

# Budikadidi DFSA Mid-Term Evaluation

## Summary Brief

### INTRODUCTION

Budikadidi is a five-year Development Food Security Activity (DFSA) that was launched in October 2016 and planned through September 2021. The prime implementing organization is Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

The project consists of two purposes, with an overarching foundational purpose. These are:

- Foundational Purpose (FP): Communities empowered to sustain improvements to food security and nutrition.
- Purpose (P) 1: Chronic malnutrition in children under five sustainably reduced.
- Purpose (P) 2: Household inclusive social and economic well-being improved.

Prepared by Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, this brief summarizes the results of the 2019 mid-term evaluation report, which examines the programmatic and operational approaches approved in the original plan; assesses the quality of program service delivery; evaluates the effectiveness of the project approach; and identifies contextual factors that are contributing to intended objectives, results, and impacts.

Since the official launch of Budikadidi on October 1, 2016, the project has demonstrated progress on its



Photo Credit: Esther Ruth Mbabazi / Save the Children

### ABOUT BUDIKADIDI

**Primary Focus Areas:** Multi-sectoral approach to deliver a package of interventions aimed to build local capacity, strengthen service-delivery systems, and increase accountability, as well as reduce structural, cultural, and gender-based barriers to change.

**Implementing Organizations:** Catholic Relief Services (prime), National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International (NCBA-CLUSA), Caritas, Réseaux Femmes et Développement (REFED), and Réseau des Associations Congolaises de Jeunes (RACOJ).

**Intervention Period:** October 2016 – September 2021

**Funding:** United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Office of Food for Peace (FFP). \$44 million.

**Intervention Areas:** 474 villages located in three rural health zones (Miabi, Cilundu, and Kasansa) in the Kasai Oriental province.

**Targeting:** 426,420 community members living in 85,300 households.



strategic objectives, and activities are generally being well received by participants. Some key areas where Budikadidi has succeeded to date include:

- Contributed to the establishment or revitalization of community animation cells (CAC) in all villages. Setting up the CAC was transparent and democratic, allowing all members of the village to participate in elections, and preventing village leaders and elites from taking control.
- Established Care Groups (CGs) which adhere well to international standards. The establishment of a solid, well-integrated governance and CG approach can be attributed, at least in part, to the technical assistance and ongoing oversight and monitoring provided by field staff living in DFSA communities, who are trained in technical areas and program implementation.
- Ensured that the core strategy grows with the population, and that newly created families (due to new marriages), returnees, and other migrants are included as activity participants.

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*People (from Budikadidi) came to the village, they were interested in working with the village chief, they sensitized the village members. They said that they came to help us, that they wanted to work with the community members. They asked us to elect people from the village who will form the groups they will work with.*

– CAC President

- Established a strong community-based structure (management committee) for water. Both village chiefs and CAC members are involved in governance and accountability of the water supply.
- Equipped and transferred knowledge to Natural Leaders and Lead Mothers (LMs) on WASH concepts and practices. Signs of social cohesion are evident in some communities where youth are being galvanized to construct latrines for vulnerable community members.
- Used study results from the refinement year to make substantial changes to the project's theory of change and implementation strategies during the refinement year.
- Established a strong routine monitoring system that is an effective project management tool used by staff at all levels of the organization.

The evaluation also found several areas where the project has an opportunity to improve and learn. These can be loosely grouped in four categories:

- Timeliness of outputs
- Activities need to be scaled up or re-focused
- Specific lessons learned from the Refine & Implement (R&I) approach
- Linkages between activities/project purposes and harmonization of approaches between consortium members needs improvement.

## KEY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Timeliness of outputs

A range of factors both within and outside the control of the implementing partners (IPs) have affected progress toward food security and nutrition since the start of implementation.

Delays in implementation of activities of key USAID-funded collaborators, including USAID Integrated Health Program (IHP) and Integrated Government Activity (IGA), have affected progress toward health, nutrition and governance activity-specific sub-purposes, such as Sub-Purposes 1.1 (Early pregnancies & forced marriages reduced) and 1.3 (All household members make use of high quality, accessible health services).

Aspects of the agriculture approach, which is intended to contribute to food security, income, and nutrition, are struggling to reach scale and viability. Some components, such as the market and permagarden approaches, still appear to be in the "refine" phase. The permagarden method, which intends to ensure year-round production of vegetables by and for households, has been widely adopted by communities. However, CRS's recent reports indicate that at least 15,600 permagardens have been implemented, which falls quite short of the 38,332 target. Furthermore, the evaluation team found that the permagarden activities often failed to follow technical approaches and had other quality-related shortcomings. Thus far, Budikadidi has not been successful in implementing activities that increase diversity in crop production and livelihoods which will allow communities to absorb shocks.

### Recommendations

- It is critical that the technical staff and leadership assess the current agricultural strategy and establish a set of approaches that can be implemented on a large enough scale to deliver anticipated results as planned and in a timely fashion.
  - To ensure timely implementation, those components that do have potential for wide range uptake should be scaled up quickly, while others that do not show promise should be eliminated.
- Budikadidi must both accelerate implementation of agriculture activities to make up for delays, and better ensure that appropriate technical oversight is provided by field agents and followed by participants.
  - Inputs critical for activities and promised by the project, such as seeds, need to be provided in a timely fashion to avoid further delays and to gain project credibility.



Photo Credit: Felly Muambavi

## Need for some activities to be scaled up or re-focused

The high demand for potable water in the Budikadidi project area far exceeds the budgetary allocation for water system installations. The population's need for water sources is placing extreme stress on the water

systems. The project has invested in and recently installed water systems, but they are failing to meet Sphere standards related to queuing time and the average liter per person per day. This raises concerns about the durability of the borehole foot pumps and whether the new pumps will reach their lifespans.

There is a perception among project staff, the health system, and communities that child malnutrition is only (severe) acute malnutrition. Children outside of the red zone for mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) measurements are

not considered malnourished or at risk for malnutrition, and communities believe the overall nutrition situation is improving, and in some cases declared the problem solved, even with high levels of stunting. This may undermine uptake of improved nutrition practices as participants may believe there is no need for them to change practices if their child is already "green."

Finally, gender norms in Kasai are deeply entrenched and will take a long time to change. Projects that will continue post-implementation are needed to have a broad and long-term effect.

### Recommendations

- The project must increase access to potable water points and strengthen the sustainability of water point repairs. One solution may be investing in fewer but higher quality water systems that can provide potable water to greater numbers of people and have a record of low maintenance and high durability.
- The project must reinforce recognition of chronic malnutrition among project staff, the health system, and communities.
- Budikadidi should focus on the activities that have the potential to reduce systemic gender barriers and explore opportunities to better ensure that these activities will continue post-implementation. Establishing firmer links with government sectors, such as the health sector in the case of CGs, or other implementing partners working on health or education in the Budikadidi health zones, may help ensure the longevity of important activities such as literacy and CGs.

### Lessons learned from the R&I approach

CRS should be commended for their good use of the R&I process to inform and adapt their program design. There are key lessons from this experience that may help inform future R&I implementation.

The context in the Budikadidi implementation areas changed rapidly from the time design activities took place to today. The conflict that began in 2016 and the cholera outbreak of 2018 required the project to revise their targeting and activities to address critical needs. Some project staff expressed concern that the findings of the refinement year studies would become irrelevant due to this rapidly changing context.

Photo Credit: Eric Mafuta



## Recommendations

- Selection of studies should be strategically prioritized and the number of studies limited in future R&I DFSAs, reducing the management burden and allowing more time for quality studies to be conducted. This will increase the likelihood that the findings of the studies are used to adapt the project design.
  - The evaluation team agrees that R&I, particularly at this early stage, could benefit by gathering information across DRC DFSAs to determine which formative studies elicited the most relevant information regarding activity design and implementation and why.
- The R&I approach should continue to integrate adaptive management throughout implementation.
  - The evaluation team observed differences between the technical sectors, and between senior and junior-level staff within sectors, in their plans for and commitment to adaptive management. Given that both R&I and adaptive management are new to USAID, there is an opportunity to promote both approaches jointly.

## Linkages between activities/project purposes and harmonization of approaches between consortium members

The project's theory of change shows linkages between the agriculture/income pathways and the nutrition pathways, providing an opportunity to create synergies. However, the health and nutrition team (especially below senior management level) does not have enough familiarity with the targeting, strategies, and timing of the livelihoods work to understand how it should be supporting health and nutrition at the household level.

Interviews revealed that some community members contributing to CAC activities participated voluntarily, while others received monetary payments or gifts in-kind. On the receiving end, communities perceive this as disjointed and unfair systems. While incentives were designed to be motivational, they appeared to demotivate those who did not receive them. Research suggests that the size of incentives relative to others' incentives can be more important to recipient satisfaction than absolute size or fairness of the incentive.

## Recommendations

- Strengthening linkages across purposes—particularly between P1 and P2—is critical to establish resilience.
- Going forward, CRS should ensure that all new incentives/motivation structures are discussed with the full project team (rather than left to the discretion of sectors) and community representatives, so that potential perceptions of "unfairness" can be addressed before they create problems.

## QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

- **Desk review** of documents and data relevant to the project.
- **Qualitative study** collecting data from a total of 492 respondents (249 women, 243 men) in six villages across three health zones, as well as the province capital, and the national capital (August 2019).
  - 39 key informant interviews with technical experts and project staff from USAID, FFP, and other IPs.
  - 84 in-depth interviews with community members, project participants, field agents, government collaborators, and other partners.
  - 34 direct observations of local village structure, activities and practices such as farming fields, water sources, livelihood activities, etc.
  - 28 focus groups, including groups of child caretakers, farmers, members of listening clubs, water management committees.