



CASE STUDY: IMPROVING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMME THROUGH YOUTH-LED ACCOUNTABILITY IN MADAGASCAR

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This case study describes how youth-led monitoring of a livelihood project has contributed to improvements in communities in Madagascar.

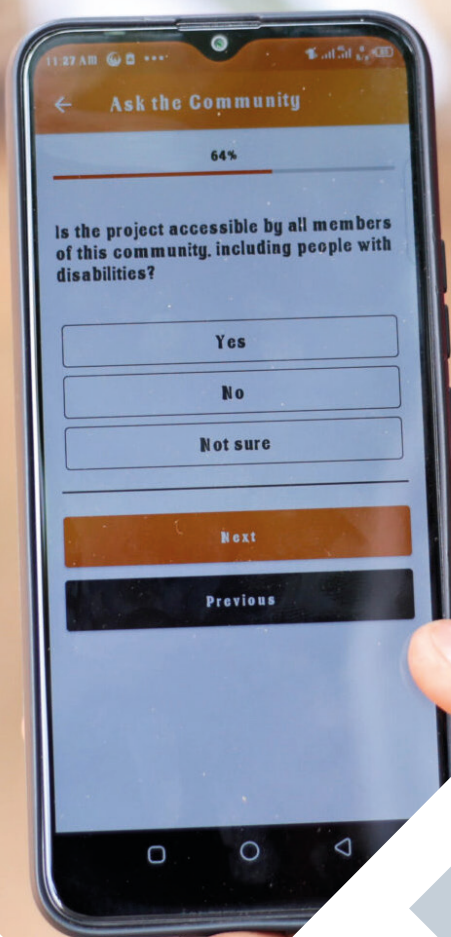
The Model for Change

The model for change is a youth-led, tech-enabled, community engagement approach led by youth volunteers. In 2020-21, YMCA Madagascar piloted this approach in Madagascar as part of [the Development Alternative](#) programme. Young volunteers use the [Development Check app](#) to monitor livelihoods projects in their communities.

Through monitoring and engagement with their communities, young people discovered improvements that could be made to these projects. Using the data generated from visiting the project together with feedback from the community, young people have been collaborating with development actors and community members to solve problems (so-called 'fixes') and create more effective projects, whilst proving the case for youth-led solutions. The aim of the project was to help shift power to communities and young people so that they can hold development actors to account and solve problems to make development projects more effective for the community. The programme worked in two districts: Kampala, Uganda's capital city, and Moroto, a rural district in the northeast of the country.

Watch [this video](#) to learn more about the Model for Change.

This case story captures some of the community benefits we have recorded after YMCA volunteers monitored programmes in Madagascar.



The CASEF Project

CASEF is a US\$105.27 million project on agriculture growth and land management, funded by the World Bank, and implemented in seven regions of Madagascar including Vakinankaratra (Anstirabe) where the Model for Change YMCA youth monitoring was implemented. The CASEF project started in September 2016 and will end in December 2022. The main objective of the CASEF project is to improve rural land tenure security and access to markets of targeted farming households. Before the CASEF project the land certification process involves landowners applying to the commune for their land ownership to be officially certified. The commune official then checks all documents are complete and if there are any land records with competing claims to the land. CASEF provide training and support to the commune, particularly land agents, to improve the process of land certification (particularly land related to farming).

This programme had two monitors who commenced monitoring in February 2020 and collected the last data in March 2021. Project monitoring has been interrupted twice, between April to October 2020 due to COVID-19 and after April 2021 to programme fundings cuts. A total of 380 observations were recorded through the DevCheck app which were gathered through seven field visits. The volunteers continued visiting the field (without using the DevCheck app) after monitoring officially stopped in April 2021.

The problems identified and programme fixes



PROBLEMATIC DELAYS IN LAND CERTIFICATION CAUSED BY LACK OF VISITS BY LAND AGENTS

Land agents (commune staff focused on land registration) would process land certification applications they receive at the commune headquarters and did not visit communities to inspect the land which was the subject of the application. Instead, the commune officials (mayors or assistant mayors) appointed community members they judged to be neutral to check land boundaries before starting registration process. This slowed down the certification process because of the lack of communication between land agents and commune officials, and at times led to disputes between landowners. Some quotes from the community:

“I obtained a first certificate for one of my lands during the first wave of distribution. I still don’t have the certificate for the others. They did not explain to us how long it should take to obtain the certificates. I didn’t get any explanation on why it took longer the second time, they just said there was a technical issue.”

“My husband is the chief community security leader. People come to us to ask about their certificates because the commune is too far. We don’t know what to tell them. The commune didn’t give him any information on the issue.”

After hearing from community members about this problem, YMCA volunteers informed CASEF managers of the need for land agents to make these visits to the community to ensure that land’s actual boundaries are consistent with received application site plans. As a result, CASEF managers introduced guidance to land agents both to encourage and train land agents to be able to make field visits in order to reduce inaccuracies and avoid land disputes.



LIMITED AWARENESS WITHIN COMMUNITY OF LAND CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Land agents and commune officials offered little guidance to community members on the registration procedure and rarely visited communities to raise awareness on the importance of getting land certificates. Only those community members who started the procedure were given the full and clear information. This lack of clear communication led to three issues: community members’ mistrust of commune officials/CASEF project, community members’ misunderstanding regarding the legitimacy of land certificates (as opposed to traditional land titles) and their reduced interest in registering their lands.

From talking with community members YMCA volunteers could tell that most community members did not know what the CASEF project was. Some community members they met during their monitoring activities did not know how to get land certificates and others did not feel the need to get their lands registered.

They reported this issue to CASEF coordinators first, and then to commune officials. As a result, CASEF coordinators encouraged YMCA volunteers to clarify CASEF's role and mission when they introduce themselves to community members they meet. CASEF coordinators also trained and encouraged land agents and commune officials to visit communities to sensitise them of the benefits of owning land certificates.



LANDOWNERS STRUGGLED TO GET UPDATES ON THE PROGRESS OF THEIR APPLICATION FOR LAND CERTIFICATE

Community members did not receive updates on the advancement of their application from land agents. Applicants had to find out by themselves if their certificates were issued or still being processed by visiting commune offices. Most community members are either not able to go regularly to the commune offices (located hours away from their homes/villages) or are reticent to speak to commune officials. Some recipients did not know their certificates were already available at the commune.

Farmers told volunteers that they did not know whether they should collect their certificate or if commune officials or land agents would eventually distribute them. Volunteers reported this issue to commune officials and also advised them of the need to remain in touch with applicants to inform them of possible issues regarding their applications. Commune officials admitted that they lacked resources to meet the demands of applicants, distributing regular updates directly to each applicant was not seen a realistic solution. Volunteers and commune officials figured out together a workable alternative that lists of land certificates ready to be picked up are now displayed at each fokontany (i.e. village-level community) office and are regularly updated by fokontany officials. The fokontany office is much closer and more accessible to community members.



TENSIONS BETWEEN PROGRAMME AND COMMUNE OFFICIALS

YMCA volunteers made an inventory of the needs of the land office and the commune upon receiving report of errors on hand-typed issued certificates and information on the time it takes land agents to type one certificate. They shared these issues to CASEF which subsequently donated digital equipment (e.g. computers and a printer) to the commune to accelerate certificate delivery and/or rectification. When noticing that the equipment they donated were not used by land agents, CASEF withdrew donations. Volunteers then urged CASEF coordinators to make a visit to the commune and to meet with commune officials to discuss this issue. CASEF coordinator confirmed that volunteers' mediation restored broken trust between CASEF and the commune officials and lead to the signature of a new agreement between them and CASEF again gave the digital equipment to the commune office.

Benefits for the community

BENEFIT 1

The change in land agents' working ways had directly benefited new land certificates applicants. Field visits by land agents were initially not a mandatory part of the procedure. However, as a result of the community's feedback via YMCA volunteers, land agents altered their working practice and now have to carry out a land survey immediately after receiving a new application and before processing registration. This change is likely to increase the speed of certification and reduce the risk of processing erroneous applications. A quote from a community member interviewed:

"There were changes recently, and it's a good change... they [land agents] are now making house-to-house visits".

A quote from a commune official:

"We used to have public meetings at the fokontany once or twice a year. But we learned lessons from YMCA. We saw that it is better to go down there each time there is a dispute, it became a habit. This is now how we are working."

BENEFIT 2

Community members interviewed shared that exchanges with volunteers had improved their understanding of the CASEF's work, the importance of possessing land certificates and the registration process, although it's not possible to confirm to what extent. Commune officials and land agents would also interact more with community members, not only applicants, and are more likely to share information on the use of land certificates and land certification process. Community members interviewed said they are now more motivated to register their lands and believe another mass certification of land in the area would be beneficial. A quote from a community member interviewed:

"I was very pleased to speak with volunteers. They explained to me about Karatany (land certificates), they were very nice. I met with them a year ago, they encouraged our community to apply for land certificates. They encouraged us and gave us a lot of information. Now the farmers are more concerned about it. We received ideas from them, and it motivated us."

BENEFIT 3

Land certificate applicants now have easier access to information on the status of their application. Lists are displayed at their village's fokontany office which has made it possible for applicants to regularly check if their application was complete meaning they do not have to make any unnecessary long trips to the commune offices.



Additional observations

- Although volunteers helped improve communication between CASEF and the commune following disagreements regarding equipment donations, there are not yet direct benefits at the community level. This is because the machines are not yet operational, potentially as there is a need to have solar panels added to the commune office to provide sufficient electricity.
- Land agents' visits benefited mostly those who were in the process of applying for land certification. This group includes landowners/farmers and does not include those not engaged in agriculture such as business owners, health workers and teachers.
- Only community members who own lands or have interest in certificates have an improved understanding of CASEF's work, not everyone in the community.
- Some community members interviewed (mostly female) who had not been involved in any certification procedures and who never attend community meetings mentioned that they appreciated receiving local news (on community development projects and COVID-19) from exchanging with YMCA volunteers.
- There is no exact information on how often land agents/commune officials now make visit to community to sensitise farmers on land certification.

Methodology

The qualitative data to generate this case study on monitoring the CASEF project was gathered through semi-structured interviews with two YMCA volunteers, one CASEF coordinator, one commune official, and eight community members identified as direct beneficiaries of CASEF projects. The topic guide and samples were developed by INTRAC in coordination with YMCA Madagascar. The interviews were conducted between November 9 -12th 2021, in the commune of Manandoana (Antsirabe II, Vakinankaratra). Each lasted approximately 15 to 45 minutes and took place at the commune office and in a classroom at the local primary school in Ambohiponona village. All interviews were voice-recorded, then transcribed and organized per respondent and per identified change. The research and analysis were conducted by Landy Rasamoeliniaina with support from Richard Ponsford (INTRAC) and Sandra Rasoloarimalala (Project Manager YMCA).

The Development Alternative develops youth leaders who are able to work with credibility with communities and development actors to improve the way development projects are implemented at a local level.



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