

profile

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Remarkable impact. Will it last? Pakistan: Dir Area Support Project

The Dir Area Support Project (DASP) was implemented in remote areas of the Upper and Lower Dir districts in the North-Western Frontier Province. It was designed as a multi-sector area support project aiming at the reduction of rural poverty. The most distinct feature of the project was its explicit reliance on village and women's organisations to serve as launching pads for a multitude of activities related to agriculture and livestock development, social forestry and soil and water conservation, village and irrigation infrastructure including roads, and off-farm employment generation. The evaluation of DASP was conducted around one year prior to project completion.

Main findings

The design of the DASP was relevant to the needs of the poor in the project area, as the component mix chosen indeed did address causes related to rural poverty. The DASP was and still is in a position to generate the planned outputs and has already achieved the objectives of increased agricultural production, off-farm employment generation, better market access and improved status of women. It was and still is implemented effectively, however with moderate efficiency. It has reached more than 10 000 among Village Organizations (VOs) and Women Organizations (WOs) members in excess of those originally planned and generated more than 7 000 off-farm jobs. However, the project design underestimated the requirements for more intensive implementation support in a difficult environment. Thus, the project is rated as effective while efficiency is constrained by, among other issues, the absence of systematic record keeping and sound impact assessments.

The DASP was successful in attaining the expected poverty reduction impacts in several areas. The formation of human assets and the strengthening of social capital and empowerment are particularly noteworthy. This achievement is in contrast to the prospect of sustainability, which is at risk with the exception of off-farm employment generated by the project. Moreover, the innovations introduced under the DASP have not thus far been replicated or up-scaled, due also to the little attention given to the systematic documenting and sharing of successfully promoted innovations.

For IFAD, the results of the DASP completion evaluation points to both familiar concerns and future challenges related to rural poverty reduction. The DASP is not the only example of an effective project



Furniture shop in Dir
Photo: Ernst Schaltegger

PROJECT DATA

Project Costs

Total:	US\$25.37 million
IFAD Loan:	US\$16.5 million
Government of Pakistan:	US\$5.95 million
Beneficiaries:	US\$2.55 million
Bank of Khyber:	US\$375 000
Cooperating Institution:	UNOPS
Loan Executing Agency:	Government of the North West Frontier Province

Project Dates

Loan Approval:	November 1996
Loan Effectiveness:	April 1997
Original Closing Date:	Sept 2004
Final Closing Date:	December 2008
Evaluation fieldwork:	June-July 2007

capable of generating poverty reduction impacts, with uncertainty about the sustainability of its benefits. The challenge lying ahead, for IFAD and its partners, consists of finding more solid and common ground for designing and implementing projects with credible perspectives of sustainability. Exit strategies must be developed early on in the project life cycle, which need to consider the real challenges at project completion if project impacts are to become durable assets.



A woman managing a forestry nursery
Photo: Rashda Syed

Key recommendations

- It is important to promote the consolidation of VOs, WOs and project results rather than focusing on further achievement of quantitative targets. This requires additional attention to training and coaching of VOs and WOs aimed at a more pro-active management of internal savings and lending.
- In order to mitigate project completion stress, but without being able to guarantee approval of post project funding, the Government should submit a proposal for a US\$200 000 country grant from IFAD's competitive grant's programme. Such a grant, to be administered by a recognized NGO acceptable to IFAD, would be used primarily for the consolidation and strengthening of VOs, WOs, cluster organizations, and especially for the set-up of an Apex Body formed by such community-based organisations.

Further information:

Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Dir Area Support Project, Completion Evaluation, Report #1993-PK, July 2008, Office of Evaluation, IFAD, Via Paolo di Dono 44, 00142 Rome, Italy. The full report and profile are available online at www.ifad.org/evaluation; email: evaluation@ifad.org.