



Lessons learned from the implementation of the Special Food Security Program (PSSA)

Food security in developing countries, and in sub-Saharan Africa in particular, is a major development challenge. Between 691 and 783 million people suffered from hunger worldwide in 2022, and 11.3% of the world's population was affected by severe food insecurity, according to data from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (World Bank, 2023). Between 2007 and 2008, the countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), suffered the effects of the global food price crisis. This was the biggest food price crisis since 1974, with rising costs of staple foods and an unprecedented increase in the number of undernourished people.¹

To respond to this crisis, the West African Development Bank (BOAD) launched the

pilot Special Food Security Program (PSSA) to support countries' efforts to develop the region's agro-pastoral potential and boost agricultural production. Thirteen years after its launch, a total of seventeen projects have been financed in the eight WAEMU member countries. A total of seven projects have been completed, and ten projects were still underway at the time of the evaluation. This brief aims to share learnings from the implementation of the PSSA based on a process evaluation initiated in 2022 by BOAD and conducted by the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie). This evaluation focuses on analyzing the PSSA implementation process and highlighting the factors behind the significant delays encountered.



Assessment conclusions

- The PSSA and the projects financed through it were relevant and in line with the strategic orientations of the BOAD, as well as the agricultural and food security policies of WAEMU countries.
- The projects have led to the development of agricultural land and the construction of socio-community infrastructures, which have contributed to boosting agricultural production, promoting and creating jobs and increasing household incomes.

Despite the relevance of the PSSA and the significant results achieved, there have been significant delays in PSSA projects due to weaknesses in the quality of the projects selected, the implementation processes, and the Bank's project monitoring and evaluation mechanism. The following lessons are drawn from these issues with PSSA implementation.

- Execution and monitoring of the Bank's projects could be improved with ongoing capacity-building for project management units and the establishment of a permanent framework for exchanges between all players involved in BOAD projects.
- Further reforms to develop project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) within the Bank would help to improve project supervision and M&E.
- Developing a comprehensive M&E system that involves all stakeholders and promotes systematic data collection would enable the Bank to strengthen its project M&E mechanism.
- In emergency situations, efforts to streamline procedures must focus on enrollment and execution, not on the quality of projects at entry.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- A community of practice be set up consisting of M&E staff and project managers involved in the implementation of BOAD projects.
- An emergency project and program management framework be developed with procedures specific to the emergency context.
- A digital framework for monitoring and measuring development results be developed and institutionalized in the BOAD information system.
- A program for the Bank's senior management be developed on the relevance and role of M&E for the effectiveness and sustainability of the Bank's interventions.

Context

From 2007 to 2008, the countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) suffered the effects of the food price crisis along with the rest of the world. This crisis was the biggest shock to food prices since 1974, with rising costs for foodstuffs such as wheat, rice, soya and maize resulting in an unprecedented increase in the number of undernourished people.²

The food price crisis also contributed to inflation and social unrest. Average inflation rate was 7.4% in 2008 in WAEMU countries, compared with 2.4% in 2007, the highest level since 1995 in the sub-region. The budget deficit within the

economic union stood at 5.7% in 2008, compared with 5.1% in 2007, due to budgetary measures taken by member countries to combat the high cost of living. WAEMU countries also witnessed demonstrations and other social unrest due to the effects of soaring food prices, which reduced people's purchasing power.

In response, the West African Development Bank launched the pilot Special Food Security Program (PSSA) to support countries' efforts to develop the region's agro-pastoral potential and boost agricultural production.

The Special Food Security Program (PSSA)

The Special Food Security Program (Programme Spécial Sécurité Alimentaire, PSSA) is an initiative set up by WAEMU development institutions to address the food price crisis that hit the region in 2007/2008 and to support the efforts of national governments to combat the high cost of living. It is based on the "stratégie pour la maîtrise de l'inflation et la relance de la production agricole" (strategy for controlling inflation and boosting agricultural production), validated by the WAEMU Council of Ministers on June 27, 2008 in Dakar. The program aims to (i) improve agricultural productivity; (ii) boost agricultural investment and (iii) strengthen food security management capacities. This emergency program provides short-term solutions to the food crisis in the eight UEMOA member countries.

The projects financed through the PSSA aim to contribute to the self-sufficiency and food security of poor rural populations by developing at least 7,700 ha with irrigation systems and related basic infrastructure. Over 5 million vulnerable people have been targeted in all eight UEMOA member countries.³ To achieve these goals, a total of seventeen projects have been financed. Of those, three projects were competitively bid. Project activities included dam construction, hydro-agricultural development, storage capacity building, improving producer

organization, granting microcredits, and building/rehabilitating schools, health centers, boreholes, markets and other community infrastructure.

The projects were financed in the countries through loan agreements between the governments and BOAD. Project implementation involved ministries of finance, ministries of agriculture and, in the case of commercial projects, private companies. In line with BOAD procedures, project implementation was marked by the key stages described below:

- **Project identification:** This phase follows on from the countries' requests for funding.
- **Project approval:** Following appraisal, projects are presented to the BOAD Board of Directors, which approves the loan agreements for financing.
- **Entry into force of the projects:** The project is subject to the conditions for entry into force of the loan agreement. These conditions vary from one project to another, and depend on the nature of the project and the negotiations between the parties.
- **Lifting of conditions preceding the first disbursement:** First disbursements can be subject to conditions. Like conditions of entry into force, these are specific to each project, depending on its nature and the negotiations between the parties.



Results

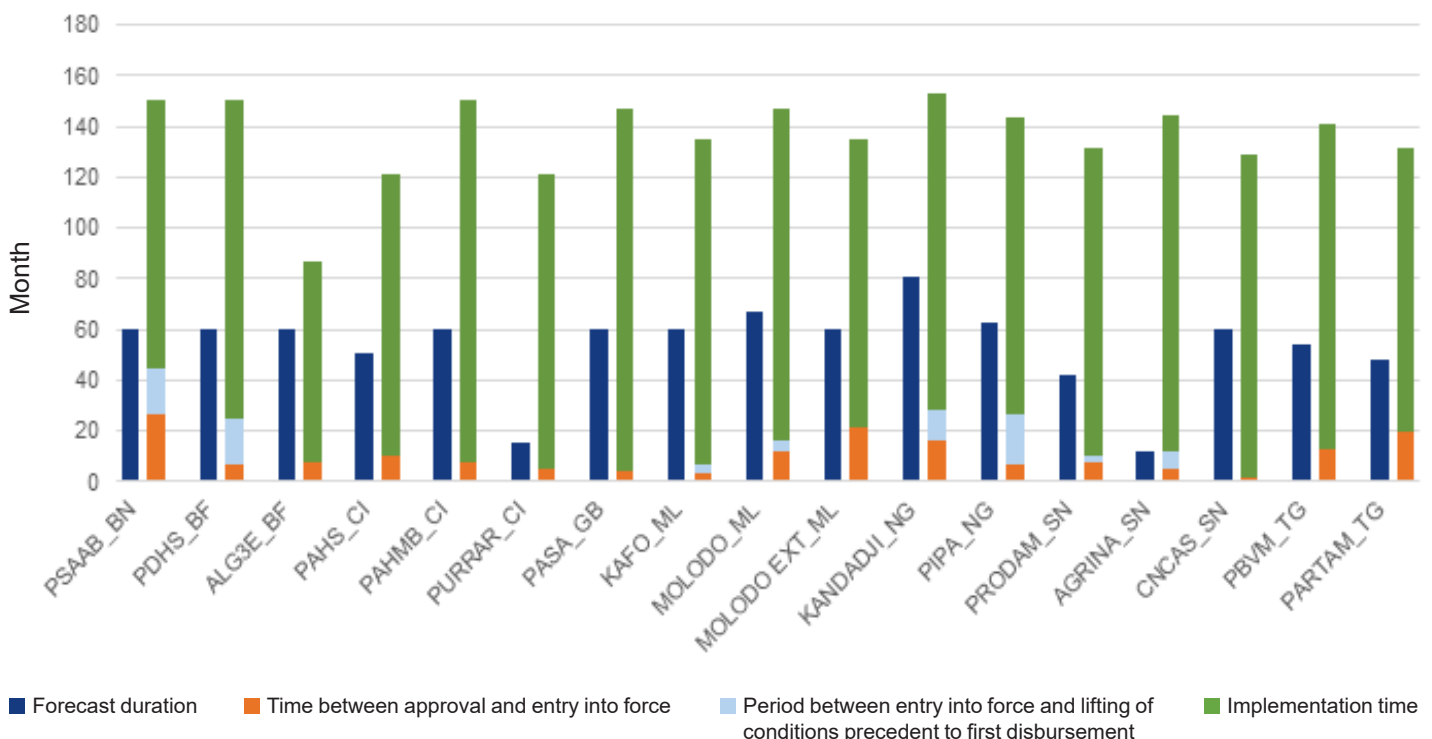
- The projects financed through the PSSA are relevant and in line with the BOAD's 2009-2013 strategy, notably in its Orientation 1: to position itself as a strategic partner of States in basic infrastructure, agriculture and the environment, in particular the action aimed at fostering the development of agriculture. They also tie in with the objectives of the PSSA, to contribute to the self-sufficiency and food security of poor rural populations, as well as with the agricultural and food security policies of beneficiary countries.
- The implementation of the PSSA shows that the program has carried out several activities both in the agricultural sector and in other socio-economic sectors (community development, rural infrastructure, etc.) which have contributed to the construction of dams, the construction of storage warehouses, farmland development, the installation of agricultural product processing units, the granting of micro-credit, the construction of water points, the construction of classrooms, the establishment of transhumance corridors and the construction of additional community infrastructure.
- The results of PSSA projects have contributed to boosting agricultural production, creating jobs, promoting gender equality, increasing household incomes, improving social cohesion and restoring and protecting the environment in WAEMU countries.

Despite the relevance of the PSSA and the significant results achieved, PSSA projects have experienced significant delays due to weaknesses in the quality of projects selected for emergency intervention,

implementation processes, and the Bank's project monitoring and evaluation mechanism. The graph below illustrates the gaps between the forecast implementation times and the implementation times observed for all projects. These delays have prevented the PSSA from providing the short-term solutions to the food crisis that were originally intended. The weaknesses identified are summarized below.

- The absence of a permanent framework for exchanges and capacity-building among the players in the Project Management Units of BOAD-financed projects on project implementation procedures, such as the development, standardization and use of common M&E tools.
- Insufficient financial and human resources to carry out the required number of project supervision missions and properly implement M&E activities and data collection on project development indicators.
- The absence of a systematic M&E data collection system involving all stakeholders at local, national and regional levels to encourage the dissemination of monitoring data and oversee knowledge management.
- The low quality of projects selected for emergency action in response to the food crisis, and the absence of emergency project implementation procedures within the Bank. Due to the emergency context, the quality of projects at entry and the availability of techno-economic, financial and environmental feasibility studies was not rigorous. On the other hand, the Bank used conventional procedures for the execution of emergency projects.

Figure 1: Comparison of forecast and actual project durations



Source: Evaluation report

Other weaknesses relate to delays in lifting conditions of entry into force and lifting conditions precedent to the first disbursement on projects:

- delays in submitting to BOAD the legal opinion certifying that the Loan Agreement has been duly authorized or ratified by the borrower;
- delays in providing proof of the borrower's commitment to pay its financing counterparty exclusive of taxes and customs duties on all goods and services required for the project;
- delays in setting up Project Management Units and recruiting staff for their operation;
- difficulties in mobilizing national counterparts for project financing and budgeting;
- difficulties in issuing environmental and social compliance certificates;
- the time required to identify and compensate people affected by the project (PAP);
- the failure of certain service providers ;
- the socio-political context in certain countries, etc.

Recommendations

- The BOAD should set up a community of practice made up of the people responsible for M&E and project managers involved in the Bank's project implementation procedures. The community of practice should aim to ensure the ongoing capacity of these players and the effectiveness of their actions, as well as the standardization of M&E procedures and mechanisms.
- The BOAD should develop an emergency project and program management framework with procedures specific to the emergency context. These procedures should ensure the quality of projects at the outset by checking the necessary technical-economic, financial and environmental feasibility studies, while streamlining project enrollment and execution procedures.
- A digital framework for monitoring and measuring development results should be developed and institutionalized in the BOAD information system. This system should be able to provide all stakeholders with real-time data on project progress and development results in relation to indicator targets. It could also draw on geographic information systems with satellite data, mobile applications. A knowledge management component should bring evidence and lessons learned at local, national and regional levels to relevant decision-makers.
- BOAD should develop a special program for the Bank's senior management which shows the relevance and role of M&E for the effectiveness and sustainability of the Bank's interventions. Such a program will facilitate the implementation of reforms to develop the practice of M&E by increasing the budget and staff dedicated to M&E activities within the Bank, to enable the Bank to further demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of its interventions.





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What is WACIE?

The West Africa Capacity Building and Impact Evaluation (WACIE) program was launched to help build evaluation capacity in the eight countries that comprise the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU): Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire,

Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo. Program goals include increasing evaluation capacity in targeted countries, ensuring that policymakers have access to relevant evidence and promoting the use of high-quality evidence by relevant stakeholders.

The West African Development Bank (BOAD)

The West African Development Bank (known by its French acronym BOAD) is the common development finance institution of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). BOAD is an international public institution whose purpose is to promote the balanced development of member states and contribute to the achievement of economic integration in West Africa. The member states are:

Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo. By treaty with the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), the BOAD is a specialized and autonomous institution of the Union. It contributes independently to the achievement of WAEMU objectives, without prejudice to the objectives assigned to it by the WAEMU treaty.

This brief is taken from the report “ l'évaluation de processus du programme Spécial Sécurité Alimentaire (PSSA)” March 2023.

Endnotes

¹ Christophe Golay, “Crise et sécurité alimentaires : vers un nouvel ordre alimentaire mondial ?”, *International Development Policy | Revue internationale de politique de développement*, 1 | 2010, 229-248.

² Ibid.

³ PSSA presentation document



The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) develops evidence on how to effectively transform the lives of the poor in low- and middle-income countries. Established in 2008, we offer comprehensive support and a diversity of approaches to achieve development goals by producing, synthesizing and promoting the uptake of impact evaluation evidence. We work closely with governments, foundations, NGOs, development institutions and research organizations to address their decision-making needs. With offices in Washington DC, New Delhi and London and a global network of leading researchers, we offer deep expertise across our extensive menu of evaluation services.

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