



Participatory Assessment of Development

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Long-term impact of development interventions by Martha Lahai (summary)

Conventional forms of evaluation concentrate on assessing the inputs and outputs of development interventions, paying less attention to the impacts, overall processes and the involvement of project beneficiaries in the process. In the framework of the PAdEv project, Martha Lahai's study sought to assess the long-term impact of development interventions on the lives and livelihood of local people *as perceived by themselves*. She also critically examined the effectiveness of the PAdEv methodology.

Data collection for this study was done from the 10th to 30th September 2008 in Bumboazio, Northern Ghana. The study design involved focus group discussions, key informant interviews, personal observations and documentary analysis. A total of 32 participants were sampled from the community for the focus group discussions and 12 project officers from 5 development organizations for the key informant interviews.

Findings show that most development interventions were perceived to have had positive impacts on the lives and livelihood of the local population in Bumboazio, mainly enhancing the human capital. The most valued (best) interventions are related to health and agricultural production. Generally, these are interventions that have enhanced more than one livelihood capability and lasted for a longer period of time with a moderately high level of community participation. However development interventions were perceived to have made minimal contributions to poverty reduction as they fail to benefit the destitute and poorest of the poor. Of the various agents of development, Christian Non- Governmental Organizations are the main and most valued agents of

development, mainly because they have a long term commitment in the community. The findings are similar to those found in the PAdEv report of the Langbinsi workshop in 2008.

Key findings from Lahai's study are, firstly, that farming is the main livelihood strategy in Bumboazi. Subsequently, more than half of the interventions are linked to agriculture. Secondly, most development interventions in Bumboazio are relatively recent, initiated in the last decade and have focused on the delivery of basic social services such as food, clean water, health and education. As a result improvements were mostly made in the domain of human capability in the eyes of the Bumboazio community. Lastly, Lahai's study has shed some light on the un-sustainability of most interventions in Bumboazio, as all projects that have phased out were valued as unsustainable.

The study concludes that the basis of impact assessment of projects goes beyond outputs or outcomes to include overall processes, which can be captured by participatory assessment of development research. Interestingly, Lahai's study showed that the expectations raised at the beginning of an intervention are crucial factors for impact assessment. However, the quantity and quality of data are salient issues that need to be addressed to enhance the effectiveness of such researches.

Full reference: Lahai, Martha (2009). *Participatory Evaluation: Perceptions of Local People on Long-Term Impact of Development Interventions in Northern Ghana*. MA thesis, University of Amsterdam

