: Self-employed well diggers in Cameroon

The well diggers that used to be salaried project employees today work in the GOIB association. On behalf of GOIB and other projects they now bore wells, and construct stream bank protections and fords etc. This also stimulates small businesses and ensures that technical expertise remains in the region.

At the local level, fishermen for instance gained the right to use certain lakes and to prevent the diking of rivers. In the Philippines a project was successful in obtaining an official ban by the relevant authorities on large-scale logging. In El Salvador, through networking activities MISEREOR partners succeeded in getting local seed exchanged at district level, bred at the national level and propagated on a massive scale, creating a demand among cultivators (Box 7). Political pressure generated at the local and national levels led to a situation in which it was no longer an attractive option for the multinational seed producers to introduce and cultivate genetically modified seed in El Salvador, even though this would have been legally possible for research purposes. The partners who had joined forces in a platform gained key legitimacy from the fact that they had a joint practice of promoting local seed, which was broadly applied by farming households and propagated by groups. In this case, the national and local levels combined to bring about a successful outcome.

Box 7: Seed project in El Salvador

To protect local seed in El Salvador an intensive process of propagation of local varieties, seed exchange at the regional level and seed improvement at the national level was launched. In the community of Jujutla the cultivation of a local maize variety (Santa Rosa) has now been extended from just a few plots to 175 ha. For the last three years a regional seed festival has been held every year in the centre of the community at which local wealth is celebrated, and seed is bought and exchanged across the region and beyond. This festival is now being staged without the support of the project organisation and has become an important event even beyond the region itself. At the national level the agricultural research centre (Centro Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria y Forestal – CENTA) together with the project partner has launched several national programmes for the participatory breeding of local bean varieties, plus a seed multiplication programme for local maize.

In a project with a veterinary component, target groups are continuing activities such as the procurement of medicinal drugs, vaccination campaigns and the continued development of feeding. This was made possible by the fact that the government picked up the project ideas, carried them on and in doing so transmitted them beyond the target group. The scaling-up strategy, which involved cooperation with other NGOs and the government (both of which are implementing the activities themselves), was a success.

Box 8: Farmer innovations in Burkina Faso

In the last few years some 300 farming innovations were developed in the numerous research groups (e.g. various products to control poultry diseases and parasite-induced diarrhoea in goats, cattle feed supplements, mineral licks, alternative roughage conservation methods, innovative marketing expertise etc.). The dissemination of these new developments and technologies is proceeding step by step. More than 18,000 small-scale producers (farmers, horticulturists and livestock breeders) actually use the products or traditional remedies of the research groups.

4 Conclusions

From the available data the conclusion can be drawn that farming families are better able to cope with crises and enjoy more sustainable food security. MISEREOR is helping improve and stabilise food security. Sustainable agriculture that relies on a few external inputs is much more appropriate for small farmers than a high level of external inputs. The approach promoted by MISEREOR is appropriate and effective.

Efficiency

Occasionally the reports contain remarks on the efficiency of specific measures. Rather more frequently remarks were to be found on increased efficiency at the target group level. It emerged that it had only been possible to comment on the efficiency of individual aspects of projects. The evaluation concludes that, as a rule, the level of efficiency is appropriate or good.

Sustainability

Projects do not plan sufficiently for the transition to the period after external support. Nonetheless, particularly in the field studies, it was evident that many of the sustainable agriculture practices introduced among smallholders were being continued after the support had come to an end. Self-help organisations also continue to exist and are beneficial for the target groups.

Conducive and constraining factors

The projects achieved varying degrees of success with their various interventions. Therefore both conducive and constraining factors were analysed.

It is conducive to the effectiveness and sustainability of measures when the project implementing organisation possesses expertise, creativity, motivated personnel, a good rapport with the target group, and credibility as a result of the longstanding nature of its work. Some partners lack sectoral expertise, and some lack expertise in organisation building.

Further conducive factors are supportive state structures and suitable markets. Constraints include land scarcity, poor infrastructure, government subsidies, and a vigorous propagation of high-yield varieties by private enterprises and public authorities.

When target groups are strongly committed, projects are more effective. To help ensure that this is the case, interventions should be relevant to them, engage with their knowledge and traditions, and meet their needs. Intensive participation is thus a conducive factor. Project success is constrained by a shortage of operating resources, a high expectation of external support, short-term thinking by farmers, and village conflicts.

5 Recommendations

The evaluation formulates seven recommendations for this sector. These are: (1) strengthen dialogue with partners on sustainable agriculture and participation; (2) ensure multiplication of desired effects; (3) focus more sharply on different strata within the poor population; (4) support partners in managing for outcomes and impacts; (5) pay attention to effects that tend not to be reported; (6) foster sustainable self-organisation; (7) allow for appropriately decreasing cooperation between partners on the one hand, and target groups and their organisations on the other.

Translation from the German original
by J D Cochrane and MISEREOR

Annex

Hypothetical set of cause-and-effect correlations in the field of rural development at Misereor (main focus: food security)

(F = farmers, LH = legal holders)

