



AGENCY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

ADWAC

LOCAL INSTITUTION STRENGTHENING AND CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT

ANNUAL REPORT

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SOFRECO



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INTRODUCTION:

The Agency for the Development of Women And Children (ADWAC) is a registered, national non-profit, non-sectarian development organization with a mission to pursue a program of integrated rural development in order to bring about sustainable improvement in rural living conditions, with particular emphasis being placed upon the well being of women and children.

ADWAC has received funding from the European Commission (EC) – Non State Actors Strengthening Program in the Gambia to implement a one year project on the Strengthening and Capacity Building of Local Institutions in North Bank Region. It was an opportunity for the Agency to have this funding from a new partner as the European Union and contribute our quota in the development of the area of our intervention.

Broadly speaking the program targeted 15 Village Development Committees (VDCs) and 6 Ward Development Committees (WDCs) in the five districts in the region and also made provisions to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Kerewan Area Council within the stipulated.

This is a consolidation of the four quarters and it is demarcated by each Executive Summary as the beginning of each quarter.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

ADWAC is indebted to a number of persons and institutions in order to achieve its goals and objectives in the implementation of EC Non State Actors project. Their efforts need to be acknowledged as they have contributed to the success of the project.

First our appreciation goes to the European Commission for the identification and selection of ADWAC to the funding of the project. Words cannot express our appreciation for being one among the many selected for the Governance project.

Also for the Local Government Authorities who have shown keen interest in the project and gave full support; to them we say thanks so much. We have not forgotten the stakeholders in the Region who have put in their collaboration in the implementation of this project. To the MDFTs, WDC, VDC, and the NCCE also to mention the staff of the Kerewan Community Radio for all the support at any given point in time.

We owe all of you a lot and we are using this medium to send our appreciation to all of you for your time and effort to make sure we all succeed in the execution of the project. It was worth the while to partner with all of you individually and your institutions.

Executive summary:

The Actions implemented during this period under review, includes a baseline survey which is intended to made available comprehensive data on the status of 15 village Development Committees and 6 Wards in the North Bank Region. This data will serve as a benchmark to measure the extent of contribution for this action to good governance in The Gambia. Furthermore, a stakeholder meeting was also conducted which was aimed at creating a platform for all the Associates in the project to have common understanding of the project objectives, activities, expected results and implementation methodology as well as roles and responsibilities of each Associate in the Action.

As a complement for a broader sensitization, the North bank community radio facilitated a panel discussion to discuss with the wider audience about the overall Objective of the project, target beneficiaries (VDC/WDC) and the role of the Kerewan Area Council in the implementation of this action respectively.

Activity 1:**Baseline study**

The Baseline survey which seeks to made available comprehensive data on the status of 15 village Development Committees and 6 Wards and the Kerewan Area Council. This data will serve as a benchmark to measure the extend of contribution for this action to good governance in The Gambia. The survey was conducted through a systematic process to enhance better results so as to meet the intended targets of the objectives of the project. To this effect, a consultant was identified, Terms of Reference developed and a successful contract was signed by ADWAC and the Consultant. This was followed by the development of the study tools, enumerators' orientation and pre-testing was done on the tools for their appropriate and relevancy to the intended purpose of the study. The pre-testing of the tools paid dividend because it has strengthened the study tools and broadened the enumerators understanding of their task in the study. The study was then lunched using Focus Group discussion and interviews with the use of questionnaires at the village, Wards and council levels. Data collection is completed. Meanwhile, the consultant is processing the data for the first draft that will be validated where all the Associates will be represented to share their views on the findings to establish the benchmarks of the project.

Executive summary of the Action:

The period under review covers the implementation period April to June. The quarter started with sensitization of the target groups on project concept, objectives, expected results, activities and the implementation framework. This led to the orientation of the MDFT on the local Government Act Amended 2002 and training of the VDCs and the WDCs on the Act at community levels. After the conclusion of this activity, VDC officials comprehensively understood the Act hence the need to restructure their VDCs in conformity with the local government Act.

Meeting with the council and monitoring of project intervention in villages was also conducted to ensure implementation is in line with plans, expected results and more importantly to generate adequate feedback on reactions of beneficiaries on the project since the start of implementation. The field coordinators being the project interface continue to sensitize target groups on the themes of the project, while radio sensitization continuous to reinforced extension messages at the Kerewan Community Development Radio for a wider coverage at Regional level.

Activity 1:

Target group sensitization on the project concept, objectives, expected results, activities and the project implementation framework.

Sensitization of target beneficiaries was conducted in the intervention villages and Wards. The ultimate objective of the action was, to formally introduce the project to the target group to enhance their understanding and participation in the project for the next twelve months. A total of 315 people directly benefited from this sensitization from 21 local institutions (VDCs/WDCs). At the end of the training many of the VDCs and WDCs comprehended the project concept and expected results. They promised to work hand in glove with ADWAC in their empowerment process. Many of the beneficiaries noted that they are reluctant to read and write formally therefore they will require continuous coaching to become viable local institutions capable of recognising their roles and responsibilities to be able to claim their rights from duty bearers.

The functions of VDCs and WDCs were well articulated as well as the Channel of communication between VDC, WDC and the Area Council. Many of the people who benefited from the sensitization applauded the timely intervention of this project that it is time that they know their rights and entitlements to be able to take active role in the democratic process of the country. While some beneficiaries blamed the area council for not doing enough some applauded them for doing well and instead urged the beneficiaries to join council in contributing to achieving its goals.

The sensitization was a very interactive and empowering and stimulated agitation in some participants who suggested continuous information flow between council and VDCs. They also suggested council to actively involve them during their yearly plan and budget sessions.

Topics covered include:

- Overall Objective
- Specific Objectives
- Expected Results
- Actors
- Work plan

Activity 2:

Two days Orientation of MDFT on the Local Government Act Revised 2002

A two day orientation on the Local Government Act was conducted for the MDFTs. The MDFTs are the project interface at community level and required adequately preparation for effective facilitation.

The objective of the orientation was to discuss the amended LG Act to ensure a common understanding prior the field exercise. The activity was conducted in collaboration with the National Council for Civic Education (NCCE) as key facilitator, the assistance project supported in the deliberations. The orientation was attended by 25 MDFTs from different institutions in the region.

Topics discussed include:

- Background of decentralization process in The Gambia
- Overview of the local Government Act revised 2002
- Composition of VDC/WDC
- Functions and mandates of VDC/WDCs

Activity 3:

Training of WDC/VDC on the Local Government Act 2002

Twenty one local institutions (15 VDCs and 6WDCS) in the lower Baddibu, Jokadu and the Lower Niumi districts, benefitted from training on the Local Government Act 2002.

The objectives of the training were to build the capacities of these officials on the requirements of the act to improve institutional function and administration and also the constitutional requirements and mandate of these institutions in the context of the LGA, 2002.

The training which lasted for period of seven days, was facilitated by the MDFTs in a village based approach. Key institutional problems were discussed with regards to the act to facilitate VDC/WDC restructuring and dynamics. The officers of these institutions keenly identified institutional weaknesses and objectively shared the need for institutional restructuring for more effective and efficient function of their institutions.

Topics Discussed include:

- Background of decentralization process in The Gambia
- Overview of the local Government Act revised 2002
- Composition of VDC/WDC
- Functions and mandates of VDC/WDCs

Activity 4:

Restructuring of VDCS

Following the training of MDFTs on the Local Government Act 2002 Revised, the facilitation and coordination of the VDC restructuring was conducted at village level. The exercise was facilitated by the MDFTs for a period of three days. The LG Act, 2002 was the principal reference point for the restructuring process to ensure the operationalisation of these institutions within the legal framework of the Act. Among the 15 VDCs that benefitted from the training on the Act, seven villages successfully restructured their VDCs at both administrative and management levels as a result of the knowledge

they gained from the capacity building. The restructuring will ensure dynamism and guide the operations of the respective institutions within the legal framework of the Act as well ensure accountability and equal representation both in terms of gender and social representation.

Topics discussed include:

- Review of the act on VDC Composition
- Review of Kabilos representation in the VDCs
- Restructuring of VDC executives

Activity 5:

Monthly meeting with the council

A one day meeting was held with at the Kerewan Area Council Chambers and was attended by councillors, Area council Service Commission members as well as the Executives Members of the Kerewan Area Council and the Regional Governor of the North Bank Region. The objectives of the meeting was to share with councillors, council Executive and the Service commission members on the status of their different functions as assigned by the council. The meeting was also aimed for the project management team of the Local Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building Project to give an update of activates implemented in the first and Second quarter as well as sharing the plan for the next quarter (July - September).

After the presentation of the Activities in the first and the second quarter, the council officials reacted positively and expressed the need for a wider coverage of this project. The reactions of the community members on the knowledge they gained from the various capacity building they benefited (*see M&E Report*) was the most fascinating part according to the officials. According to the Chief Executive Officer of the Kerewan Area council, *"Local Institution Capacity Building is fundamental to the attainment of our process to good governance and democratization at the grass root level"*.

Topics discussed include:

- Introduction of the objective of the meeting
- Updates on council progress in the implementation of its activities
- Discussions (Questions and Answers)
- Updates on the status of ADWACs Good governance and Democratization project
- Presentation on the Action plan for the next quarter (July- September)

Activity 6:

Monthly project site monitoring

A three days monitoring of activities of the action was carried out in the three districts comprising six wards of fifteen villages. The exercise was conducted by two ADWAC staff, one staff of the Department of Community Development (The Regional Community Development Officer) and one Area Council staff (The Physical Planning Assistant) which are all actors in the implementation of the project.

The objective of the Exercise was to track progress of the activities implemented by the during the period under review so as to guide the implementation process and align expected results to the logical framework.

During the VDC restructuring exercises Participants expressed the need for them to put to writing of the lectures and discussion proceedings during the exercises. To that effect, facilitators also requested

that similar exercises in future should include relevant such materials like flip charts and markers for facilitation and note books for the participants.

In some spheres, communities' members expressed the need to extend the duration of future trainings to at least two or three days. This according to the people is because of the importance of the contents to their lives and that they are not literate although some of them can write and read in Arabic or local language scripts.

Focus of the monitoring

1. MDFT orientation on the Local Government Act of 2002
2. WDC/VDC sensitization on the Local Government Act of 2002
3. VDC assessment and restructuring

The main Actors involved in the implementation of the actions under review, includes Departments of Community Development, National Council for Civic Education, North Bank Community Radio and Kerewan Area Council Respectively. ADWAC's relationship remains to be smooth and cordial.

The community are very receptive to the project both at village and Ward levels and this has further cement their relationship between them and ADWAC.

Direct beneficiaries of the project at VDC level is 225 people (115 male and 110 female). At the Ward level there were 90 direct beneficiaries which comprised of 45male and 45 female. A total of 77,831 people (40,319 female and 37,512 male) will indirectly benefit from the action in the three districts of Lower Niumi, Jokadou and Lower Baddibu Respectively.

Executive summary of the Action

The period under review covers the reporting period July to September, 2011. Activities began with of course continuous radio panel discussions to sensitize the wider audience on local institution governance issues. Resource mobilization and management training was also conducted during the period under review which was aimed to strengthen to resource mobilization and management capacities of the beneficiaries. A community action planning and updating conducted in 15 villages and 6 wards has given village and ward governing institutions the opportunity to have a guiding tool in managing the Affairs of their villages and Wards. Monitoring of project sites conducted during the period has provided the project management team and field coordinators as well as the communities adequate coaching to facilitate proper implementation of the project actions in accordance with plans and the logical framework. Assessment of Village Development committee which was conducted has revealed the training needs of the VDCs and other support services such as record keeping materials to improve their performance, managerial skills and documentation.

Activity 1:

Radio Panel Discussions Conducted at the North Bank Community Radio

Topic Discussed:

- 1.** Economic Literacy and Budget Accountability in Governance
- 2.** Civic Empowerment
- 3.** Accountability

Three radio panel discussions were conducted during the period and these includes discussions on economic literacy and Budget Accountability in governance. Discussion of this tool in accountability has enhance the understanding of the audience to be able to analyse and influence pro-poor budgets at various levels in society, and how that can contribute to more just and democratic governance. The discussion fascinated and attracted a large audience you call in during the programme to seek for clarity of some points of the discussion.

Furthermore, another theme discussed at the radio panel was centred on civic empowerment and Accountability. While the discussion on civic empowerment focuses on empowerment process and power relations in governance, the accountability discussion covers key relations such as power, citizenship and civic participation. As expressed by audience, such programmes need to be periodically broadcasted to deepen their understanding key accountability and governance issues in an evidence based manner.

Activity 2

Training 15 VDCs and 6 WDCs on Resource Mobilization

The VDCs/WDCs need resources to execute plans and proposals in implementing community projects and programmes. This resources could be mobilized both internally and externally hence requires capacities of institutional officials to be adequately prepared to activate their roles and functions in community resource build up.

A two days training on resource mobilisation and management skills was conducted for 15 VDCs and 6WDCs officials. The training was facilitated by the MDFTs and coordinated by the project management team. Sessions were focused on key areas relevant in facilitating community resource mobilisation initiatives such as;

- Resource identification and overall assessment

- Types of resources (HPFM)
- Local resource assessment, importance and rationale
- Resource mobilisation techniques
- Community problems/needs identification techniques
- Solution formulation and techniques
- Potential funders and donor identification
- Simple project proposal writing and marketing skills
- Subscriptions, group farm initiatives and other potential resource at community level.

Prior to the start of resource Mobilization training in villages and wards, a one day orientation was organized for 12 MDFT and 3 field coordinators. The objective of the orientation was to share the Module that will be use to facilitate the training to enhance a common approach for the community training.

The orientation was facilitated by the project assistant and a module was provided for all the team facilitators in guiding the training activity. Discussions were generated from the document and key terms translated for simplicity and uniformity in transmitting the information in the communities. A sample proposal format was also developed and use as a guide to support the training process.

Activity 3

Monitoring of project sites

A three days monitoring of the Community Action planning process was carried out in the three Districts comprising six wards. The monitoring exercise was conducted by two ADWAC staff (M&E officer and project Coordinator), one staff of the Department of Community Development (The Regional Community Development Officer) and one Area Council staff (The Physical Planning Assistant) and; the trip was facilitated by an ADWAC driver.

The objective of the visit was to monitor the facilitation teams in communities with a view to track consistency in content and facilitation approach. It was observed during the monitoring that there was consistency in the process as facilitators had a briefing with the project coordination team one day before start of the exercise. During this session, facilitators had the opportunity to share the contents and methods of facilitation during conduct of the exercise.

Graphics were constructed on the ground with participants and these were very helpful as they were further empowering as participants express clarity rather than abstract discussions and hence increased their participation in the Action planning process.

The CAP development process was viewed by communities' members as a capacity building forum for them as they said it helped them know about how it is different from knowing about what the communities want and that the communities' needs. (See annex the M&E report)

Activity 4

Initiation of Regional Action plan

The development of the North Bank Regional Development plan is at its preparatory stage. Consultations are underway between key partners that are relevant to the realization of this regional working tool. The Community development office, the Kerewan Area council and ADWAC are assigned the task to facilitate the process. While consultations are at its final stages, the development of the regional plan will be actualized at the end of the next quarter.

Activity 5

VDC and WDC Action Planning and Updating

This exercise is a segment of the proposed regional plan development. 15 VDCs and 6 WDCs were consulted to facilitate the development and updating of community action plans. These plans will be consolidated together with non project coverage areas to form the basis of the regional plan development for the Kerewan Area Council.

Participatory plans were developed from these twenty one institutions reflecting community felt needs that are expected to guide the resource allocation of the council in coming years. Community members were actively involved in the process with community based indicators set on each proposed intervention for impact tracking. The KAC management will be consulted to facilitate the development of similar plans from non project intervention areas for the development of a comprehensive regional plan for the Kerewan Area Council. The activity also served as capacity building for institutional officials in exposing them to the application of participatory tools.

Activity 6

Support to VDC Meetings

Assessment of Village Development committee which was conducted has during a project site visit revealed the training needs of the VDCs and other support services such as record keeping materials to improve their performance, managerial skills and documentation. This will strengthen the capacity of community documentation by providing VDCs and WDCs with stationery such as quire books, files and stamp-pads to facilitate sound records keeping systems. This will positively contribute to both accountability and institutional management practices at community level. Proper records will also enhance references and evidence based expenditures, invoices and other literature crucial in institutional governance.

Generally, the performance of the actions of this project is observed to be positively contributing to attainment of the overall goal and specific objectives of the project. This claim is substantiated by the numerous capacities building training conducted in the intervention communities. Some of these evidences are the alignment of the 15 VDCs with the provisions of the local government act (LGA), community solidarity which enhance communal farms initiatives as a result of the resource mobilisation training and the conduct of regular meetings and improve documentation at institutional level.

Another crucial milestone is the inter partner relationship as a result of the project, particularly the recent network between ADWAC, KAC and other associates. Community solidarity which enhance communal farms initiatives as a result of the resource mobilisation training and the conduct of regular meetings and improve documentation at institutional level.

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Executive summary of the Action

The period under review covers the reporting period October to December, 2011. Major project milestones were achieved in this quarter at both project management and grass root levels. The activities carried out include the facilitation and development of 15 Village Development Committees (VDCs) constitutions and bye-laws, support the conduct of a council meeting for the Kerewan Area Council (KAC) and comprehensive review of project activities implemented with associates was also carried out during the course of the quarter.

The task force primarily constituted to facilitate the development of the Regional Action Plan started the review and compilation of the relevant data for the exercise. In a similar vein, the Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) capacity building earmarked for both the council staff and MDFTs was recently concluded following the conduct of the step down training at community level for 15 Village Development Committees (VDCs) and 6 Ward Development Committees (WDCs). The traditional quarterly project monitoring generating the much needed data for result tracking meaningfully guiding action evaluation was carried out during the quarter.

More importantly, extension support from the project interface (field coordinators) and MDFTs inclusive continued to strengthen the capacities of institutions through regular visits and technical support at community level.

Activity 1:

Village Development Committee Constitutional Development.

The development of 15 Village Development Committees and bye- laws were facilitated by the MDFTs constituting the extension force of the project at village level. These instruments are expected to serve as legal documents in facilitating institutional governance of Village Development Committees (VDCs). The constitutional model in the Local Government Act guiding this requirement was adopted to reference the process. In addition, (VDC) bye- laws were collectively generated by members to support the administration of institutional governance. The process was actively participatory, allowing community members adequately comprehend the content of documents for onward application.

Hard copies of these constitutions are made available at (VDC) level for application by institutional executive officials to coordinate and manage the socio- economic activities of Village Development Committees (VDCs).

Activity 2

Facilitation of Council meeting and project review.

A one day meeting was held at the Kerewan Area Council Chambers and was attended by councillors, Area council Service Commission members as well as the Executives Members of the Kerewan Area Council. The objectives of the meeting was to share with councillors, council Executive and the Service commission members on the status of activities at ward level and also give an update on project activities and share the feedback on the development of the Regional Action Plan Development. A comprehensive review of activities implemented since the start of project (1st, 2nd and 3rd quarters) was central in the deliberations.

Topics discussed include:

- Introduction of the objective of the meeting
- Updates on ward project and / or programmes.

- Discussions (Questions and Answers)
- Updates on the status of the Regional Action Plan Development and Action plan for task completion.
- Presentation on the activities implemented (1st, 2nd & 3rd quarters)
- Plan for the coming quarter.

Activity 3

Regional Action Plan Development (KAC)

A three days comprehensive exercise engaged task force members for the review of data and development of the Regional Action Plan for the Kerewan Area Council. The task force members nominated from various institutions for the development of the plan include, ADWAC and action associates such as Kerewan Area Council staff, Dept of Community Development and key stake holders including the Dept of Health regional staff, Dept of Agricultural services, National Environment Agency (NEA) and fair number of Technical Advisory Committee members (TAC) representing the principal arm in coordinating the action plan development process.

The community members were actively consulted through the development and updating of community action plans in both the NSA and non project areas in representing a regional dimension of the plan. The existing literature relevant to the exercise was reviewed and community action plans consolidated forming ward action plans were used as principal guide to outline regional community priority needs. In assessing the comparative advantage of stake holders in the implementation of the action plan, institutional representative were tasked to give a SWOT analysis of their respective institutions for thematic allocation and responsibility of stake holders in action plan implementation.

Summing the data for the finalisation of the Regional Action Plan, a core committee was nominated to coordinate the finalisation of the task and report to the larger group before January, 2012 ending.

Action Plan for the Finalisation of the Regional Action Plan Development

Action Points:

- SWOT analysis
- Institutional Activities
- Compilation of all actions

Activity 4

Title Capacity building on PM&E for council staff and MDFTs

Capacity building on Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation earmarked for the Kerewan Area Council staff and MDFTs was successfully carried out during the quarter under review. The activity benefitted 28 council officials and 13 MDFTs members.

Topic covered and facilitation methodology

- Pre-testing
- Outlining training objectives and expectations
- Training evaluation
- Collective planning for the conduct of the step down training
- Concept and principles of PM&E

- Project cycle and Management
- PM&E tools and application
- Role of communities/beneficiaries in the PM&E framework
- Relevance and rationale of the PM&E concept in project management.
- Stake holder analysis

Facilitation methodology was very interactive supported with series of group works and presentations in ensuring shared learning.

Activity 5

PM&E step down training at VDC and WDC levels

Similarly, a step down training on Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) was facilitated by the MDFTs at community level. The training benefitted 15 VDCs and 6 WDCs officials on basic PM&E concepts and principles. The exercise was also aimed at outlining the stake of communities in project and /or programme evaluation missions and the relevance of generating Community Based Indicators (CBIs) as fundamentals of institutional maturity.

The training was also geared towards sensitizing communities understand their role in monitoring and the principal role of communities in monitoring council revenue, utility and relevance of setting solid accountability mechanisms at community levels in making the council accountable.

Sessions were facilitated with the use of flip charts and graphics to illustrate concepts and informal discussions in enhancing participation.

Activity 6

Project Monitoring

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Another crucial milestone is the inter partner relationship as a result of the project, particularly the recent network between ADWAC, KAC and other associates.