

CZECH UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES PRAGUE

FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS



MASTER THESIS ABSTRACT

SUSTAINABILITY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS: CASE STUDY

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Summary

The purpose of the Diploma Thesis is to determine what factors would make rural development projects sustainable and most especially in a North-Western Cameroonian village called Belo. Within this context, a non profit organization named RUDEC- Rural Development Centre is working hard to see specific development projects implemented successfully and yield long lasting results for its Community. The Rural Development Centre served as an institutional example. The author reviewed its ongoing projects in Belo Village which served as secondary data. The main findings of this research were derived from the analysis of the primary data collected through a questionnaire research targeting 50 households in Belo and which served as a Community Needs Assessment tool. A Participatory Rural Appraisal was also conducted through four main tools namely: History timeline, Participatory Mapping - Village Resource Mapping, Matrix Scoring and Ranking, and Problem-Cause-Effect-Solution Trees. The results revealed that the people of Belo battle mainly with socio-economic challenges such as food insecurity, unemployment and unfavourable environmental conditions. It revealed RUDEC as a fairly sustainable institution which simply lacks sufficient resources to achieve its goals.

Keywords

Rural development, IFAD, North- West Cameroon, Belo Village, Sustainability, Project Design and Implementation

Aims

The aims of this research were to 1) determine what factors would make a project sustainable in North-west Cameroon, precisely in Belo village. The author sought to 2) know to the extent the lessons learned by rural development organizations such as IFAD and their recommendations regarding rural development project sustainability could be applied to a narrower context which is Belo still. 3) Hopefully the results obtained through this research are to help the Rural Development Centre, an organization based in Belo to improve its strategies with recommendations on how to design and implement sustainable projects that would cause impact far beyond the present generation. The author also desired 4) the results of this thesis research to be applicable on a daily basis and serve rural development practitioners in North-west Cameroon.

Hypotheses

- 1) Every stage of the project cycle namely Design, Implementation, Supervision and Monitoring and Evaluation needs to be taken into account in order to achieve sustainability.
- 2) Development models leading to sustainability must be responsive to the operating environment.
- 3) Existing community assets and structures should be prioritized over the existence of new ones.
- 4) Incorporating Risk Management approaches by promoting household resilience is essential.
- 5) Environmentally Sustainable systems must maintain a stable resource base and avoid Overexploitation of renewable resources and preserve Biodiversity.
- 6) The empowerment of the poor and marginalized household, the active and unbiased participation of community members in the realization of the rural development projects' goals would cause long lasting results.

Methodology

To prove or disprove the above mentioned hypotheses, the author worked with RUDEC (Rural Development Centre) which served as an institutional example. The author reviewed ongoing projects by RUDEC in Belo as a case study which served as secondary

data source. A detailed interview was conducted among RUDEC's founder and staff seeking to understand their motivations and their view of sustainability. A Community Needs Assessment was conducted among the people of Belo Village through a questionnaire research to see if the projects that are currently worked on by the Rural Development Centre correspond to its Community's true needs. Another important data collection tools included Participatory Rural Appraisal tools such as: History timeline, Participatory Mapping - Village Resource Mapping, Matrix Scoring and Ranking, and Problem-Cause-Effect-Solution Trees

Main results

The RUDEC organization was found to be a fairly sustainable organization because its priority and projects implemented greatly reflects its operating environment. The key project implemented by RUDEC is the "Orphan Care and Orphanage" Project and findings revealed that up to 40% of households in Belo live with orphans under their roofs. These individuals need assistance and have rights to education like any other. The PRA revealed that the main problems faced by the village are water and electricity shortages, unemployment and poor infrastructures. These were identified as being the main causes of food insecurity, high mortality rate among others, and these keep the village's residents in a poverty trap. Other discomforts are price fluctuations, high inflation rates, and the inconsistency of Cameroon's economic policies which deeply affect its rural communities who stay at the risk of even getting poorer with time.

Conclusion

Belo, like most villages in sub-Saharan Africa is facing major challenges such as food insecurity, high unemployment, inadequate environmental conditions- poor maintenance of the natural resource base, high price volatility among others. This research helped to identify the above mentioned challenges and reveal their implications for the socio-economic sustainability of Belo Community. The Boyo division based organization- has been meeting up with the challenges by being an institutional structure raising awareness locally/ internationally and providing a platform for Belo people to corporate and air their points of view regarding their community. RUDEC as an institution is sustainable because its prioritized project reflects the community's true needs which showed they were designed with Belo people's opinions taken into account. RUDEC could even do more if it had adequate support from its community, the government and any individuals around the

world that would be willing to supply aid in any way.

Recommendation

The author recommends that RUDEC works harder building fruitful relationship and partnerships with its community members. It could seek to launch Teacher Volunteering Programs, through which it can attract independent teachers from various fields to offer industry-specific, entrepreneurship training, aiming at helping the people improve their skills. RUDEC could conduct a project need assessment and organize Participatory workshops open to the public before any project is designed or launched. Let the Communities do the project design, if they know they have been involve from the very beginning then they will be involved with Implementation, Supervision, Monitoring and Evaluation as well. The people are any society's greatest assets, not its nature, neither its riches nor its advanced technologies.

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