

Oxfam Management response to the review of *Resilience in Pakistan: Evaluation of enhancing food security and resilience of small scale farmers (Effectiveness Review Series 2013/14)*

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1. Context and background of the review

As part of Oxfam Great Britain’s (OGB) Global Performance Framework (GPF), samples of mature projects are randomly selected each year and their effectiveness rigorously assessed. The ‘Enhancing Food Security and Resilience of Small Farmers’ project was selected for review in this way, under the resilience thematic area.

The project was carried out in three districts of southern Pakistan during 2010 and 2011, by Oxfam in partnership with the Sindh Agricultural and Forestry Workers Coordinating Organization (SAFWCO) and Baluchistan Environmental & Educational Journey (BEEJ). The project’s overall objective was to mitigate the negative effects of food price volatility on vulnerable households, by supporting agricultural production and improving access to safety nets and by building local-level institutional capacity to support positive resilience.

This Effectiveness Review used a quasi-experimental evaluation design to assess the impact of the project activities approximately two years after implementation ended. The review was restricted to the two districts where the project was implemented in Sindh Province, Sanghar and Dadu. Household surveys were carried out in a random sample of villages in which the project had been implemented, as well as in nearby comparison villages. This means the results of this Effectiveness Review reflect the impact on the population of those villages as a whole, not specifically on the direct project participants.

In total, 787 households were interviewed, across 23 project villages and 44 comparison villages. At the analysis stage, statistical tools of propensity-score matching and multivariate regression were used to control for demographic and baseline differences between the households surveyed in project and comparison villages, to provide additional confidence when making estimates of the project’s impact.



2. Summary main findings and recommendations

Key results of this Effectiveness Review			
Outcome area	Evidence of positive impact?		Comments
	Sanghar District	Dadu District	
Adoption of improved agricultural practices	Yes	Yes	Evidence of considerable increase in use of improved seeds and other practices encouraged under the project.
Crop production and sales	No	No	Little evidence of any effect on agricultural production or sales. In Dadu District, crop sales were lower in the project villages than in comparison villages.
Livestock ownership	Yes	Yes	Evidence of an increase in number of animals owned, better availability of fodder, and an increase in milk production.
Borrowing and indebtedness	Yes	Yes	Respondents in project villages were more likely to say they had experienced a reduction in their household's level of debt since 2009 than were those in comparison villages.
Food security and dietary diversity	Not clear	Not clear	Standard food security indicators are not conclusive. No apparent effect on dietary diversity in either district.
Indicators of material wealth	Yes	Yes	Households in project communities increased in terms of indicators of material wealth (ownership of livestock and other assets, and housing conditions) since 2009 relative to households in comparison villages.
Resilience to future shocks and stresses	Yes	Yes	Evidence that the project has led to improvements in various characteristics thought to be associated with resilience, especially in indicators of social and institutional capability.
Losses due to shocks in 2010 and 2011	Not clear	Yes	Project villages in Dadu District appear to have experienced fewer crop losses in the crises of 2010 and 2011 than comparison villages. Some indication that this may also be true for losses of livestock in both districts.
Women's participation in community organizations	Yes	Yes	Evidence that the project led to an increase in women's participation in community organizations. Male respondents agreed that women have increased their involvement and influence in the community, but women themselves did not.
<p>Results apply to the general population (including members and non-members of the Farmer Organisations and Producer Organisations established under the project) in the 23 villages where the survey was carried out. Those 23 villages were selected at random from among all except the 15 largest villages where the project was implemented, across the two districts of Sanghar and Dadu. The sample gives proportionately more weight to respondents in smaller villages than in larger villages. The project's activities in Musakheal District in Baluchistan Province are not covered by this review.</p>			



Recommendations:

- **Consider future opportunities for implementing and further testing this project's model of building community-level organisations.**

Overall the area in which this project appears to have had made the greatest contribution to resilience is in building social capacity, through the establishment of the Farmer and Producer Organisations and through improving linkages to extension services and other service providers. The fact that no similar community-level organisations existed in the comparison villages suggests that there is potential for these structures to be replicated, at least on a local level. If, as advised by the implementers, the villages were selected for this project for their vulnerability rather than for pre-existing social cohesion or local leadership, then it is to be expected that similar results in building local-level social capability could be achieved in many other villages in those districts.

One point that is less clear is whether a large number of community-based organisations would be able to benefit from improved links to government and other providers and services and support, in the way that those created under the project seem to have done. This of course depends on the capacity of service producers to meet such expectations, and is an important factor that should be assessed and then monitored in any scale-up of this type of intervention.

- **Seek to investigate the mechanisms by which change is achieved, in this and in future projects.**

A wide suite of interventions were implemented as part of this project, including the establishment of the Farmer and Producer Organisations, the provision of agricultural inputs and grain banks, the support to production (of food crops, kitchen gardening and animal fodder), the organising of seeds fairs, and awareness-raising on crop insurance. The link between the Farmer and Producer Organisations and the building of social capital seems reasonably clear. However, it is less certain which of the project activities were key to achieving other positive results, such as the apparent increase in indicators of material wealth in the project villages over the course of the project, and the smaller losses experienced in those villages during the crises of 2010 and 2011. It is possible that these positive results could only be achieved through the combination of the various interventions – but it is equally possible that some of the interventions would produce positive results for livelihoods and resilience, even in isolation from the others.

Understanding relationships between the various project activities is important in being able to target resources in future interventions. To that end, consideration should be given in future similar projects to putting in place monitoring and evaluation systems that will be able to differentiate the effects of different interventions, to allow the optimal combination of interventions to be established. This would involve implementing different combinations of interventions in different communities, closely monitoring indicators of initial changes, and regularly reviewing to retarget resources toward those activities or combinations of activities that seem to be generating the most positive results.



3. Overall do the findings of the review concur with you own expectations or assessment of the project's effectiveness?

The findings are very helpful in providing evidence on the intended changes occurred due to programme implementation. The team felt that the findings of the effectiveness review helped in understanding effectiveness of the approaches and provided guidance for future programming. Based on these findings; program decided to add nutritional element among resilience and production as right to food agenda.

4. Did the review identify areas that were particularly strong in the project?

Women's inclusion and making this a women led initiative has come up as the strong area of the project. Adaptation of improved agriculture practices, enhanced ownership of livestock as key to women empowerment, and building of assets turned up as building resilience to future shocks and trends. Livestock has been identified as one of the key interventions in building women assets, income enhancement, a means to overcome shocks and empowerment.

5. Did the review identify areas that were particularly weak in the project?

Establishment of supply chain and linkages with markets for sales has come up as the week area.

6. Summary of review quality assessment

Assessment was extremely comprehensive it has not only addressed the core theme of resilience but also provided an over view of projects unintended results for further exploration. It has provided a clear analysis of the effectiveness of the programme approaches and provided basis for programme improvement.

7. Main Oxfam follow-up actions

Program will focus on following three areas based on learning from this report.
Improving relationships with government to deal with crisis;
Ensuring social cohesion in all programming to ensure sustainability;
Working on awareness on Climate change.

8. Any conclusions/recommendations Oxfam does not agree with or will not act upon

Over the passage of time program learned that social protection is an issue all across the country for small scale farmers and agri businesses. Whereas report identified those respondents had access to social protection systems, which needs some clarity, and evidence.



9. What learning from the review will you apply to relevant or new projects in the future? How can the regional centre/Oxford support these plans?

For new areas resilience will be one of the core theme of Livelihoods program. In this context country team will be seeking support in developing compatible projects in future for disaster prone areas. Moreover, considerations will be given to have integrated long term programming among humanitarian, resilience and livelihoods programmes.

10. Additional reflections

Effectiveness reviews is a good exercise, as it provides clarity on objectives and impact of project themes. For example this effectiveness review was focusing on resilience but through this we also learned about the effectiveness of Oxfam's approaches in building resilience for women, women empowerment, crop management and social protection.