



Federal Ministry  
for Economic Cooperation  
and Development

BMZ EVALUATION REPORTS 005

# **Country Case Study – “Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) North Western Province, Zambia”**

Summary Ex-Post Evaluation – Sustainability of  
Regional Rural Development Programmes (RRD)





## Preface

This study was commissioned by BMZ (Division for Evaluation of Development Cooperation). It is an independent evaluation which was **carried out by Newton Lungu & Associates in association with Bowanda Consultancy Services Limited, Lusaka, Zambia**, by the consultants Bright M. Chunga, Andrew Chitembo, Newton Lungu, Willem Colenbrander, Christine Ng’ambia, Marx Mbunju and Thomson Sinkala. The views and opinions expressed in the report do not necessarily correspond to those of the BMZ. However, a comment by the BMZ can be found at the end of the summary.

The document at hand is **part of a series of four ex-post evaluations on Regional Rural Development Programmes in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Zambia**, which were implemented between the 1970s and the 1990s. The evaluation was carried out in 2003 and 2004 using specific questions and methods. One characteristic of the evaluation is that BMZ commissioned profes-

sional local consultants, in order to obtain a “local perspective”. Altogether the key objectives of the evaluation were:

- the widening and deepening of our understanding of the outcome and long-term impact of German cooperation projects and of the underlying conditions for success;
- the introduction of a different vantage point for the analysis of the outputs, outcome and impact of German cooperation projects by charging local research institutions and/or consultants with the actual evaluation work; and
- the further refinement of the ex-post evaluation methodology.

In addition to the four country case studies a synthesis report is available (contact see inner cover page for contact details).

*Division for Evaluation of Development Cooperation*

# Summary of Evaluation

**The views presented in this study are opinions held by the independent external experts.**

## 1. The Evaluation and the IRDP

The primary objective of this Ex-Post Evaluation was to conduct “**an independent, external assessment of the impact, relevance and sustainability**” of the Integrated Rural Development Programme, IRDP.

The IRDP was implemented in the Kabompo, Mufumbwe and Zambezi districts of the North-Western province of Zambia, between 1977 and 1993; on behalf of the Zambian government and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), through its implementing agencies of **GTZ** and **KfW**.

This ex-post evaluation, requested for by BMZ, is a consequence of the international debate on development co-operation and the changing paradigms for it, which brought to the fore the debates on the nature of development aid **ownership**, issues and concerns of project implementation **transparency** and **results orientation**.

The IRDP was a multi-sectoral programme which had nineteen identifiable different projects all aimed, using the so called sandwich approach, simultaneously at:

- a) Enabling small-scale producers increase their productivity and creating market access for their produce and
- b) Enabling service delivery institutions to effectively reach down to these small-scale producers.

This report is the result of a five-month study into the above issues.

## 2. Overall Results

The study which included both a desk study and fieldwork has basically come to the conclusion that:

“The IRDP has had a considerable positive impact on the target group, and that it was and still remains relevant to the target group and aspects of its outcomes have been sustainable”.

## 3. Limitations

The study has however also concluded that given the investment in time – **17 years** (1977 to 1993, both years inclusive) and the financial resources – **DM 61.6 million** (DM 59,131,119 from the German government and DM 2,491,000 from the Zambian government):

- a) The impact could have been higher if the expenditure profile of the IRDP had been a little more geared towards providing for its stated core business of “**creating a sustainable improvement to the general living conditions in the project areas and the strengthening of the local economy**” rather than to project administration.
- b) Sustainability would have been greater had the IRDP, on deciding to work outside existing local institutions, **clearly articulated its exit strategy at the onset**.
- c) Whilst the IRDP was an extremely relevant development intervention aimed, as it was, on improving productivity and removing constraints to market access for small-scale

producers, if the **three necessary conditions for developmental relevancy** were adequately addressed, the IRDP would have achieved greater impact, these being:

- Firstly, adequately defining the problem that requires resolving, within the context of the intended beneficiary community.

This was done in most cases but in some cases such as the water wells and creating Muzama as a commercial enterprise without due regard to its products in the post IRDP construction boom, it was not adequately done

- Secondly, understanding the capacity of the target group and the capacity of the existing institutional mechanisms ability to absorb and sustain any such new interventions.

The decision to create parallel structures to see what could be achieved using German skills and German financial resources, completely overlooked the post IRDP financial capacity of the executing agency to continue service delivery at IRDP levels. This created high expectations among the target group as they became accustomed to the door step service delivery.

When this could not be achieved by the local executing agency after the completion of the IRDP, it created frustration among the target group. It also created the notion, justified only to the extent that the IRDP did not take into account the financial capacity of the local executing agency, that only with Donor intervention could things get better.

- Finally, developing ownership for the innovation remains a critical factor for sustaining it.

While some innovations such as the ox-carts and farming systems have been internalised and improved upon by the target group, the IRDP itself is still referred as the German programme. The assets left over therefore, such as vehicles, were considered IRDP “their” assets rather than “our” assets. This has negative implications for the maintenance and sustainable use of these assets.

These issues were not covered in full in all cases. This has created some impediments in optimising the creation of “**sustainable improvements**” in the living conditions of the target group.

- d) Whilst the IRDP provided extensive door-step service delivery mechanisms for its target group, no major effort was made in capacity building for the target group to reach up to their level of efficiency. Even today, almost twenty years after the fact, the intended beneficiary communities still wish for the “Germans” to bring back the fabled IRDP doorstep service.
- e) **Developing ownership** for innovations is a critical ingredient in sustaining the innovations and their relevancy.

The high profile of the IRDP and its role as **implementer**, rather than that of **facilitator**, created un-wanted ownership issues. The IRDP is still referred to as “their programme”, not our programme.

This has had negative lasting implications for sustainability as even to this day, the somewhat more successful **North Western Bee Products Limited**, sees it way forward as lying in continued access to additional donor assistance, see for instance and especially the letter he wrote as a follow up to the interview.

- f) Whilst the replanning sessions were openly participative, from the beneficiary’s point of view, the budgeting and financial resource control and allocation were not done in a transparent manner.

#### 4. Issues that Contributed Positively

Issues that contributed positively to the successful achievement of IRDP objectives included:

##### a) Building on the local knowledge base

- The North Western Bee Products Limited, for instance based, as it was, on centuries old local traditions of bee keeping, has been one of the relatively more successful aspects of the IRDP contribution.
- Intercropping of local food varieties based on adaptive research on local cropping practices has resulted in these practices continuing and contributing to local food security.

#### 5. Issues that Contributed Negatively

Issues that contributed negatively to the successful achievement of IRDP objectives included.

- a) Frequent policy changes in the Zambian economy, especially towards the end of the IRDP life.
- b) Lack of a clear IRDP exit policy resulting in the inability of the remaining local service delivery institutions to carry on service delivery at or near the ‘door step’ level set by the IRDP.
- c) Lack of attention to the absorption capacities of the local institutions that were intended to continue undertaking the IRDP functions.
- d) Inadequate attention to the differences in approach of developmental institutions and commercial enterprises in commercializing aspects of the IRDP.

#### 6. KEY LESSONS LEARNT

The key lessons learnt, were that:

- a) Any programme that aims at creating a sustainable impact, must either:
  - If working as facilitator, work with and enhance existing local institutional and human capacities to ensure continued service level delivery after programme exit or
  - If working as implementer, clearly articulate its exit strategies at the onset and work from the beginning of the programme at creating new local institutional and human capacity to ensure continued service level delivery after programme exit.
- b) In identifying the needs of the target group, target group participation in identifying their needs is key, both to greater target group acceptance of the objectives and sustainability of the activities.
- c) Programmes that have built on a local knowledge-base have a far greater chance of success and sustainability.
- d) Investing in people, rather than institutions, has a far greater chance of success and sustainability.
- e) Programmes that take into consideration the local institutional absorption capacity have a greater chance of success and sustainability.
- f) Strong local programme oversight, is key to the reduction of excesses in joint venture activities

**Comment of BMZ**

Given the importance of the IRDP approach in general and in Zambia in particular during the 70s and 80s, it was appropriate to conduct this ex-post evaluation. Furthermore, recent debates on poverty reduction, the MDGs and impact orientation call for these kinds of reviews, in particular in poor countries and regions like Zambia’s North Western Province. The present evaluation focuses on the impact level through the “Zambian perspective”, which is welcome in itself.

The results of the evaluation are – on the whole – pleasingly positive. The living conditions of the target group (several tens of thousands of small-scale producers) were improved through IRDP. This achievement is sustainable with regard to the impact at target group level (incl. innovative farming systems, income generation, ox-carts for transport). However, the authors argue that the long-term impact and the cost-benefit ratio would have been even better if institutional aspects had received more attention (incl. better integration into local organisations, more ownership and a realistic estimate of the financial resources of partner organisations). These lessons are still relevant and the BMZ takes them seriously.

However, there are some statements that could have done with more explanation: If the impact at target group level was sustainable (i.e. what we want to achieve in the end,) how can the authors conclude that the project did not perform well on the institutional side? In fact, despite the adverse political conditions at that time (a centralistic and state dominated political and economic system) the IRDP managed to establish new private and community-based organizations in addition to supporting statal and para-statal organizations and encouraging individual small-scale producers.

Against this background, the authors’ “key lesson learnt” (No. 4) “investing in people, rather than institutions, has a far greater chance of success and sustainability” seems somewhat contradictory. This seemingly simple sentence could have done with more explanation, since it touches the core of many discussions on participation, capacity building and impact.

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