



Evaluation of Community-Based Rural Livelihoods Programme in Badakhshan, Afghanistan

Executive Summary

Oxfam GB Programme Evaluation

August 2006

Commissioned by: Oxfam GB

Evaluators: Kavita Gandhi and John Krijnen

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Oxfam's Community-based Rural Livelihoods programme is a three-year's programme financed by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, Oxfam GB, Oxfam America and Oxfam Australia. The programme seeks to reduce vulnerability of the poor through implementing an integrated programme focussing on livelihoods, health, education, gender and governance. As the programme is slated to end in September 2006, an external evaluation was commissioned to assess the impact of the programme, and to provide recommendations to shape the development of future interventions.

The programme has succeeded to establish itself in a remote area and has created substantial goodwill by responding to community needs and by compensating for government weakness in delivering basic services.

The programme has succeeded to positively influence attitudes and behaviour to girl's education, and public health practices. It has put the role of women in reproductive and productive tasks in the forefront and has succeeded in providing a platform for women to come together and discuss their issues and concerns.

Improvement in food and income security of the poor has been modest. Specific measures to target landless and marginal farmers and women are missing. The programme appears to be understaffed with regards to technical staff. The technical skills of the staff are not commensurate with the task at hand. Many innovative livelihood options are being tried out by organisations like AKF and Afghan Aid who create more space for participatory experimentation, and thereby failure and success, learning, and exposure to relevant experiences elsewhere in the mountainous area of Pakistan, Tajikistan and India. Oxfam is not taking advantage of these opportunities.

The institutional and financial sustainability of project activities shows a clear potential for improvement. Oxfam managed service delivery has prevailed over strengthening local institutions in management and funding capacities. Shuras are facilitating the delivery of the programme but have not been set up to be representative and accountable community institutions. In the last one-year the provincial and district governments have been elected and the process of preparation of provincial development plan was initiated. Oxfam is seen as being distant from this process. Project activities are largely subsidised. The role of private sector, government and payment for some services by communities has to be systematically worked out.

The evaluation team recommends for the extension of the programme by another two phases of three years each. This is fully justified by the extreme vulnerabilities in the remote mountain area of Badakhshan. This time frame will enable bringing lasting changes in poor peoples' lives. The present area coverage should be maintained instead of spreading relatively modest resources too thin. The sectoral focus should be on livelihoods, water and sanitation, governance with gender as a cross cutting issue. Oxfam should play the role of gap filling in addressing education and maternal and child health.

A next phase should emphasize capacity building in institutional development and organisational strengthening of community-based institutions and district government.

Financial sustainability will be pursued through gradually phasing out from subsidies. At the same time self-help groups can be established geared towards community-based saving/credit schemes modestly financed with rotating funds. Moreover, private sector options need to be systematically explored. There is an opportunity to more actively link up with the national decentralization effort and the provincial planning process in order to obtain the goodwill to pursue the own programme and to successfully lobby with donors to invest in the infrastructure development of the programme area.

The order of magnitude of funding could be somewhat increased to approximately US\$ 2 million for a future three-years phase, in order to enable subcontracting arrangements, the reinforcement of technical field staff and the establishment of a rotating fund for saving-credit purposes (replacing subsidies).

Technical support for the livelihood interventions in particular in livestock, horticulture and agriculture, should either be sub-contracted to specialized agencies through institutionalised partnerships or appropriately qualified technical people should be recruited by Oxfam. The number of field staff i.e. community organisers and technical staff should be increased.

SDC and Oxfam should lobby with major players in the health and education sectors to step up their investments in the area. Lobbying is also needed with regards to the improvement of the main roads connecting the district headquarters with the inter-provincial road.

Last but not the least, it is recommended that adequate time and resources be invested in designing the next phase of the programme. The programme development should be based on a detailed analysis of livelihood strategies, assets, threats and vulnerabilities for different socio economic and vulnerable groups. Historical analysis of livelihoods in Badakshan should be carried out to understand the type of livelihoods that can be promoted in this food deficit region characterised by hostile terrain, harsh winters, poor water availability and soil conditions. It is recommended that with support of SDC and AKF, Oxfam will orient itself towards livelihood options as successfully developed in comparable agro-ecological zones in Afghanistan and in the region. A baseline needs to be developed for monitoring changes incorporating quantitative and qualitative changes in people's lives.

© Oxfam GB 2006

First published online by Oxfam GB in 2010.

This document is part of a collection of programme evaluations available from Oxfam GB in accordance with its evaluation policy.

This document was originally written for internal accountability and learning purposes, rather than for external publication. The information included was correct to the evaluator's best knowledge at the date the evaluation took place. The views expressed in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect Oxfam's views.

The text may be used free of charge for the purposes of advocacy, campaigning, education, and research, provided that the source is acknowledged in full. The copyright holder requests that all such use be registered with them for impact assessment purposes. For copying in any other circumstances, or for reuse in other publications, or for translation or adaptation, permission must be secured and a fee may be charged. Email publish@oxfam.org.uk

For further information on the issues raised in this document email phd@oxfam.org.uk

Oxfam is a registered charity in England and Wales (no 202918) and Scotland (SC 039042). Oxfam GB is a member of Oxfam International.

www.oxfam.org.uk