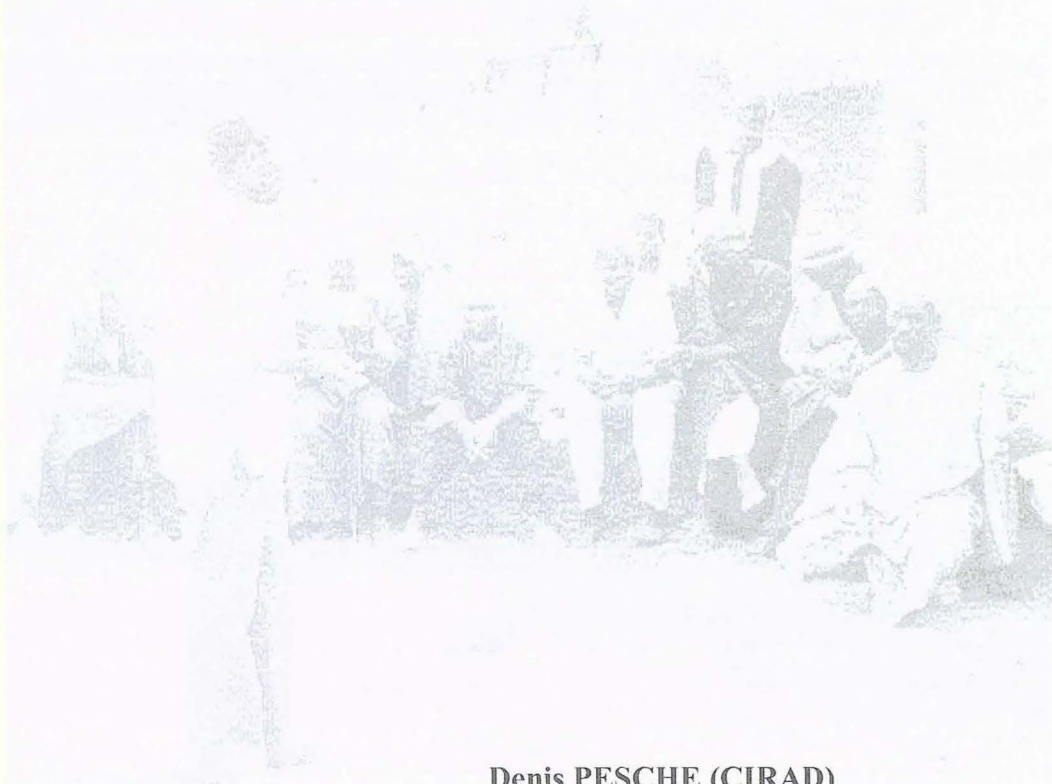


ADENI Project

NAERLS ABU Zaria, Nigeria

The strengthening of Farmers'
Organisations and service provision

Memo on the Support Mission



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March 2004



ADENI Project / NAERLS ABU Zaria, Nigeria

Memo on the Support Mission on FO enhancement and Farmers service centres

Denis PESCHE (CIRAD) and Christian FUSILLIER (IRAM)

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This memo has been written mainly for ADENI and NAERLS staff but is also designed to be readable for less directly involved stakeholders. For that, we apologise to those involved in the day-to-day activities of the ADENI Project for some comments or information already known. The Memo includes the following:

- 1. Context of the support mission*
- 2. Brief summary of our understanding of the ADENI Project*
- 3. The approach and methodological aspects*
- 4. The process of establishing Farmers service centres*
- 5. FO capacity building*
- 6. The information system*
- 7. Institutional aspects of the ADENI Project*

List of acronyms

ADP	Agricultural Development Project
FG	Farmer Group(s)
FO	Farmer Organization(s)
FU	Farmer Union(s)
FUA	Fadama Users Association(s)
HVIP	Hadejia Valley Irrigation Project (Jigawa State)
IS	Information System
KRIP	Kano River Irrigation Project (Kano State)
LGA	Local Government Authority
NAERLS	National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Service
NAIC	Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Company
NARI	National Agricultural Research Institute
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization(s)
VEA	Village Extension Agent
WUA	Water Users Association(s)

1 - Context of the support mission

The ADENI Project requested the support of Cirad-Iram expertise for an 18-month contract (from February 2004 to the end of the project in July 2005) to contribute to the methodological aspects of the project. A 60 man/days mission was provided for this support. The project should also mobilise the Cirad-Iram team through backstopping and exchange of ideas and documents.

This first mission was conducted by Mr. Denis Pesche (Cirad team leader) and Christian Fusillier (Iram), from 26 February to 7 March 2004. The main objectives were to get an overview of the Project rationale and activities in its contexts of intervention and to share experiences with the team and main partners in two major fields of work: the strengthening of farmers' organisations and service provision (Service centres). This mission also had to make proposals for the next steps of the support.

To start with this collaborative process, the following programme was followed:

- Field visits for each expert (one in the HVIP area, the other in the Gaya site), in order to meet the main stakeholders and partners involved in the project (Farmers' organisations, Agencies, ADP, LGA, NGOs, ...),
- Participation in a working session between Farmers' organisations and the NGO responsible for the grassroots diagnosis of support activities and services (one in the cotton area, one in the KRIP area), in order to have a better understanding of the methodological process.
- Animation of a three-day workshop with the OS Team (Organisational Strengthening Team) of NAERLS¹ and the NGOs responsible for operational support to the FOs in the five sites concerned with the Project. These three

¹ NAERLS/ABU-Zaria, National Agency in charge of Extension and Research, partner of the ADENI Project

days were an opportunity to share experiences on the different processes of service provision to farmers or stockbreeders, to start discussing the different tools and methodologies for FO enhancement, and to exchange ideas on methodological issues in the implementation of project activities.

- Specific meetings on the Information System component with the team responsible for its design, in order to exchange ideas on the various options and feasibility according to the needs of each potential user.
- Meeting with the Management staff of NAERLS at the beginning of the visit, for a restitution of the main findings of the mission and, more generally, to get the opinion and advice of NAERLS Management team on the Project process in the future.

The consultants would like to thank the Project, its team and NAERLS Management for the good organisation of the mission, and also all those who participated in the field visits and workshop, for their availability.

2 - Brief summary on our understanding of the ADENI Project

After 5 years of the NAERLS/CIRAD research project in the HVIP area (1996-2001) geared towards the promotion of participatory irrigation management schemes, the ADENI project was identified in 2001 by both French Cooperation and the CIRAD mission in close collaboration with Nigeria's main partner, NAERLS. The project officially started in July 2002 with the signing of a cooperation agreement between the French Embassy in Abuja and FMARD, with NAERLS responsible for coordination. The ADENI Coordination staff went operational in late 2002, though the real start of activities of the ADENI project can be considered to have been in January 2003, with the holding of the first National Steering Committee meeting.

The overall conception of the ADENI Project is based on the following choices:

- Intervention on 5 sites throughout the States of Katsina, Kano, Jigawa and Bauchi, chosen for their agro-ecological diversity: 2 irrigated areas, 1 Fadama area, 2 upland areas (cotton and groundnut zones).
- A project centred on facilitation activities with a range of partners in the field (FOs, NGOs, ADP, Agencies in irrigated areas, LGA), a key partner at the central level (Zaria) and NAERLS. The project coordination team is a small one (4-man staff), with the aim of mobilising and facilitating multidimensional partnership in the various activities and building coherence.
- An intervention philosophy based on coherence between knowledge production (general inventory of FOs, sites diagnosis, commodity chain analysis...), selection of partners (beneficiary FOs, NGOs as implementation partners), assessment of FO needs and support services to FOs without any direct investment on financing productive activities or inputs to FOs. ADENI is supposed to enhance the establishment of farmers service centres but also to contribute to national capacity building and expertise to support FOs.

For the start of implementation, the ADENI Project coordination team has gradually built two specific teams to carry out the activities:

- One organisational capacity building team (composed of ADENI and NAERLS staff with NGO representatives) in charge of components 1 and 2 (FO enhancement and Farmers service centres)
- One Information System team responsible for component 3 (production and dissemination of knowledge).

Five Site team leaders were appointed. Except for the ADENI Coordination Team, NAERLS staff members are involved in the project activities on a part-time basis (around 10 to 15%). For specific studies, complementary contracts can be signed with NAERLS staff or researchers from other institutions (IAR...).

The key activities carried out in 2003 are the following:

- FO inventory in 5 sites (around 1000 surveys carried out) with an analysis of some quantitative aspects of the study (January to April 2003)
- Interactive workshops in each site, with FO representatives and local stakeholders to identify the possible services for FOs (May and June 2003)
- A Stakeholder Meeting organised in NAERLS to finalise the implementing strategy (August 2003).
- A process of identification and selection of FOs but also of NGOs as local partners to work on the sites.
- A review of literature on agriculture in the four states concerned with ADENI and five specific studies on each of the five project sites.
- More detailed assessment of FO needs and organisational diagnosis.

The Mission worked with ADENI during this last stage.

3 - Approach and methodological aspects of ADENI

Since 2003, the ADENI Project carried out a lot of activities (see above). Most of them are diagnosis activities based on a participatory approach. Tools and methodological steps were rigorously prepared to facilitate the multi-stakeholder approach in the implementation. The ADENI project coordination team is looking for proactive involvement of staff from NAERLS and other research institutes (IAR).

This overall approach had some shortcomings, especially the following:

- The implementation process was too cumbersome and slow, especially to identify relevant services to be improved. Aware of this, the ADENI project has already rendered its organisational assessment of FO “needs” more flexible.
- Based on demand identification but without technical elements to strike a balance between demands and needs, ADENI did not provide information to

the FOs for in-depth discussions (for instance, information on credit provision, input supply ...).

- Due to delays in the execution of the specific studies, data production was not always linked to the analysis, processing and dissemination of information and knowledge. An effort could be made to lay emphasis on data and information with a potential use for FOs.

Comments and proposals (not necessarily in chronological order):

- Adapt the methodology by reducing steps and processes (an already on-going process).
- Produce and provide information to FOs on the basic needs of farmers (input and loans facilities for instance)
- Carry out feasibility studies on the possible services and begin experimental support by site team on one selected service.
- Look for better coherence with component 3: i.e. design the future commodity chain studies as potential support tools for FO leaders working sessions, use the site diagnosis (soon available) to provide information for discussion with FOs in the decision-making process on services to be experimented (use Site meeting for that).
- Based on information already available, decide on possible services (shortlist) to provide to FOs on different sites

Whenever possible, these activities should be carried out by mobilising a joint team including ADENI and NAERLS Staff with local institutions (ADP, LGA), NGOs and FO leaders.

4 - Farmers Service Centres

One objective of the ADENI project is to promote and facilitate the implementation of Service Centres (SC) for farmers and more generally for groups working in the rural areas (for example livestock groups, women groups, small companies...), depending on the main services required.

During the three-day workshop, we discussed the conditions of success and experiments conducted in other countries on this issue. Hence, it was easier to work out the main methodological steps in designing an SC:

- Diagnosis/identification of the demands/needs in service provision, trying to make a grassroots diagnosis (FOs explaining their activities, constraints and main objectives) and an external diagnosis (to be guided by the project through the NGOs in the areas in partnership with the agencies and ADPs),
- Identification of the services to provide or support, making a distinction between general services and specific ones,
- Designing of the tools and means necessary to provide such services,
- Definition of the modalities and rules for accessing services,
- Testing on a small scale first, before possible expansion.

From the case study we discussed during the workshop (Multi-service Centres in Mali – Niger Office, Rural Management Service Centres in the cotton area in Mali, experimental Service Centres in western Chad, and internal Service centres in a Co-operative network in Namibia), we had some general findings that could be useful to the project:

- In each case, the project began with one service to provide, considered as the most important or the service which looked as the easiest to provide,
- In most of the cases, implementation was mainly decided by an external partner, with financial support (regressive subsidies) for several years,
- What we call “Service Centre” covers a large range of design, depending mostly on the financial resources available. In some cases,
 - ✓ It is implemented at very low-cost, with a farmer selected as a technician/adviser by virtue of his experience or level of education, working part-time, and getting income from the members for the services rendered, with the possibility of also enlisting the support of a civil servant

placed at the disposal of the FOs by the ADP for example, and free of charge for the SC,

- ✓ It is a cumbersome system to implement, with the selection and training of specialised staff, and design of contracts between the advisers and the board of the SC stating the services to provide, the system of payment for the services to be rendered, equipping the adviser with a motorcycle, etc. (the example of the SCs in the cotton area in Mali).

- Mostly, it seems better to start implementing SCs on a small scale and later expand the range of services,
- When the Services have to be rendered to a large number of farmers/FOs, there might be a problem with recovering the financial participation of the SC members. In most cases, the ideal was to use existing systems to collect the participation (for example through a system already designed for collecting water consumption charges, in the case of perimeters).

After these general considerations taken from outside examples, the workshop held discussions on the following issues:

- Before thinking about the design of an SC, we have to focus on the Services themselves. When the Services to provide and the means of providing them are well known and appraised, it is important to study the feasibility of implementing a sustainable Centre.
- At this stage, the project is at the design stage, with the targeted FOs being the beneficiaries of the main services to provide; in most of the areas, it seems that the project revolves around the supply of inputs (fertilisers, seeds, pesticides), access to credit, support to the marketing of produce (access to price information, but also technical information including for example post-harvest management).
- Concerning the Project, it is important to get a good appreciation of the demands formulated by the FOs, which have to be also analysed in terms of needs. To achieve this, we have to make two types of diagnoses: at the

grassroots level (which is mainly FO diagnosis), and at the external (or sector) level (which has to be conducted by technicians). This will enable the project to get an overview of the general services required (which concern most of the FOs) and the specific services (which concern only a few of them).

- The project is designed to act as a facilitator in cases where it is not able to provide the services by itself: it has for example no budget to purchase tons of fertilisers and supply them directly to the farmers, and in the same way it is not designed to provide credit to the FOs. These were some of the issues we had to discuss at the workshop, as some of the stakeholders could not see how the project can operate if it does not carry out earmarked activities by itself. For example, we had to state the way the project can operate as a facilitator on the issue of credit to farmers: it can, mainly through the NGO responsible for FO support in the area, (i) identify the needs (qualitative and quantitative), (ii) look for a partner capable of providing a guarantee fund, (iii) facilitate contacts between the FO representatives and the banks or other micro finance operators, (iv) train book-keepers in the FOs, (v) support the FOs in managing their activities, (vi) support the FOs to organise the collection of credit.

This example can give indications on the functions that a potential SC could support later:

- Provide information on existing services,
- Facilitate links between partners,
- Enhance capacities to manage the operation, through training, exchanges, visits,
- Support to negotiation, and advocacy skills,
- Monitoring and adjustment (of the methodology, conditions and rules, etc).

Concerning SC implementation, the main recommendation of the mission is to go ahead gradually and step by step.

- First, it seems that the ideal is to test the capacity to facilitate the provision of Services that meet the general needs expressed by the FOs (one or two major services).
- Depending on the results obtained, an assessment should be made, to appreciate the feasibility of (i) the technical and economic aspects related to the provision of services by/to the FOs and (ii) the capacity of the ADENI project and its partners to play an effective role in facilitating service provision.
- Each experience in each area should enable the project and the FOs to lay down the conditions to be met for the setting up of a Service centre with some prospects of sustainability.

5 - About FOs and capacity building

Except for irrigated areas, most of the existing FOs are grassroots organisations, at village level, bringing together about 20 to 30 farmers each. Most of them are “intermittent” organisations with a few cases having more than 20 years of existence but without continuous capacity building and activities: most of them had been placed in a situation to receive, from time to time, help from governmental agricultural services. Since the mid-eighties, the withdrawal of the State led to the well-known degradation of the environment of agricultural production. In the irrigated areas, FOs are based on water use functions (Water User Associations, WUA) and could pool more than 400 farmers. In one of the perimeters (HVIP), a Federation of WUA has a few years of existence.

During the three-day workshop, we focused on:

- The long-term historical perspective of farmers' organisation in West Africa, especially in French-speaking countries but with some similarities in Nigeria.
- Description of some FO Federations, for instance in Mali and ROPPA in West Africa.
- Discussion about key elements of external interventions in supporting FOs: (1) rural development programmes with specific component in strengthening FOs in some aspects or (2) specific programmes designed to strengthen FOs. Most of the external interventions dealing with FOs are of type 1.
- Distinction between technical capacities of FOs (to implement and manage activities) and strategic capacities (to have a vision, understand the environment of FOs, analyse policies, etc.). Most of the interventions focused on technical capacities and few on strategic capacities. This distinction is useful to plan capacity building strategy combining traditional training with other activities in a learning process perspective.

The overall diagnosis made by ADENI laid emphasis on the weaknesses of FOs, especially as regards their “traditional” basic need for organisational management and collective action monitoring: planning and management capacities, bookkeeping capacities and so on. These weaknesses seem in fact to be based more on the few activities of FOs, preventing a “learning by doing” process, than on strict capacities of FO leaders. Recently, ADENI began a process of organisational diagnosis and simultaneously planned working sessions with the aim that each FO works out an action plan.

The ADENI strategy and implementation process seem relevant with priority given to FO enhancement, mainly targeting FO leaders. Nobody can doubt that there is a lot to do in that field. In the Nigerian context, ADENI also appears as a potential innovative project in the field, with the experimentation of new tools to strengthen FOs and contribution to foster national capacities and expertise in supporting FOs.

At this stage of ADENI implementation, the main risk appears to be a break between FO capacity building and concrete actions of such FOs to the benefit of their members. This risk is based on:

- The initial concept of the ADENI project with no means to directly support the production or economic activities of FOs (i.e. revolving funds, loan guarantee ...).
- A tendency to consider that FO capacity weaknesses could be corrected principally by traditional training.
- Unbalanced activities of ADENI at this moment focusing mainly on FO diagnosis but with few analyses and useful knowledge on existing or potential opportunities for FOs in their direct environment (for instance, credit, input supply, marketing...).

The Mission suggests as follows:

- Envisage the capacity building process in a broad sense including training but also dialogue and participation of FO leaders in specific activities of the project (market studies, meetings with economic partners like inputs suppliers, etc.). Consequently, the project monitoring of the capacity building process should take into account this diversity of “learning moments”.
- Link “traditional” training activities more closely to concrete activities related to the services facilitated in each sites.
- Anticipate the training session by preparing the basic elements to be ready to provide training on obvious needs (bookkeeping, basis for planning activities), mobilising NAERLS expertise and documentation.
- Harmonise capacity building process with communication activities, for a better dissemination of experiences and useful information for FO members, avoiding elite capture mechanisms.

6 - Information System

One of the results of the NAERLS/CIRAD project on HVIP perimeter is an information system (IS) designed and implemented in 1999 by a young French technical assistant. This IS is made up of 5 independent modules on (1) agronomic aspects (areas cultivated, type of crops), (2) maintenance of irrigation canals, (3) water-management operations, (4) problem statement on infrastructure failures and (5) social aspects. A marketing module (prices) completes these 5 elements but without real experimentation. The data are processed using the access software consonant (qualified as sophisticated) with a mapmaker software. Data are available for 1999, 2000 and the first season of 2001. This information tool has been designed in a decision-making perspective for an Agency (HVIP and KRIP) or Basin Headquarters (H-JRBDA). The IS has not been operational since 2001. Now, the ADENI IS team is considering:

- How to move from a concept-based information system to a demand-oriented information system?
- How to mobilise more and better partners in the IS?
- How to work on upland areas in term of IS?
- How to render the IS sustainable?

One of the weaknesses of the design of this IS seems to be a break with the existing means used by the Agency staff to manage information on the perimeter. The IS was built in a rational way of thinking, to help decision-makers, but without taking into account existing rules about production and flow of information on the perimeter. It seems also that the IS makes more complex the existing system of information management. In fact, the main stakeholders on HVIP (Agency and WUAs) do not always have the same interests in collecting and advertising some information, especially information about water-fees collection and maintenance operation effectively carried out by the Agency, which could create a conflict situation among stakeholders. The feasibility of an adapted IS is not only a

technical issue but also an institutional and political issue. The lack of financial autonomy of agencies led to misunderstanding and a demobilising situation between WUAs and the Agency.

The Mission suggests as follows:

- Carry out a detailed survey of information needs based on the analysis of the tasks and responsibilities of the main stakeholders in irrigated areas (distinguish strategic information from more general information for general knowledge).
- Avoid restoring existing IS tool, but design different IS scenarios adapted to specific demand and strategic information for Stakeholders (with clear cost estimation and implementation aspects). In particular, it could be relevant to think in terms of several IS, tailored to the needs of specific stakeholders, and not only looking on one IS to adapt and transfer.
- Use these scenarios to discuss with stakeholders and find partners in implementing new, flexible and adapted IS.
- Combine these activities with an advocacy work on the utility of friendly and efficient IS to make progress on the way to co-management of irrigated areas using existing platform as experimental governing bodies about water management issues.
- In upland areas, start with small IS directly related to FO activities or the main commodity chain in the site.

7 - Institutional aspects of the ADENI Project

The Mission was not responsible for assessing the institutional aspects of the ADENI Project set up. Field visits and working session with ADENI, NAERLS and NGOs staffs gave us the opportunity to identify some elements we thought important to share:

- Stakeholders find it difficult to clarify their role and be pro-active within the framework of the project. This situation seems to be linked to different interpretations of ADENI goals and philosophy.
- For some people, the ADENI Project belongs to the 4-man staff of the ADENI coordination team but for others, the ADENI Project includes also NAERLS and NGOs staff. The ownership feeling of ADENI by NAERLS is not yet very strong.

The Mission suggests as follows:

- Improve communication among stakeholders about ADENI goals, methodology and implementing process. In particular, explore ways to further NAERLS involvement by better communication and search for a common vision for the future of ADENI activities in the field. ADENI coordination and NAERLS should explore new collaboration mechanisms based on contracting procedures allowing stronger involvement of NAERLS staff in achieving ADENI goals.
 - Organise periodic discussions with stakeholders (on their roles).
 - For the OS team, clearly state NAERLS staff responsibilities on specific tasks (FO leaders training for instance).
 - The budding French technical assistance could play an active role to multiply interactions between the Zaria Project base and the 5 sites.

Further step

The Mission clearly states that further support activities will be planned based on interactions with the OS team through the ADENI Project leader. For the next mission, a preliminary suggestion has been made: after the next season (September-October 2004), evaluate and draw lessons from the first experience of few site teams regarding specific services and plan subsequent activities (till the end of ADENI) with a specific feasibility study of one (or more) farmers service centres.

