

RESTORING LIVELIHOODS AFTER FLOODS

Gender-sensitive response and community-owned recovery in Pakistan



A group of women from the village of Yosuf Bhatti, Shikarpur, hold up cheques received for 'Cash for Work' activities in their village. © Timothy Allen.

Following unprecedented flooding in 2010, Oxfam and partners launched an early recovery programme in Sindh Province, Pakistan. As well as directly supporting food security, this programme included support for women and men to establish livelihoods and rebuild assets when they began to return to their villages. This offered some opportunities to promote improved livelihoods. More than 25,000 households were targeted, and 25 per cent of direct beneficiaries were women.

Oxfam Programme Insights

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INTRODUCTION

With over 176 million inhabitants, Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world.¹ It ranks 145 out of 187 countries on the United Nations Development Programme's 2011 Human Development Index and continues to struggle with high rates of unemployment, inflation, and insecurity. Adding to the instability is the ongoing conflict within the country and recurrent natural disasters, including earthquakes in 2005 and 2008, a cyclone in 2007, and most recently the devastating floods of 2010 and 2011.

Pakistan's patriarchal society means that women face multiple inequalities. In 2010 for every 100 boys in primary school there were 82 girls, and for every 100 boys in secondary school there were 76 girls. In 2008 the literacy rate for females aged 15–24 was 61 per cent, compared with a male literacy rate of 70 per cent.² Cultural constraints restrict women's mobility and although they contribute the majority of unpaid household labour as well as other forms of work, this is often unrecognised. Traditionally, women own little land, lack decision-making power, and have low levels of literacy. Violence against women is endemic throughout the country, and they have limited legal protection in such matters.

Oxfam has been working in Pakistan since 1973. We support local partners and work with government authorities to improve the livelihoods of those living in poverty, and we provide humanitarian assistance to those affected by disasters and conflict. Oxfam's focus in Pakistan is on ensuring poor women's access to land and economic opportunity; ending violence against women; ensuring that all girls have the right to a good education; increasing resilience to disasters and climate change; and improving access to effective humanitarian assistance during emergencies.

Summary

Heavy monsoon rains beginning in late July 2010 triggered unprecedented flooding in Pakistan which ploughed a swathe of destruction more than 1,000 kilometres long over the course of three weeks and destroyed more than two million hectares of crops. By November 2010, 7.2 million people were still receiving food aid, and restoration of livelihoods was seen as a key priority. Oxfam, as part of the Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (CBHA),³ and with funding from ECHO in association with local partners, launched an early recovery programme in Sindh, targeting approximately 53,000 households (318,000 people) and featuring two sectors of intervention:

- an Emergency Food Security and Livelihoods (ESFL) programme to kick-start livelihood regeneration, targeting more than 25,000 households (150,000 individuals);
- Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene projects, which in total served 48,000 households (288,000 individuals).

Where possible, activities targeted the same communities in order to achieve a more holistic impact. At the outset of the Oxfam intervention, households were asked to register one household member to receive cheques or inputs. They were encouraged to put women forward, but this was not mandatory. As a result, 25 per cent of direct beneficiaries were women, totalling approximately 6,500 households (39,000 individuals). Of households where women were directly targeted, approximately 60 per cent were female-headed, while the remaining households put forward a woman for direct participation or receipt of inputs. However, regardless of the sex of the household member directly participating or receiving inputs, it was intended that interventions should benefit the entire household, including women.

This paper will examine the extent to which this was achieved. In particular it will consider and evaluate (a) the involvement of women in programme planning and implementation; (b)

constraints that limited their involvement; and (c) programme outputs and outcomes, and the views of women on these.

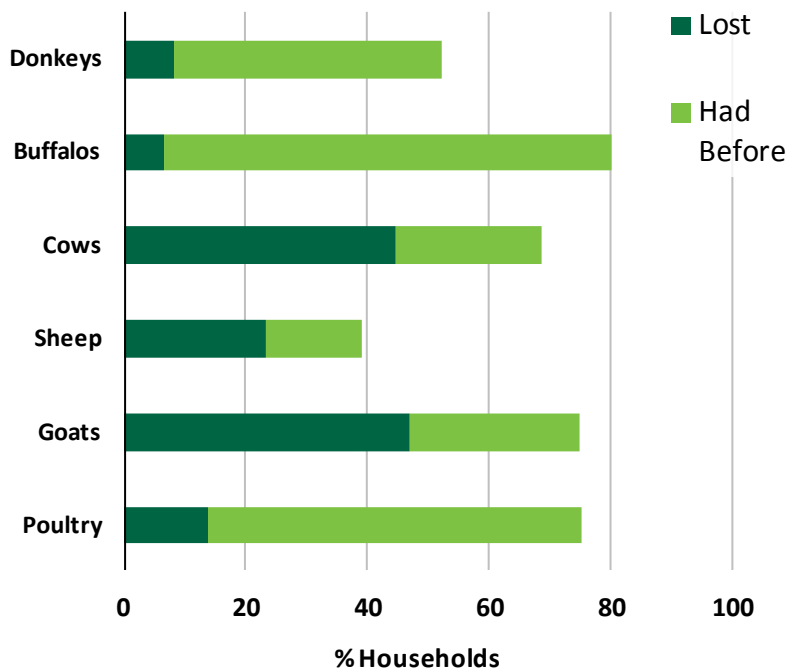
What happened?

In the summer of 2010, Pakistan was hit by unprecedented flooding. The scale was hard to conceive. An area the size of England was under water, and approximately 12 per cent of Pakistan's population, 20 million people, close to the population of Australia, were affected. The north experienced flash flooding, which, although devastating, enabled the early start of recovery and rehabilitation, but the south experienced a different fate. Here the bloated Indus River breached protection bunds and flooded densely inhabited plains, destroying agricultural land, homes, and household assets. Due to poor early-warning systems, communities had to flee to temporary camps on higher land as the waters filled their homes, leaving behind livestock, businesses, and other household assets. The flood waters remained for three–four months, and some areas remained under water even as the end of the emergency was signalled by the government of Pakistan in January 2011.



Emergency provision of food, clean water, and non-food items (NFIs) made up the bulk of the emergency response while people remained in camps, but an even greater challenge was faced when they began to return to their villages, particularly in Sindh, where loss of land, assets, and homes was most prevalent. The top priority on returning home was to re-establish livelihoods – no small task, as damage to the value of US\$10 billion was recorded, half of which affected the agricultural sector alone.⁴ In particular, Sindh in the South registered 46 per cent of the total damages within its area.⁵ Before the floods more than 80 per cent of households depended on agriculture for their livelihood. With the harvest now lost, many poor households that had bought agricultural inputs on credit were left with no way to repay the debt or to re-start their lives. In fact, only 23 per cent of households reported feeling confident that they could continue to earn a living from agriculture following the floods; the majority turned to scarce casual labour and handouts from aid agencies or richer community members.⁶ Losses consisted not only of crops, but also infrastructure and livestock such as buffaloes and goats (see Figure 1), which are the primary household assets and often the only asset for Sindh's landless sharecroppers.

Figure 1: Losses of Livestock/Poultry



While frequent disasters in the north of Pakistan had encouraged the growth of strong local humanitarian organizations and a historical presence for many INGOs, the same was not true in the south. However, due to chronic problems in the province, including sustained high malnutrition rates (>16 per cent Global Acute Malnutrition),⁷ low literacy rates, and limited land ownership for women, Oxfam was already operating long-term development programmes in Sindh, focusing on women's economic rights. As such, Oxfam aimed to utilize its long-term understanding of the province by working within already established partnerships to address the evolving situation in some of the worst-affected Districts. Long-term programmes were halted, and partners were supported to expand or establish their presence in the targeted Districts of Dadu, Qambar Shahdadkot, Jacobabad, Thatta, and Jamshoro.

WHAT WAS OUR RESPONSE?

Oxfam and partners launched an early recovery programme in target districts of Sindh in January 2011 which ran until August 2011. While this programme included shelter projects and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene work, this paper will focus on the Emergency Food Security and Livelihoods (EFSL) intervention. Within this sector Oxfam and partners saw the need to continue directly supporting food security while also ensuring that communities were able to re-start their livelihoods and rebuild lost assets. The situation also presented an opportunity, albeit limited, to promote improved livelihood options and outcomes.

1. Getting Started

In order to provide timely and relevant support to targeted communities, Oxfam sought to build on existing relations with local partners. Partnerships for early recovery programming were established with five pre-existing partners: Research and Development Foundation (RDF); Sindh Agricultural and Forestry Workers Coordinating Organisation (SAFWCO); Strengthening Participatory Organisation (SPO); Participatory Development Initiative (PDI); and Laar Humanitarian and Development Programme (LHDP). Each partner covered a specific district in which they had prior experience. Monthly meetings were held, involving partner staff and Oxfam staff, to share experience, build understanding, and ensure a coherent response across Districts. The involvement of local partners added much to the understanding of the local context and the cultural norms of the two ethnic groups present in the area, the Sindhi and the Balochi. However, the rapid scale-up meant that many staff lacked a good understanding or prior experience of working in programmes related to either EFSL or Gender, and a structured gender analysis was not undertaken at the start of the programme.

To overcome this, monthly learning workshops were introduced to enhance capacity and discuss challenges and best practice. In the initial two months, the focus on speed of delivery meant that on-the-job training led by Oxfam EFSL Technical Team Leaders in each District formed the backbone of learning. Before each activity, Team Leaders would conduct a short workshop with their staff to introduce the rationale and tools to be used (such as attendance sheets and monitoring sheets). Teams would then be accompanied to the field to ensure that learning about EFSL was internalized, and to provide further guidance based on field observation. At the end of each day field teams gathered to share any problems, queries, or best practice which they had seen during their work.

Unfortunately there was no Gender Adviser available at the project outset or in the implementation period. To ensure that gender concerns remained at the forefront of the work, regular discussions both at the monthly workshops and during field visits were held by the EFSL team. In this way policies were agreed on the role of women in committees, the inclusion of women in cash-transfer activities, and their involvement in livelihood opportunities. For example, it was found that staff had automatically assumed that the activities proposed were specific to men and women: for example, that business grants should be offered to men, while poultry inputs (of much less value) should be offered to women. This was because in that context women often cannot operate outside the home, so it was assumed that raising poultry is a home-based task and hence a woman's role, while small businesses operate outside the home and hence are a man's role. However, during discussions it was seen that many women actually do run businesses, although these may be home-based and hence less visible in the community than the more public businesses owned and managed by men. It was therefore agreed that female staff members with greater access to female beneficiaries would specifically ask about women who were engaged in economic activities before the floods, to ensure their inclusion in grant-making and business-training activities.

In the first instance, support was provided to ensure that female members of staff constituted 50 per cent of each EFSL team. Although this proved difficult, given low female literacy, it was vital

to our ability to involve women in our project, and as such it was seen as a necessity. Many of the women recruited were fresh graduates from school who came from the target area. Despite their lack of experience, the presence of local female staff enabled the programme to gain access to women in the more conservative Balochi communities that do not condone interaction between women and men, and local communities were more likely to accept the intervention as a result. However, during programme implementation it was found that staff should not be assigned to cover their own communities. This helps to avoid unfair demands on staff members such as the pressure put on a female staff member by a family member to include him in the beneficiary list that she was responsible for finalising – a demand that was extremely difficult for her to resist, as she was working in her home village.

2. Women's Voice

At the outset of the programme a team was assigned to each community, consisting of one male and one female EFSL Assistant. In most cases, the male staff member worked specifically on eliciting input from the men, and the female staff member worked closely with the women. Although inequitable relationships between staff are often a barrier, in this case power relations within the pairing were not overtly apparent, as the female and male staff members came with independent information from their groups to report to senior staff members. It also helped that within the Oxfam team there were senior female staff from other areas of Pakistan and from other countries who interacted with partners on a daily basis and were able to ensure that junior female staff had a strong voice in the project.

Before the activities began, these assistants visited each community to inform them about the proposals, seek their approval, and support the formation of a Village Development Committee (VDC). If committees already existed, communities were asked to endorse them for the purpose of the programme. They were also asked to ensure that 50 per cent of members were women and that two leaders be nominated, one male and one female. While this was not a problem in Sindhi communities, it was quickly found to be unacceptable in the more conservative Balochi communities. Following community discussions, it was agreed that Balochi communities would form two committees, one for men and one for women, with each having a leader to represent the committee at large. Although the Balochi communities were happy with this arrangement, especially as it was made clear that only female staff would interact with the women, it became apparent that they saw the women's committee as being junior to the men's committee. This perception was not overtly tackled with the community, but efforts were made internally to elevate the women's concerns. Clearly the presence of female staff made it easier for women to take part in accountability processes.

The VDCs were charged with five main roles: (a) finalization of beneficiary selection criteria (see Annex 1) and selection of beneficiaries; (b) providing community input on activities to be undertaken; (c) monitoring activities; (d) acting as focal points for the project (conveying information to and from Oxfam/partners and helping to resolve problems); and (e) maintaining community assets resulting from the project. For example, VDCs were asked to select the beneficiaries according to the agreed criteria and submit the lists to Oxfam/partner staff. These lists were verified through random staff visits to households. A broad-based meeting was held with the whole community at which names were read out. The list was left with communities, and a seven-day period was allowed for the receipt of complaints from households not included in it. Complaints about registration could be registered either through a mobile-phone hotline or through direct discussion with the male/female partner staff members. Although women did not use the hotline, it was found that they were at ease registering complaints directly with the female partner staff.

VDCs were seen as the main link between Oxfam/partners and target communities and so played a key role in the success of the project. They were in almost daily contact with partners, and in places where there was an effective, highly motivated VDC, the project achieved excellent results.

In Sindhi communities women often took an active part in the VDCs, and in some cases the main focal point became the elected woman leader. The roles of men and women in the committees, according to focus-group discussions, were seen as 'the same'. However, many Balochi communities, including women, did not understand the reason for insisting on a women's committee. In some communities we found that Oxfam and partner staff had not adequately explained the role of the VDCs to women. The need for women's representation in the VDCs had been explained in male-led meetings, and the men had formed a women's committee without telling them why. In these cases women staff from Oxfam met with the women's committees to ensure full understanding of the VDCs' roles and responsibilities.

There was often an assumption that the men should decide for the community. EFSL assistants often found it difficult to elicit women's opinions, as women would say 'What did the men say?' or 'We agree with the men, they should make the decision'. A related issue was that although men and women VDC members in Balochi communities signed the same Memorandum of Understanding, specifying identical roles for men and women, the community devised their own division of roles. For example, women were encouraged by Oxfam and partners to support the selection of beneficiaries for all activities, but in reality the involvement of women in some communities was restricted to the selection of what men saw as the less important, less profitable 'women's activities' such as poultry-package distribution. One of the male focus-group respondents explained that women members 'were not allowed to come before males... female projects were looked after by them.' This was also the view of some women, as shown in the response, 'women were given equal presence in the formation of VDC but their roles were bit different. They were focused to women-based issues at village level.' While this is not a bad thing *per se*, all activities were open to both men and women, and Oxfam always aspires for all project activities and decisions to be equally led by women and men.

Despite the difficulties outlined above, women's participation in VDCs did improve during the project. This was in part due to the perseverance of our staff. In addition, the women started to see the impact of sharing their opinions, which encouraged them to speak out more and to be more involved. For example, it was found that the women had a much better understanding than the men of which households were most in need of assistance (widows with many children, for example). In the view of one female VDC member, 'We observed [this] registration process was [the] best because we were included as VDC members and also we were asked to present our views.' Women were also the ones to dictate the breed of chickens distributed, as it is they who look after poultry within the household. Finally, in some Balochi communities women insisted on being involved in Cash for Work activities, leading to the identification of suitable activities and women's inclusion in work which would have traditionally been for men only.

During the project-evaluation focus-group discussions, positive feedback was given by women and men from both Sindhi and Balochi communities regarding the role of the female VDC committee members. One woman said, 'Females were respected and given opportunity. We facilitated in field visits, in business monitoring and other information given to the teams.' Men also noticed a difference and one man commented that, 'It happened first time that a VDC was formed comprising 50 per cent women. It has given them confidence.' Members of female and male focus groups wanted to see the continuation of the VDCs. In the words of one Balochi woman, 'The VDC is the backbone of the village development and we strongly encourage to continue VDC... Our VDC will present our problems and issue in front of Government persons, political persons, even in front of our males.'

3. Activity Implementation

Cash transfer

In emergencies, distributing cash can often meet people's immediate needs more quickly and appropriately than the direct distribution of commodities. When markets are active, cash, rather than food aid, can help to stimulate the local economy rather than undermine it.

In this case, markets were found to be functioning, but communities could not afford to buy goods because they had lost their main source of income (crops and livestock) in the floods.

In such situations, the following forms of cash transfer are considered.

- **Cash for work:** payment for work on public or community works programmes, which may include rehabilitation of agricultural land or development of infrastructure, such as roads and houses. The cash wages help people to meet their basic needs, and the community projects help to improve or rehabilitate services or infrastructure. Cash for work is targeted at community members who can provide labour but cannot currently gain an income due to loss of assets/labour opportunities.
- **Business support:** grants to enable people to re-launch business activities in which they had engaged before the floods, or to start small businesses. In Pakistan this also had the knock-on effect of rehabilitating community-level markets, many of which had closed following the floods, due to lack of money to purchase new stock.
- **Unconditional grants:** cash grants made to the most vulnerable people who are unable to take part in cash for work or to start businesses. This income is intended to support such households in meeting their basic food needs and ensuring a basic level of dignity.

A total of 12,829 households were selected to provide Cash for Work beneficiaries, and analysis of the gender division of labour shaped the programme design. Of those directly involved in work and therefore directly receiving the cash payments, 88 per cent were men. The main reason for this was that the stated priority of all communities, according to both male and female committees, was the repair of irrigation canals. Before the floods, the primary source of income for 80.5 per cent of households in the targeted areas was rice production. Even households not directly dependent on rice production indirectly benefit from labour opportunities or opportunities to engage in petty trade within their villages. With the approach of the Kharif (April–June) planting season, the first viable season since the floods, many communities saw it as a race against time to repair the canals. Repair of irrigation canals is traditionally a male activity, and it was not possible to encourage women's involvement.

Other works prioritized by VDCs included road repair and rehabilitation of public buildings. In some Sindhi communities women did participate in such activities, but this was rare and was not acceptable for Balochi communities, in which women cannot work outside the home. Repair of homes was also seen as a major concern for many communities, but the donors' request for community works made it difficult for Oxfam to prioritize this. The fact that house repair is a task often performed by women also limited women's participation in public works. In response, where possible Oxfam and partners established teams of 10–20 women who worked together to rehabilitate houses within their community; but in some communities this was not possible because there was no interest in forming such arrangements. Women's groups were present in approximately 120 villages out of a total of 553.

In addition, EFSL assistants worked closely with women to identify other suitable activities. They were asked to be innovative, and eventually a range of activities was identified, including creation of community seed-storage jars, rehabilitation of kitchen spaces (conducted by a work team), and creation of traditional items of clothing which were provided to the most vulnerable community members. Involvement in work was received very positively by both men and women in targeted communities.

Box 1: Cash-for-work activities for women and men



In the village of Lano Mallah in Thatta District, Amaami (above) supervised a Cash for Work group of 30 women. When people were able to return to the village after the flood, Oxfam and partners discussed with the community what support they needed and what activities people could be involved in. Amaami explained, 'We had a committee meeting and everyone from the village was there – both men and women were involved in the discussion. The activities (for cash for work) were being discussed, and work like repairing the roads was being assigned to men, but the women said, "We can work too and we also need money". So then everyone discussed what we could do, and it was agreed that women could work on repairing homes: mud plastering ... it's very good to see our houses clean and decorated again ... and to have got this work done before it rains. Secondly, we received money that has really helped us when we needed it.'

Amaami was chosen to be a supervisor because, she says, 'I know how to manage women and I know how to do mud plastering'. She worked for two months, supervising 30 women, who earned 300 Rupees for 30 days' work, a total of 9,000 Rupees each (approximately £65⁸). Amaami said, 'Without this money we would have got into more debt ... We'd have had to spend money on transport and other things ... and if there is no work, and there is very little, then this would have caused us to have more debt.'

In total, 1,826 women directly participated in Cash for Work activities. Although the proportion of households in which the direct beneficiary was a woman was low, in most households it was found that decisions about what to spend the money on were made jointly. As indicated by Figure 2, 54 per cent of households responding to a household questionnaire reported making a joint decision, while 40 per cent of decisions were made by a man and 6 per cent by a woman. Although the evaluation did not record the ethnic identity of respondents, it is assumed that joint decision making was more prevalent in Sindhi communities, where men and women traditionally have more equal power relations. In addition, it is notable that there was very little difference in how men and women spent their money (see Table 1). As one female respondent commented, 'Women also benefitted from the support provided to men, as men utilized support for household purposes.' The greatest differences could be seen in the case of livelihoods inputs such as seeds, fertilizer, and rent of tractors, on which male-targeted households spent 11 per cent more, and in the case of debt repayment, on which women-targeted households spent 8 per cent more. The difference in the remaining categories (food, medicines, and other) was less than 5 per cent. In addition, women as well as men were happy with the outcomes of the projects, and in particular with the repair of irrigation canals.

Figure 2: Decision making on use of cash by flood-affected families

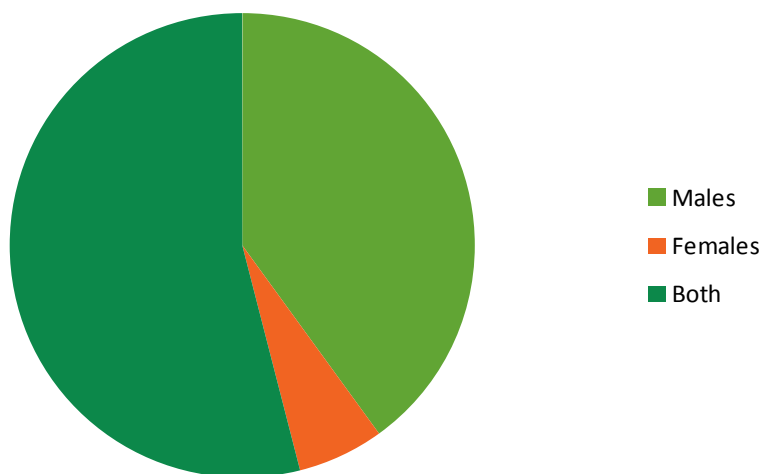


Table 1: Spending of Cash for Work money according to sex

	Male spending	Female spending
<i>Food</i>	44%	40%
<i>Medicines</i>	13%	17%
<i>Livelihood inputs</i>	25%	14%
<i>Debt repayment</i>	12%	20%
<i>Other</i>	7%	9%

In addition to Cash for Work, a total of 932 most vulnerable households were selected to receive unconditional cash grants (UCGs). Due to the high number of widows and other female-headed households included in this ‘most vulnerable’ group, 75 per cent of beneficiaries directly targeted by UCG activities were women. This meant that overall in 64 per cent of cases the decision maker was a woman, and in a further 24 per cent a joint decision was made. In terms of expenditure, the picture is similar to that seen in CfW: little notable difference between male and female recipients. The only differences were seen in expenditure on food, on which male-headed households spent an additional 9 per cent, and expenditure on medicines/health, on which female-headed households spent an additional 8 per cent.

This suggests that the traditional view of women as more likely to spend money on household needs such as food did not hold true in this instance. According to focus-group discussions, the need for canal repair was seen as the top priority for both men and women, because it dictates the ability of the community as a whole to access income through agriculture. As one woman stated, ‘the whole community including women benefitted from these projects. From these CfW activities we cultivated our lands.’ As canal rehabilitation is firmly perceived as a male activity in all communities, it was seen as the right decision to directly involve more men than women in the work. However, there may have been other benefits in the direct targeting of women. For instance, cash transfers were distributed in the form of cheques, whose beneficiaries then went to the bank to cash them, and one female beneficiary reported that she ‘stood in line at the bank along with the men. I felt proud of myself and my contribution to my family.’ To enhance this feeling of self-worth, and also to increase awareness of gender equality in future projects, we need to be creative in identifying culturally appropriate work for women.

Box 2: Meeting immediate needs and re-starting livelihoods through Unconditional Cash Grants



Benazeer Gohar is a resident of Ghulam Qadir Chandio village in Taluka NK Shah in Dadu district.

'I am the second wife of my husband, who has 18 children, 13 from first wife and 5 from me. My husband is the only son of his parents and he had a grocery shop in the village and 10 acres of agricultural land from which we had a good life before the flood. During the flood we lost almost everything, along with agricultural crops and a grocery shop which were the main sources of income for the family.

We took shelter in the camps during and after floods. When we returned to our village, our family faced a lot of problems. My husband was trying to get employment but it was impossible to get work near the villages.

After some time we heard from villagers that RDF and Oxfam were going to start cash-for-work activities in the villages and they are focusing on women as beneficiaries. So, based on the criteria, they put my name on the unconditional cash list.

I spent the entire first instalment, amount RS 4,500, to purchase food and medicine. I know stitching, which I did before marriage, but after marriage it was not allowed. These days I realised I should start stitching again.

My husband re-started his grocery shop in small scale again with my second instalment amount, which was RS 6,600. Also we purchased food from this amount. Now I'm the owner of a sewing machine which I bought with my third instalment, amount RS 6,900. Also we purchased food and medicine by this money.'

Income generation

In addition to receiving immediate income through cash transfer, it was seen that some households, and in particular those not engaged in agricultural activities, would need alternative means of support. The most vulnerable households who received unconditional cash transfers spent most of the money on food and medicine and so had no opportunity to establish a longer-term option to generate income. The following two options were offered: (a) provision of poultry kits; (b) provision of a grant and training to establish a small business.

Poultry-kit provision: During the floods many households lost their productive assets and in particular large livestock, which either died or were later sold to enable households to meet essential needs. This was particularly a problem for the most vulnerable households who relied to a large extent on their own production for food consumption. Oxfam and partners, in consultation with communities, identified distribution of a poultry kit (10 hens, one cockerel, and 10kg of feed) as an appropriate intervention, because poultry provide a quick source of protein. In addition poultry are traditionally cared for by women and can benefit the most vulnerable, such as elderly or disabled family members. According to project-evaluation questionnaires, in 69 per cent of cases the poultry provided were looked after by women.

Perhaps because poultry keeping is a traditionally female activity, male community members and Oxfam/partner staff in discussions rated this activity as the least important in the project. However, according to household interviews and focus-group discussions, this activity has made a big difference to the beneficiaries. In total, 2,319 households received poultry kits, 86 per cent of whom were women. This reflects the high proportion of widows and other female-headed households selected as beneficiaries for poultry inputs. Many of the women and men who received these inputs are elderly or vulnerable, and they were pleased to have assets of their own. Female recipients in particular felt that these assets could not be taken away from them, whereas money (for instance through Cash for Work) could be controlled by other family members.

Box 3: Re-starting livelihoods through provision of poultry kits



Beb Naz from Ibraheem Patooja village was a beneficiary of the Poultry Kit Provision programme. She was 60 years old and sick for most of the time. During the flood, she went to Larkana with her daughter and stayed in a camp. When they came back after four months, their village was like a jungle and they had to make a hut from local materials to live in. According to Beb Naz, *'I feel that I am burden on my daughter. She had to feed me, she had to look after me, and she had to take care of my health and hygiene.'*

In May 2011 LHDP/Oxfam staff came to the village, held discussions with the community, and formed a village development committee. Beb Naz was recommended by the VDC to receive 10 hens and one cockerel. She was given a token to redeem at a distribution point, where she collected her package and she also received training in poultry-rearing practices and vaccination.

'I am very happy and thankful to LHDP/Oxfam for supporting me. My hens have started laying eggs and I daily take one egg in diet. I save some of eggs; I will sell and give the money to my daughter as reward of looking after me. I was helpless and had nothing to do. Now I am busy with my hens most of the time, my time passes very well. I am happy.'

Business grants: As well as the loss of incomes derived from agriculture and livestock, it was noted that those owning small businesses had lost their livelihood assets and in many cases were unable to re-start their businesses due to the high debts that they had built up in purchasing food and other items since the floods. This had an impact on the availability of basic commodities within communities. Oxfam and partners felt it necessary to provide a conditional grant to support the re-establishment of these businesses. To do this, a training of trainers on the topic of small businesses was conducted by an external consultant for 18 partner staff. Following the training, participants developed a four-hour training session to be offered to beneficiaries, covering simple counting and calculation of profit and loss, risks in business, marketing strategies, and business planning.

This training was provided to groups of 25 beneficiaries, after which each beneficiary was asked to complete a simple business plan. Partner staff helped illiterate beneficiaries to do this. Finished plans were analysed, and if they were deemed to be sustainable an MoU was signed

between the beneficiary and Oxfam partner. Following this, 70 per cent of the grant was provided upfront to enable the purchase of productive inputs, such as a sewing machine or livestock; the remainder was provided once there was evidence that the business had been re-started and was running effectively. An additional 100 people were selected for vocational training such as courses in tailoring, mobile phone/radio repair, mechanics, and carpentry.

At the outset of the project, this activity was seen by both Oxfam and partner staff and also by communities as targeting men, because men are the ones who normally own businesses that are run from outside the home. During a staff workshop this issue was discussed and it was agreed that businesses run from home, usually by women, should also be included – for example, selling goat's or sheep's milk and running small shops. Following this, female staff members worked closely with female VDC members to identify women business owners. As a result, 62 per cent of those targeted by this activity were women (1,796 individuals). Businesses established included small shops, drinks/food kiosks, tailoring, handicrafts, and milk sales (through purchase of a buffalo or several goats).

The training was cited as useful by participants, with one female focus-group respondent reporting: 'We used the activity of counting and carefully keeping the record of buying and selling in the book for our businesses. That was very interesting.' Targeting women in this activity was well received by both men and women in the communities. A female participant explained, 'We have supported our family, we opened our business at our village, it means we earn the money at home and maintained our veil (*Parda*). The male community is also happy with this as it will reduce the financial burden on their shoulders.' Women frequently talked of their pride in their business and increased levels of self-worth.

LESSONS LEARNED

What best practice can we share?

- We must ensure that all staff including partner and Oxfam staff have a shared understanding of what gender equality means, and how women should be included in response and recovery activities. Open discussion should be encouraged, rather than a lecture with set outcomes. Often people (especially men) are reluctant to express their views, because they perceive that more senior Oxfam staff will view them negatively if they say they do not think women and men should be involved on equal terms. In addition some useful points regarding local context could easily be lost. The earlier a shared understanding is achieved, both about gender and about women's participation and inclusion, the easier it will be to move towards gender mainstreaming in activities.
- Inclusion of female staff members in the team increases access for women, especially in more conservative communities, and is therefore vital to women's effective inclusion in project activities. If it is hard to recruit women with the same educational standards or understanding of NGO work as men, workshops and on-the-job training should be provided. Investment in the training of female staff will yield benefits in the future.
- Women should be equally and effectively involved in project committees, but it is important to be flexible and listen to the communities. The same structure may not work in every case. The community, especially women, will provide the best guidance on how they can be most effectively incorporated. It is important to show women that their opinions are shaping the implementation of projects, or they may lose interest – with detrimental consequences for the future.
- It is important to discuss and agree on the most appropriate activities with women, to encourage them when they lack self-confidence but also to respect their opinions even when they make choices that do not reflect gender and inclusion goals. If they say they do not want to be involved in a certain activity for example, staff should try to explore why. It may be

that they want to be involved but do not think they can. In this case it is important to seek creative ways of overcoming the barriers; but if women do not want to do a particular activity, this decision should be respected.

- It is good to have a range of activities suitable for different groups, to ensure that the most vulnerable, such as widows with many children and no assets, are not forgotten. It is essential to ask these groups what will make the greatest difference to them.
- Ensure that terms such as 'business' are not narrowly interpreted as income generation outside the home, which automatically excludes some women. It is important at the outset to discuss the implementation methodology to see if everything possible is being done to enable women's inclusion. Additional support may be needed for women's groups if they lack business experience.

What challenges can we learn from?

- The presence of a gender adviser to support the team at the outset and during implementation of the project would have helped staff to develop greater understanding of gender-related issues, provided the technical basis for implementing a gender analysis, and provided greater guidance on how to address gender inequality most effectively.
- The increase in female voice, and confidence levels, especially among female VDC members were seen to have increased greatly during the project implementation period and are likely to have long-term benefits. However, these gains can quickly be lost if there is no follow-up. It is important to provide ongoing support to such groups to ensure that improvements are sustainable. Long-term benefits will be achieved by working with partners who have strong gender expertise.
- In cases such as this project where communities prioritized cash-for-work activities that excluded women, it is still important to recognize the positive benefits of giving women access to money. Appropriate community consultation will indicate how best to achieve this, including deciding who provides the work and who receives the money.
- A greater understanding of markets for businesses which are traditionally female would enable better-targeted training and activities. It could also help to avoid competition and the ultimate failure of some traditional businesses established by women. This can be done through either a gender analysis or a market analysis that includes gender dimensions.

CONCLUSIONS

The intention to mainstream gender into projects and openness to implementing it are important. Projects do not have to be specifically targeted at women in order to ensure that a gender perspective is mainstreamed and that women are effectively included in them. The involvement of both men and women in the project will help to enhance the gains made.

Donors and NGOs such as Oxfam often focus on quantifiable outcomes: for example, the number of women who receive inputs such as cash for work. But experience in Pakistan has taught us that although receipt of such inputs can make a difference, we need to do more to ensure that the impact of our action is positive in the long term. This can be very hard to measure, especially in emergency situations. However, by working with women and men in communities in Sindh we were able to avoid making the generic assumptions that can often plague attempts to include women in humanitarian projects. By involving women in a real sense from the outset in terms of staffing choices, the composition of committees, and activity decisions, we gained some insight into which activities could and should involve women. Through this, their involvement in business grants and cash for work was made possible.

However, this was not a perfect process, and there is no doubt that the role of women could have been enhanced if a structured gender analysis had been undertaken at the start. A better

baseline understanding of local markets and women's roles and needs would have helped us to position the programme better. The presence of a Gender Adviser would help to guide the team, particularly in patriarchal societies where sometimes staff views (women as well as men) can be a barrier. Finally, maintaining an ongoing presence in the area is certainly a necessity if long-term changes in power relations between men and women are to be made. We know that these things are not always possible, but this project has shown that even in the most challenging cases, where there is no baseline or long-term presence to build on or lead to, we can still aim to ensure understanding of vulnerabilities and their differential effects in emergencies. We must recognize that it is not possible to change deep-rooted inequalities and prejudices through one short-term project. However, we can make steps in the right direction through identifying what we can realistically achieve and working out how best to do it. If we keep learning, sharing, and improving, each time we will do better.

ANNEX 1: BENEFICIARY SELECTION CRITERIA

All Beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All beneficiaries must be residents of the village and planning to stay for the project period. • The household must be affected by the flood (lost housing or livelihoods). • The household must have no regular (government/contracted) employment. <p>Priority will be given to: female, elderly or disabled-headed households; households with a high dependency ratio; households with access to less than six acres of land; households with few productive assets.</p>
Unconditional cash grant, Poultry, Home Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The household must be willing to engage in the identified activity. • The household must have no able-bodied person who is 18–65 years old and who can work outside of the home. • The household must have a <u>very</u> high dependency ratio (VDC feels involvement in CfW will undermine care of dependents.)
Cash for Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The household must have at least one able-bodied person who is 18–65 years old and able to work. • The household must be willing to work for the agreed rates and for agreed projects.
Agricultural Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The household must depend on agriculture for their main source of income. • The household must have lost their crop in the flood. • The household must have access to 1- 12 acres of land (unless a LEO beneficiary⁹). • The household must be willing to plant in the coming <i>Kharif</i> season.
Small enterprise Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The household must depend on a small business for their main source of income. • The household must have lost part or all related productive assets during the floods.
Vocational training support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Households must be willing to either learn or improve on skills that will help them diversify their livelihood sources.

NOTES

¹ World Bank, www.data.worldbank.org/country/Pakistan

² World Bank, www.worldbank.org/indicator

³ www.thecbha.org

⁴ According to the preliminary Damage and Needs Assessment by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, November 2010. Some aid actors and Pakistani officials believe that the actual figures are higher.

⁵ Early recovery of agriculture for population and areas affected by 2010 Pakistan floods, NDMA, January 2011

⁶ Oxfam GB baseline assessment, February 2011.

⁷ ACF and UNICEF studies in November 2007 and December 2010.

⁸ The payment rate used was set by the national-level Cash and Voucher Working Group, was 3000 PKR per day for unskilled labour. This rate takes into account the need to avoid undermining local labour wages, while also ensuring that the wages provided allow for a life with dignity.

⁹ Oxfam's Land Rights and Economic Opportunities programme (LEO)

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