MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NAMIBIA

MCC Learning from

"EVALUATION REPORT: COMMUNITY-BASED RANGELAND AND LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM"

INNOVATIONS FOR POVERTY ACTION, JULY 2020

MCC has identified the following programmatic and evaluation lessons based on the Namibia Community-Based Rangeland and Livestock Management (CBRLM) final evaluation report.

PROGRAMMATIC LESSONS

- *Programs should have an evidence-based theory for the extent of behavior change necessary to achieve intended outcomes and be implemented in a way likely to foster that change.* One notable success of CBRLM is that it resulted in substantial adoption of key practices, many of which were sustained two years after the program ended. However, these new practices did not translate into the material outcomes anticipated in the program's theory of change. The evaluation measured the nature and intensity of behavior change and found imperfect adoption, including a lack of coordination across farmers in a community, and individual farmers failing to implement all key behaviors, or to implement them throughout the day, throughout the year, or rigorously enough. The evaluation noted that the three-year implementation period may have been too ambitious for this kind of program, and the number and geographic distribution of participating communities made it difficult for facilitators to spend significant time in each one. Perhaps individual or community compliance would have been higher with more intensive implementation, though it is also possible that CBRLM methods were not suitable to bring about the desired changes in this environment or timeframe. Future programs should be aware of such complexities and be clear and realistic about (i) the type of behavior change sought; (ii) the quality of evidence supporting that behavior change; (iii) why the behaviors should be appropriate for the context; (iv) how the program might need to adapt given cultural or ecological variation; and (v) the duration or intensity of assistance required to bring about the targeted change.

- *Structure project management in order to capitalize on synergies between related interventions.* The CBRLM evaluation asserted that insecure communal land rights (along with an underdeveloped formal livestock market) in the Northern Communal Areas (NCAs) of Namibia made it unlikely for the program to produce positive outcomes. The connection between land rights and land use were considered during the development of the Namibia Compact. In fact, CBRLM and the Communal Land Support (CLS) Sub-Activity fall within a common Land Access and Management Activity and were conceived as complementary investments with certain shared outcomes. CBRLM attempted to address community decisions

around shared resources (i.e., *internal* tragedy of the commons dynamics) but did not (and probably *could not*) do much about neighboring communities poaching land (i.e., *external* tragedy of the commons dynamics), which likely contributed to the negative CBRLM impacts detected on the rangeland. Although much of CLS focused on policy reform and individual land rights, CLS also attempted to introduce group land rights intended to protect common grazing areas and the external tragedy of the commons referenced above. Unfortunately, however, the two interventions were managed by different staff within MCA-Namibia and MCC, and implemented by different contractors—CBRLM and CLS were both overseen by the MCA-Namibia Agriculture Director but MCC lacked a single project lead with sufficient authority and accountability for both investments and their targeted results; this may have contributed to a loss of natural and planned synergies, and undermined results. In addition, hiring separate contractors to be responsible for complementary components of a common objective may have created a dynamic whereby contractual requirements and incentives were not only misaligned but may have also inadvertently undermined each other.

Going forward, when results are interdependent, MCC should better align its strategic oversight, contracting, management, and external accountability, in a way that capitalizes on synergies and increases the likelihood of achieving results through a unified vision for the design and implementation of the activities. One example that comes closer to this recommended approach is the land project structure MCC is using with the Morocco II Compact in which cross-cutting functional roles report to a single project lead, who is accountable for whether the project achieves its objectives. This contrasts with MCC's traditional matrix structure where cross-cutting roles sit outside of the project and report to a functional manager instead of a project lead.

- *Alignment between the costs imposed and benefits produced by program participation should not be ignored.* Cattle were often managed by hired herders who did not own them. The evaluation highlighted a number of challenges that stemmed from this dynamic: (i) some herders were not even expected to participate because their cattle-owning employers were unwilling or unable to provide the personal protective equipment the implementer required for participation; (ii) not all herders were willing to meet the demands of CBRLM—the practices required much more exertion than traditional herding and the Namibian climate makes it even more difficult to conduct them; (iii) the lack of herder oversight meant it was difficult to assess whether herders were in fact following the program or address noncompliance; and (iv) there was a lot of turnover of herders (in fact, many of the cattle managers interviewed in 2016 had never even heard of the intervention); all of these challenges had major implications for the continuity of implementation and the potential for sustainability. Perhaps compliance and results would look different if the people expected to implement CBRLM practices were also expected to benefit directly from improvements in range and cattle quality. Where such complexities around ownership and management of resources exist, they should be thoroughly investigated so appropriate incentives can be put in place facilitate success.

- *Where complex behavioral change is needed, or when it is unclear how to target or implement a program, learning should be built into the implementation approach.* Key stakeholders disagreed whether CBRLM was the type of pilot that was adaptive in order to hone an effective approach, or a fully packaged program being tested for scale. As reflected in the evaluation report, the implementer learned and iterated throughout the program about how to get communities and individual farmers to participate and in other ways, so it was certainly adaptive in some respects. Adaptation can be critical to developing a program that can ultimately be scaled. Thus, future adaptive programs should ensure they have the appropriate structures in place to learn while implementing and to do so efficiently. Such structures might include (i) staff with the appropriate skills to understand the cultural, social, ecological, economic, or other dynamics that affect take-up decisions and upstream behavior change; (ii) periodic opportunities to take stock of what has and has not gotten traction, and why; and (iii) designs that are simpler and implemented on a smaller scale to facilitate the learning process and lower the stakes of failure.

- *A clear and comprehensive communications strategy is essential for interventions that involve community mobilization.* The evaluation report includes a number of quotes from community members that describe frustrations and misunderstandings about how the program would work, with some individual farmers and communities opting out of participating because of the perceived inconsistent messaging. While MCC and MCAs may not be able to control all misinformation that can spread about an intervention, messaging can be better managed with a comprehensive communications strategy that is used during community mobilization and throughout implementation. For example, as a result of early challenges with community distrust, the CLS Sub-Activity worked out a communications strategy that ultimately included a blitz during mobilization, radio shows in different local languages, and messages tailored for different stakeholder audiences. CBRLM's communications strategy was haphazard by comparison, and further complicated by the ongoing refinements to the program, different structural components (e.g., livestock management, rangeland management, and community development) being managed by different experts, and widespread geographic distribution of program areas. Going forward, a clear and comprehensive communications strategy should be a contract deliverable and contractor performance should be assessed against their adherence to the strategy.

- *Greater clarity around development problems can help identify the appropriate solution and increase the efficiency of an intervention.* CBRLM aimed to overcome environmental degradation and the low productivity of cattle in the NCAs. In other words, the intervention intended to address multiple problems with complex root causes; and as a corollary, the intervention set out to achieve multiple intervention-level objectives. The evaluator reported that the intervention cost approximately $12,500 to implement per participant even though participants ultimately did not experience positive economic impacts, making this a very inefficient use of program funds. The Agriculture Project objective was (in part) to increase the total value added from livestock in the NCAs. Perhaps this could have been achieved without *all of* the various components or intervention-level objectives of CBRLM. As one

example, women's empowerment was an objective written into the CBRLM Terms of Reference. The primary means for accomplishing that was a "Small-Stock Pass-on Scheme," which was considered time-intensive even though it was not a primary focus of the intervention, and CBRLM ultimately was unsuccessful in improving women's empowerment. Success in this area likely would have required a more concerted effort but it is unclear whether the lesson from this lack of impact should be a greater focus on women considering the project objective was to improve the total value of livestock in the NCAs rather than something pertaining to gender. Instead of layering this complexity onto the program, there might be more effective and efficient ways of accomplishing both the project objective and improving women's economic empowerment even if they entail separate solutions.

The Namibia Compact was developed before MCC introduced the Constraints Analysis and Root Cause Analysis that are both key features of MCC's current compact development process. These processes are intended to help focus compact design on the most critical development problems (i.e., binding constraints to economic growth) and a strategy for addressing them efficiently. It is possible that MCC's newer development processes would have resulted in a different set of solutions to address livestock value in the NCAs, farmer livelihoods, or gender-related outcomes, which may have ultimately been more efficient both in terms of lower costs per participant but also in successfully delivering benefits, including to women.

EVALUATION LESSONS

- *Effective qualitative data collection enhances an evaluation's learning opportunities; it can even inform the structure of the evaluation itself.* The evaluation team did not understand key dynamics that were both relevant for program implementation, as well as evaluation design and implementation. For example, early data collection focused on the household rather than "kraal managers" as the appropriate unit of analysis. Similarly, the evaluation team did not understand the full range of behaviors to investigate during quantitative data collection, the risks of community conflict, or the outside farmer poaching problem until they collected and analyzed qualitative data. Perhaps the implementer was aware of these dynamics and their project documentation simply did not reflect it, or perhaps these are issues the implementer also could have learned about in the process of their adaptive implementation approach as discussed above. Either way, understanding these dynamics increased the value of the subsequent quantitative data collection dramatically. It also helped build trust with the implementer, who welcomed updates about what the evaluator was learning and providing their feedback on this learning, and showed that the evaluator cared to really understand the intervention and not just pass judgment on it.

- *Integrating complex programs and rigorous evaluation designs can be challenging but is particularly important to "get right" when implementing pilot programs.* The implementer argued that community mobilization required adaptation and believed the evaluation design

constrained their ability to mobilize and implement effectively. However, for the very reason that the implementer could not tell ex ante using observable characteristics which communities would participate or succeed, it would have been impossible to use observable information to identify comparison communities and generate the kind of unbiased estimates that a randomized controlled trial (RCT) offers. Unbiased estimates of program impact are critical to assessing whether a program is worth repeating or expanding, which is the entire purpose of conducting a pilot. Some considerations for how to support better integration follow:

- *Because integration is hard, incentives should be aligned to help ensure it happens.* If the RCT had not been described in the Namibia Compact and CBRLM implementation contract, it is likely the implementer would have abandoned the implementation restrictions imposed by the evaluation. However, simply having these legal supports in place still did not facilitate the kind of good will or embracing of the value of the evaluation that would more naturally lead to strong communication and integration. Therefore, it is recommended to consider other ways to align incentives for the implementer to comply with the evaluation design, e.g., conditioning payments on implementing in a way or conducting certain actions that support the evaluation. The last amendment of the CBRLM contract included an incentive payment to help compensate the implementation team for time they spent supporting the evaluation. Another option could be requiring the evaluator to conduct intensive program monitoring throughout implementation and share the results with the implementer; having the evaluator produce something of value for the implementer could guard against a perception that the evaluator always requests assistance without ever offering something in return.

- *Expectation setting and relationship management are key to good integration of implementer and evaluator activities, especially for complex program evaluations*. As mentioned above, it was critical to include the impact evaluation requirement in the CBRLM implementer's Terms of Reference to establish clear expectations from the outset. However, it is also important to ensure that evaluators approach such arrangements as a partnership, treat the implementer with respect, listen to their concerns, and try to be flexible in addressing them. In addition, for this kind of adaptive pilot, MCC should encourage evaluation teams to consider whether a field-based member of the evaluation team could help monitor the evolution of the program and nurture a relationship with the implementer; and MCAs should encourage implementers to maintain open communication with independent evaluators. While some of these dynamics will be personality-dependent, if expectations are set upfront about the need for mutual respect and coordination, and fostered on both sides by the MCA and MCC contract managers, some of the challenges encountered in this evaluation might be avoided.

- *Carefully consider the necessity and type of baseline survey data to be collected when evaluating adaptive pilots.* The CBRLM evaluation conducted a baseline household

survey and cattle assessment that were not ultimately used for the evaluation analysis. These wasted resources are an example of the challenges that resulted from insufficient integration and lack of a common understanding between the CBRLM implementer and independent evaluator. If the evaluator had better understood the adaptive nature of the intervention and uncertainty about where implementation would occur, we could have saved a lot of time and money on the baseline surveys and adapted the evaluation design much earlier.

In reality, large baseline surveys may not always represent good investments. While they may boost precision and allow heterogeneity to be examined, they (i) can be expensive; (ii) sometimes get discarded as happened here; and (iii) are not necessary for an RCT. Given the uncertainty about where implementation would occur, an alternative to a full baseline survey might have been a grazing area-level baseline of a much longer list of grazing areas in anticipation of the implementation grazing areas changing over time. The funding that would have gone to a traditional baseline survey could instead have gone to repeated behavioral audits during implementation as multiple endline measures can offer more precision than baseline measures.