

# Imperatives for Effective Monitoring and Evaluation System of Community Based Rural Development Projects (A Case of Interim Impact Study)

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*An interim impact study is an integral part of any Project evaluation system, if conducted with appropriate technique could surface the real picture of implementation. However, in Balochistan the development projects are mostly evaluated in terms of physical indicators, which are not an appropriate methods. It does not adequately address the questions such as capacity building, transparency, people's perception, equity and access etc necessary for gauging sustainability of development projects. The present case study examines the same problems while reviewing the strategy of monitoring and evaluation of Pat Feeder Command Area Development Project with special relevance to community organizations.*

## 1. Introduction

On going impact study is an essential activity of project cycle. It not only gives an assessment whether the project is on the right tract but also provides basis for final impact study. There is a general consensus among development practitioners that appropriate and comprehensive evaluative framework can surface the real issues of implementation provided both quantitative and qualitative performance indicators are assessed on relevant and reliable information.

In practice, however, such types of study are not conducted with professional rigor nor are the perspectives of beneficiaries are incorporated. This is especially true in case of Balochistan Province where institutional capacity is relatively poor.

To understand the deficiencies in the existing monitoring and evaluation system, we have taken the case of pat-feeder command area development project, which is the largest on going project in Agriculture sector. The reasons for analyzing such types of problem by case

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study are threefold. First, case study is widely used in detecting the problems of monitoring and evaluation, which is also recommended by Yin (1984) Ahmed and Bamberger (1989). Second, case study is an inductive approach, the results of which can be generalized for other rural development programs. Third, case study is prescribed especially in those cases where the socio cultural and economic dynamics of community organizations are to be assessed. However, the present study is confined only to review M&E of project in case, and draw the lessons learned while applying it to mobilization of community organizations.

## 2. Methodology

The data used in this study are purely of secondary nature developed by management of Pat-Feeder Command Area Development Project. Main sources of data include (a) Baseline survey (1999) (b) PC-1 (c) Quarterly progress report (d) Books on monitoring and evaluation. The method of analysis is based on performance indicators regarding community organizations, which were developed in the workshop conducted by project on Benefit Monitoring & Evaluation (BME). The approach was participatory as all concerned component managers, Consultants, members of WDGS & ADGS were involved in the process of identifying the performance indicator. Thereafter, the physical indicators were analyzed against the targets fixed by ADGs & WDGs. Finally; a comprehensive evaluative strategy is suggested by assessing the effectiveness of community organizations.

## 3. Socio-Economic Characteristics of The Target Groups

Pat Feeder Command Area Project is located in Nasirabad district, which is the only canal irrigated area in the province and is famous for its Agricultural production representing 46% of the total cropped area. More than 63% of the total grains and about 25 % of the fodder also come from this district (PC-I, 95).

However, 70% of project population still lives in absolute poverty indicating that actual benefits of project still go a long way reaching the poorer of the poor. Besides the recent base line survey (1999), confirmed that more than 50% of the total farmers belonged to poor social status as measured by access to water and income. In the same way social indicators of the project area also reflect depressing scenario. Over all literacy ratio is very low. More than 66% of the respondents are illiterate as per baseline sample survey (99). The education status of females presents even more dismal picture, as only 0.8% are literate. Similarly joint family system is still dominating feature representing 95%. Moreover, the nature of population is heterogeneous, organized in different tribal structure and are living under the influence of feudalism. In addition, early marriages, high mortality rate, lack of family planning education and honor killing perpetuate the poor status of women.

## 4. Description of Monitoring and Evaluation System of the Project

In order to move towards an effective framework for monitoring & evaluation, we need first to describe the existing monitoring strategy of the project and then highlight the

major weaknesses, deficiencies and bottlenecks in the mechanism.

The present procedure adapted by the monitoring staff is that they visit field area on regular basis and collect information for monitoring & evaluation. They get information from the target groups (ADG, WDG) who are the main beneficiaries of the project. The data are normally collected on selected indicators by means of questionnaires. These impact indicators are developed in meetings and workshop in line with the objectives of project. Thereafter, the component managers review the progress and workout future plans. They submit their plans in monthly Coordination meeting headed by the (PMU), which is the permanent monitoring feature of the project. In this forum, the progress is reviewed in terms of quantitative targets and achievements. However, the evaluation of project is the responsibility of planning and development department, which reviews the project by conducting Baseline, interim and final impact studies.

### **5. Assessing Effectiveness or Monitoring & Evaluation Strategy in Community Development**

Community mobilization is one of the important objectives of Pat Feeder Command Area Development Project as its major thrust is to alleviate poverty through community participation. Prior to intervention, the majority of the farmers had no social participation in any formal and informal village level organizations. It was therefore, decided by project management to organize the communities into different groups like (ADGs); (WDGs); (WUA) in such a way as to improve their capacity and capability. In this regard, the project management used participatory approach as most of the targets about structuring and trainings of community organization were fixed at the request of ADGs and WDGs. Now the question arises to what extent, the project has achieved its targets about community development. This question has to be analyzed by two different approaches. First we will see the performance of the community development by applying the existing monitoring quantitative technique then we will study the issues involved in community organizations from the perspectives of equity, accessibility and sustainability.

As regards the mid-term assessment by the present monitoring approach, the available data (Table.1) tells the story of success. The figures show that a considerable progress is underway in social mobilization of people. A lot of social assets in the form of knowledge & skills have been developed, which in turn have increased the accessibility of farmers to agriculture, livestock and to social services. Besides the data also reveal that awareness among women has been increased as extensive campaign is being carried out. The implications of these results are promising and will be having positive impacts especially on gender development.

However, progress regarding Water User Association is not satisfactory as about fifty percent work is yet to be done. The poor performance in this regard, is attributed to unfair distribution of water. Anyhow the overall progresses in terms of figures is quite satisfactory.

Table 1. Performance Indicators of Community Development (Targets and Achievements)

S.No.	Item	Unit	Total Target	Achievements October 2000	Remaining
1	Formation of ADGs	ADG	164	96	68
2	Number o ADGs member	Member	4000	3177	823
3	Training	MM	45	30	15
4	Formation of WUAs	Nos	430	221	209
5	Formation of WDGs	WDG	250	198	52
6	Staff & Farmer Trainings	P/days	36944	26638	10306
7	Training	P/Days	4781	2353	2428
8	Number of WDGs member	Member		2238	
9	Training to communities of their livestock and farms	Person days	300	170	130
10	Social Structures to Ads and WDGs	Structure	600	353	247
11	Women Awareness Campaign	Person	200	104	96
12	TBA Training for ADGs members	Member	26	13	13

Note: (WUAs) Water users Associations, (ADGs) Agricultural Development Groups, (WDGs) Women Development Groups.

Source: Agriculture and Cooperatives Department, Pat Feeder Command Area Development Project, Agriculture Extension, Dera Murad Jamali, Unpublished data, October, 2000.

In fact, quantitative performance indicators are easier to be assessed and comparatively cheaper but this tool of assessment does not fully bring out the actual problems of community organizations therefore, the need arises to judge its efficiency from other dimensions as well. Here the question arises, what are the other aspects which were not included in the model. Obviously they are some considerations like sustainability equity, accessibility and efficiency which must have been incorporated for comprehensive on going evaluation.

While evaluating the effectiveness of community organizations with respect to reliability, equity and sustainability criteria, we have found the following deficiencies in the existing monitoring approach.

As regards reliability of information for the assessment study, indicators such as source of information can judge it and its validity, qualitative verses quantitative indicators. The present monitoring system emphasizes only on one source of information i.e. beneficiaries. The problem with this type of information is that it cannot be crosschecked. Therefore, the validity of information remains matter of doubt. Similarly poor communication is also found between project monitoring staff and community residents, which also create problems of

credibility. It has also been observed that the beneficiaries express themselves differently in formal meetings and do not speak out about their concerns. When they are approached individually, they openly express their apprehensions. So it can be easily inferred that the current way of collecting information, which is group-oriented is not credible.

The major thrust of present monitoring strategy is on quantitative indicators, which can assess physical input & output but not quality of services and the real change in the capacity building and gender development. Osborne and Gaebler (1992) have also criticized this approach. They argue that as long as performance is evaluated in terms of numbers, there will be tendency to ignore the real change in capacity building like amount of community participations, effectiveness of community networks etc.

Similarly, as mentioned earlier, the project is being evaluated by Planning and development of Balochistan. Two problems have been noticed in their assessment, first, the overall institutional capacity in terms of professional efficiency is poor, due to which quality of analysis for evaluative study is also sub-standard. Secondly, prejudices on the part of P&D evaluation staff may affect the veracity of study. The reports produced by the department just present the version of government and hardly reflect the perspectives of other stakeholders. Another potential problem regarding sustainability of community organizations may arise due to shortage of money. In fact, regular sufficient supply of money is cementing factor keeping them together. Since the project is going to be handed over to NGOs in near future, it will be a challenge to create financial resources both from the beneficiaries and the donors.

As far as assessment of community organization by equity criterion is concerned, the existing monitoring and evaluation framework is almost silent about the gender issues. Just organizing women into groups and then training them can not depict the true picture of real situation. The important questions like gender biased nesses and in-effectiveness of women groups have not been incorporated in the assessment model. Moreover, poverty specific indicators like, source of income and its distribution have also not been developed without such information the problems of marginalized groups cannot be identified. Besides to some extent, the accessibility of small farmers to Agricultural and Livestock benefits cannot be assessed by the existing monitoring indicators. Because they have not been defined in the assessment model.

Concerning sustainability criteria, it has been observed that majority of farmers are not satisfied with the effectiveness of the community organizations. They expressed their concerns that the big landlords and other influential farmers get more water than their shares. Thus disputes over the distribution of water have become a routine problem. According to baseline information 1999, more than 55% of the farmers were found dissatisfied with the present supply of water. They complained not only about the shortage of water but also about the timely availability of water.

It has also been observed that community groups are ineffective for social action due to tribal differences and infrequent meetings. This trend can be considered as potential threat for project sustainability because most of the work is of collective nature. Another threatening factor is poor involvement of small farmers in the community organizations. Through land

less tenant have been given due consideration while structuring community organizations, their involvement in the implementation process is still not satisfactory. In the long run, it may get worse as NGO is going to undertake the responsibility of project with poor skills and meager resources.

### **6. Need for a Broader Monitoring & Evaluation Framework**

As a matter of fact, community development is a complex process, involving interaction of political, social, psychological and economic factors. Therefore, it can be only assessed in a broader perspective. The present monitoring evaluation strategy is based on quantitative aspects of community development and does not touch upon the important aspects of capacity building like sense of ownership, commitment, satisfaction and intuitiveness on the part of beneficiaries. To assess the viability of community of organizations from these perspectives, we need to incorporate qualitative questions in the sample survey. No doubt, qualitative information is more difficult to collect and assess as it is subjective in nature and is exclusively concerned with behavioral factors. But this problem can be resolved by trained local evaluators and by following participant observation technique.<sup>1</sup>

As far as reliability of qualitative information is concerned, triangulation method can increase the credibility of both quantitative and qualitative information. Under this method different stakeholders are approached in such away as to verify the validity of requisite information.

Similarly, the proposed framework should be worked out within the principles of sustainability and equity. The factors affecting the sustainability of community organizations need to be incorporated. The questions about sustainability normally range from financial autonomy to sense of ownership and from level of awareness among beneficiaries about the objectives of project to their responses to different activities of project.

Concerning equity problem, there are two areas, which need to be considered. First question about income and income distribution must be asked and that information must be compared with benchmark data in order to judge the on-going situation. Similarly information about the level of participation on the part of marginalized groups such as tenants, land-less farmers have to be achieved. In the same way, we need to include more questions regarding gender development such as women's control over the economic resources and their access to social services etc. In this regard, a workable analytical framework is available for guidance (Overlalt and Law, 99).

Over and above, the project needs to be judged by third party preferably by local consultants as they are well acquainted with surroundings and culture. The ingredients of proposed assessment model for judging the efficiency of community organization may be summarized in the following table No-2

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<sup>1</sup> Participant observation evaluation is an observational technique, which is used by researchers and evaluators in order to study the behavioral pattern of community members (how they behave and interact with each other).

CRITERIA	INDICATORS	METHODS
Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than one source of information.</li> <li>• Effective communication network.</li> <li>• Both qualitative and quantities indicators.</li> <li>• Approaching groups and individuals separately.</li> </ul>	Triangulation
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viability of community organization</li> <li>• Autonomy satisfaction</li> <li>• Institutional capacity</li> </ul>	Beneficiary Participant Observation
Equity/ Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sources of income of marginalize group. (disadvantaged and poorest).</li> <li>• Women's access to economic and social resources and their level of participation.</li> <li>• Pattern of income distribution. (structure of ownership).</li> </ul>	Diagnostic Studies

## 7. Concluding Remarks

The main conclusion emerging from above discussion is that traditional monitoring approach for assessing the community based development project is no more useful as it does not address the important questions of reliability, sustainability and equity. Similarly, its emphasis on physical quantitative indicators cannot bring out the pitfalls of community participation and can not assess the real change going on in the perceptions and attitude of target groups. The present monitoring strategy is also deficient in collecting reliable information and therefore, gives misleading picture of performance. The implications of these conclusions suggest developing a comprehensive assessment framework comprising both quantitative and qualitative indicators.

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# Off-Seasonal Vegetables Production by Drip Irrigation System in Palpa District

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## Abstract

*Off-seasonal vegetable production plays a major role to improve living standard of local people as well as economic position of the country. In Palpa district, farmers have practiced off-seasonal vegetable production by drip irrigation system because of high water scarcity. They are practicing vegetable farming by drip method in a smaller size of land for consumption both for household level and marketing of surplus vegetables in urban areas for additional income. In the district, 860 household farmers of 31 VDCs and single Municipality have been practicing off-seasonal vegetable farming under 215 ropani of land by drip irrigation method in dry season. To reduce the cost of vegetables, it is needed to increase the cultivated area and Agrovet center in rural areas of Palpa district. Moreover, group marketing concept and road access is needed to solve marketing problem and alternative water resources should be taken for more off-seasonal vegetable production.*

## 1. Introduction

The term 'vegetable' is usually used to designate the tender edible shoots, leaves, fruits and roots of plants that are eaten whole or in part, raw or cooked, as a supplement to starchy foods and meats (William, 1991). Vegetable production is called olericulture. Olericulture covers the cultivation of all of the vegetables and also such crops as melons and rhubarb, which are customarily grown in vegetable gardens. Because most vegetables are cultivated outdoors, most vegetable growers work in field vegetable production. However, in some areas of the country vegetables are grown in greenhouses (Rice, 1980). Most vegetables are served with the entree or main dish of a meal but some are used for desert and for salads. The culinary herbs are usually included among the vegetables. All the plants are herbaceous (Work, 1997).

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