

Final Evaluation

(Final Version)

Country: Afghanistan

Project Title: **PEOPLE FOR ENVIRONMENT -
ENVIRONMENT FOR PEOPLE (PEEP)**
Upstream Water Catchment Protection and Forest
Regeneration in North East Afghanistan
(Kunduz River Basin Program)

Project Holder: Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e.V.
53173 Bad Godesberg, Germany

Principal Donor Agency: European Union, represented by the Delegation of the
European Commission in Kabul, Afghanistan

Project Number: Welthungerhilfe: **AFG 1068-05 / AS 1279**
EC: **EUROPEAID/120597/C/G/AF**
(FOOD/2005/101-820)

Project Duration: 15 May 2005 - 29 February 2009 (EC contract)
01 April 2005 - 29 February 2009 (including 2 extensions)

Project budget: 2'218'762 Euro (EC contribution: 2'000'000 Euro)

Evaluation

Commissioned by: Welthungerhilfe

Evaluation Period: 17 - 30 November 2008

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Hann. Münden (Germany), 05 February 2009

I. SUMMARY

1 Brief Description of the Project and Framework Conditions

The People for Environment - Environment for People (PEEP) project is one of three upland projects which form an integral part of the first phase of the EC-funded Kunduz River Basin Programme (KRBP). The overall objective is to “foster poverty alleviation through enhanced food security”. The specific objective is given as: “Sustainable management of natural resources is improved and rural development of the population is strengthened in the project region”. PEEP was initially implemented by a consortium of three NGO. Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e.V. (Welthungerhilfe) is the lead organisation. Child Fund Afghanistan (CFA) was tasked with agricultural activities and People in Need (PIN) was tasked with training and community mobilisation. At any one time 25 villages were targeted. Over time the village portfolio changed. For security reasons project activities were terminated in Aliabad districts (Kunduz province) and minimised in Old Baghlan district (Baghlan province) and attention was instead focussed on the districts of Khanabad (Kunduz province) and Chal (Thakar province). At any one time around 3'800 families were targeted - but again, over time the number and composition of households changed. The vast majority of beneficiaries are illiterate. Relative importance of livestock production and cropping varies from village to village and household to household. On average, about 60 % of income is derived from cropping and 40 % from livestock. From 30 - 60 % of production is required for subsistence, the balance is sold.

Afghanistan is a nation of about 29 million. Per capita income ranges from 150 - 180 US\$ per year. In 1996, out of 174 countries listed, Afghanistan occupied rank 169 of the human development index. 70 - 80 % of the population live below the poverty line. In a vicious cycle, narcotics production and trade, corruption and the absence of law and order are rotting the heart of the government and crippling the economy. Despite massive Western investment, Afghanistan is close to being a failed state.

There is general agreement that the security situation has steadily deteriorated in northern Afghanistan in the past years. Security concerns climaxed after two Welthungerhilfe staff were murdered in separate incidents in 2007. In the same year a bomb threat was directed at the Welthungerhilfe office in Kunduz. As the Kunduz region was perceived to be a regional hotspot for insurgency, the Welthungerhilfe office and guest house were moved to Taloqan in late 2007. On 23 January 2009, while this report was being finalised, two grenades struck the PEEP offices in a building shared with two other Welthungerhilfe projects.

2 Outcomes and Impacts

In some instances the methods and approaches applied were not adapted to local conditions. In some cases provision of inputs was poorly synchronised. Thus, for example, various plots were planted with pistachios before the irrigation water reservoir and the protective fence were constructed. Establishment of demonstration plots was only started recently. Not a single unit is completed. Physical interventions which are highly praised by beneficiaries include the introduction of apiculture (22 beneficiaries as of 30.04.08), distribution of improved breeds of poultry (1'000 chickens distributed as of 30.04.08), domestic cisterns (220 units constructed as of 22.08.2008) and various others. A major thrust was made to provide improved seed and perennial plants. As of 22.08.2008 deliveries included amongst

others: 71'000 pistachios in poly-bags and 38'428 fruit trees, 8'947 timber trees and 116 ha seeded with pistachio. M&E data indicates that survival rates for pistachios are generally low varying from 64-83 % for the poly-bag method and 26-60 % for direct seeding. Random data collected during the evaluations indicates that the survival rate may actually be lower. A major thrust has been erosion control of natural drainage structures (rivers, gullies). A substantial number of different structures (check-dams, gully-plugs, gabions walls etc.) have been erected. The locations appear well chosen and the technical quality of construction is unusually high by Afghan standards. Apart from the establishment of perennials, little has been done to alleviate the erosion risk on land. Contour trenches viewed in the course of the evaluation need to be refined technically. The project has devised a monitoring framework for all important activities. It may be surmised that eventually a beneficial impact will arise from interventions owned by individuals or placed on private land. The picture is less clear for activities projected onto communal land. Anti-erosion structures will primarily benefit distant communities. In the mid term, the project may be expected to contribute to the ability of farming communities in the project area to improve management of natural resources and production systems on a lasting basis. Activities such as apiculture and poultry production already add to disposable income. The project is now well established. In the past 2 years considerable emphasis was placed on sound conceptualisation of interventions and rapid implementation. An enormous effort has been made to ensure adequate quality of infrastructure deliveries.

3 Sustainability

Some support has been provided by national or sectoral policies and there is no financial contribution from national or regional budgets. There is strongly stated support at community, regional and national levels. Private sector support is not clear. No newly created dependencies on aid beyond project duration were identified. The project has made efforts to consult with local communities and decision making bodies. NRM committees initiated by the project are made up of people with little tradition of negotiated consent to solve complex technical issues. There is a general recognition in the project, that “social engineering” has to be intensified prior to implementation. Also there is a growing awareness that adoption of new techniques relies to a large extent on the visibility of comparative advantages. While the project has created individual ownership of outputs, there is likely to be little institutional or community ownership as such. The project experiences constraints with regard to imposing meaningful levels of community contributions. This effectively reduces community ownership of actions. Substantial efforts were made to train local people and to create community based committees. It is not yet clear whether local institutional structures (new and existing) will be able to contribute to the continuing flow of benefits. Project activities only partly conform to the perceived needs of beneficiaries. Erosion control measures in the natural drainage hold little reward for target communities, but rather benefit the irrigation schemes in the flood plans. Little attempt has been made to address gender issues. Apparently, local customs have been respected fully. There are generally good relations between the project beneficiaries and staff, although there are instances when expectations of individual beneficiaries are excessive and expressed in an unexpectedly assertive manner.

4 Relevance

The overall objective (OO), to “foster poverty alleviation through enhanced food security”, remains relevant as the natural resource base is severely depleted. The specific objective (SO) foresees that “beneficiaries slowly learn applying measures to manage their scarce

natural resources available". It remains relevant. A major SO, not adequately clarified in primary project documents, envisions a marked reduction of erosion to reduce siltation in the irrigated lowlands of the Kunduz river basin which constitute the main sectoral focus of the umbrella KRBP. Project planning and compilation of the grant application (= project proposal) apparently occurred under various constraints, without adequate access to relevant baseline data. Planning was excessively ambitious in both quantitative and temporal terms. The logical framework (= project planning matrix - PPM) was revised on various occasions. One of 4 results, with 3 activities, was revoked. The activities and anticipated outputs of the project remain valid and are consistent with the OO and attainment of the SO. At project level the intervention logic is sound. Over time three budget realignments became necessary. The project originally targeted villages in sub-catchments in 4 districts spread over 3 provinces. The excessive geographic area covered complicated implementation. Selection of villages was not systematically focussed on pre-defined sub-catchments. As a result villages appear randomly scattered, devoid of any discernable logic context.

5 Effectiveness

To maximise the score on which the EC bases the selection process for grant applications, the lead agency formed a consortium with 2 other NGOs. Various constraints during the evaluation prevented a thorough analysis of complications which characterised interactions within the consortium. Collaboration with (CFA) was discontinued in August 2006, following the recommendation of an external project progress review. The agreement of collaboration with PIN ended on 14 May 2008 and was not extended. Staffing inputs of Welthungerhilfe were provided with considerable delays. During the first 18 months the project was headed by 5 different project managers. Recruitment of adequately qualified and motivated national staff has been a challenge. Turn over of national staff was high. Institutional memory is minimal. The project dealt maturely with challenging socio-cultural attitudes of staff as well as suppliers of inputs and services. The excessive work load of the project manager was only partly defused by the temporary appointment of an international agronomy expert. The project has adapted well to the volatile socio-political, security and cultural framework conditions and reacts flexibly and efficiently to changing circumstances. Focus on gender issues has been virtually non-existent throughout project elaboration. There are indications that, in spite of prevailing socio-cultural conditions, a more assertive stance towards targeting of women could have been taken by all actors. The project is presently operating under the second of two zero-cost extensions, and will be closed on 28 February 2009.

6 Efficiency

Although now considered a pilot project by some actors, this is not apparent from early project documents. Many interventions evolved with the project. Throughout project duration the search for suitable interventions continued. Some activities, such as the promotion of propagation of trees through cuttings by PIN, clearly lacked intervention logic. The aforementioned activity, introduced by PIN, was stopped by the project, as farmers traditionally use the method and there was no reason to pay an incentive of 0,10 US\$ / cutting. The level of detail required for community consultation and site identification for intervention was underestimated. Lack of sufficient conceptualisation of interventions, compounded by inadequate project management, slowed implementation during the first 18 months of project evolution. During this period no visible physical deliveries were made. The project thus came under substantial pressure to commence with deliveries. Precautionary

measures to counter security risks, instituted by the lead agency, considerably complicated project elaboration. Due to security considerations, activities were suspended in one district and severely curtailed in another. To substitute for villages in no-go zones, new villages were added in relatively secure project areas. In spite of some reductions in geographical coverage, the area remains huge, reducing cost-ineffectiveness due to long travel distances, thin-spreading of activities and maintenance of a field office. Various studies and analytical exercises were conducted but apparently managed to contribute little towards a more focussed approach on implementation. Security issues have been dealt with carefully and considerately. The project is embedded well in the local, regional and national socio-political arena.

7 Annual Cross-Cutting Theme

The annual theme for 2007 / 2008 is “**Helping people help themselves**”. A number of activities have targeted individual households. These will empower families to improve their livelihood standard. Farmers who have received trees have been given the opportunity to increase their income and nutritional status once the trees reach a productive age. Many individuals have been trained. The knowledge gained can be channelled into activities and used for decisions to better the livelihood situation. Through the creation and support of NRM committees, the self help potential of community organisations has been mobilised. All project activities were aimed at men. An opportunity has been missed to target women and to assist them towards empowerment. Empowerment is - perhaps - the first and most important step toward enabling to take their fortunes into their hands.

8 Most Important Recommendations

Ongoing project (until project termination 28 February 2009)

1. Attempt to complete all physical deliveries until 31 December 2008.
2. Consider options to increase the survival rate of perennials planted
3. To gain practical experiences for future projects, a few small gullies, in loam areas, could be plugged using different approaches (gabions with mountain stones, with neatly packed river stones, sand bags filled with earth or earth enriched with cement).
4. Attempt to complete the demonstration plots so that successful new techniques can be shown to farmers. Ensure that ownership is sufficient to ensure proper maintenance.

Future project phase

5. Planning of follow-up phase should be based on sound resource mapping and detailed conceptualisation of interventions.
6. It is recommended to bridge the period between the present project and a possible second EC-funded phase with an interim project to ensure continuity.
7. Functional demonstration plots should be established to display new methods and to obtain reliable statistics on yield etc.
8. Consider a mix of activities with long- and short-term benefits to beneficiaries to ensure an immediate and steady flow of tangible benefits.
9. Include activities which specifically target women.
10. Consider clustering of target villages in sub-catchments within a concentrated region (eg. catchment, one province), as opposed to having the project areas scattered over a large region (various provinces).
11. Consider targeting villages clustered within a carefully selected sub-catchment to ensure visible benefit for KRBP program at large.

12. Consider means to improve number and efficiency of traditional water storage facilities.
13. Consider improvements to existing and establishment of new basic irrigation infrastructure and domestic water supplies where appropriate (ram pumps, increased use of pipes, etc.)
14. Continue implementation of sustainable anti-erosion measures at drainage level.
15. Increase efforts of anti-erosion control at field level.
16. Improve and maintain high quality of technical deliveries.
17. Refrain from direct support of the livestock sector.
18. Discontinue establishment of perennials (timber, fruit trees) on public lands unless protection of plants is ensured.
19. Continue dialogue with KRBP to explore means by which “rich” basin communities - who are primary beneficiaries of erosion control - can support “poor” upland communities.

To GAA:

20. Consider options to improve back-stopping by Welthungerhilfe regional and head offices.
21. Consider deployment of ruggedized equipment for harsh working environments.

To EC delegation:

22. Consider a review of the policy concerning the selection process of grant applications with regard to awarding extra points for project holders that enter into consortia with partners.
23. Consider commissioning an in-depth cross-sectional analysis of all water catchment projects completed to date with the primary objective of identifying suitable approaches and interventions for future projects.
24. Consider means to ensure that women are targeted by projects and supported effectively.
25. Consider options to use the influence of the EC and KRBP to initiate land titling.

9 General Conclusions

The project has shown that under challenging conditions it is exceedingly difficult to bring together different actors into a consortium. Specific frame-work conditions in Afghanistan warrant strengthening of project management capacity with additional management / supervisory support staff. If suitably qualified local staff is not available, then expatriate staff needs to be recruited. If understanding of the local situation and conceptualisation of interventions are insufficient, then the duration of the “entry phase” has to be extended to provide ample time for project inception. In the Afghanistan context, this may necessitate a period of 12-24 months. Farmers will make long term investments only on land for which they hold land titles. Upland farmers are keenly aware of the fact that they do not receive tangible benefits from erosion control structures installed in natural drainage systems. Siltation affects irrigation schemes in distant river basins. The beneficiaries of such measures are lowlanders.