

Cameroon: Community Development Program Support Project APL1



COMMUNITY-DRIVEN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Empowering Rural Communes and Communities in Cameroon through Fiscal Decentralization

Overview

Using International Development Association (IDA) resources and expertise, [Cameroon](#) has accelerated its fiscal decentralization strategy by empowering rural communes and communities to identify, plan, implement, and manage priority activities defined in their development plans, including construction of economic and social infrastructure and provision of health, education, and agricultural extension services. For the first time in Cameroon, the financial resources (about US\$24 million) were directly transferred to local governments and community-based organizations to plan and manage their own development. These achievements were only possible because of the project's critical role in improving the legal and regulatory framework for strengthened local governance and empowering decentralized authorities with the legal authority to manage local development. Finally, the successful test of the mechanism for channeling resources to the local level encouraged the Government to transfer selected areas of competence and associated resources of nine ministries to local governments in 2010.

Challenge

The government of Cameroon signaled its strong interest in promoting decentralization more than three decades ago, but progress achieved toward this objective has been slow. Efforts to empower rural communities have been hampered by the absence of a common vision for local development, lack of appropriate planning and budgeting tools, and weak capacity at the local level. Communal elected officials have not been sufficiently empowered to manage local development and have had limited accountability toward their constituents. Investments channeled to local communities have often been influenced by politically well-connected elites and have not necessarily taken into account local priorities. Last but not least, the flow of resources to the local level has been inefficient due to lengthy and non-transparent administrative procedures and poor tracking systems, leading to delays in implementation of investments at local level.

Approach

The Community Development Program Support Project (PNDP) was designed to support decentralization and local development by removing or reducing some of these obstacles, with the goal of improving basic social services delivery and establishing a decentralized financing

More Results



67

deaths per 1,000 live births in 2006 from 124 in 2002

87.3%

of medically-assisted delivery in 2006 compared to 44% in 2002

2%

of HIV/AIDS prevalence among young pregnant women in 2009

MORE INFORMATION

mechanism for local development. The project transferred resources directly to communes through a phased process designed to put in place a sustainable mechanism for channeling funds to rural communities to finance prioritized collective infrastructure projects and service delivery programs. Establishment of a sustainable and decentralized financing mechanism capable of operating with full participation of rural communities was seen as a long-term objective, so the project was designed as an Adaptable Program Loan (APL) to be implemented in three phases over a twelve-year period.

Results

The project achieved important results in three main areas:

Established a system for channeling resources to rural communities and increased access to basic social services in rural areas. The project successfully transferred nearly US\$24 million (US\$6.6 million from IDA and US\$17 million in the government's own funds) to communes and community-based organizations for the co-financing of subprojects. These resources, which were transferred securely into the bank accounts of communes and communities, were used to finance 691 subprojects. More than 1.6 million people benefitted directly from infrastructure financed through the project:

- 98,415 people have improved access to education facilities
- 116,916 people have improved access to health facilities
- Number of 89,629 people with improved access to energy
- Number of 164,778 people with improved access to water and sanitation
- Number of 128,169 people with improved access to economic infrastructure
- 8,764 Women with improved access to gender promotion infrastructure
- 21,780 Youth with improved to sport and leisure facilities
- Number of 45,861 people with improved access to market

Strengthened the capacity of communities and local governments to plan and manage their own development. The concrete results achieved on the ground were complemented by important achievements in terms of capacity building. During the course of providing support to approximately 3,100 community-based organizations in the preparation of their local development plans, the project greatly strengthened the ability of rural communities to manage public resources. The project also supported the preparation of communal development plans in 135 communes. The project strengthened capacity at the local level by providing training in communal planning, functioning rules of communal and community subproject approval committees, and familiarization with national and simplified procedures.

Improved the legal and regulatory framework for decentralized rural development. The project has made a significant contribution to improving the legal and regulatory environment of decentralization, thus providing communes with an adequate framework for improved local development planning, financing and management. One study on local taxation and financial regimes of the decentralized territorial collectivities (DTCs) led to the adoption and promulgation of several new laws relating to the financial management of DTCs and the collection and use of local taxes. Another study on institutional diagnostics and standard employment types of communes led to the passing of an official decree regarding the organizational structure for communes. The project also supported the preparation of key legal texts relating to the evolving decentralization framework, which were used in drafting the national and sectoral strategy on decentralization.

- » Djibouti and the World Bank
- » Health Sector Development Project
- » Country Assistance Strategy 2009-2012
- » Active projects
- » Lending summary
- » Economic and Sector Work
- » All publications
- » Doing Business
- » Djibouti Data
- » Millennium Development Goals

The preparation, and sometimes promulgation, of key legal texts clarified the role and responsibilities of the decentralized and deconcentrated administrations, thus giving these entities the legal authority and the human and financial resources needed for local development. It contributed to increasing the coherence in local development planning, including better alignment between sector and territorial priorities, and a more efficient use of sector's resources. This change was facilitated by the institutionalization of development plans as investment planning and budget tools. The improved legal framework also helped strengthening the coordination between the project and sector ministries and between communities and communes as well. This has led to strengthened local governance and a greater command of the local development process by communes, and an improved delivery of basic social services.

Bank Contribution

IDA support has consisted of US\$20 million approved in 2004. The IDA resources have been used to leverage an even larger contribution of the government's own resources, bringing the total to over US\$50 million, including US\$24 million from French Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) funds.

Partners

By launching the Community Development Program in the face of challenging institutional constraints (weak local capacity, ineffective governance systems at the community level), the government of Cameroon not only showed a strong commitment to local development, but also took a calculated risk regarding its success. The government was successful in forging a strong partnership with IDA and other development partners (Agence Française de Développement, AFD, Germany's development bank KFW and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation, GTZ) in preparing and successfully managing this project. The government provided critical support to the National and Provincial Project Units, and directed sector ministries to work with decentralized local governments in the planning and management of local development.

Moving Forward

The project has contributed to decentralized local development through its support to the elaboration of the development plans, through its financing of capacity building activities, and by setting up a system for channeling resources to implement priority activities in the development plans. The project has now set the stage to expand and consolidate these achievements during the subsequent phases, with the ultimate goal of setting up a sustainable mechanism for channeling funds to communities and communes for financing local development.

Beneficiaries

Based on the impact evaluation, the average growth rate of the number of students in schools where the project intervened has reached 45 percent, the students per classroom has decreased (from 89.8 to 84.3), and the net global enrolment rate of children aged 6 to 11 has improved, (from 75.6 to 77.3 in almost all the regions). It is estimated that the construction of health facilities contributed to reduce the average distance from the household to the nearest health centers, thus increasing the annual number of consultations and of attended births over the period. In communities who benefited from water and sanitation subprojects), the number of persons per water point fell from 916 to about 644. This improvement was associated with an increase in the proportion of households with access to drinking water (from 20.6 percent to 25.0 percent) and a decrease in the percentage of persons suffering from diarrhea.

Meanwhile, the percentage of households with electricity in regions where the project intervened increased (from 50.8 to 55.1 percent) leading to the creation of new income-generating activities for many households, including in areas such as food processing, carpentry, welding, mechanics, commerce, and thereby contributing to improve the living conditions of populations.

Finally, with up to 41 percent of the infrastructure portfolio the procedures introduced under the project have succeeded in making infrastructure subprojects more gender-responsive by addressing the needs and constraints of women, thereby enhancing women's opportunities for employment. These actions, which never before received such attention, have enhanced the social standing and decision making of women in their communities. Priority investments identified by women's groups often relate to water and sanitation, health and professional training centers.