



Evaluation of Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness Project in Western Mongolia

Executive Summary

Oxfam GB Programme Evaluation

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Executive summary

In May 2004, ADRA Mongolia implemented a thirty two (32) months project entitled “Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness in Western Mongolia” with grant funding from Oxfam-GB. The project was implemented in three vulnerable soums namely Ider, Tudevtei, Yaruu soum, Zavkhan aimag. Project beneficiaries are herders that had been affected by the zud in 1999 to 2001 and drought that followed during those years.

The project aimed to strengthen the resistance of poor herders and other residents of three soums (counties) in Zavkhan Province, western Mongolia, in the face of winter disasters. This is achieved by improving access to irrigation, hay and fodder, developing improved food and income alternatives and by increasing the skills and knowledge of herders and local officials. ADRA Mongolia implements the project by integrating and extending the activities of four its programs: food security, micro-finance, and disaster relief and well restoration.

Funding and project structure is such that the micro-finance, bio-intensive gardening and well components of the project are financed by a variety of donors. The components got underway in 2003 and each finished at different stages of the Oxfam funded disaster component, compressing irrigation research, herder and official training and the development of hay and fodder cooperatives. Although each component could be run as a stand-alone project, the integration done in this project was such that each component compliments the others. Cost sharing reduces spending; there are beneficiaries who cross-over components, staff in each component is aware of other components and often share tasks.

Project goal: to develop, in the communities of three soums of Zavkhan aimag, greater resilience to disaster producing events.

Specific objectives of the project:

- The areas of maximum potential for grazing, hay production and gardening in 3 soums of Zavkhan aimag will be known
- There will be adequate water supply, skills and other resources available to herder communities of 3 soums for autumn grazing, hay making and gardening in identified priority areas
- The herder will practice good pasture and stock management
- Sources of income will be diversified
- The capacity of local government to prepare for, mitigate against and respond and recover from disaster-producing events will be increased

The project has completed its activities in December 31, 2006.

Upon completion of the project ADRA Mongolia office hired a consultant for conducting impact evaluation of this project. The assignment with one month duration started on February 1, 2007. The objectives of the impact evaluation are to assess the achievements

of the project in terms of its specific objectives, its impact and effects, sustainability and replicability, and relevance of the project outputs to development priorities and needs.

The evaluation methodology employed the desk review, focus group discussions, and interview with key informants, including herders, rural citizens, soum, aimag and national government officials and representatives of donor and humanitarian organizations implementing their programs and projects in the project respective areas. The Consultant made desk review first, learning the project proposals and annual project progress and final reports. Then the consultant made a 12-day trip to Zavkhan province center and three soums (county) Ider, Yaruu and Tudevtei to meet project beneficiaries, partners, local non-cooperative herders and local government officials. Ms. Munkhchimeg, project local coordinator, accompanied the consultant during the field trip. The team has met in total 90 persons (Appendix 1), among them 37 members of 8 cooperatives, 8 non-cooperative herders and vegetable growers, 36 soum, aimag and national government representatives and 8 persons of various donor agencies that are assisting in Zavkhan aimag through their projects and programs. Among these persons met 36 were women and 53 men. The evaluation data was collected using face to face meeting with individual cooperative members, where the other members live far from each others and was not possible to communicate. In Ider soum, first a semi-structured interview with the soum governor and his staff was organized as well focus group discussion (FGD) with members of Darkhan-Uul cooperative separately.

In order to make the objective assessment and to ensure reliable data collection as well to facilitate exchange of information and cooperation among local government officials, herders and cooperative members, the consultant has organized participatory rural appraisal (PRA) meeting. The meeting included governor, his staff, and cooperative members as well non-coop herders and unemployed people. The participants divided into 3 groups: local governments, cooperative members, and non-coop herders, individuals and discussed achievements, benefits and prospects of cooperatives created with project assistance. This approach was very helpful not only for reliable data obtaining, but also to understand as well to further support all the benefits and potentials of such a structure by governments officials and the other herders participated in the meeting.

In Tudevtei soum, a FGD meeting was organized for 2 cooperatives together so that to compare activities and current achievements. This arrangement facilitated impartial data collection and allows all participants to review activities themselves and see comparatively benefits and find more efficient ways of their cooperation. Interview of key persons, such as governor, food and agriculture officer, governor's office manager took place.

In Yaruu, FGD took place with each of three cooperatives, due to distinct locations of the cooperatives, followed by interview with soum officials and observation through visits individual members' households. Upon return to Uliastai the aimag center, individual meeting with key informants such as Aimag deputy governor, heads of departments and division responsible for policy making, coordination, relief and winter disaster reduction

within the aimag. A thorough discussion took place with each of interviewers regarding the changes caused by the Disaster mitigation and preparedness project.

All the findings through meeting, discussion and participatory analysis, observation and official statistics provide outstanding achievements of the project goal and its specific objectives. The first objective was achieved in the project first year, areas for grazing, hay production and gardening in 3 soums were identified in close cooperation with soum officials, land managers and herder groups. Certificates for possession and land use were handed in to all herder groups- beneficiaries that ensured the right to access to resources.

Second objectives have been achieved through inventory of all wells and water sources and prioritizing the wells to be repaired and providing access to water for irrigation of areas for gardening, hay and fodder making.

Intensive training series have been organized systematically among local herder groups, unemployed people, and those willing to learn and join their efforts. Also local government officials have been trained together with heads of herder groups in developing and implementing disaster mitigation, preparedness and contingency plans in a practical way.

As results of the project efforts, 8 herder groups have been formed and which later on the third year transformed into cooperatives. The structures were built in a way that poor herders or unemployed people come together on their own willingness, based on their knowledge and skills developed through the various trainings organized by the project staff.

As the evaluation found, the cooperatives through their intensive work efforts have made a significant contribution to the local economic development, local supply of food and fodder, which are vital for reducing risks of winter disaster zud and summer droughts. 116 members of these eight cooperatives with their 374 family members have greatly benefited from the project activities, through diversifying their incomes and most importantly, created 116 additional job positions that bring sustainability to local economy and livelihoods of these families.

Their lives are improved significantly in social, economic and mental terms. The project has a very big potential for replication, considering its achievements in improving livelihoods of the poor in remote rural areas in a relatively short period. The project initiated vegetable growing, hay and fodder making businesses bring sustainable work places for many of poor herders allowing them to diversify their income and prosperity to local economy and thus, decreasing significantly the risks and vulnerability of local communities to zud and droughts.

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