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PROGRESS REPORT ON DEVELOPMENT PROJECT GAMBIA 2729.02

Community-based rural development

Date approved	13 June 1996
Date plan of operations signed	11 November 1996
Date notification of readiness accepted	10 February 1997
Date of first distribution	1 January 1997
Duration of WFP assistance	Three years
Duration of project as at 30 June 1998	One and a half years

Cost (dollars)

Total cost to WFP	2,937,479
Total food cost	1,946,600

All monetary values are expressed in United States dollars, unless otherwise stated.

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted for information to the Executive Board.

Pursuant to the decisions taken on the methods of work by the Executive Board at its First Regular Session of 1996, the documentation prepared by the Secretariat for the Board has been kept brief and decision-oriented. The meetings of the Executive Board are to be conducted in a business-like manner, with increased dialogue and exchanges between delegations and the Secretariat. Efforts to promote these guiding principles will continue to be pursued by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat therefore invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document, to contact the WFP staff member(s) listed below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting. This procedure is designed to facilitate the Board's consideration of the document in the plenary.

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PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT AND OF WFP ASSISTANCE

1. In line with the Government's strategy for poverty alleviation and food security, the project aims, in the long term, at enhancing the productive capacity of rural people, improving access to and performance of social services, and building local capacity and assets while promoting participatory development processes at the community level.
2. The immediate objectives of the project are to: increase access to swamplands through the construction and rehabilitation of bunds, dikes, causeways, footbridges and canals; improve access of rural communities to social infrastructure through the construction and rehabilitation of health posts, wells and classrooms; promote self-help development schemes, initiated and controlled by the communities themselves, in swamp development, sustainable integrated upland soil and water conservation measures and social infrastructure; reduce women's time constraints during the peak agricultural labour season through the provision of child-care in day-care centres; and provide extension and skills training in rural training institutes.
3. WFP assistance is intended to encourage communities to: undertake labour-based activities; serve as an income transfer; and provide dietary support for the beneficiaries attending day-care centres and training courses.

IMPLEMENTATION

4. The project covers all five administrative divisions of the country. It is implemented by the Department of State for Local Government and Lands through a Project Management Office (PMO). This office, headed by a project manager, is adequately staffed with one monitoring and evaluation officer, one accounting clerk, one store keeper, four drivers, four watchmen and 10 store hands.
5. With a view to improving the managerial and monitoring skills of the PMO's senior staff, the WFP country office, in collaboration with the Management Development Institute and a computer training firm, recently organized a tailor-made counterpart training in project management and monitoring as well as in computer operations.
6. The Government's implementation capacity is significantly enhanced through the cooperation and collaboration with NGOs on the basis of Memoranda of Understanding. For example, the Christian Children's Fund (CCF/USA) is active in supporting day-care centres in Western Division, while the rural infrastructure sub-project is being implemented by CARITAS/The Gambia countrywide and Future in our Hands (FIOH/Sweden) for the construction and/or rehabilitation of other social infrastructure countrywide. The NGOs provide staff, materials and funds for the different activities.
7. Sub-project sites are identified by the implementing agencies in close consultation with the PMO, the relevant Government department and the communities. For example, for the rural infrastructure sub-project, communities requiring wells forward their applications to CARITAS. These applications are appraised by the well construction team. Communities to be assisted are then sensitized and organized into groups on which women have a significant representation. The groups provide labour and local materials (sand/gravel). Once the well is completed, they receive training on how to manage the asset and on water sanitation.



8. The Department of Community Development (DCD) is promoting rural institution building through assisting communities to establish village development committees (VDCs) which take responsibility for overseeing development activities in the villages. Through its field extension workers, DCD supervises the 34 day-care centres in North Bank, Lower, Central and Upper River Divisions. Day-care centre committees, in which women represent the majority, are responsible for day-to-day operations under the supervision of the DCD field extension workers. The communities provide cooks and attendants who also receive WFP food rations.
9. The sub-project “self-help schemes” has been decentralized to the divisions; it is supervised by the Divisional Commissioners and Coordinating Committees. Villages forward their request to the Divisional Coordinating Committees (DCCs). Successful applicants are assisted in forming groups, which are sensitized and supervised by the DCCs during the implementation of the activity. Efforts are made to promote women’s participation in planning and implementing this sub-project.
10. Rural skills and vocational training centres are run by the Government and an NGO. Trainees are mainly rural youths and school drop-outs. Some centres have engaged in placement programmes for graduates, but because of financial problems, these efforts could not be sustained.

FOOD MANAGEMENT

11. WFP’s revised food commodity commitment consists of 4,008 tons of rice, vegetable oil, canned fish, sugar and corn-soya blend (CSB). The latter commodity was included in February 1997 to provide an early morning porridge for children attending day-care centres.
12. At 30 June 1998, the project had already received the entire approved food commodity commitment—4,008 tons—of which 1,985 tons (50 percent of receipts) had been utilized as intended; the remaining balance will be distributed up to December 1999. As a result of improved food management, including the shipment of food commodities in containers to the Gambia, commodity losses have been minimal in the current phase, amounting to only 2.8 tons of receipts, or 0.07 percent. These losses occurred mainly during the reconditioning of torn bags and containers. Placing shipments in containers has contributed not only to reducing losses, but also to speeding up food delivery from the port.
13. The project’s central warehouse capacity of 400 metric tons at the PMO in Kanifing is adequate. This warehouse was built by WFP with funds provided by the Government of Sweden.
14. Until the beginning of 1998, The Gambia Cooperative Union (GCU), a semi-autonomous primary produce marketing agency, was responsible for the transport of food commodities from the port up to the distribution sites. In the meantime, the GCU has been liquidated by the Government owing to insolvency. Therefore, the movement of food commodities has become the major constraint affecting the project. Possible solutions are under discussion between the WFP country office and the Government.
15. Following receipt of the work programmes of the collaborating and implementing agencies and NGOs, the PMO arranges for the delivery of food commodities. On certain sites, meals are provided while work is in progress. For other activities, food commodities



are delivered to the divisions and distributed by the DCCs to the beneficiaries, in general on a quarterly basis.

16. Quarterly progress reports containing information on utilization, level of implementation and achievements are prepared on a regular basis by the PMO and submitted to the WFP country office for verification and necessary follow-up actions.

GOVERNMENT'S CONTRIBUTION

17. Over the period covered by the report, the Government's contribution amounted to 124,510 dollars, or 12 percent of planned commitments. Shortfalls in government funding are due to inherent financial difficulties. In order to increase the project's implementation capacity, collaboration with NGOs is being intensified.

EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE

18. External assistance in support of project activities has mainly come from NGOs: approximately 272,000 dollars from CCF/USA for 10 day-care centres; FIOH/Sweden of about 547,215 dollars for constructing and furnishing 52 classrooms, 12 kitchens and 20 units of improved latrines in 12 primary schools; and about 52,800 dollars from CARITAS the Gambia for the construction of 22 large-diameter concrete-lined wells.

ASSESSMENT

19. WFP assistance constituted a valuable input to the project. Overall, some 45,700 men and 38,400 women benefited from labour-based activities at the community level. Furthermore, some 10,818 children attended the day-care centres and 231 persons took part in training sessions.
20. The project's physical achievements in terms of quantity and quality have varied in the different project components, which will need to be adjusted on the basis of experience to date. The development schemes implemented with the collaboration of NGOs were supervised by competent officials, and the structures established were of sound quality. In the sub-project "self-help schemes", works have been of relatively low quality because the level of organization of some of the activities, technical supervision, monitoring and material inputs exogenous to the communities were insufficient. This has been partly due to the Government's financial constraints and weak capacity at the divisional level that have impaired the effectiveness of most DCCs to properly appraise, supervise and monitor the widely diverse self-help projects. The Government's recently launched decentralization programme aims, among other things, at improving and strengthening local capacities. This should ultimately help the DCCs to better coordinate local development processes, and have a positive impact on the WFP-supported activities.
21. The PMO has not yet been able to adequately monitor and follow up on project implementation; fully sensitize collaborating agencies and communities; and promote the effective participation of and proper targeting to poorer, vulnerable, food-deficit areas and women.



22. The construction of dikes and bunds did not take place because the IFAD-funded small-scale water control project under the Ministry of Agriculture terminated during the period covered by the report. Arrangements are currently under discussion with the Ministry of Agriculture and NGOs to use the remaining food commodity allocation for swamp development.
23. Under the rural infrastructure sub-component, 22 water wells in two communities in Central River Division were constructed, representing 43 percent of prorated targets; this contributed to enhancing access to water for human consumption, and for vegetable gardening by women. In collaboration with FIOH, 52 classrooms, 12 kitchens, and 20 toilets were constructed in 12 rural primary schools in Central and Upper River Divisions (78 percent of prorated targets) and about 2,000 children benefited from increased access to basic education, improved health and sanitation facilities and services.
24. The self-help schemes were the most popular component of the project in terms of demand from communities and even more so following the poor performance of the last agricultural season. Some 242 schemes have been initiated, (exceeding prorated targets by eight percent), including classrooms, improved kitchens, toilets, health posts, day-care centres, storage facilities and concrete-lined wells.
25. Swamp development activities have increased the access of women rice farmers to more swamps for cultivation. Based on local priorities, for upland soil and water conservation, 6,126 metres of contour bunds, 1,683 metres of causeways and 4,500 metres of access roads were constructed and 61 hectares of vegetable gardens established. For lowland soil and water conservation and improvement, some 137,363 meters of dikes, 83,147 of causeways, 6,698 of access bridges and 8,728 of canals were constructed. Furthermore, some 112 hectares of community forests were protected with fire-belts.
26. Under the institutional feeding component, 49 day-care centres with some 10,818 children (122 percent of the targets) under seven years of age received WFP support. This has enabled the mothers to take part in productive activities. Furthermore, girls were relieved of child-care duties and were thus able to attend school. Because of poor harvests, communities have been unable to support day-care centres during the months of December to April, when WFP food rations were not supplied.
27. Some 231 rural youths (77 percent of prorated targets) enrolled in vocational training received WFP food rations. Efforts are made to increase the current low share of female trainees through measures such as more flexible entry requirements and increased community sensitization.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

28. The project is contributing to strengthening the capacity and competence of rural communities in undertaking activities aimed at improving the living conditions of the communities. Food aid has contributed to creating assets and skills, and encouraged the participation of communities in determining, undertaking and managing their own development priorities.
29. Communities have shown ample interest in self-help schemes; it is therefore recommended to transfer the unallocated rations for dikes and bunds (see paragraph 22) to the self-help scheme component.



30. Considering the food security situation of the target groups, it is recommended to extend the duration of WFP support to day-care centres beyond the lean period.
31. With a view to overcoming the lack of adequate private trucking facilities, it is recommended that the provision of three 15-ton capacity trucks be considered for the project. The trucks will also be used by the WFP-supported school feeding project in the Gambia, which faces the same situation.

