

Evaluation Report



External Post Project Evaluation for Local Authorities and Civil Society Organisations in Development of Flood Affected Population in Muzaffargarh and Rajanpur Districts, Pakistan

February 2019

Prepared by:

Hassan Nasir Mirbahar, Lead Consultant

&

Ehsan Qazi, Lead Field Researcher

Summary

Deutsche Welthungerhilfe (DWHH) implemented a European Union (EU) supported project titled “Local Authorities and Civil Society Organisations in Development of Flood Affected Population in Muzaffargarh and Rajanpur Districts, of South Punjab in Pakistan”. The 47-month project **aimed at alleviating the negative impacts of poverty and building opportunities that could empower the communities so that they participate in governance for risk responsive development of their areas.** DWHH implemented the project in partnership with two local Partners. Rural Development Policy Institute (RDPI) was an implementing partner since February 2015, the beginning of the project, till March 2018 when Doaba Foundation was brought on board. The total project budget was €1.38 million of which the EU provided €750,000 and DWHH contributed €630,188.

As the project ended, DWHH commissioned an independent end of project evaluation to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the project interventions. **The overall aim of the evaluation was to provide a comprehensive assessment of the project to inform future actions by DWHH Pakistan.** The evaluation utilised a mixed methods approach, using both qualitative and quantitative methods wherein tools included focused group discussions, key informant interviews, site visits, desk review and survey. Overall, the evaluators covered 377 persons (222 men and 155 women) through qualitative methods while 199 respondents (63 women and 136 men) participated in the survey.

A brief description of the project and framework conditions

The project targeted three flood affected Union Councils of Districts Rajanpur and Muzaffargarh in South Punjab. All three union councils fall within the riverine belt of Indus River, coming under direct threat of small- and large-scale floods. They were worst affected during the 2010 Pakistan floods. Besides, they also face drought and other calamities. Notwithstanding the effects of disasters, the areas suffer from poverty and have poor human development indicators. Despite such challenges, the government has paid less attention to these areas. The revival of local government systems in Pakistan presented an opportunity to push for the development of these communities.

Using the opportunities available under the Punjab Local Government Law 2013, the project was designed to bring communities, civil society, local government representatives and media together to address the above-cited issues through community organising, capacity building of communities & elected representatives and developing community physical infrastructure.

Relevance

The project appears relevant to the needs of the targeted communities, strategies and mandate of DWHH and its partners and the Pakistani priorities. As stated above, targeted communities face multiple developmental and humanitarian challenges. The composite development indexes suggest poor human development and gender parity indicators with the 2017 UNDP Human Development Report placing Rajanpur among the lowest developed districts and Muzaffargarh among the low-medium developed districts of the country. Both districts have the lowest education and literacy levels within Punjab. Sustainable Development Policy Institute ranks Rajanpur 26 and Muzaffargarh at 32 in its 2012 poverty ranking.

The project builds upon a similar project that DWHH implemented in Badin Sindh. It addresses the following aspects from DWHH’s global strategy: advocacy, ending hunger, improving nutrition, and promoting Sustainable Development Goals. DWHH Pakistan’s Multiannual Country Programme 2016-2018 focuses on 1) promoting linkages between local communities and government stakeholders for accessing the services, 2) agriculture promotion, 3), building disaster resilience, 4) addressing gender gaps and 5) advocacy for good governance. Most of these elements are adequately covered in the project design, in addition, to focus on some aspects of WASH through CPI schemes such as water filter plants and drainage schemes. Overall, the project also contributes to promoting good and inclusive governance. The project focus largely matches the mandate of two implementing partners.

Pakistan has issued a visioning document called “Pakistan 2025”, which includes seven priority areas. Within these, the project contributes to priorities number 2-4, namely: i) Achieving Sustained, Indigenous and Inclusive Growth, ii) Democratic Governance, Institutional Reform and Modernization of the Public Sector, and iii) Water, Energy and Food Security. Poverty reduction is a cross cutting focus within Pakistan Vision 2025 and several other

governmental priorities (e.g. the poverty reduction strategies), hence the project also addresses poverty reduction objectives which the government of Pakistan pursues.

Effectiveness

Project design: The project followed a robust design by focusing on demand and supply-side structures. On the demand side, it worked with communities and civil society to organise and train them to engage with local governments for effective risk responsive service delivery. It equipped them with knowledge and tools which can help them successfully deliver on this vision. On the supply side, the project engaged with the local government institutions to build their capacity and provide them with technical assistance to carry on their mandate. The community organising was aligned with local government structures, departing from traditional generic community organising approaches.

The design could have improved in three aspects at least. First, some activities do not follow the results chain defined under DWHH's OIO guidelines. For example, kitchen gardening is clubbed with result one, which has no linkages to community organising. Second, journalists training activity is isolated with no focus on broader issues that affect the media landscape and has weak linkages with the rest of the project activities. Third, the project could improve the application of the decentralisation framework. Pakistan's Constitution requires devolution, a form of decentralisation which requires devolving financial, political and administrative powers to local government. Under devolution, most activities and actions can be planned and implemented at the local level without a need for approval by provincial or federal governments. The project design, however, envisioned that it would shift the planning cycle from top-bottom to bottom-top, which is not necessarily required under devolution.

Result 1: Under result one, the project has organised 18 Ward Development Forums, using Lok Saths, a traditional practice in South Punjab used for solving problems collectively. The project has democratised the practice by conducting elections for WDFs and ensuring women's participation. Overall 423 community members participated in these WDFs which were then federated at the Union Council level. The project has provided the members with capacity development opportunities by organising training programmes on community management skills and leadership development as well as taking them on exposure tour to other project areas in Sindh. The forums, however, could not be registered during project life due to stricter registration requirements for CSOs/NGOs in Pakistan.

Result 2: Under result 2, the project facilitated the communities and local authorities in preparing community development plans after identifying and prioritising their issues. The plans were then presented to the Union Council governments, who have endorsed these plans with a promise to implement them. Based on our evaluation all three UC governments implemented 32 schemes. Contrary to these, the project helped implement 153 schemes involving soling, culverts and water filter plants. The schemes were implemented in the last six months of the project as a result of which the quality of the schemes was compromised. For example, one soling scheme was broken into three smaller pieces whereas a drainage system could not be connected with a *Nala* (drain/stream).

Result 3: Under result 3, the project trained local government authorities and elected representatives in understanding their functions and responsibilities under local government laws. It also helped Union Council governments in establishing their proper offices and provided them with necessary equipment. To facilitate the right to information, the project also supported the UC governments to develop such centres and established their websites. The centres appear to be well utilised by the beneficiaries.

Result 4: The project organised civil society to form public interest groups in the two districts. Known as "Mafad-e-Aama Groups" (MAG), they prepared charters of demands based on the community development plans and other needs of the targeted communities. They have used the charters of demands for advocacy with local authorities, MPAs and MNAs to help address these issues. The project also trained 29 journalists on reporting about disasters.

Overall execution of the project: DWHH faced issues with the performance of RDPI (the first project partner), which faced some organisational challenges as the project started. Reportedly, the organisation detected some financial issues and had to undergo a management change. DWHH wanted to change the partner early on but decided to continue with RDPI to help them with the organisational development as well. Despite that, RDPI's performance remained unsatisfactory as several activities were delayed. Meanwhile, the government of Pakistan

required all INGOs to work only with registered partners. As RDPI could not fulfil this requirement, DWHH had to end its partnership with RDPI and brought Doaba Foundation on board. The period of influx affected implementation as several activities were delayed. As a result, the project staff and communities were waiting to hear further progress in terms of implementation of the planned activities. The team reported de-motivation and psychological issues, citing issues with job security.

Efficiency

The three target union councils have a population of 97,174. Hence, the per-beneficiary cost comes at €14.20 per beneficiary (1.3 million divided by 97,174). The project budget seems more burdensome on the management side with a 45% cost allocated for salaries of the management and project teams. The project contract was originally signed in 2015 for 1 million Euros - with 750,000 Euros coming from EU and 250,000 Euros contributed by DWHH. Since 2015, DWHH has injected over 380,188 additional Euros of its own funds to attempt to address some of the ongoing management challenges. The additional injection of resources has increased the management cost in manifolds. 27% of the budget is directly channelled for four results areas. Result 2 has the highest allocation at €247,083 due to CPI schemes, which is understandable. Project beneficiaries contributed labour, land and silt to different activities. Result 4 only cost 1% of the total project value yet yielded important results such as the government's decision to upgrade some schools from primary to elementary and the provision of the mobile health units.

Initially, the project lagged in having a functional M&E system as DWHH did not have a dedicated M&E officer for around one and a half year. As a result of which many activities remained unmonitored in field and some basic systems could not be put in place. However, it seems to have picked up on this area later with a well-maintained documentation database. Some project learning was also improved upon. For example, initially the project procured seeds from Islamabad, but they did not grow in the local conditions. Hence, the project bought new seeds locally. A mid-term evaluation was planned but deferred as a substantive number of activities had not been implemented. Only one month was allocated for the final evaluation. However the same was increased due to the unavailability of some key staff. The evaluation design could have been improved a) by improving consistency between ToRs and the report outline and b) by streamlining the report outline to minimise overlaps between different sections of the report.

Outcomes and impacts

Confidence in demand articulation due to community organising and training programmes: Community members reported an increase in their communication skills and confidence to articulate their needs. They feel that by organising them, the project has given them a collective sense of taking self-help initiatives to address their issues. They have used these forums to raise their issues and seek their solutions from the local authorities.

Increased women's participation: As gender inequality remained pervasive in the target areas, the project has contributed to gender inclusion. Women have participated in all the WDFs activities and seem encouraged to take part in different activities.

Food security due to kitchen gardening: The beneficiaries from kitchen gardening reported an increase in their food security and economic benefits. They shared that before the project they could not afford to purchase vegetables, but now they have their produce which they consume, share with others and sell as well.

Ease of communication and linkages due to CPI schemes: Communities reported comfort in their transportation & communication due to the construction of soiling, culverts and bridges. Now they feel better connected with markets, schools and health facilities.

Upgraded education and health facilities: Initiatives from MAG have contributed to up gradation of two schools and provision of mobile health units in the project UCs.

Environmental benefits: Communities reported environmental benefits from the construction of proper drainage systems as it can drain out water easily from their homes and there is less stagnant water in their houses. Besides, due to the project's focus on awareness raising activities, some of them have asked for the development of latrines from different projects as well.

Sustainability

Several project activities contribute to the sustainability of the project interventions. While the UCDFs and WDFs could not be registered within the project cycle, they are an important platform for continuing linkages with government agencies and following up the community development plans. Some local NGOs have also

approached them for joint implementation of various projects. However, they could have been better prepared to repair and maintain CPI schemes such as water filter plants. The project could have partnered with the Public Health and Engineering Department for repair and maintenance of such schemes. The present UC governments have endorsed the forums and their community development plans, but it remains to be seen if future governments will also endorse them.

The project invested in websites for the UC governments, but they are not integrated into the government system. Therefore, they may not be sustained beyond project support. Besides, the project provided equipment to the UC offices which are located in rented buildings and in one case at a private property of a UC Chairman. These involve some risks as they may or may not be transferred to public UC offices.

Key recommendations and lessons learnt

- Improve the application of DWHH's results chain framework. Activities like kitchen gardening deserve a result of their own.
- Give dedicated focus to activities like journalists' training in future projects. While designing them, broader sector issues, such the lack of investigative journalism, lack of professionalism and over-commercialisation should be considered.
- Build the capacity of staff in understanding and applying new concepts like Lok Sath.
- Build the capacity of the communities in maintaining schemes and develop linkages with relevant departments to undertake repair and maintenance initiatives.
- Align community development plans with government budget cycles and build communities' capacities to engage with the budget cycle process.
- Invest in building the capacity of staff in understanding and applying the decentralisation framework.
- Ensure systematic engagement of councillors elected on reserved seats including women, minorities and peasant/workers in project activities.
- Integrate UC websites into government structures.
- Develop a detailed exit strategy at the start of the project and implement concurrently.
- WHH should consider the diversification of partners and engaging multiple partners.

General conclusions

Despite challenges during the implementation, the project has left a significant footprint on the target communities. The project model has a robust social mobilisation component coupled with engagement with government institutions for inclusive service delivery and reforms. The model should be replicated in other parts of the country after making the improvements outlined and suggested in the evaluation report.