

Livelihood Restoration, Protection and Sustainable Empowerment of Vulnerable Peasant Communities in Sindh Province



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



Fast Facts

Country: Pakistan

Duration: January 2013 to December 2015

Implementing UN Agencies: FAO; ILO; UNWOMEN

Other Implementing Partners: Local municipalities; Government institutions and civil society groups

Budget: \$4,698,544.00 (UNTFHS: \$2 million, co-funding: \$2.7 million)

Key Words: Disaster Risk Reduction; inclusive development; empowering vulnerable communities

BACKGROUND

Unprecedented and devastating floods hit Pakistan in 2010 and 2011 destroying infrastructure, homes, and agricultural lands affecting 20 million people, one-fifth of the country. The disaster-prone Sindh Province, home to 34 million people, was particularly hard hit with 90% of the rural population engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry as their primary occupation. The floods had a disastrous impact on the already tenuous food and economic security situation of those most vulnerable. As a result, a total of 352,000 food insecure *hari* (tenant farmer) families, of which 33,500 were female-headed households, were

severely affected. Ill-prepared, the impact of these disasters was further exacerbated by the existing rural poverty stemming from a deep-rooted land tenure system and inequality of access according to caste and tribe. Many tenant farmers accumulate debt, which they struggle to repay for years, effectively making them bonded labor. At the same time, women who often lack identity cards are invisible in their role as poorly compensated home-based workers. The combination of these factors resulted in the urgent need to rethink the country's growth strategy towards one that is more inclusive, resilient and sustainable.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of the programme was to restore and protect the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable peasants dependent on tenanted landholdings and made vulnerable by recurrent natural disasters through the following objectives: (i) improve the economic security of rural communities with improvements in agriculture and alternative income-generating activities; (ii) enhance the skills and knowledge of men and women farmers, landless people and

unemployed youth through technical training and increased awareness in disaster risk reduction and adaptations to climate change; and (iii) empower community organizations, including women's groups, to improve their management of natural resources (land, water, vegetation), strengthen their resilience to future shocks, and give voice to those most marginalized.

BENEFICIARIES

In total, the programme benefitted 11,800 rural families in 120 villages located in two districts of Sindh Province (Mirpur Khas and Dadu Districts). This translated into an estimated 86,000 direct

beneficiaries, 150 community-based organizations (CBOs) and mobilizers, and over 120 national and local Government officials and specialists.



NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) The programme introduced innovative agricultural practices which improved the food security of vulnerable peasants and enhanced their resilience to future calamities. Based on a system of multiple crop production, rehabilitated irrigation systems and home gardening, incomes of vulnerable men and women was substantially strengthened. Participating farmers were able to sell their produce and reduce their debts thus contributing to their economic empowerment. Moreover, preventive and cost-effective measures such as savings and insurance schemes and the use of better materials in construction improved community resilience to sudden economic downturns and natural disasters.

(ii) Furthermore, the programme enhanced the tenure of farmers through participatory land mapping and dialogue between landlords and tenants. As a result, over 2,000 tenure agreements were signed which created greater social cohesion and reduced the

potential for conflict between these groups.

(iii) In addition, the programme empowered vulnerable peasants and marginalized individuals by mobilizing them through networks of action. As a result, farmers benefited from increased leverage in determining the price of their produce, while local stakeholders took ownership over the implementation of the programme. These organizations also acted as the focal point for collaboration with Government counterparts, thus bringing authorities closer to those most vulnerable and rebuilt trust between them.

(iv) Women in particular benefitted from the programme by gaining national identity cards, which provided them access to basic services. Combined with improvements in their capacities to earn an income, women began to play a more active role in the management of their households and were able to increase their social status within their communities.

LESSONS LEARNED

The programme highlighted the importance of a targeted and multi-stakeholder approach where synergies between actions taken by the Government, UN agencies and civil society resulted in a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable growth strategy. Through its field office, the programme strengthened networks between communities and local authorities and delivered an integrated and comprehensive plan to a range of risks and vulnerabilities. Based on the active participation of community members, the programme ensured local ownership over the design and implementation of the programme. As a result, initial resistance to the programme's innovative objectives were lessened, the most striking of which was the increased awareness and acceptance of the rights of women by traditional members. In addition,

the programme addressed the structural causes of rural poverty in the Sindh Province. In particular, the empowerment of those furthest behind through social networks, combined with capacity-building measures, led to tangible improvements in the daily lives of those most vulnerable. This strategy moreover had a multiplier effect with initial beneficiaries training their peers and allowing for replication and sustainability of the programme. This programme is a notable example of how an inclusive multi-stakeholder process that ensures community-level interventions and leaves no one behind can result in sustainable development and greater resilience.