



Benin

MCC Learning from

“MCC – Benin Access to Land Project (Rural)” World Bank

Gender Innovation Lab

MCC has identified the following programmatic and evaluation lessons based on the MCC – Benin Access to Land Project (Rural)

PROGRAMMATIC LESSONS

- *Establishing land offices, design and installation of land information systems, provision of land certificates and legal changes takes time-often longer than the Compact period and depends on government processing and approval.* Similar to other land projects, it took a significant amount of time in Benin to set up land offices, which led to delays in delivering certificates and insufficient time for training and other measures that would have mitigated the risk of unsustainable land information systems. Projects should be reasonably scoped to allow completion in time as well as institutional and financial feasibility assessments to support sustainability post compact. In Benin’s case 300 villages was overly ambitious and too large an effort to complete in a 5-year period. Even after the offices were established and capacity built to map and process land use rights, the government required field validation of private surveyor work leading to further delays. There should be an agreed upon streamlined process to recognize and formalize land rights during compact implementation, regardless if the project is trying to streamline these regulations and procedures as part of the Compact. Demand for formal land certification was present but exceeded the government’s ability to process the requests. The processing of a small number of certificates was largely done in the last year of the compact and then more slowly processed in the post compact period. Delays in certificate issuance prevented the evaluator from measuring those effects even though two follow-up data collection rounds were completed post compact. Similarly, the changes drafted for land legislation did not get passed until well after compact closure. Similar delays have occurred in other MCC compacts and a more realistic expectation of time to complete land activities and related benefit streams should be built into the timelines and related logic frameworks and cost benefit analysis. Streamlining of administrative and technical procedures should also be considered moving forward. These lessons from Benin and MCC’s other early land compacts have already been incorporated into scoping and institutional assessments completed in future MCC land projects.
- *Random selection of beneficiaries in land is possible and provides key learning opportunities and results for expansion; however, early buy-in/interest by potential beneficiaries is key for success.* The land sector is still in its infancy in terms of research. Benin’s Access to Land evaluation was the first large-scale RCT in the land sector. The project selected villages randomly within each of the 40 communes via a lottery. Although project design required significant negotiation to gain buy-in to the random selection of beneficiaries, the agreement to randomize was made during compact development allowing for randomization to occur. During project

implementation, randomization was even seen by local stakeholders as depoliticizing the selection of beneficiaries. It also provided key results and learning, which has allowed the expansion of the land intervention across Benin by other donors. However, villages should be willing participants in order for success. In Benin, some villages were not receptive and did not want to participate after selection. In future compacts, such as Mozambique, the Compact asked local officials in municipalities and districts to apply for participation prior to beneficiary area selection.

- *Prior to titling, land demarcation in combination with a consultative land use planning process can change investment behavior.* The evaluation found that shortly after village level land demarcation, households increased long term investments, including trees and perennials. The investment effects could have been caused by a sense of tenure security provided by the village land use planning and demarcation alone or due to the expectation of titles to be provided at a later date. However, even without land certificates provided, investments in perennial crops remained significant at the endline.
- *In certain contexts, provision of village level land rights in the statutory system or related buy in to common land use plans can initially lead to similar effects as provision of individual land rights.* The investment effects were seen at the village level prior to issuance of individual land use certificates (CFRs) and these investment effects continued to be significant in the endline analysis even though only a small portion of the population had received CFRs. Other external evaluations, including of MCC's Mozambique Community Land Fund intervention, have found similar conclusions. Alternative modes of implementation could not be tested such as PFRs (village level land use plans) vs land certificates as this would require a different project design and implementation of only PFRs in some areas while implementing both PFRs and land offices to process CFRs in other areas. More research is needed to understand the contexts where such village-level interventions may work and if the results last in the long-run.

EVALUATION LESSONS

- *Use of government surveys has limitations.* Reliance on the government's nationally representative EMICoV (Enquête Modulaire Intégrée sur les Conditions de Vie de Ménages) survey led to issues with data quality and sampling. First, randomization was constrained by the initial EMICoV sampling frame and the related expansion of EMICoV 2006 sample to additional villages. Data from some survey villages had to be dropped due to PFR villages with no control groups in the same *commune* and 20 treatment villages which could not be located in the EMICoV sample due to mismatch in village names. There was also a limited set of land and agricultural questions in the EMICoV, which required the World Bank to use 2011 World Bank survey estimates instead of panel estimates using the EMICoV data. Collection of detailed land and agricultural data was also challenging for the data collection firm, including elements like GPS plot measurements as the survey was not focused on land and agriculture. There were also data quality issues from data entry by the Benin National Statistics Institute which administered the survey, INSAE (Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Economique). In the end the World Bank did not utilize the EMICoV data from 2006 or 2010 and instead collected two rounds of follow-up data directly. MCC has faced similar issues in government run surveys in the past as well as having issues obtaining that data. Close coordination or oversight is necessary and not solely paying for additional sampling or modules.

- *Need to test tenure security perceptions and related drivers of key longer-term outcomes.* Although the evaluation captured changes in investment and productivity, questions around perceptions of tenure which were supposed to drive investment were not included with the exception of willingness to let the land lay fallow. It was unclear why investments increased and what was driving behavior change and related investments. For an understanding of what is driving changes in tenure and related investments, more questions on the level and drivers of tenure security should be included in baseline and follow-up data collection instruments, as well as assumptions detailed within project logic frameworks. Similarly, the evaluation was unable to provide information on why labor market difference occurred in 2011 but did not continue in 2015—was it due to low issuance of land certificates and relatedly lower tenure security or something else? Exploring what is driving or constraining investment decisions is key. In later evaluations and logic frameworks, tenure security has been flagged as a key interim outcome and MCC has requested that detailed questions on perception of tenure, including concerns of losing land and related drivers of land conflicts are included.
- *Measuring yields and productivity may require a different approach.* Similar to findings in MCC’s agriculture portfolio, the Benin Access to Land evaluation found changes in increased investment but no changes in productivity and yields. In this case there was sufficient time to see these changes. Concerns were raised that our ability to measure productivity using recall data is insufficient. It is unclear if investments were simply ineffective or insufficient to result in higher productivity and yields or if we are just not able to effectively capture these changes. This points to the potential need to explore alternative and more cost-effective ways to measure productivity such as geospatial data, which allows for collection of data across areas at multiple periods of time. The World Bank is working on reviewing remote sensing imagery to see if that data will provide further details on crop cover and production.
- *Project documentation of selection process and start and stop dates for key activities is needed to support the evaluation.* Without documentation, significant work was needed by the evaluators to get a clear picture of the implementation status, project decisions, and timelines. Project descriptions and documentation, especially around selection of beneficiaries and variances in implementation, is often missing. The World Bank faced difficulties in obtaining the sampling frame and mapping villages to survey enumeration areas, as well as understanding when project activities actually began in each areas to match with expected exposure periods. Lack of detailed data on lotteries and variations in PFR implementation, required the World Bank to conduct a thorough review of project documentation and discussion with stakeholders to identify all the villages that submitted a PFR proposal and understand what each beneficiary group received. There was also limited data on when each of the activities occurred in each location, which made it difficult to understand early/late treatment and exposure periods for all the villages as at times implementation was over a year apart from one area to another. During project design and implementation, MCC should carefully track (in coordination with MCAs) the details of interventions start and stop dates at the activity level for each area. MCC has had to retroactively provide this data across countries, which has led to significant effort and quality issues.