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Stone bunding for soil conservation at Gulmera Batora watershed

Increasing income through vegetable production opportunities

Diversification into horticultural crops became attractive to many poor farmers of the Dhani Mai Sahiba village, Seri Darra union council in district Muzaffarabad in the aftermath of the 2005 earthquake. The main reason for this change from growing staple high yielding crops to vegetable crops was the destruction of five kilometre long water channel – IFAD sponsored – by the earthquake. Apart from a change in land topography, the irrigated land turned into rainfed thereby considerably reducing the crop yield - more than 400% in some areas. This made the life of small landholders harsh compelling many to migrate.

Since technically it was not feasible to reconstruct the old channel, the *Engineering Cell* established under the FAO project to provide assistance to IFAD sponsored Community Development Programme, assisted the community in finding an alternate solution and installed a 590 metre long double line water pipe for irrigation. Horticultural production was the obvious alternative due to its profitability with farmers earning much higher incomes as compared to cereal producers. About 250 acres of land, owned by the total population of the village consisting of 240 households, are mainly under vegetables now. The village proximity to Muzaffarabad city – 3 kilometres – acted as a catalyst in reaching out to potential vegetable markets in the urban centres thereby contributing to the commercialization of the rural economy and creating many off-farm jobs.



Pipes installed for irrigation water, Dhani Mai Sahiba village, Muzaffarabad PAK



Household women carry out weeding, Dhani Mai Sahiba village, Muzaffarabad PAK



Vegetables grown at regular intervals to maintain a consistent supply, Dhani Mai Sahiba village, Muzaffarabad PAK



Farmer pulling out the ripe vegetables, Dhani Mai Sahiba village, Muzaffarabad PAK

Poor farmers have lacked resources and the skills for turning vegetable production into a profitable enterprise. The project staff trained the farmers, facilitated in developing linkages to the market, and created and supported producer organizations. This has resulted in higher annual income levels of RS 70,000 to RS 100,000 for the beneficiary farmers with landholdings of less than 0.4 ha.

Development efforts in the post-harvest sector that favours the poor must include appropriate pre- and postharvest processing technologies, as well as developing and improving market information systems that include information on prices, seasonality, handling constraints, and emerging technologies that are relevant to their capacity. The project staff has trained, organized and supported small-scale farmers and marketers to meet the challenges of supplying to both local and domestic markets.

For further improving the farming system of the village, the project is technically assisting in the use of specialized technologies such as plastic mulch and drip irrigation for water conservation. The project plans to introduce low tunnels for producing out of season vegetables such as cucumbers and also to be used as tomato transplant beds. Demonstrating the use of biological control pesticides in controlling multiple pest problems on vegetables is also planned.

Livelihoods skill training for women of Poonch district

Income-earning opportunities are few and far between for the poor women of Poonch district in the Pakistan Administered Kashmir (PAK). Their problem is not only of exclusion but also of invisibility and a disadvantaged position (Pakistan National Report on Women, 1995). In fact, a major puzzle of the labour market in Pakistan has been the relative invisibility of its women labour force (ILO, 2000). Apart from their low literacy rates, lack of access to vocational skills training, lack of proper linkages to the markets, limited mobility, etc., contextual “disabling” factors that are not conducive to women’s economic empowerment in the country. Women often seek additional income through selling handicrafts made from locally available material, doing embroidery and stitching clothes.

Through the Livelihoods Rehabilitation Project, ERRA and FAO have worked closely with its partners and local communities in encouraging women of Nakker village to learn such skills as embroidery, sewing and tailoring for income generation. The livelihoods skills training has brought opportunities for greatly improved standards of living, and economic and social well-being of the twenty-four most vulnerable community women.

Mateema who is a resident of Nakker village and is also a beneficiary of the eight weeks training and a sewing machine said, “We lost shelter in the earthquake 2005, my husband was already mentally disabled, so unable to support us. It was impossible for me to feed my children and send them to school. The support provided enables me earn to money with dignity and I now proudly look after my family.”

The objectives of the project were to: enable women to earn an independent income; improve the standard of living for women’s families; improve the status of women within their households and the wider society; and enhance the economic and social well-being of the community. Women have expanded their income-generating activities enabling them to make clothes either for their families’ use or for sale.

The role of the Village Development Organization and Women Welfare Organization Poonch has been integral in participatory community development as they have acted as mediators between the local community and the public sector.



Women gather to learn basic stitching skills, Nakker village, Poonch district, PAK



Sewing machines and stitching skills – an income generating activity for the poor women, Nakker village, Poonch district, PAK



Mateema is able to support her family with the income she earns from stitching, Nakker village, Poonch district, PAK

Given the prevailing cultural norms that limit women's role to the domestic sphere, it was a significant challenge to encourage women to expand their earning capacities by attending the training programmes on offer. That the initiative succeeded without creating social conflict is extremely encouraging and has promising implications for the future. Awareness of women's rights and capabilities is increasing among the local communities as they experience the projects' positive effects.

Emerging challenges to agriculture – Balochistan Agriculture Livelihoods

A seminar to commemorate the World Food Day was organized by the Balochistan Agriculture Livelihoods project – USAID supported - at Siddiqabad in the outskirts of Mastung district, Balochistan. Mohammad Iqbal, ADO Agriculture Extension Mastung and Asif Rasheed, CDMF FAO Mastung facilitated the experience sharing in which it was highlighted that the agricultural land and livelihoods of the people compete from several pressures of development. The theme of the seminar was the challenges facing agriculture such as a growing population, and a shrinking natural resource base coupled with land degradation.



Mir Muhammad Iqbal Zehri, District Naib Nazim Mastung while addressing the seminar, said that the need of the hour is to accord high priority to food security issue in Pakistan. He meticulously outlined the paradoxes that exist in terms of food surplus and deficit. The other speakers presented their views on environment changes, sustainable development of livelihoods and agriculture in Balochistan, poverty and organic farming. The seminar concluded with the distribution of wheat seeds amongst the farmers and a visit to successfully carried out FAO facilitated interventions such as green house tunnel, land levelling project, construction dykes etc.

Mir Muhammad Iqbal Zehri, District Naib Nazim Mastung distributes wheat seeds to farmers, Siddiqabad Mastung district, Balochistan

Participants included farmers from Kanak, Siddiqabad and the adjoining areas of Mastung district together with USAID and FAO representatives.

More than 1.02 billion hungry people

FAO estimates that 1.02 billion people are undernourished worldwide in 2009. There are more hungry people than at any time since 1970, the earliest year for which comparable statistics are available.

The hunger has increased not as a result of poor harvests but because of high domestic food prices, lower incomes and increasing unemployment due to the global economic crisis. Many poor people cannot afford to buy the food they need.



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