

Naihoud Cooperative Credit Project in Kordofan State, Sudan

Theme(s):

- Economy

Type of Program:

- Provision of Services (agricultural/rural development)

Country/Region:

- Sudan (provincial)

Submitting/Executing Organizations:

- Women Initiative Group

Author:

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Project Cost [Amount and Source of Funds]:

- \$9.5 million – IFAD
- \$2.5 million - Finland International Agency for Development
- \$1.0 million – Government of Sudan
- \$3.7 million - Sudan Agriculture Bank
- Contribution of farmers – 30% of loan

Human Resources:

- 150 government employees from different communities
- 97 partnering organizations
- 220 community cooperative networks/groups
- 3 volunteers from the community
- women are 30% of total workforce in the project

Partners:

- IFAD
- Ministry of Sudanese Agriculture
- Finland International Agency for Development
- Sudanese Agriculture Bank

Initiative overview: Following the famine witnessed by the country in 1986, the EN Naihoud Cooperative Credit Project in Kordofan State (southwestern Sudan) was launched to develop agriculture in the region, improve the income of small farmers, and meet the needs of these isolated areas. Lately, the initiative integrated gender equality as part of its strategic objectives.

Social discriminatory practices targeted: In spite of the important role played by women in Sudan's agricultural development, success in meeting their needs for funding, job market integration and official measures remains limited. This is due to socio-cultural attitudes.

Socio-cultural context: The population number in the project region is about half a million. Women represent 70% of the farming workforce and participate in all farming phases, but they do not benefit from educational opportunities. This is due to a biased interpretation of the Koranic verses on gender equality. The local community lacks a necessary awareness of women's issues. Men's needs enjoy priority at the expense of women's needs in jobs, banking practices, and so on.

The last twenty years have witnessed positive changes, however, through the increase in the financial resources allocated by foreign funders, and through the appearance of women in civil society. In an unfortunate parallel, the region has suffered from famine and desertification, thus contributing to increasing poverty inside the local community.

Laws and policies: On the basis of the constitution and the customary and legislative laws, the national government enacted legislation stipulating gender equality in all fields, especially in economy and development.

Objectives and Goals

The short-term objectives of the initiative seek to increase awareness in the local community in order to give women the opportunity to participate in civil groups and projects and ensure their participation in the various project phases, and additionally to improve women's economic conditions and improve handicraft projects. The medium-term objectives are capacity building of rural men and women. The long-term objectives of the project are sustainable development by defining a new strategy for allocating credits for beneficiary men and women.

Good Practices

Innovative Approach

- Strategy: The full funding of cooperatives and staff capacity building made it possible to provide social services and women training programmes, and ensure income-generating activities such as nearby small farming projects.
- Initiative innovative tools (under study): Media, flyers, theatre, and films were all used.
- Initiative effective tools: Intensive discussion groups and local radio coverage of activities were also effective methods.

Overcoming Challenges

The measures aimed at overcoming the difficulties encountered by initiative implementation include meetings with opinion leaders in the local community to discuss and eradicate the obstacles relating to traditional practices; and coordination with the various technical units in charge of implementation at the level of the Agricultural Bank of Sudan, EN Nahud local farming groups, the local cooperative registration office, and the unit in charge of coordination between EN Nahud and Khartoum.

Direct Successes

- The initiative exceeded expectations by creating 227 cooperatives working for 23,686 beneficiary families, a 25% increase compared to the initially planned figure.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring the changes at the level of the existing practices in terms of:

- Increase in women's participation in agricultural production;
- Increase in the number of women beneficiaries in the training programmes created as part of the initiative;
- Increase in the number of cooperative female members;
- Creating women's cooperatives to market their products;
- Reinforcing women's capacity for making decisions on production and expanding the initiative activities in the region; and
- Cooperation between women, young women and men to preserve the farming environment and promote joint work in training, social awareness and small project environment in order to ensure sustainability.

Contribution to Social Transformations

- Increasing social awareness of the negative impact of discriminatory social practices
- Sensitisation of the authorities in charge
- Creation of open spaces to give opportunity to the target groups without any gender discrimination, opening cooperatives to men and women. attempting to reduce the discrimination gap which excluded women from the market
- Participation of local opinion leaders and religious leaders in treating discriminatory practices

Lessons for Replication

- This initiative shows using the economic sector as an introduction to social and cultural changes. The economic activities emanating from female and male beneficiaries contributed to increasing awareness of the economic benefits of equality in gender relations in the region and eradicating the obstacles to women's work being on equal footing with men's. This positive approach along with the initiative strategies and tools can be used in similar projects in local communities with similar farming activities.

