

Evaluation Abstract

Title, author and date of the evaluation report:

Environmental Rehabilitation in North West Frontier Province and Punjab (ENRP), Final Project Evaluation Mission Report, prepared by Taco de Vries, Piet van der Poel, Saleha Begum and Ashraf Sahibzada, July 2004

Name of project, programme or organizational unit:

Environmental Rehabilitation in North West Frontier Province and Punjab (ENRP)

Objectives of the project, programme or mandate of the organizational unit:

Overall objective:

- To design and implement, based on a community participatory approach, a sustainable programme of natural resource management and socio-economic development.

Intermediate objectives:

- To increase environmental awareness and reach a consensus on the need to adopt protection measures at the local level;
- To develop local economic potential and income and to improve the status of the population (particularly women) for estimated population of 1.1 million in the project area;
- To improve practices in water run off control, forestry, rangeland in approximately 35.000ha, and livestock management in approximately 200 villages;
- To stimulate a process of community development (creation of village organizations, women's organizations, clusters of villages, NGOs and associations in approximately 200 villages).

IUCN area of specialisation: Natural Resources Management; Socio-Economics

Geographical area: North West Frontier Province and Punjab, Pakistan

Project or programme duration, length of existence of organisational unit:

January 1997 – December 2003

Overall budget of the project, programme or organizational unit: EUR 31.8 million (with EC contribution amounting to EUR 25.2 million and the remainder EUR 6.3 million provided by GoP and local communities).

Donor(s): European Commission; Government of Pakistan (GoP); local communities

Objectives of the evaluation: (see below Evaluation Questions)

Type of evaluation: Final project

Period covered by the evaluation: January 1997 – December 2003

Commissioned by: Not specified

Audience: European Commission

Evaluation team: External

Methodology used:

The evaluation methodology involved collecting and analyzing available data, judging the quality and relevance of the interventions in the field, comparing with other projects, and discussing interventions and approaches with all project partners.

Questions of the evaluation:

The Evaluation Team sought to assess the following aspects of project planning and implementation:

- Extent to which project objectives and its focus on the full involvement of the local population, with particular reference to women, have been met in the three sub-projects;
- Concrete results delivered by each sub-project against overall workplans and budgets;
- Current status of expenditures against budgetary allocations and disbursement by the EC, the Government of Pakistan and local communities;
- Project funds expenditure control, audit, reporting and replenishments mechanism;
- Role of each PMU partner in preparation and implementation of project activities (including efficiency and effectiveness of the decision-making mechanisms and service delivery of each PMU);
- Quality of project outputs;
- Project strategies and role of the Resource Unit in terms of coordination and provision of technical support services;
- IUCN-Pakistan's capacity in project design and implementation and the Resource Unit's role in preparing strategy documents, mobilizing local communities, training local staff, developing effective linkages, setting up field monitoring organizations, etc.

Findings:

The review of this seven year project was hampered by the lack of a baseline study and indicators to measure impact, but arrived at the following findings:

- The project has succeeded in delivering goods/services to beneficiaries without undue delays; the Natural Resource Management (NRM) objectives have largely been achieved; and staff is considered well-qualified and highly motivated. Despite these positive aspects, sustainability of some project activities is considered questionable.
- Community mobilization through establishing community/village organizations (COs/VOs) is satisfactory. More effort could have been made in targeting poor and socially vulnerable groups.
- As a result of differing organizational approaches, the degree of involvement of the local population varies among the three sub-projects. Nevertheless, recognizing women as direct beneficiaries is highlighted as one of the project's strengths. Gender balance is still not achieved in the COs/VOs in Galiat and Dir Kohistan (DK).
- The work of the Project Management Unit (PMU) of Punjab is considered efficient in terms of decision-making and goods/services delivery. The Galiat and DKP PMUs have performed less efficiently due to management complexities and the negative attitude of an earlier Project Director towards working with communities.
- The project has done an unsatisfactory job in networking and establishing linkages with credible national NGOs, thus ensuring "aftercare" facilities for beneficiary communities in the post-project period.
- A major weakness is that no baseline socio-economic data is available for the villages, thus making it impossible to assess the poverty alleviation impact of the project.
- A long gestation period should have been allowed before forming community organizations. The intended beneficiaries should have been thoroughly briefed over and over to make them understand the objectives of the Project and the roles and responsibilities of all parties concerned. They should have been given sufficient time to consider whether they would like to participate in the Project activities or not. This would have helped people to make an informed decision. Community organizations should have come at a later stage.

- While it is difficult to assess the potential sustainability of community organizations, it is believed that some groups will continue to exist under certain conditions (such as strong and dynamic leadership from within the group); others will either become inactive, or will gradually wither away.

Recommendations:

The project has faced a delay of approximately two to three years in implementation. The [review] Mission thinks that to stop [the project] will waste the investment [and] recommends to complete the project by implementing a sustainability phase, including an emphasis on:

- Impact studies;
- Institutionalizing the methodology of the project;
- Increasing beneficiaries contribution until they will fund all activities by the time the project closes;
- Forging linkages with districts; and
- Implementing recommendations of consultancy reports.

Lessons Learned:

The Evaluation Report outlines a wide range of lessons learned, some of which are presented below:

- Capital formation in Community Organization/Village Organization (CO/VO) Funds proved to be a binding, but not necessarily sustainable, factor for communities.
- Project support for activities should be gradually decreased during the project's life to increase the chances of attaining sustainability.
- To ensure sustainable natural resources or rural development, a process rather than a project approach is required.
- In the last phase, the project should become more and more demand driven, reacting to requests made by the communities through CO/VO resolutions.
- Capacity building of community and staff members and creation of a cadre of Village Extension Workers contributed towards successful implementation and sustainability of interventions.
- Participatory village planning for the formulation of village development plans provided communities with a vision for the future. It also proves very useful for village level decision making, fostering ownership of activities and providing transparency and accountability.
- A smooth and timely flow of funds should be ensured throughout project duration. Erratic financial flows hamper the pace of activities and damage the project's credibility in the eyes of communities.

Language of the evaluation: English

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