Critique of baseline conditions of the Third National Fadama Development Project in Kogi State of Nigeria : Beneficiaries' perspective

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Abstract

The study reviewed baseline conditions of the third National Fadama Development Project in Kogi State from beneficiaries' perspective. The synthesis was based on interview with 100 randomly selected members of fadama users, focus group discussion and official document of the project. Majority (71.0%) of the respondents were males, married (88.0%) with household size of seven persons and mean age of 45 years. The study revealed several shortfalls and gaps in the planning, execution and management of the project. The approach of the project though supposedly community driven seems not to have accommodated the priority needs of beneficiaries because the farmers were probably not actively represented in the planning of the project. Fadama beneficiaries did not benefit from the Agricultural Development Program (ADP) Support and Adaptive Research component and the advisory service was not demand responsive as designed to be. Moreover, the strength of the project in terms of resources was more on maintenance/logistics than the actual implementation process at the farmers' level. The study recommends that development planners should evolve appropriate and stringent measures to ensure effective monitoring; and increased involvement of the beneficiaries and other stakeholders in the planning and implementation of development project. The design of project should be flexible to accommodate various geographical peculiarities. Development intervention should be gender sensitive with specific projects and funds for women and the vulnerable.

Key words: Baseline, fadama, Agriculture, fadama community association, fadama user group, development project.

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Introduction

The National Fadama Development Program (NFDP) came on board as a result of the success recorded by the small scale irrigation projects carried out by the Agricultural Development Programs (ADPs) in fadama areas. ‘‘Fadama’’ is a Hausa name for irrigable land usually low-lying plains underlay by shallow aquifers found along Nigeria’s major river systems. The programme was implemented in successive phases (I, II and III phases) with each phase designed and equipped with measures to make up for the shortfalls experienced in previous one.

Fadama III project is a follow up to the successful Fadama II project. The development objective is to sustainably increase the incomes of fadama users. One of the key features of the project is to empower the communities to collectively decide on how resources are allocated and managed for their livelihood activities and to participate in the design and execution of their sub-projects. Unlike the first and second phases of the Project, Fadama III introduced new components (public ADP and adaptive research support) and several sub- components (sustainable land management, Fadama User Equity Fund etc.).

Moreover, Fadama III also has a stronger emphasis on production through its ADP support and research, as well as demand-driven advisory services and input support. The project set a goal of increasing agricultural productivity by 60 percent, a goal that was not set explicitly under Fadama II [1]. It employs community demand- driven approach which emphasised and promotes beneficiaries’ participation and ownership of subprojects from inception, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Generally, the approach agrees with current policies and development strategies in Nigeria which emphasize poverty reduction, private sector leadership and beneficiary participation. Besides, experience from past development programmes shows that active participation of target groups is one of the key factors and determinants of effectiveness of interventions in realizing the set objectives. Therefore, considering the laudable objectives, coverage and expanded components or activities, expectations were high. Therefore, concern on the gap between expectation and

reality becomes crucial. Thus, the study critiques the baseline conditions of the project, exploring on the views and experiences of beneficiaries; and official documents of the projects.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Kogi State. Kogi State is located in the North-Central geo-political zone of Nigeria at Longitudes 5°, 22'E to 7°, 49'E and Latitude 6°, 33'N to 8°, 44'N. It covers an estimated 29,833 square kilometers and a population of about 3,314,043 (NPC 2006 census). Twenty five local government areas in the state participated in the project.

Multistage random sampling technique was used in selecting the beneficiaries. In the first stage a total of five local government areas (LGAs), out of the twenty local government areas participating in Fadama III were randomly selected using simple random sampling techniques. The LGAs were Adavi, Mopamuro, Kabba-bunnu, Idah and Kogi. In the second stage, one fadama community association (FCA) which is the apex association (comprised 15 Fadama users groups (FUGs)) were randomly selected from each of the five LGAs by simple random sampling technique, giving a total of five FCAs. The third stage involved purposive selection of two FUGs (each comprised about 10 members) from each FCA, giving a total of 10 FUGs. This was based on functional FUGs in the local governments areas. Finally, 10 FUG members were selected from each of the FUG by simple random sampling technique. A total of 100 FUG members (beneficiaries) participated in the study. The study relied on the baseline condition of the Third National Fadama Development Project as stipulated in the official document, as well as information from focus group discussion. Data on the socio-economic characteristics of the beneficiaries were collected through structured interview schedule. The respondents were asked to indicate their ages (years), sex (male and female), educational level, household size (number of persons), years of farming experience (years). They were also requested to indicate their source of information and membership of social organizations. Data were presented with percentage and charts.

Results and Discussion

Respondents' socio-economic characteristics

Sex

Figure 1 shows that majority (71.0%) of the respondents were males, while 29.0% were females. This indicates a dominance of male folks as beneficiaries in Fadama III Project. The result agrees with the findings of [3] who reported that fadama III farmers in Delta State were predominantly men (55%) as opposed to women who made up 45%. This is surprising because the scope of Fadama III Project was enlarge to include the rural poor engaged in economic activities (farmers, pastoralists, fishermen, nomads, traders, processors, hunters and gatherers as well as other economic interest groups), the disadvantaged groups (widows, the handicapped, the sick and other vulnerable groups, including people living with HIV/AIDS and unemployed youth which are areas dominated by women. It could be as a result of the traditionally poor resource status of women and limited access to credit which is supposed to have been taken care by group approach adopted in the project. The low participation of women may undermine one of the objectives of the project targeted to reduce poverty especially by targeting female household members because they increase propensity to lift households out of poverty [4]

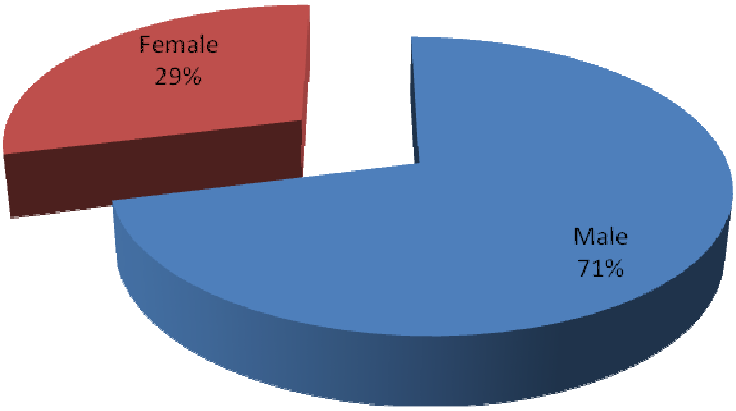

Figure 1: Percentage distribution of respondents by sex

Age (years)

The average age of the respondents was 45years. A greater proportion (57%) was between the age category of 41 and 50 years while, 20% and 16% were within the age ranges of 31-40 and 51-60 years, respectively. Only 4% and 3% were within age bracket of 0-30 and 61-70 years. This shows that majority of the respondents were still within middle age as well as active years. They are therefore matured enough to make rational decisions concerning improved technologies of Fadama III Project since age could influence productivity and farm decision making process [5]. The low participation of youths in the project portends fear on the continuity of the subprojects; it could be as a result of youth's negative attitude toward agriculture as a practice for school drop-outs and illiterates [6]. There is need to create incentives to attract the youth into the project

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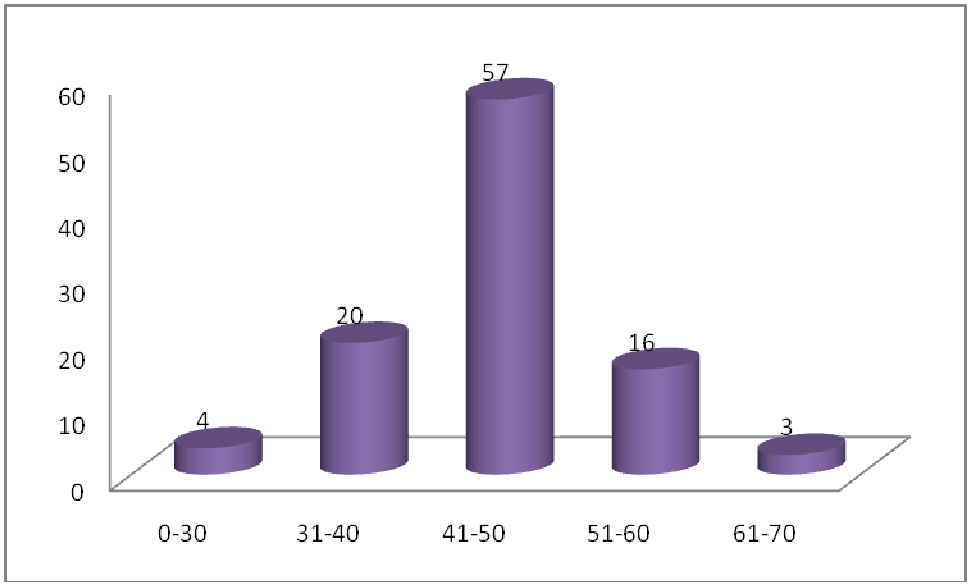

Figure 2: Percentage distribution of respondents according to age.

Marital Status

Majority (88%) of the beneficiaries was married and 8% widows. While a lesser proportion (3% and 1%) was single and divorced, respectively. This agrees with the findings of Jibowo (1999) that the vast majority of the adult population of any society consists of married people. This is encouraging given the expectation that the Project will also reach at least 2 million indirect beneficiary households, as members of the Fadama communities not benefiting directly from subprojects [4]. However, the low percentage of the widows indicates a low level of participation of the vulnerable in Fadama III implementation in Kogi State despite the design to ensure their active participation.

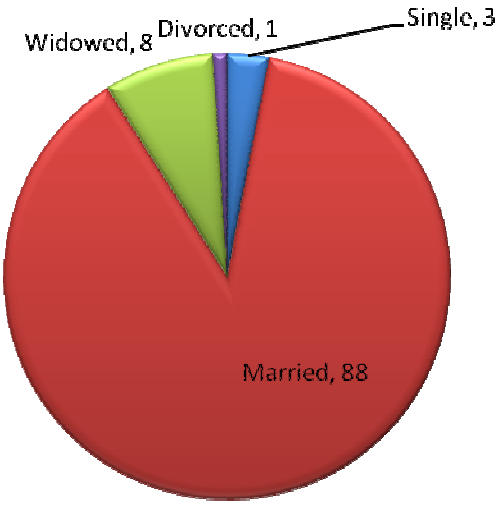

Figure3: Percentage distribution of respondent according to marital status

Educational level

Table 1 shows that 28% of the beneficiaries completed their secondary education, 19% had OND/NCE qualifications, 15% had HND/first degree. Only 7% had no formal education. Majority (93%) beneficiaries of the project are literate. It is an advantage for effective running and management of the project particularly between the facilitators and farmers. It might also make for sustainability and maintenance of productive assets and fadama users equity fund which if not properly handled could constitute conflicts, given the culture of ownership in Nigeria. Education also is known to be a factor in adoption of modern practices as it is generally considered an important variable that could enhance farmers' adoption of new technology.

Household size

Majority (58%) of the respondents had household size of between 6 and10 persons, while 26%, 13% and 1% had household size of 1-5, 11-15, and 16-20 persons, respectively. The average household size was 7 persons. Relatively the beneficiaries had large household size which characterizes most rural households. According to Oladeji, Adisa, Adeokun (2008), this is obtainable in societies where little mechanization is practiced and most economic production activities are carried out manually, so that the number of hands available determines the productivity of the family. It is possible that most of the beneficiaries depend on family labour for their agricultural activities.

Years of farming experience

The average farming experience of the respondents was 23 years. A greater proportion (57%) had farming experience of between 31 and 40 years, while 20% had farming experience of between 31 and 40 years.. Only 4% had experience of less than 30 years. The result shows that majority of the respondents had remarkable farming experience. This suggests that the project captured experienced and active farmers as beneficiaries. This agrees with the objective of the project which targeted rural communities who are predominantly farmers.

Major occupation

The major occupation of the respondents was farming (46%), while 27%, 19%, 9% were engaged in civil servants, trading and transporters, respectively. In other words 54% of the beneficiaries were part- time farmers. Relatively, the project targeted the intended beneficiaries, that is the active rural farmers. Hence, the objective of the project which is to increase productivity and income through training/information, provision of productive assets and rural infrastructure will likely be acceptable to the beneficiaries.

Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents by socio-economic characteristics

Categories	%(n=100)	Mean
Educational level:		
No formal education	7.0	
Primary school attempted	9.0	
Primary school completed	6.0	
Secondary school attempted	10.0	
Secondary school completed	28.0	
OND/NCE	19.0	
HND/First degree	15.0	
Higher degrees (M.Sc/Ph.D)	3.0	
Household size:		
1-5	26.0	
6-10	58.0	
11-15	13.0	7.0
16-20	1.0	
Major occupation		
Farming	46.0	
Civil service	27.0	
Trading	19.0	
Artisans	3.0	
Transporters	6.0	
Clergy	1.0	
Years of farming experience		23.4
< 30	4	
31-40	20	
41-50	57	
51-60		

Sources of information

Table 2 shows that 72% of the beneficiaries got agricultural information from radio, 58% and 43% from facilitators and buyers, respectively. Others sourced information via fellow farmers (38%), television (30%), friends and neighbours (22%). A lesser proportion (18% and 13%) of the respondents sourced from ADP/ Ministry of Agriculture, and family members respectively. Radio was the major source of information to the Fadama III beneficiaries. This could be as a result of the wide coverage of radio as mass media channel of information flow. Another reason could be because majority of the respondents had radio in their homes and is the major source information for rural communities. Ideally, facilitators are supposed to be the major source of information due to their involvement and proximity to the farmers. The project is designed such that the facilitators live in the community and preferably speak the local language of the people [4]. They guide beneficiaries to develop local development plan, choose subproject and provide technical training and market information. In fact, the type and nature of their responsibilities should keep them at regular contact and interaction with farmers. The findings suggest gaps between expectation and reality.

Table 2: Percentage distribution of respondents by sources of information (n=100)

Source of information:	**%**
Radio	72.0
Television	30.0
Friends/neighbours	22.0
ADP/Ministry of Agric	18.0
Family members	13.0
Fellow farmers	38.0
Buyers	43.0
Facilitators	58.0

***Multiple response**

Farmers' group/cooperatives

Table 3 shows that a large proportion (85%) of fadama farmer belongs to other groups and cooperatives, while 15% belonged only to fadama user groups. The respondents indicated membership of credit cooperatives (49%), marketing cooperative society.(43%) multipurpose (41%) and production cooperative societies (21%). Reasons deduced for belonging to more

than one groups range from benefits such as diffusion of information, access to loans and other input. Those who did not belong to any other group attributed it to much the fadama user groups were already existing groups or combination of membership from existing farmer/producers associations. Use of group approach is not a new phenomenon in development programmes among rural people, so many farmers are already members of one or two groups. It enables farmers to enjoy economy of scale and common voice on programmes and policies that affect their lives. However, it may foster poor commitment of members, and inefficiency or death of some groups.

Table 3: Percentage distribution of respondents by membership of farmers' groups/cooperatives (n=100)

Farmers' group/cooperative*	**%**
Yes	85.0
No	15.0
Other group/cooperative	
Production	28.0
Multipurpose	41.0
Marketing	43.0
Credit/thrift	49.0

***Multiple responses**

4.2. Critic of the baseline conditions of the Third National Fadama Development Project

Project objective

The development objective of Fadama III Project is for the fadama farmers to acquire capital assets which should be used to undertake a wide range of small-scale income generating activities [4]. The project aspires to increase the income of users of rural land and water resources on a sustainable basis, help reduce rural poverty, increase food security and

contribute to the achievement of key Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This is in line with the nations' development goals of moving the country out of poverty, malnutrition and food insecurity with particular interest in rural areas where agriculture (subsistence level) is the main source of livelihood. The project is expected to increase productivity and income of farmers by 60% and subsequently leads to improved standard of living. Obviously, this is a laudable goal aimed to revamp agriculture, boost farmers' morale; and address the increasing challenges of feeding the population and alleviating rural poverty. However, report from focus group discussion suggests that the small-scale income generating activities of the Fadama III Project has not helped to improve the subsistent level of farming and income of beneficiaries. Production is still highly subsistence with household consumption as the major production goal. The little proportion sold may not be substantial for tangible change in income and standard of living.

Project approach

The project is anchored on the community driven development (CDD) approach. Community organizations decide on how the resources are allocated among the priorities identified by groups and manage their funds. This is contrary to the top down approach that characterized past development efforts in agriculture. It is response to highly popularized participatory, community demand driven and mainstreaming approaches in policy discourse. Practically, this is not the case on the field. The project implementation unit (PIU) and facilitators wield a lot of influence on the activities of the FCAs including their choice of subproject and the location of their community infrastructures. For instance, the discussion revealed that most of the widows' group in the study area had rental business as their choice of non-farm income generating subproject, but the facilitators turned them down because it is not an agricultural-based business. Also most of the marketing enterprises were equally not approved because according to the PIU members, the project will not give any group money to buy tubers of yams, bags of beans or basket of tomatoes to sell". The consequence is that such groups would agree on another project usually suggested by the facilitators so that they do not loose- out totally from the "national cake". Unfortunately, the beneficiaries revealed that most of such subprojects never functioned. Meanwhile the design of the project that contractors be employed in the activities of the FCAs/FUGs was not totally approved by the beneficiaries.

Consequently, construction of some community infrastructure such as the construction of market sheds engenders conflict. Some bricklayers among the FCA/FUGs objected to contracting the job out because they felt that members could handle the job better. The same applies to the sites of some community project such as borehole and market sheds. Most times the reason for the inappropriate sitting of project is the insistence of the project for land agreement papers aimed to avoid future conflict on land. But communities believe that "this is our land you can build the infrastructure anywhere". The discussion reveals that often when community does the bidding of the project, most times the location is not suitable for them. These scenario undermine the supposed community driven development (CDD) approach of the Fadama III Project.

Target beneficiaries

The Project's target groups include: (a) the rural poor engaged in economic activities (farmers, pastoralists, fishermen, nomads, traders, processors, hunters and gatherers as well as other economic interest groups); (b) the disadvantaged groups (widows, the handicapped, the sick and other vulnerable groups, including people living with HIV/AIDS and unemployed youth; and (c) service providers, including government agencies, private operators, and professional/semi-professional associations operating in the project areas. Although their influence may have been disproportionate to their participation, women made up just about two in every ten members of fadama users group. Moreover, no sub-projects were chosen based on women's priorities alone or earmark basically for the disadvantaged. These two target groups, including the youths are not properly represented. Chabeuf, Toledano, Bouarfa, Neighbor (2004) suggest that in future projects, project management could earmark a portion of grant funds for women's projects. These could also be extended to the disadvantaged groups and the youths.

Demand-responsive advisory services

This was put in place to provide advisory services that enable fadama users to adopt output enhancing techniques and more profitable marketing practices in their fadama enterprises. The component has benefits for the beneficiaries especially the fact that it could encourage new techniques to farm practices. But from focus group discussion, the beneficiaries reiterate that advisory services were usually rendered long before the FCAs commence the operation of their enterprises. Consequently, most of the farmers often fail to apply the knowledge gained during

the advisory service training. Also the document of the World Bank (2008) stated that the choice of activities or training needs rest solely on the FCAs, but it was revealed that the choice of the areas of needs are not usually determined by the FCAs but by the advisory service providers who design some general topics, their relevance notwithstanding, and teach them to the various FCAs across the state. Therefore most of the subprojects do not experience output enhancing technologies and more profitable marketing practices which the advisory services is supposed to help achieve in their fadama enterprises. Example is the case of pig pen poorly built in a traditional pattern as non- fadama beneficiaries would have done. Also the operation of the pig farm had no modern touch signifying lack or low knowledge and skill of improved technology and technical know- how in piggery production. This casts doubt on the effectiveness of participatory, community demand driven and monitoring approach adopted in the implementation of the project.

Agricultural Development Program (ADP) Support and Adaptive Research

The component was seconded to the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) by Fadama III Project and it supports demand driven adaptive research meant to demonstrate new technologies that address the beneficiaries' needs. This is designed to be achieved through sponsored research and on-farm demonstrations. Also under this component, Fadama III supports the public agricultural extension services of the participating LGAs by providing on-the-job training so that they can provide quality assurance to privately- hired advisory service providers, training to facilitators and demand driven advisory services But the beneficiaries reported that they did not enjoy this service. The extension agents were reported to abscond from their duty post because of lack/poor payment of allowances. Invariably this boils down to the financing system of ADP which has suffered poor funding even with involvement of the federal, state, and local governments. The ADP was initiated by and has continued to be maintained by external funds. The recent funds have come in the form of projects such as the Sasakawa Global 2000, the Special Programme on Food Security (SPFS) and the National Fadama Project. Again, this is a serious missing link in the whole process.

Fadama Users' Equity Fund (FUEF)

Fadama users' equity fund was put in place to ensure the sustainability of the subproject beyond 2013 when the Fadama III would elapse. The establishment of fadama user equity fund requires that the FCAs/FUGs open savings account where they could remit some cash on regular basis. The Project purposed that FUEF reserve could grow into a cooperative that would enable the FCA/FUG members to access loan to advance the economic activities of their various groups. The FUEF is a lofty proposal but its success is yet to be proved because the group approach to asset ownership practiced by Fadama III is not a common practice in Nigeria and Africa at large. Though, the operation of FUEF is based on guidelines outlined in its operational manual and integrated into the project implementation manual, the farmers expressed fears and mistrust in the members. The unanswered question has always been" who would inherit the assets when they are no longer on the scene?. Possibly this accounts for the poor disposition of some members and why they readily share the profit made from the enterprises.

Financial package

A fundamental problem that rocked the first FCAs in the implementation of sub project was funding. The financial package allotted to the various groups was very small. The total of $14,813.333 (N2, 222,000.00) spread over the 15 groups gave about N148, 150.00 at most to each group for asset acquisition and input support. Groups that needed to put some form of structures such as poultry house and pig pen in place could not be sufficiently mobilized due to the meager amounts. Subsequently, these lapses were revealed in the erection of structures that were primitive and unworthy to be presented as World Bank assisted projects. The insufficiencies of funds were also responsible for the inability of most groups to purchase enough inputs such as feed for their livestock. Some of the enterprises became non- functional after awhile. Meanwhile, it was observed that the overhead cost of the project is more than what is allocated to the project proper (farmers). This is evident in the cost of putting the State Fadama Coordination Office in place, the procurement of furniture for the Local Fadama Desk Offices and the monitoring visits to the field by the members of the projecting implementation unit. Although the State and local government counterpart funds designed to be paid yearly

throughout the life span of the project was supposed to make up for these allowances but the counterpart funds were not remitted regularly.

Project implementing unit/facilitators

Members of the project implementation unit (PIU) comprised of staff in the monitoring/evaluation, communication, environment/land management , procurement, audit, finance, community development/gender equality, training/technical assistance, rural finance/livelihood units and the office of the State project coordinator. The facilitators are on the field in direct contact with the farmers. The experience of the Kogi State project implementation unit was a huge factor in the quality of the fadama subproject. The emphasis of the PIU on the initial FCAs established was on quantity, that is going by the number of FUGs (15-25)/FCAs. However subsequent subprojects were better executed because of the reduced number of the groups (7-10FUGs/FCA). The PIU also initiated the fadama village idea where all the fadama subprojects under an FCA was located in a common site. This means that each monthly facilitator's forum comes with some innovations or improvements on previous ideas. Personal communication with facilitators reveals that the frequent changes gave them a run for their money because conveying the innovations to farmers was quite involving.

Conclusion

The study establishes that the approach of the Project though, community driven seems not to have accommodated the priority needs of the farmers. Practically, it undermines the key element of participatory and demand driven approach because the operations at the local level are not farmer-driven. Fadama beneficiaries did not benefit from the Agricultural Development Program (ADP) support and adaptive research component and their advisory service was not demand responsive as it was designed to be due to poor payment of allowance. The strength of the project in terms of resources was more on maintenance/logistics than the actual implementation process at the farmers' level. The sustainability of a FUEF account is doubtful because of the aura that surrounds the ownership of assets by groups, a practice not common to Africa where inheritance is a sensitive issue. The vulnerable including women, unemployed youths and people living with HIV/AIDS are either not adequately represented or not represented at all. There should be increased and functional involvement of farmers, facilitators

and other stakeholders in the planning and implementation of project. Planners and policy makers should ensure flexibility in the design of projects to accommodate various geographical peculiarities and make provision for necessary adjustment or change in the field. Interventions should earmark sub-projects specifically for women and the vulnerable to foster inclusion and wide impact of programme.

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