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*Woman from Manjebri village growing vegetables to support her family income*

## Review of the Implementation of the Livelihoods Rehabilitation Strategy of ERRA: Project Experience

The State and Provincial Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agencies (SERRA and PERRA) and FAO held two one-day review workshops on 25 and 27 May 2009 in Muzaffarabad and Abbottabad respectively.

The workshops analyzed and consolidated the experiences gathered and lessons learnt while implementing the Livelihoods Rehabilitation Strategy of ERRA so as to draw recommendations from this on ways to ensure sustainability of the activities initiated, and agree on exit strategy approaches. The workshop brought together a cross-section of stakeholders working on livelihoods in the earthquake affected areas of northern Pakistan, including representatives of Government line departments; officers of SERRA, PERRA, and District Rehabilitation Units (DRU); NGO partners and community representatives. An important observation

was the fact that bottom-up planning processes at community level are feasible within a bureaucratic government-led rehabilitation context. Equally important is the fact that this planning process can be facilitated through non-governmental organizations. This might however lead to line departments feeling bypassed an issue that needs careful consideration and further study. At the same time, placing the Livelihoods Rehabilitation Strategy and the funding mechanism within a centralized government structure has resulted in an excessive focus on targets and deadlines, to a certain extent responsible for one-shot intervention rather than programmatic type of approach. This also explains an excessive focus on 'hard' rather than 'soft' types of interventions e.g. infrastructure instead of training, which is likely to reduce when the social planning process and social cohesion is given time to mature and not rushed through.



*A lady activist from Rajnayan village explains the participatory process of development in their village at the workshop in Muzaffarabad.*

*Grants for the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) are channelled through projects that meet the unforeseeable needs and fill critical gaps for small-scale actions that are of modest cost and of limited duration but have a catalytic or a multiplier effect*

## Overwhelming majority of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) are small landholder farmers

There are some 226,000 farming households in the affected districts including 85 per cent of small landholder farmers. The small landholder farmers on average have access to mere 1.7 acres which accounts for more than 1.7 million people (or 42 per cent of the total population) of affected districts who seek their livelihoods from a piece of land, which is smaller than two acres.

Agricultural activities typically combine small landholder crop production – mainly wheat as the winter “rabi” crop, used primarily for household food consumption, and vegetable production during the summer “kharif” season, predominantly used for income generation – and livestock production, involving one or two large ruminants and 5-10 small ruminants.

Ziarat Gul, a 47 year old farmer from Kabal Tehsil, currently living with his relatives in Peshawar, is longing to return home free from fear and to start work in the fields. “We will not return to our homes unless it is guaranteed that we will not be attacked again.” While security is of paramount concern for IDP families waiting to go back to their villages, reclamation of their land and restoration of infrastructure are also essential for the rehabilitation of livelihoods of the affected population.

Many of the host families, especially those living outside urban areas (the majority), depend on similar agricultural livelihoods systems. Most IDP households have very limited cash reserves and/or supplementary cash income. The sudden onset of the conflict led to the abandonment of fields, and in many cases, the abandonment or selling of livestock, at a critical time in the agricultural calendar: wheat is standing in the fields and should be harvested in the coming weeks, whilst the land should be prepared for the forthcoming vegetable/kharif crop.

If return takes place in July, IDP farmers will need support for one agricultural cycle to recover the level prior to displacement as the vast majority lack either the agricultural inputs or the necessary financial resources to restore their agricultural livelihoods effectively and in a sustainable manner. UN and National Humanitarian Assistance focuses on camps with extension to major population centers but extent to which the rural displaced have been reached is not clear. Impact on host communities is still very sketchy and an accurate assessment of the situation in the affected districts can only be carried out after the fighting ends.

As learned from previous experience with displacement in NWFP and FATA as well as following the earthquake of 2005, and preliminary assessments from conflict-affected and IDP settlement areas that effective support to early returnees can encourage many other households to return sooner than would otherwise have been the case. This in turn can contribute significantly in reducing long-term food aid dependency. It is important to address food security and livelihoods related issues in an integrated and holistic way from as early as possible in the humanitarian response. Provision of food aid should also take into account food produced through agriculture and the recovery and rehabilitation efforts should supports this.

*Footnote: Excerpts of the article are from Farmer Report by South Asia Partnership-Pakistan - Punjab Lok Sujag; FR 09/09; June 2009 and contributed by Hassan Sher FAO.*



*IDP families from Swat living in camps, North West Frontier Province (photo credits: Anjad Jamal WFP)*

## Improving livelihoods through irrigation and agroforestry

Construction of the irrigation channels was identified as one of the primary needs by the community members of Biari Darra village in Battagram district for increasing their agriculture productivity. The activity involved the construction of 600 metres long irrigation channel that would convert about 16 acres of rainfed agriculture land into irrigation farmland.

Prior to the earthquake, the area was rainfed and mono-cropping was practised and maize crop cultivated. This was used as cereal, fodder and fuel. Due to the availability of water through the construction of irrigation channel, multi cropping replaced mono cropping. Multi cropping introduced agroforestry encouraging farmers to plant fruit orchards of cherry, apple, apricot, Japanese wild persimmon trees and walnut with crops adding to the household income. Biari Darra village farmers also planted floriculture garden of gladiola and diverse tree species creating a more complex habitat that could support a wider variety of birds, insects, and other animals. The general aim was to study the possibilities to develop new profitable and sustainable agroforestry systems for the benefit of the local people that could contribute to relieving the pressure on the natural forests in the earthquake affected areas.

Construction of the irrigation channels provided the incentive to the farmers to invest in labour and material for building structures that could convey water to the fields where and when it was needed. With the introduction of agroforestry and the regular supply of water through irrigation channel, the local communities' livelihoods that were dependent only on agriculture improved significantly.

Farmers learned to build a low cost irrigation channel with locally available material such as stone, use of minimum amount of cement, and clear silt and debris for channel maintenance. The construction of the irrigation channels added to the skills of farmers directly involved in the activities was only one way of building their capacity. Indirectly, by engaging them in these kinds of activities, the farmers become part of a forum where they exchanged experience and knowledge. This was not only limited to the topic of irrigation channels, but quickly spread to include other issues such as agroforestry they felt to be

important. Interactive benefits from combining fruit trees and shrubs with crops created more diverse, productive, profitable, healthy and sustainable land-use systems. Knowledge of the linkages between adequate supply of water through the irrigation channels and agroforestry was shared by the project staff with the farmers and NGO partners.

Impact assessment highlighted the role of agroforestry in increasing farm income encouraging households to plant more trees on farms. Although, there is a good prospect of agroforestry meeting the livelihoods needs of rural households, reducing the pressure on forest resources and conserving biodiversity, this practice also contributed to widen the gap between households with large land holdings and those with relatively little land.

Irrigation schemes and agroforestry development has to be seen within the context of socio-economic circumstances of the user communities. An integrated approach of combining fruit trees with crops requires knowledge, careful selection of species and good management of trees and crops to optimize the production and positive effects within the system and to minimize negative competitive effects.

The commitment of farmers, alone or in partnerships, is imperative towards the establishment and management of forests on their land. Where many landholders are involved the result is the natural regeneration of degraded rangeland. Incorporating agroforestry practices in rural farmers' strategies can address both the environmental and economic production issues on farmlands.

*Footnote: Contributed by Mohammad Rifaq FAO*



*Community people building the irrigation channel indigenously*



*Tufail Ahmed, a farmer inspecting his vegetable crop at Biari Darra village, Battagram district NWFP*

## FAO Appeal related to the IDP situation is online

As part of the May 2009 **Revised Pakistan Humanitarian Response Plan (PHRP)**, FAO is seeking **USD 15.7 million** to assist vulnerable IDP and host families and enable them to restart their agriculture-based livelihoods. The PHRP 2009 includes ten proposals for the IDPs in the camps, host communities and for the restoration of agriculture livelihoods of Bajaur returnees. The three-pronged focus will support the recovery of agriculture system in the current conflict areas. The agriculture cluster is 5% funded since September 2008 in the revised Appeal.

The agriculture cluster - IRC, ABKT, SPO and DR-Net - with FAO in the lead aims to protect and restore the food production and livelihoods of IDPs and host families in conflict-affected areas. In close collaboration with the Government, the cluster identified three focus areas under the revised PHRP:

- ✓ immediate assistance for agricultural production and enhancement of the food security of poor and vulnerable IDP households and host families affected by the armed conflict in NWFP;
- ✓ immediate support to returning IDPs in Bajaur agency to ensure the rapid restoration of food security and agriculture-based livelihoods; and
- ✓ immediate relief support to agriculture-based livelihoods and the rapid restoration of the food security of the affected households in Swat, Dir and Buner (when the situation allows).

More than two million people have been displaced by the fighting between Pakistan military and Taliban militants around Swat in the past month. Another half a million or so fled had already fighting elsewhere in the north-west.

This massive displacement and lack of access to cultivable land has adversely affected food security situation in conflict-affected Pakistan North West Frontier region. The Pakistan Government is forecasting the return of IDPs to their areas of origin after the military action and already IDPs are repatriating to Bajaur. IDPs returning to their areas of origin require support for the restoration of their livelihoods mainly relying on agriculture and livestock production.

The Appeal is available online on the link below:

<http://www.fao.org/emergencies/tce-appfund/tce-appeals/appeals/emergency-detail0/en/item/20215/icode/?uidf=10813>

*FAO makes participation of affected communities in decision making processes affecting their livelihoods an overarching and cross-cutting guideline in all its programmes*



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