



Project to Assist ERRA and its Partners to Restore Livelihoods in the Earthquake Affected Areas of Pakistan



Field Experience – Case Studies

Project Title

Vocational training and enterprise development

Project objectives

Providing employable skills to the women, enabling them to work and earn, is one way to make them self-reliant. Vocational skills training to help prepare women to work and earn a living.

Context

Namal union council has three villages – Namal, Nakhetar and Khori Kheer – most affected by the earthquake on the bank of Jhelum river in Abbottabad tehsil and district. The earthquake killed 65 and damaged some 2,000 houses.

Some men from these villages earn their livelihoods by working in the services sector others run small business enterprises in down country while women work from home. With limited opportunity in attaining higher education the girls are mostly engaged in developing small handicrafts and other material. In informal talks with the community, it was realized that women were facing problems commuting to work areas and another problem was a lack of training opportunities in basic vocational skills. To address these issues, trainings in bed quilting, bed linen, bridal dresses and gola work for the women were organized. In this process vocational training was seen as a way to reduce the pressure on the households' income. It was also seen as a way to bring the women together to jointly address some of the problems they were facing.

Population groups targeted

Cultural habits in the village limit the way women can be organized in formal groups. In addition the social impact of the earthquake on many households had been significant, which is why it was decided to start with a group of some 200 women whose experience could serve as a basis of knowledge and as a demonstration for their peers.

The project

Women from the Namal union council learned skills in producing bed sheets, floor cushions and tailoring ladies clothes. They also learned traditional embroidery and gola work.

Nagina Bibi from Nakhetar village learned bed quilting and stitching bed linen.

She said, "I could not continue my education after matriculation due to limited family income."

"The opportunity to learn stitching and quilting was a God send and I very quickly learned the skills." Now for the last year and a half, she is working with different communities as a master trainer and earning RS 10,000 to 15,000 per month. Despite coming from a conservative background, her family supports her and she earns a goodly amount enhancing the household income.

All trainings are carried out by skilled NGO staff, in the form of group training. There is a mix of economic and social objectives – on the one hand to transfer employable skills, and the other to expand the income-



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generating activities for the women of the area.

This case study is a part of a series of studies to document the experience gained implementing the *Livelihoods Rehabilitation Strategy* developed by the Earthquake Reconstruction and Reconstruction Authority (ERRA) of Pakistan as part of its response to the October 8, 2005 earthquake which hit the north of the country and killed over 78,000 people. The Strategy is implemented by ERRA, Government line-departments and Non-Governmental Organizations, with technical assistance provided through FAO using Sida funding.

Building capacities

The vocational trainings adds to the skills of the women directly involved in the activities was only one way of building their capacity. Indirectly, by engaging them in these kinds of activities, the women become part of a forum where they exchanged experience and knowledge. This was not only limited to the topic of stitching and embroidery, but quickly spread to include other issues they felt to be important. With improving household income one of the objectives of the activity, gradually the project staff assisted in creating linkages between the women entrepreneurs and the relevant markets.

While discussions among the women and their peers is a major factor in the dispersion of the approach, an important tool turned out the maintaining of simple records – actually a kind of in-out booklets – by the women. This recorded the inputs and time spent on stitching and sewing on the one hand and the products developed and sold on the other hand. During their discussion they could then easily make a cost-benefit analysis, which turned out to be a major convincing factor.

Vocational trainings can be a catalyst to introduce a community-based approach and for setting up small groups, especially women group. This is a critical factor in cultures where physical and social mobility of woman is limited. As such it can be used as an entry activity for enterprise development.

Challenges

- ✓ Need to maintain the women's interest and focus from start to completion of the training.
- ✓ Cultural setting which limits access to women by outsiders, sometimes even other women.
- ✓ Duplication of the activity to other people in the same villages as well as in other villages.
- ✓ Accessibility of women to the

Opportunities

- ✓ The savings made through selling the products increases the household income and makes it more self-reliant.
- ✓ The link between skills development and marketing techniques carries the process from the house stead to the markets.
- ✓ Women are involved in a productive activity without having to leave the environment



outside markets.
✓ Develop the right linkages for marketing the products.

of the house stead and through groups interact more frequently with their peers.
✓ An opportunity for women to become business entrepreneurs.

Considerations for replication



The vocational training aimed at the provision of skills for (self) employment – the economic objective and organize women in groups so as to become a catalyst for the introduction of other community-based activities – social objective - in particular when focussing on women in traditional cultures where physical and social mobility of women is limited and it is hard for women to interact with outsiders or leave the environment of their hamlets as in many part of rural Pakistan.

The best measure of the success of the intervention was the fact that neighbouring households started copying what the women's group was doing and asked the project for help. The training is predominantly practical, which is a good thing. However, the quality of what is produced is often rather low, and more attention and resources allocated to theoretical instruction, including upgrading of the skills of the trainers, could help to achieve a higher quality of products.

An expanded skills training programme is relevant and necessary. The group-based trainings should be supplemented by enterprise-base training in order to strengthen theoretical instruction, as well as offer upgrading courses to craftswomen in areas such as quality control and business skills. The vocational training activities is expected to provide women with skills suitable and conducive to the socioeconomic prosperity of the community.

This case study received input from [redacted] and Piet Vochten.

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