

Second phase western Savannah development project

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Sudan: Western Savannah Development Project - Phase II (Credit 1640-SU)

The Sudan Western Savannah Development project II, supported by Credit 1640-SU for US\$10.6 million equivalent, was approved in FY86. The project was cofinanced by the United Kingdom Overseas Development Administration (US\$13 million) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (US\$12.7 million). About 25 percent of the IDA credit was canceled at credit closing. The Implementation Completion Report (ICR) was prepared by the FAO/World Bank Cooperative Program and the Africa Regional Office. Despite their dominant share in project financing, no comments were received from the Cofinanciers. The Regional Office reports that the draft was not sent to the borrower because of the current suspension of activities by the Bank.

The first Western Savannah Development project (WSDP-I, approved in FY81) was a large scale pilot operation aimed at developing a strategy for agricultural production in a region of rapidly increasing population, caused partly by immigration from drought stricken areas further north. The Western Savannah Development II project (WSDP-II) was designed to expand the activities of the first project in a larger region. Its objectives were to raise the living standards of the local population and develop a more productive and sustainable form of agriculture to replace the traditional shifting cultivation and livestock herding systems of the region which were judged to be leading to land degradation. These objectives were to be accomplished through the dissemination of improved crop varieties and use of fertilizer; tractor cultivation of heavy soils; improvement of animal health and rangeland and pasture management; and the utilization of idle, fertile land through the development and rehabilitation of stock watering points, and the development of planned settlements.

The objectives of arresting land degradation and developing a more intensive form of agriculture were not achieved; nor was the development of a water supply system with full cost recovery. The settlement program was halted because of high costs and lack of evidence of sustainability. Project implementation was handicapped by two major problems, largely reflecting inadequate design. First, as many as ten agencies or line departments had full or partial responsibility for the implementation of individual activities. Many were handicapped by their own resource constraints and the coordination of project activities by the lead agency, the Western Savannah Development Corporation, was poor. Provision had been made for substantial technical assistance, but this was of mixed quality, partly reflecting inadequate agreement among the cofinanciers on the needs of the project. Second, WSDP-II was approved only four years after WSDP-I, and many of the preliminary conclusions of the latter were not adequately tested. For example, farmers were not interested in the improved seeds and fertilizer, or in mechanical cultivation, as they were not financially attractive. Farmers continued to use extensive production methods rather than intensify, as labor was a more immediate constraint than land. Despite weaknesses in initial design, under the project progress was made in the use of animal drawn implements, especially a donkey drawn plough, which proved very successful. Some improvement was also made in extension and research services and a number of women's societies, which had not been planned, were started. Progress was made with privatizing veterinary services and in improving drug supplies.

The ICR rates the project's outcome as unsatisfactory, institutional development as partial, sustainability as uncertain, and Bank performance as satisfactory. The Operations Evaluation Department (OED) agrees with these ratings, except for institutional development, which it rates as negligible because it is not clear that the capacity to support development in the region is any greater than before the project.

The ICR is satisfactory, especially in its assessment of project implementation and results, but would have benefited from a fuller and clearer discussion of the project's future operation. The principal lessons of the project are that, in a multi-donor project where borrower institutions are weak and underfunded, effective coordination among donors is essential, and that, especially in risky, marginal agricultural conditions, it may be preferable to concentrate on incremental technical or institutional changes rather than on introducing major systemic change. No audit is planned.