

Rural Livelihood Programs in Pakistan: Lessons from the past as guide to the future

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Introduction

Promotion of productive and sustainable livelihoods for the rural poor in developing countries in general and in South Asia in particular has undergone many iterations over the decades. As the concept note to this study states, “community based rural livelihoods programs using the self-help group platforms have been a popular development solution to diversify incomes and reduce vulnerabilities in the past 20 years” (World Bank, 2020). These community based models have occupied the landscape of rural livelihood interventions on the back of both market and state failures. Even the traditional model of cooperatives did not yield the desired transformation in rural areas, mainly because of the paternalistic nature of the state that led the initiative (Khan, 2009, p27-28).

In the Pakistani context, the model of community based rural livelihoods and poverty reduction was first developed by Akhtar Hameed Khan in the Comilla district of the erstwhile East Pakistan in the 1960s. Mr. Khan then replicated the model amongst the urban poor in the 1970s in Pakistan. It was in the early 1980s that his student Shoab Sultan Khan replicated the community based development model in the northern areas of the country with the financial help of the Aga Khan Network.

This study will assess some of the key facets of the rural livelihoods programs in Pakistan to gauge their impact on the rural poor beyond conventional poverty indicators. The dimensions chosen for this study are; community mobilization, women’s empowerment, sustainability and the political economy context in which programs operate. While there is some overlap across these four dimensions, the reason they were chosen are:

Community mobilization lies at the cornerstone of community based programs. Central to the model of such programs is the ability to forge collective action among the poor. This helps pooling of resources—both financial and human—to identify and execute mutually beneficial projects, and to ensure that benefits from the projects are owned by the poor. Once such collective action takes place, it has positive externalities for beneficiaries in terms of both accessing benefits that the state provides and to resist encroachment on the assets and livelihoods by predatory groups.

In a patriarchal society such as Pakistan, any livelihoods or poverty alleviation program will be incomplete without incorporating strategies for women’s empowerment that gradually and incrementally alter existing male-dominated norms. This process will take place essentially around three axes: economic, social and political empowerment.

Economic empowerment can be gauged from participation in the labor market, either as an employee or as an entrepreneur. If it is the latter, this can be tracked by creating access to markets where they can command higher returns for their produce. Social empowerment can be assessed mainly by the ability of women to access public spaces for commercial, cultural and recreational purposes. It will also entail finding out where their voice stands within the household and in the larger community they are part of. Political empowerment will be evaluated across three dimensions. First, through activism for accessing public goods and for their rights as women, for their children, their communities and as poor citizens of the state. Second, for accessing state provisions for social protection, health and educational services. Third and most important, to be

able to participate in the political process as voters, or seek nominated seats for women in local government as well as provincial and national assemblies.

It is obvious that outcomes sought through programmatic interventions, such as poverty alleviation and enhancing community capabilities, sustain beyond the project cycle. Sustainability will be assessed through three aspects. First, creation of sustainable livelihoods will require training in adequate and market compatible skills that can enable the beneficiaries to effectively participate in the labor market. Second, where livelihoods are created through asset transfers, program design and processes need to ensure that returns on those assets can not only cover the depreciation of those assets but are able to pull households permanently out of poverty. In this case, sustainability will require that collective action forged during the course of the program lasts beyond the duration of the project. This is necessary to create some form of a revolving community fund that can provide resources for small infrastructure creation or replenishment in the community but also provide contingency payments to beneficiaries. Third, sustainability can also be gauged through capability enhancement, not only in terms of fostering managerial and vocational skills but also building leadership capabilities to compete for political office. Likewise, if collective action through community mobilization is sustained it can lead to activism for economic, social and political rights for the community.

It goes without saying that all rural support programs work within a political context. It is therefore important to understand the political context through the entire cycle of conception, design, execution, monitoring and evaluation stages. We will assess the political economy context through three vantage points. The first is to gauge the compatibility of program design with local power structures. This is particularly important in the Pakistani context where a variety of power structures exist. The probability of success of programs will be very low where they do not take the particular local political dynamics into account. Also programs that do not have enough flexibility in their design will not be able to change course if local political dynamics alter through the course of the program. The second facet is to prevent programs from being captured by local power elites. Local elite capture can occur in a variety of ways. Notably, where locals provide land for program activities, they wield enough power to stall community mobilization—especially of women—or capture assets provided by the program. The third element is the relationship forged between the programs, support programs and donors with different tiers of government. Relationships with the national, provincial and local governments are necessary for purposes of financing, validation and facilitation of the programs. Effectiveness of programs can be severely compromised where effort is not made to forge such relationships or where governments perceive the programs to be encroaching on their domain.

Section 1 of this study provides a brief background of the rural support programs in the country. After setting the context, this section starts with the antecedents of the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP), which pioneered the community based RSP model in the country. It then provides a brief description of the National Rural Support Program (NRSP) and the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF).

Section 2 provides the methodology through which specific programs were chosen and a brief background of the programs. It will also describe the methods by which information for the programs was gleaned.

Section 3 is the main body of the paper and provides a description of the programs across the four themes, that is, community mobilization, women's empowerment, sustainability and the political economy context in which the programs operated.

1. Brief History of Support Organizations

1.1 Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP)

The AKRSP started operations in 1982 in the northern districts of Pakistan. The initiative was conceived by the Aga Khan Foundation. Rural development expert Shoaib Sultan Khan was engaged to execute the program based on the participatory development model. The success of the AKRSP has been described "as the mother of all rural support programs" (H. Khan, p94) and is the precursor of all RSPs in the country³.

The program has encompassed six districts in northern Pakistan – Baltistan, Ghanche, Gilgit, Ghizer and Astore in the Gilgit Baltistan region and Chitral in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. These are some of the most remotely located areas in Pakistan because of the mountainous terrain. In fact, at the time of AKRSP's inception, this region was perhaps the poorest in the country (Khan, 2009, p97). Over the years, the program has encompassed all union councils of the districts it has worked in. The organizational structure of the AKRSP has been based on community organizations (COs), village organizations (VOs) and women's organizations (WOs). These organizations have contributed in creating small infrastructure, developing the 'commons', received vocational training and have been provided small and large loans for enterprise development.

Within five years of AKSRP's establishment, the World Bank evaluated the programme and assessed that its role in poverty reduction and enhancing community capabilities has been positive. These evaluation was done over four rounds in subsequent years⁴. According to more than one of our key informants, these validations from the World Bank played a large part in the model gaining legitimacy among government and donor agencies as an effective poverty reduction instrument.

The success of the AKRSP model notwithstanding, the larger socio-economic and political context was favorable to AKRSP's initial achievement. First, this region had fairly equitable land distribution. The areas where AKRSP worked were former principalities ruled by dynastic rulers. By 1969, all these areas had merged with the Pakistan, and land owned by the rulers had reverted to the peasantry. Second, some districts of the area belonged to the Ismaili sect, whose spiritual head is the Aga Khan. In fact, the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) had been active in the region since the early 1950s, providing health and education services⁵. The fact that the program was named after the spiritual head and funded by the now familiar AKF could have been an important factor in facilitating collective action. The third factor which facilitated poverty reduction in the

³ In fact, according to Khan (2009, 94), 'The AKRSP model has been used, with support from the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), beyond Pakistan's borders in India, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Syria, Kenya and Mozambique.'

⁴ See World Bank (1987, 1990, 1995 and 2001).

⁵ Information provided by Mr. Khaleel Tetley during the Key Informant Interview.

region was the construction of the Karakoram Highway (KKH) by the government that was completed in 1978. This highway connected the remote northern areas with the more developed and economically prosperous plains of the country.

While the above enabling factors are important in poverty reduction in the region, this does not diminish the success of the AKRSP model. The fact that AKRSP coverage spans across all union councils of the region testifies to the fact that non-Ismaili Shia populations were also attracted to the program. Similarly, while KKH might have facilitated domestic commerce in the region and provided employment to locals in the plains, there is no evidence to suggest that it was solely responsible for poverty reduction in the region.

1.2 National Rural Support Programme (NRSP)

The NRSP started in 1991, based on a 500-million Pakistani rupee (PKR) grant provided by the government of Pakistan. By the early 1990s, the reputation of AKRSP as an effective initiative for poverty alleviation had been established. The then Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, requested Shoaib Sultan Khan to replicate the NRSP throughout the country and allocated PKR 1 billion for this purpose. By the time the first installment of PKR 500 million had been handed over to NRSP, the Nawaz Sharif government was no more in power, and the successor government refused to release the rest of the money⁶. The NRSP then invested the money already received and also established a credit line with a commercial bank to finance its operations. This is where the idea of microfinance germinated within the organization⁷.

According to the NRSP website, the aim of the organization is “to organize rural communities develop their capital base at the local level through savings and credit schemes, support human development endeavors, and link the communities with the government service delivery departments, donors, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector”⁸.

The NRSP works in 72 districts of Pakistan, including 6 in the urban areas. Its work consists of poverty alleviation through the community organizations based model for small loans and grants, financing for small infrastructure projects, enterprise development (especially for women), asset creation and contingency grants to local level organizations linked with the RSPs. The NRSP also contracts out its expertise to other RSPs for social mobilization. The NRSP also established a microfinance bank in 2011. The bank has 71 branches across the country.

1.3 Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund

The Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) was established in 1997, essentially as a conduit to channel donor money broadly for poverty alleviation and specifically to RSPs. It is also the vehicle through which the World Bank funds the RSPs in Pakistan⁹. PPAF has been described as a model of public-private partnership and as a “private sector delivery mechanism of the government of Pakistan”, particularly at the grassroots level for the most marginalized and poor (Hyat, p127).

⁶ This information was provided by Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan during the KII.

⁷ Mentioned by Ms. Shandana Khan during the KII.

⁸ Accessed from <https://nrsp.org.pk/about.html>

⁹ Other than the World Bank, PPAF's other multilateral and bi-lateral international partners are: IFAD, Agenzia Italiana, USDA, DFID, UNHCR and KFW. See <http://www.ppaf.org.pk/bilateral.html>

PPAF remains an independent, non-political and autonomous body (p127). It started with a three-tier governance structure including a general body, board of directors and a management team headed by the chief executive. The board of directors are carefully selected, well-reputed individuals while the general body mostly includes civil society members with a minority representation of government members (PPAF p12). PPAF has retained much of its original model in terms of operations and management, with separate units for various areas such as quality assurance, infrastructure development, institutional development, etc.¹⁰ (PPAF p13).

PPAF was established during a time of rising poverty and vulnerability in Pakistan, particularly in rural areas where services and resources were limited while natural disasters had made livelihoods more precarious (PPAF 3). At the time, very few NGOs were working at the grassroots level on poverty alleviation, participatory development and capacity building, especially with a focus on gender equality (PPAF p3). NGOs also struggled with sustainability as they relied on government grants or donor funds, which were substantial but “often sporadic and volatile” (PPAF p4). The Pakistani government struggled to resolve the issues of growing poverty and vulnerability amid the “supply-driven and grant oriented” environment, and decided to co-opt the private and civil society for service delivery (PPAF p5). Increasing globalization also led to a recognition and support of multi-stakeholder partnerships. The government of Pakistan together with the World Bank envisioned PPAF as a vehicle for poverty reduction and grassroots development that would allow implementation of “relevant, sustainable and scalable” development plans (PPAF p6).

Some of PPAF’s distinguishing features include its participatory model and focus on social mobilization, skills development and capital formation, which are demand driven and based on community preferences (PPAF p14). Another significant feature of PPAF is its interaction and collaboration with civil society organizations that assist the fund in implementing programs in target locations (such as the Livelihood Enhancement and Protection program discussed later in this report). These organizations are selected through a rigorous eligibility criteria and have demonstrable commitment to community driven development (CDD) (Hyat, p127, PPAF p14). PPAF has continually emphasized the sustainability of these organizations and has taken some steps for the continuation of developmental work over the years (Hyat, p127-128).

PPAF differs from other organizations that have received funding from the World Bank in three aspects: it works with civil society organizations and does not intervene directly; it has a significantly higher amount of allocated funding; and it has a more “holistic approach” evidenced by the addition of the physical infrastructure component to “the usual microcredit and capacity components” (PPAF p20). Additionally, it focuses on multi-sectoral programs and benefits to larger communities. PPAF has also made conscious efforts to focus on women in all its activities. These include representation of women in governing bodies, gender inclusiveness in documentation, prioritization of women in PPAF activities, and greater emphasis on gender disaggregated data (PPAF p29). For instance, PPAF requires community institutions to have 40 percent female membership¹¹. However, currently there are only two women on PPAF’s nine-member board of directors¹².

¹⁰ See also <https://www.pfaf.org.pk/>

¹¹ See <https://www.pfaf.org.pk/what-we-do.html>

¹² See <https://www.pfaf.org.pk/Board.html>

Through its partner organizations, PPAF operates in 130 districts in Pakistan. It claims to work through civil society organizations that “target the poorest and most marginalized regions of Pakistan.” It is involved in providing support for livelihoods, infrastructure, health and education facilities, energy resources and resilience against disasters. According to the CEO of PPAF, it has also developed a reserve fund, which has been used for rehabilitation and relief in times of disaster, such as the earthquake of 2005, the floods of 2010 and during Covid-19.

To date, the PPAF has spent over US\$ 2 billion for poverty alleviation in the country. It has also attained expertise in monitoring and evaluation, and has become a hub for research on poverty alleviation through the participatory development framework. PPAF currently has seven donor funded programs, several initiatives funded by itself and the corporate sector.

1.4 Rural Support Programs Network (RSPN)

The RSPN was established in 2000 as a network for RSPs that adopt the community driven development (CDD) approach. There are 9 members of the network all committed to CDD methodology¹³. Shoaib Sultan Khan, the current chairman of RSPN, is considered the doyen of the community driven approach to rural development in the country.

As a network organization, RSPN works with its members, all tiers of government, and with international and local donors. As part of its objectives, the network provides strategic support to its partner organizations and helps them with resource mobilization. RSPN also generates knowledge that feeds into its strategic support initiatives for member organizations. More importantly, it has been able to link up the organizations with international practitioners of CDD approach to acquaint them with best practices.

RSPN has been instrumental in promoting and helping its members to mainstream gender and women’s empowerment organizationally, and to incorporate these issues in the design and execution of their programs.

1.5 Provincial Rural Support Programs

As mentioned earlier, after NRSP was founded and the RSP model was accorded recognition by government and donors alike, provincial RSPs were set up. The first among them was established in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) as early as 1989 and the last one was started in Sindh in 2001. Performance, impact and outreach of the provincial RSPs has varied. Below we provide a brief description of each of the provincial RSPs.

1.5.1. Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP)

Evolved from the “Pak-German self-help project” in 1983, BRSP¹⁴ was established in 1991 as a non-profit organization by the government of Balochistan with support from the German Agency of Technical Cooperation. The organization is focused on improving the living conditions of

¹³ These include the Agha Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) and apart from Punjab, the other 3 provincial RSPs. See <http://www.rspn.org/index.php/about-us/our-members/>

¹⁴ See <https://www.brsp.org.pk/>

Balochistan's rural poor, and is working in areas of human and institutional development, livelihood and natural resource management, emergency response as well as social sector services. It has presence in more than 20 districts of Balochistan. PPAF is a partner and has funded projects such as Revitalizing Youth Enterprise (RYE) Program, and the Relief, Repatriation and Rehabilitation Project. Gender and development is one of their main sectors of focus.

Performance and activities of RSPs may differ in Balochistan given the province is one of Pakistan's least developed with poor performance on various development indicators. Mr. Qazi Azmat Isa (key informant) reiterated the need for additional attention towards Balochistan, expressing concern for the lack of change achieved in the province. Balochistan has the lowest literacy rate in Pakistan at 40 percent and also the lowest female literacy rate at 24 percent (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 12). The total literacy rate of the country stands at 60 percent while Pakistan's female literacy rate stands at 49 percent (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 12).

1.5.2. Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP)

SRSP¹⁵ was established in 1989 by members of government and civil society for reduction of poverty and creation of sustainable livelihoods in target areas. Given the success of AKRSP, which was working in one of the districts of KP (then called NWFP), the bureaucracy of the provincial government had become attuned to the rural development model of AKRSP and was agreeable to scale it up as its primary vehicle for poverty alleviation.

SRSP is the largest non-profit organization in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the newly merged tribal districts (formerly Federally Administered Tribal Areas-FATA), and has done humanitarian work in several disaster situations. It currently operates in 25 districts and all 13 tribal areas. It has partnered with Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) for projects such as Programme for Poverty Reduction and LACIP-II (works in the areas of disaster resilience, public infrastructure, and livelihood enhancement).

1.5.3 Punjab Rural Support Programme

PRSP¹⁶ was established in 1997 with the objective to develop rural areas and engage in socio-economic welfare. It is currently operating in 19 districts of Punjab through various programs in partnership with government and donors. It has five ongoing projects including Public School Support Programme and Solid Waste Management Project. It has only one listed project, Electrification of 16 villages in Sialkot District, which was "PPAF aided".

Among all RSPs, the Punjab program is the least active. Also it is not completely in tune with the community driven model that other RSPs have adopted. According to one of our key informants, 'the leadership of PRSP has been top down and is not willing to engage with rural communities and the poor.' Moreover, there is also the perception that the bureaucracy and political leadership

¹⁵ See <http://www1.srsp.org.pk/site/>

¹⁶ See <http://www.prsp.org.pk/Home/Home.aspx>

in Punjab is not convinced of the participatory model. Rather it considers provision of social services and infrastructure as more effective vehicles for poverty alleviation.

1.5.4. Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO)

SRSO¹⁷ was established in 2003 as a non-profit organization after receiving an initial endowment of PKR 500 million from the provincial government. It is funded by the Sindh government and other donors to work towards poverty reduction through community mobilization and capacity building. The organization is currently working in 15 districts of Sindh, claiming to cover 90 percent of Sindh's rural population. SRSO is currently carrying out a number of projects, including the PPAF partnered National Poverty Graduation Program (2019-2023), which is funded by the government of Pakistan and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Most key informants state that among all RSPs, they are happiest with the evolution of SRSO. The main reason for this is ownership demonstrated by the political leadership of the province, particularly for women's empowerment. SRSO has organized women's only community organizations (COs) and local support organizations (LSOs) in large numbers and that too in areas that are tribal and hence more patriarchal. According to a former CEO of SRSO, the organization transitioned to deploying the poverty score card as the basis for community mobilization in 2007, This helped them in not only targeting the poorest but also in creating a firewall against elite capture.

2. Methodology Adopted

This study has adopted a two pronged methodology. The first was to select rural support programs that were funded wholly or partially by the World Bank in order to assess their performance along the four criteria mentioned earlier. The second prong of the methodology was to conduct key informant interviews (KIIs) with prominent personalities in the rural support landscape in Pakistan. The purpose of the KIIs was to get information first hand in many cases—about the history and evolution of participatory rural support programs in the country as well as specific data on selected programs that were either missing from program documents or needed further elaboration.

2.1 Selection Process for Programs

The study team selected five rural support programmes across Pakistan for this review. The process of selection was carried out in consultation with the World Bank Staff. Although hundreds of rural support programs in Pakistan have been funded by the World Bank, the team decided in favour of selecting a few and analyzing them in-depth, mainly because of time and resource constraints.

¹⁷ See <https://www.srso.org.pk/>

The second criterion in the selection process was that the choice of programs to be assessed should capture the provincial and regional diversity of the country. Moreover, the team also wished to choose programs in regions that are vulnerable—either in terms of climate change, or because their terrain is not amenable to mainstream agriculture (such as desert or mountainous regions) or because they have been the epicentres of violence due to extremism (such as the erstwhile FATA region).

Based on the above criteria, the team members sought the list of programs supported by the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), the main channel of World Bank funding for rural support program. They then shortlisted programs that had sustained over time, had some focus on gender, and whose program documents and evaluations were available. They also wrote to some of the PPAF partners such as Rural Community Development Society (RCDS) and SRSO for documents to determine their eligibility for selection. Though the intention was to include two projects from each province, more than two were shortlisted for Punjab and KP. The list of projects was sent to the World Bank, which requested to remove two projects due to lack of available evaluations and focus on gender. Instead, WB added projects IECLP, FATA, RLCIP and KP-SADP to the list. Documents for each of the former three projects were acquired through the World Bank’s website and its Pakistan staff while the team attempted to collect information for BDN through KIIs. Similarly, no project was selected from Punjab. Instead, it was decided to use KIIs for providing an overall understanding of RSPs in Punjab. A brief background of the projects chosen is provided below.

2.1.1 Sindh Rural Support Organization – Livelihood Enhancement and Protection Project

The Livelihood Enhancement and Protection Project Phase I (LEP-I) is a poverty alleviation and income enhancement project funded by the World Bank (WB) through the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) and implemented by the Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO). Project beneficiaries were profiled by SRSO in terms of their socio-economic status at two levels. The Poverty Score Card (PSC) (developed by the World Bank) was used at the household level and focus group discussions (FGDs), interviews and a transect walk at the village level (SRSO – PCR 7).

Table 1: SRSO LEP-1 Project Summary

S.NO	Livelihood Enhancement and Protection Project - SRSO	
1	Donors	World Bank through PPAF
2	Implementing Partner	Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO)
3	Project Timeline	2011-2013
4	Funds Disbursed	PKR 44.06 million
5	Program Objective	“Develop capacity, opportunities, assets and productivity of community members to reduce their vulnerability to shocks; improve their livelihoods and strengthen their business operations” (SRSO-PCR 3)
6	Target Locations	3 Union councils of district Ghotki in the province of Sindh

7	Target Beneficiaries	Various poor people identified through the Poverty Score Card
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A graduation survey was carried out, presumably at the end of the project (dates unavailable), to assess the final impact of the interventions made under LEP-I. This included graduation of project beneficiaries to the next level within poverty bands (SRSO-GSR p4). The survey primarily focused on asset transfer, livestock management and sustainability of interventions (SRSO-GSR p4). The graduation survey report (GSR) noted that a total of 553 beneficiaries out of the planned 669 were covered (p5). The survey methodology involved a questionnaire, a 3-day orientation and training, and completion of assignments by team members (minimum 10 survey forms each day). Additional information was acquired through detailed open-ended discussions (individual and group) by team members with randomly selected beneficiaries (p6).

Table 2 outlines the target results and achievements for this project while Table 3 present gender-related outcomes.

Table 2: Target Interventions and Achievements for LEP-I, SRSO

Target Intervention	Achievement
Livelihood Investment Plan (LIP)	Target met (100 percent)
Training	Target met and exceeded (106 percent)
Wage Compensation (number of recipients)	Target met and exceeded (105 percent)
Asset Transfer to Beneficiaries	Target met and exceeded (103 percent)
Common Interest Groups (CIGs) formed	Target met (100 percent)
CIG saving	Target not met (0 percent)
Formation of Procurement Committees	N/A
Awareness Raising Sessions	Target not met (0 percent)
Identified-Assessed-Trained PWDs included	Target not met (0 percent)
Teachers Trained on Inclusive Education	Target not met (0 percent)
Linkages Developed	Target incomplete (21 percent)
Case Studies Submitted to PPAF	Target not met (0 percent)
% Households Involved in any New Economic Activity (not defined)	80 percent (no target specified)
Households Graduated from Previous Poverty Band after Asset Transfer	122 households (22.1 percent of total PSC surveyed households)

Source: Project Completion Report, Graduation Survey Report

Overall, the project met and exceeded targets, including some important targets regarding provision of training, and asset transfer. However, some targets were not met at all, such as targets for the common interest group (CIG) savings and awareness raising sessions.

SRSO's LEP-1 did not have any mechanisms for sustainability built into the project design. However, the project generated a number of positive externalities. On the gender front, the project had relatively greater emphasis on women's empowerment, with activities such as training, asset transfer, and CIGs targeted towards women.

Table 3: Gender Related Results for LEP-I, SRSO

Indicator	Target and Results
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Number of Women that Completed PSC	365 (3.5 percent)
% Female Beneficiaries Below the Poverty Line	100 percent (target not specified)
% Female Beneficiaries Below PSC Score of Ultra and Vulnerable poor	60 percent (target not specified)
Asset Recipients (female)	597 women (89 percent of total beneficiaries of the activity)
Women Receiving Livelihood and Vocational Training	2050 women (47.6 percent of total beneficiaries of the activity)

Source: SRSO-PCR

2.1.2 Indus Eco Region Community Livelihood Project

The Indus Eco Region Community Livelihood Project (IECLP) was conceived in 2015 and consisted of three components. Project Component 1 involved organization of the rural poor; including establishing four fisher groups; building capacity by setting up fisher sustainability schools (FFS); training of community members as master trainers; and establishing relevant facilities and plans for marine exports. Component 2 focused on the promotion of alternative livelihoods for women and youth through capacity building, which comprised activities such as provision of assets, technical assistance and sub-grants for indigo production. It also involved formation of local ‘recycling groups’ of youth and marginalized community members who collect waste. The component also entailed 15 percent community contributions in-kind and in cash that would leverage on the project’s investments (PID p4). Component 3 was focused on monitoring and evaluation as well as knowledge dissemination. It aimed to finance several learning activities that enable the upscaling of successful approaches, facilitate governance and project management and carry out reporting efforts and a baseline survey (PID p4).

Table 4: IECLP Project Summary

S.NO	Indus Eco Region Community Livelihood Project	
1	Donors	World Bank
2	Implementing Partner	World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan (WWFP)
3	Project Timeline	2016-2019
4	Funds Disbursed	Approximately US \$2.6 million
5	Project Development Objective	“to pilot alternative livelihood opportunities and improve capacity of households of fisher communities in four priority sites of the Indus Eco Region” (Leao 2020 2)
6	Target Locations	Keenjhar Lake, Manchar Lake, Chotiari and Nara Canal
7	Target Beneficiaries	The target beneficiaries were poor fisher folk and farmer communities organized in community based organizations (CBOs) in the selected sites

The project was also realigned in 2018, after a baseline survey conducted in 2017 revealed certain misalignments within the project design. Table 5 provides targets and results for IECLP and Table 6 presents some gender-related results. The project’s fourth indicator (increase in income) was

reported incorrectly (Leao 2020 p.9). Additionally, the only indicator for a key aspect of the project, alternative livelihood opportunities, is client days of training (p.26). Aside from these issues, the project was able to accomplish most of its targets.

Table 5: Target and Results for IECLP

Indicator	Target	Result
Direct project beneficiaries (number):	5500 HHs	5689 HHs (achieved and exceeded)
Number of targeted fisherfolk who have adopted improved management practices promoted by the project (includes agriculture farmers)	27000	31936 (achieved and exceeded)
Client days of training provided (number)	790	3228 (achieved and exceeded)
Increase (over inflation) in target beneficiaries' household incomes	15 percent	19-20 percent increase in harvest for fishers and 17 percent increase in crop yields for farmers.

Source: Leao 2020

IECLP had a limited focus on sustainability with certain activities (such as refresher courses) and intentions to upscale successful approaches targeting this key indicator. Additionally, the World Bank addressing sustainability issues of freshwater fisheries sector through program activities. However, the project did not have a consistent focus on sustainability in design and practice or any proper methods to measure this factor.

The project's gender focus is reflected in the alternative income generating activities, where women were one of the three focused groups. Additionally, the program aimed for 25 percent of its beneficiaries to be women. Despite the best objectives, the project's focus on women's empowerment was poor.

Table 6: Gender Related Results for IECLP

Indicator	Target and Results
Direct Project Beneficiaries (number), of which female (%)	Target 25 percent Result 17 percent (target not met)
Women empowered through social mobilization trainings	600

Source: Leao 2020

2.1.3 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Southern Area Development Project (KP-SADP)

KP-SADP comprised of three components. Component A focused on community development support, social mobilization training, and capacity building of farmers. Component B involved a community driven investment program that focused on building social and productive infrastructure, including technology in farming and asset building needs of ultra-poor and vulnerable groups (3). Component C focused on project implementation support with a focus on

introducing new and innovative approaches such as operations and management (O&M) for community-government partnerships.

Table 7: KP-SADP Project Summary

S.NO	Indus Eco Region Community Livelihood Project	
1	Donors	World Bank
2	Implementing Partner	Provincial Local Government and Rural Development Department (Ahmed, <i>ISR-13 1</i>).
3	Project Timeline	2013-2019
4	Funds Disbursed	Approximately US \$18 million
5	Project Development Objective	To strengthen the capacity of the poor to improve their livelihood options through access to social and productive infrastructure, using participatory approaches in the selected southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province”
6	Target Locations	Dera Ismail Khan (DIK), Tank and Lakki Marwat
7	Target Beneficiaries	Poor, specific criteria unknown

A final project completion and results report is not yet available for KP-SADP and the study team has used the implementation status and results (ISR) reports for this review. These reports have provided important insights into the project’s functioning during its life, including slow progress and perennial management issues. On the KP government’s request, clearance for additional financing for the project was signed in 2017 and the project closing date was extended to December 2018 (Alvi, *ISR-9 p2*). The project was to extend its outreach to 28 new union councils in the three selected districts.

The updated project targets and outcomes are presented in Table 8 while Table 9 provides gender disaggregated indicator, which will be discussed in the thematic areas. KP-SADP was able to achieve some of its key indicators but failed to meet targets for others.

Table 8: Target and Results for KP-SADP

Indicator	Target and Result
Project Beneficiaries	Target met and exceeded
Number of CBO/EIG members benefitting from productive and social infrastructure*	Target met and exceeded
Change in percent of population accessing productive infrastructure and services provided through this project	50 percent target, achieved 45 percent
Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Economic Interest Groups (EIGs) created or revitalized	1,390 (target exceeded);
Community Action Plans (CAPs) completed	465 implemented and 23 in progress (target unknown)
% of CAPs with arrangements for community engagement in post-project sustainability or O&M	60 percent target, 47.33 percent achieved

CBOs and EIGs formed that are using participatory processes for need identification and prioritization	100 percent
Infrastructure Schemes	367 initiated, 343 completed (target unknown)
Community members received training	2,082 (target exceeded)
Number of EIG members benefiting from livelihoods support	5000 target, 4489 achieved (not met fully)
Percent of grants disbursed timely to EIGs/CBOs out of the total approved CAP	70 percent target, 40 percent achieved (not met)

Source: Ahmed, ISR-13

KP-SADP's efforts towards sustainability include carrying out an environmental and social assessment where temporary or reversible negative externalities were reported. For women's empowerment, the project noted women as one of the vulnerable groups it considers in component B. Additionally, the project exceeded the target of total female beneficiaries and provided training to women (Table 9).

Table 9: Gender Disaggregated Indicator Results for KP-SADP

Indicator	Target and Result
Project Beneficiaries, Female (% of total)	30 percent target, 52 percent achieved
Community members receiving training, Female (% of total)	Target unknown, 37 percent achieved
Gender Disaggregated Intermediate Level Indicator Results for KP-SADP	
Number of community female members that received training through the project	781 (target exceeded)
Number of EIG female members benefiting from livelihoods support	1962 target, 1920 achieved
Number of CBO female members benefiting from social and productive infrastructure	11,104 (target exceeded)

Source: Ahmed, ISR-13

2.1.4 FATA Rural Livelihoods and Community Infrastructure Project (RLCIP)

FATA RLCIP, which was established for peace-building and socio-economic needs of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)-FATA region after the 2009 military operations, became operational in 2010. As a result of two major donors pulling out in 2015, the RLCIP underwent a restructuring with modification of component costs and outcome targets (ICRR p.10). In 2017, RLCIP received additional finance and was scaled up to cover all agencies of FATA and the six Frontier Regions (p. 10).

Table 10: FATA-RLCIP Project Summary

S.NO	FATA Rural Livelihoods and Community Infrastructure Project	
1	Donors	World Bank's Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) ¹⁸

¹⁸ The MDTF became operational in 2010 and was established for peace-building, socio-economic development, and

2	Implementing Partner	FATA Secretariat
3	Project Timeline	2012-2018
4	Funds Disbursed	Approximately US \$13 million
5	Project Development Objective	“To improve livelihoods and access to basic service infrastructure in selected agencies in FATA”
6	Target Locations	Bajaur, Khyber and South Waziristan before additional finance; All FATA agencies and six frontier regions after finance
7	Target Beneficiaries	N/A

The project consisted of 4 components. Component A focused on community development and social capital building, and involved social mobilization and capacity building of local communities. Component B focused on community infrastructure and services, including the rehabilitation and construction of infrastructure as well as operation and maintenance (O&M). Component C, which initially focused only on livestock and agriculture livelihood support, was expanded at the mid-term review to include “non-farm livelihoods development” activities. All indicators under the component were merged into one indicator that measured the number of community members provided with livelihoods support. Component D focused on strengthening of institutions besides monitoring and evaluation, and project management.¹⁹

FATA-RLCIP was one of the projects that introduced the sustainability mechanism of an O&M fund. However, finances for the fund were not established by project closure. The program reported some positive externalities, but these attempted to target women within activities. In effect, no concentrated effort towards women empowerment was evident. The target indicator for female beneficiaries was removed while some activities and plans were modified in order to make them more suitable for women. Table 11 provides results against FATA-RLCIP’s final PDO indicators.

Table 11: Final Indicators' Results for FATA-RLCIP

No.	PDO Indicators (final)	Before Restructuring/ AF	After Restructuring/ AF
PDOI One	Number of total beneficiaries	100 percent (target fully achieved)	68 percent (target not achieved)
PDOI Two	Number of community/ farmer groups established and/or revitalized through the project	100 percent (target fully achieved)	63 percent (target not achieved)
PDOI Three	Number of community/farmer groups mobilized through the project, using participatory planning and implementation for site and beneficiary selection	83 percent (target partially achieved)	63 percent (target not achieved)

rehabilitation after the military operations of 2009 in FATA and KP.

¹⁹ This component also included participatory planning; innovations in community-government partnerships; technical training; building linkages between the FATA Government, the project team and local communities; exposure to similar community driven development (CDD) models through exchange of local and international experience.

PDOI Four	Number of infrastructure schemes completed, and operations & maintenance transferred to local communities	85 percent (target partially achieved)	61 percent (target not achieved)
PDOI Five	Number of labor days of employment created	N/A	Target 4000 Achieved: 5000

A better performance before restructuring is evident from these results²⁰. Overall, only 50-60 percent of project targets were achieved, project efficiency was rated negligible, and the overall project outcome was rated unsatisfactory (*ICRR* p17, p19).

2.1.5 Balochistan Rural Support Programme: Livelihood Enhancement and Protection Project

The Livelihood Enhancement and Protection Project Phase I (LEP-I) is a poverty alleviation and income enhancement project. Major project deliverables included poverty score card (PSC) assessment, livelihood investment plans (LIPs) development, training for community capacity building, formation of community interest groups (CIGs), provision of assets to beneficiaries, and wage compensation for the ultra-poor.

Table 12: BRSP's LEP-I Project Summary

S.NO	Livelihood Enhancement and Protection Project - BRSP	
1	Donors	World Bank through Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund
2	Implementing Partner	Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP)
3	Project timeline	2011-2014
4	Funds disbursed	
5	Project Development Objective	“develop the capacity, enhance opportunities, provide assets and improve productivity of community members to reduce their vulnerability to shocks, improve their livelihoods initiatives and strengthen their business operations” (Khan 4)
6	Target locations	5 union councils (UCs) of districts Pishin and Kharan
7	Target Beneficiaries	Poor members in the community identified through PSC

Program literature comprised of a graduation survey (GS) report for each district. The methodology for Pishin’s GS involved analysis of pre- and post-status of PSC ranking with a qualitative survey questionnaire developed to conduct direct interviews with the beneficiaries and representatives in the target villages (BRSP 3). Groups of poor were identified through PSC ranking that placed the ultra-poor in the 0-11 band and the vulnerable poor in the 12-18 band (p9).

²⁰ The project was rife with problems after the restructuring and receipt of additional finance, with no activities implemented during this phase (Syed, ICR Review 8). Some contributing factors to the problems after restructuring were (i) allegations of corruption by project staff leading to persistent delays, (ii) a staff hiring ban issued by Pakistan’s Electoral Commission in lieu of the 2018 general elections, and (iii) the merger of KP province and FATA. Additionally, there was a court case at Peshawar High Court between the FATA secretariat and the RLCIP project staff in 2017 (*ICRR* 13). The project’s locations were also spread out geographically and there was a lot of uncertainty especially since the closing date was extended four times (*ICRR* 19). Some of these issues are discussed in the thematic areas.

The survey was based on community preference, which was noted as a limitation of the study since findings were based on perceptions of the community members. In Kharan, the study was conducted by taking a sample of 343 households (out of a target 1718 households) with data of 308 households tracked and matched with the baseline for comparison (Khan p4, p29)²¹. A computer based random sample was drawn (p5). In addition to PSC data, the study also included the use of a qualitative household level survey questionnaire that was developed after reviewing the Pishin study questionnaire and consulting with BRSP officials (p5).

Table 13 demonstrates that targets were accomplished for most indicators in both districts with Pishin exceeding more target requirements. Some of the project challenges that were reported include management difficulties due to the large number of project activities and participants (p36-37).

Table 13: Targets and Results for BRSP's LEP-I in Pishin and Kharan

Indicator	Pishin: Target and Result	Kharan: Target and Result
% of target households where PSC was completed	84 percent (target not fully met)	90 percent (target not met fully)
Percentage of beneficiaries engaged in PSC Ranking	99 percent (no target)	99 percent (no target)
Training provided to person	107 percent (target met and exceeded)	99 percent (target almost met)
Percentage of participants satisfied with training	99 percent (no target)	99 percent (no target)
Assets distributed to persons	100 percent (target met)	100 percent (target N/A)
Complete satisfaction with asset quality (% of total recipients)	42 percent	83 percent (target N/A)
CIG formed	113 percent (target met and exceeded)	N/A
CIG membership	81 percent (target not met)	67 percent (target N/A)
Linkages developed	3 percent (target not met)	N/A
LIP completed	109 percent (target met and exceeded)	N/A
Knowledge about BRSP (% of surveyed beneficiaries)	93 percent (no target)	100 percent (no target)
Full involvement in LIPs (% of surveyed beneficiaries)	99 percent (no target)	99 percent (no target)
Received proposed/relevant training (% of surveyed Beneficiaries)	99 percent (no target)	Practical utility of training: very good (54 percent) (no target)
Poverty graduation (to an improved poverty band)	92 percent of the previously ultra and vulnerable poor beneficiaries	54 percent of the households out of poverty while 95 transitory poor households required BRSP's continued support to avoid falling below the poverty line again (Khan 29).

²¹ Not all households of the sample were tracked due to absence of primary keys in PSC data provided by BRSP (Khan 29).

Source: BRSP and Khan

The LEP-I graduation surveys by BRSP inquired about program activities (after they ended), such as utilization of skills acquired in training and the current status of assets received under the project. Positive externalities generated through the program were also noted. The available information shows absence of concentrated effort towards sustainability in program activities and design. The program's efforts towards women's empowerment was also limited, with only 29 percent of the program's beneficiaries being women. While some activities were tailored to focus on women and qualitative results suggest positive outcomes, specific gender-related objectives and activities were not established. Table 14 presents available gender-related results.

Table 14: Gender Related Results for LEP-I, BRSP

S. No	Indicator	Pishin: Target and Result	Kharan: Target and Result
1	Beneficiaries Survey (gender disaggregated)	71 percent men 29 percent women	N/A
2	% female beneficiaries receiving access to education	37 percent	N/A
3	% female beneficiaries engaged in income generating activities (such as livestock management)	38 percent	N/A
4	Improvement in ownership of household assets (including livestock, electronic appliances, and others).	N/A	38 percent (majority) reported a lot of improvement
5	Family related decision making	N/A	64 percent (majority) reported a lot of improvement
6	Spending of cash	N/A	40 percent (majority) reported a lot of improvement
7	Confidence Level	N/A	39 percent (majority) reported a lot of improvement
8	Mobility outside home	N/A	50 percent (majority) reported substantial improvement.
9	% female surveyed who received training	N/A	100 percent
10	% female surveyed who were engaged in LIP development	N/A	100 percent
11	% female surveyed who were CIG members	N/A	65 percent

Source: BRSP and Khan

2.2 Key Informant Interviews

The team was able to conduct nine key informant interviews (KIIs) from a finalized list of twelve individuals. Interviews were conducted with the most prominent personalities in the RSP circle in the country. Other interviewees included informants with specific information on the programs that would complement the available knowledge acquired through the literature. The topics of

discussion were selected based on the four themes of this report as well as the literature review, which identified information gaps and relevant thematic questions.

3. Thematic Review of Programs

3.1 Community Mobilization

Community mobilization was central to program design across provinces with variation in the success of corresponding interventions. Based on its review of the literature and key informant interviews, the study team examined community mobilization in the selected RSPs based on these factors: interventions targeting social mobilization and community engagement, capacity building, and asset transfers and infrastructure schemes (as communal goods). The team also looked at the significance of local contexts and needs in community mobilization.

3.1.1 Social Mobilization and Community Engagement

The RSP projects reviewed by this study consistently emphasized social mobilization. The programs also mobilized beneficiaries into COs/groups or engaged them directly in their interventions. In SRSO's LEP-1, common interest groups (CIG) were formed in the target district by the program. Further, several individuals with similar livelihood aspirations and resources were organized and provided technical assistance, including basic infrastructure, market linkages and working capital for effective implementation of any planned activities (*SRSO – PCR p19*). According to program documents, CIGs engaged participants in a wide range of opportunities and developed their “existing livelihoods and assets” (p19). LEP-1's completion report by Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO) mentions that CIGs now operate as a business group divided into two categories based on the type of members: basic and honorary (p19). The target number of CIGs were formed under the project. The lessons learnt included in program literature noted that CIGs would need additional training for bringing “value addition to work” (p24). SRSO claimed that all CIGs have been facilitated in acquiring opportunities. The nature of these opportunities or their benefits to community members is unclear. Other details are also not available, such as whether CIGs launch businesses in partnership, or separately, or both. Similarly, very limited details are available on the mobilization of CBOs mentioned in the introduction of the program.

Indus Eco Region Community Livelihood Project (IECLP) faced its own set of issues with community mobilization. It mobilized members into 45 community based organizations (CBOs), but issues such as unregistered CBOs in Manchar site and poor record-keeping of CBOs in other sites diminished this accomplishment (*Leao 2020 p12*). Reasons are not provided for these issues. IECLP did establish 15 indigo farming pilots through CBOs in three sites, reviving “indigo cultivation and dye extraction after more than 30 years” (p12). It is unclear why this intervention was not carried out in the fourth site (Manchar). Farmers were also trained on indigo plantation and harvesting management (p35). The implementation completion results report (ICRR) noted that since the producers were finding it difficult to sell their dye at a better price, an indigo value chain assessment was being conducted by WWFP to address this issue. The assessment helped

establish linkages between indigo producers and the market. Indigo growers in target sites also established an Indigo Grower Association (IGA) to work together in this respect (p13). Such organizations and initiatives are an important demonstration of community mobilization undertaken within these programs, where several members with similar entrepreneurial or community interests are brought together for collective action and benefit. It is essential, nevertheless, to document experiences and processes of these activities in order to understand the extent and nature of mobilization that is achieved as well as the possible challenges that may arise.

IECLP's sub-component 2b also included 15 percent community contributions in-kind and in cash that would leverage on the project's investments (*ISD p4*). At project inception, target communities were already contacted and informed by WWFP of the 15 percent contribution sub-component. The appraisal documents noted that WWFP previously found that communities readily agreed to such a contribution and the participation created a sense of ownership among community members (p4). However, there was no information in the final reports that indicate this was the case for IECLP. Component 2 of IECLP entailed the establishment of four fisher groups at one water body in each district as part of organizing the local fisher community and promoting a rights-based approach (*ISD p2*). Furthermore, under this component the project aimed to directly export selected marine species. The final reports do not contain any information on this activity, so it is difficult to ascertain its course and impact.

The process of establishing fisher groups was part of the project's "bottom-up" approach, where fisherfolk organized themselves at the community level and selected their village representatives, who in turn could become a legal entity by federating into registered cluster groups with the government (*ISD p2*). Although not explicitly described in the literature, it can be ascertained that these registered cluster groups are the fishery groups, which were linked to area coordination committees (ACCs) for representation of their needs, especially with regards to facilities in the sector and "protection of water-bodies from pollution and over-or improper exploitation" (*ISD p2-3*). The extent of compliance with this process is unknown as activities and outcomes of these ACCs are not discussed in the final reports except to designate them as "networks of CBOs and NGOs" (*Leao 2020 p17*). Outcomes of the intended water-bodies' protection are also not provided in the literature. Nevertheless, the project was successful in establishing three fisher groups while a fourth agriculture group was set up at the Nara Canal site, all of which were at least registered as CBOs (p31). Although the function and impact of these groups are not directly discussed in the literature, the project's 38,000 beneficiaries were all from fisher groups and farmer communities (p9). 30 percent of these beneficiaries benefited from alternative livelihood interventions while 70 percent benefited from BMPs in agriculture and aquaculture (p9). Fisher groups also played a role in spreading knowledge acquired from project training which helped fisherfolk access markets and vendors (p10).

KP-SADP's component A aimed to mobilize communities into economic interest groups (EIGs) and "federate at *tehsil* level into clustered economic interest groups (CEIGs)" (Syed, *ISD p2*). Although we did not find details on the nature of these groups in the literature, a KP-SADP success story showed that they provide support to members for improving their livelihoods²². The

²² EIG "Wasti Farmer" member, Abdul Majeed Qureshi, used the irrigation channel provided by KP-SADP to increase

target for timely disbursement of grants to EIGs/CBOs was not met (Table 8). The process for establishing these groups was to be initiated before project approval and included preparing an operations manual, recruiting staff such as facilitators, and providing training to all staff members before implementation (p2). Trained facilitators were to guide EIGs and CEIGs to engage in social mobilization and initiate a participatory process for the development of community action plans (CAPs) that will provide the basis for project funding. CAPs had lists of infrastructure sub-projects apart from constraints and opportunities for advisory services to address. The plans had also worked out proposals on capacity building, identification of recipients of a “matching grant”, and a consensual mechanism for conflict management and resolution (p2). 465 CAPs were implemented with 23 in progress at the time of project closure (2019) (Ahmed, *ISR-13* p6). These plans show an attempt to engage target communities in the design of interventions. However, very limited details are available about the process of developing CAPs, including information on participation and consensus on items of required lists.

KP-SADP also trained 2,082 community members, exceeding its target of 1245 training (Ahmed, *ISR-13* p5). Details about the training and how they targeted social mobilization and development of CAPs is unknown. KP-SADP’s fifth implementation status and results (ISR) report also claimed that the program’s social mobilization had been playing a key role in strengthening ‘state-citizen trust’ (that the project had been consistently building); a third-party monitoring report also endorsed this progress (p2). Since these monitoring reports are not available to the public, it is difficult to assess this impact of social mobilization. Mr. Alvi (key informant) explained that training was carried out in this regard and there was some anecdotal evidence to suggest state-citizen trust was strengthened but the exact impact remains unclear. Other mobilization initiatives under KP-SADP included engaging youth and women through a youth internship program that took on board 45 youths including 14 women (Alvi, *ISR-9* p5, p2).

FATA RLCIP’s component A also focused on community development and social capital building. It involved social mobilization and capacity building of local communities, farmers and project community groups through training, peer learning and mentoring by more established organizations (*ICRR p13, ISD p1*). The component also involved “consultations with local communities, village mapping with agriculture and livestock needs, beneficiary selection, and implementation of infrastructure and livelihoods through farmer and community groups” (*ICRR p13*). Participation of local communities was also to be facilitated by using local structures such as peace committees and *Jirgas* (council of elders); indigenous organizations (not defined) were to be identified as social mobilization partners (p13). Significant information is missing about the functioning and processes of these activities. The results of the social mobilization indicators, that is, project development objective indicator (PDOIs) two and three in Table 11, show that targets were achieved or almost achieved (80-100 percent) before the additional financing (AF) but not achieved (around 60 percent) after the AF (p18-19). The final report cites an analysis, conducted by the MDTP annual review in 2014, which estimated the revitalization of COs to create benefits of \$40 per person annually and the ICRR asserts that it likely “assumed sustainability of the activities” (p51).

production of the Singher Lemon he grew, allowing him to export excess produce and increase income (*Dera Ismail Khan – Success Stories*).

Key informants described social mobilization and community engagement as one of the primary elements of the RSP approach, achieved mainly through the three-tier model of COs, VOs and local support organizations (LSOs). Although our examined literature discusses this process and other activities that engage community members and generate subsequent positive benefits, it also demonstrates the struggle of RSPs to properly document the method of mobilization and the assessment of its impacts.

3.1.2 Capacity Building

Most RSP projects have built capacity of community members by providing training in technical and vocational skills training. For SRSO's LEP-1, training was provided in livestock management, including instruction on latest techniques and disease prevention (*SRSO-PCR* p10). Vocational training was given to households below the poverty line (identified through PSC score of between 0–23) (p10). The type of training needed in target communities was based on market demand for employable technical trades. The demand was assessed by SRSO's team through semi-structured interviews while individual participants' seriousness about the training was judged through one-on-one interviews (p11). The program also established a vocational training center (VTC) along with inking collaborations with partner organizations and corporate training institutions (*SRSO-PCR* p22). Vocational training opportunities were limited to members of community organizations' (COs) or their relatives (blood relation) who were not more than 35 years old (p11). Mr. Sono Khangharani (key informant), who formerly worked with SRSO and was part of the LEP-1 project, explained that the age limit was imposed because young people were likely to be more productive and had greater chances of employability. Similarly, the condition of nominated blood relatives was added so that CBO members will propose their younger family members for training. Mr. Khangharani claimed that a lot of thought had gone into this process to help SRSO target those people that were more likely to utilize their skills and work after the training was completed. He credited this conditionality for the success of the training component. The training target was met and exceeded by the program (106 percent); the highest participants were in agriculture and livestock training (p11). The major outcomes achieved through this intervention were reportedly a better business environment and trainees linked to the market. But a proper evaluation to assess the impact of training would be needed to ascribe credibility to SRSO's claims of major achievements and also pave way for scaling this intervention.

The LEP-1 program implemented by BRSP also had a strong focus on capacity building, particularly through training and establishment of common interest groups (CIGs). Training targets were met and exceeded in Pishin while almost completed in Kharan (99 percent) (BRSP p5, Khan p8). For Pishin, most of the respondents found the training good and effective (BRSP p16-17). 84 percent of the respondents were utilizing their acquired skills after getting trained, while 16 percent were not (p16). No explanations are provided for the latter. On the other hand, in the case of Kharan, the market was saturated with trained and skilled professionals due to dearth of entrepreneurship opportunities (p36-37). The implications of such challenges or possible remedial measures taken by the program are not discussed. Apart from training, the Kharan study found that community participation in the implementation of the project helped build community capacity and project ownership (Khan p7). CIGs were utilized as a common institution for BRSP-supported entrepreneurs to exchange ideas and support one another (p21). Targets for the number

of CIGs to be established were not available and membership was low in Kharan (61 percent) in comparison with Pishin (81 percent). Fewer members can be attributed to the irregularity of CIG meetings with only 4 percent men confirming attendance in regular meetings and lower participation of women in CIGs (p22).

In IECLP, the first sub-component of Project Component 1 emphasized capacity building through the medium of fisher sustainability schools (FSS), training of community members as master trainers, and collaboration with local mobilisers (*ISD p2*). Master trainers were to further train fisherfolk groups who then passed the learning onto community members. Master trainers were to also facilitate the implementation of better management practices (BMPs) through FSS. These BMPs were for managing fish species, data recording and other sector requirements (p2). The project was successful in meeting its community training targets. It successfully trained 20 electricians and mobile technicians, out of which 80 percent developed their own microenterprises (*Leao 2020, p14*). BRSP's LEP-1 program also developed livelihood investment plans (LIPs). In Pishin, the target was exceeded (109 percent) and resulted in 2814 LIPs (BRSP p5). Almost all community members were engaged in the development of LIPs in both the districts (BRSP p12, Khan p12). LIPs were also used to inquire about asset preferences of beneficiaries, and these were incorporated in the asset transfer activity accordingly (BRSP p14).

FATA RLCIP attempted to improve capacity of target communities through its Component C that focused on agriculture and livestock-based livelihood opportunities (*ICRR p9*). This included inputs provided to farmers to increase production as along with training delivered through “various channels, including farmer field schools (FFS)” (p9). The nature of these methodologies or the process for setting up and utilizing FFS is unclear. The project supported agriculture-based livelihoods by financing the distribution of agriculture packages and providing relevant infrastructure under component B (p9). It is unclear whether the project also facilitated construction of infrastructure or its role was limited to financing. Livestock-based livelihood investments included backyard poultry as well as dairy development, vaccinations and de-worming, mobile veterinary services for the communities, and more (p9).

Although largely successful in providing training to improve capacity, the RSP model needs to invest more efforts towards other measures such as LIPs and CIGs. The literature points out challenges in terms of participation and active utilization of these plans and groups. The reasons for under-utilization could be found by going through the RSPN's institutional maturity index (IMI) analysis report, which assesses strengths and weaknesses of community institutions (CIs) with the aim to identify capacity gaps and subsequently provide required support (Maheen and Khan). The index is also intended as a self-assessment tool for the CIs. The report observes consistent problems in maintaining records, monthly progress reports, and book-keeping for the CIs. Where records were maintained, the quality was very poor as information on activities was insufficient and/or unintelligible. Similar issues with community groups can make it difficult to resolve the issues of irregular or unhelpful meetings and ineffective execution of plans. RSPs and project implementing partners can improve capacity building efforts by addressing these issues and evaluating impacts thereafter.

3.1.3 Asset Transfer and Investments in Infrastructure

Communities were also mobilized through the program's asset transfer activity and infrastructure schemes. Mobilization in this regard happened through demands made by the community for their asset needs, or through the transfer of communal use assets/investment in public goods. SRSO transferred those assets that were demanded by the community through a resolution made by a CO (*SRSO-PCR* p14). Later, a procurement committee was formed that identified vendors and took three quotations for the desired assets before transferring it to the beneficiaries (p14). In case of livestock, animals were procured locally with the help of CBOs (although the process of CBOs' assistance is not provided in the literature). The most common asset transferred was livestock followed by Karyana Shop (p15). Asset transfer targets were met and exceeded (103 percent). Program documents claim that this activity changed the socio-economic status, improved per capital incomes after initiation of small businesses, and enabled communities to fight against extreme poverty.

Asset provision was also one of the major activities for BRSP's LEP-1 program. Targets for asset distribution were met in both districts. In Pishin, the majority of beneficiaries chose livestock as their preferred sector for livelihood improvement (BRSP p14). 2 percent of the beneficiaries reported about not receiving their proposed asset. This was mainly because the proposed asset was out of approach or budget (for example, cows, tractors, heavy machinery) (p18). Contingency plans were not found for such events. Additionally, 3 percent of the beneficiaries changed/replaced their asset; (most of them did that due to their inability to meet asset expenses) (p20). Other reasons included weak animals that could not survive in the future and inappropriate/unproductive assets. In most cases, the changes involved switching to a more productive and cost-effective option (such as getting a local cattle breed, poultry farming, and others) (p20-21). 90 percent of the beneficiaries said this change was beneficial for them (p22). In Kharan, assets transferred to beneficiaries related to agriculture, livestock & enterprise. In addition to satisfaction, 98 percent of beneficiaries agreed that their assets had increased since provision by BRSP (p8). The average asset value increase per household was equal to PKR 27,314 (p8). Moreover, an average increase of PKR 2489 was noted in household's monthly income. This was based on the respondent's estimates of a raise or loss in monthly household income due to project interventions. Without a robust measure that accounts for other factors influencing income, the utility of these results is limited. Finally, the highest rise in income was noted from non-livestock assets (carts, shops, sewing machines). Livestock reportedly led to the lowest rise in income; a possible reason could be that livestock production is not usually sold monthly by farmers (p25).

Component B of KP-SADP focused on investments in infrastructure, distinguishing between public and private infrastructure based on its social or productive nature (Syed, *ISD* 3). Social infrastructure mostly included public goods identified in the CAPs such as schools, and sanitation. On the other hand, productive infrastructure consisted of small-scale physical and socio-economic infrastructure, income-earning assets, and extension service-type sub-projects revolving around livelihood activities (p3). Approximately 90 percent of the target EIG members benefited from livelihoods support, although the nature and extent of benefit is unknown (Ahmed, *ISR-13* p6). 367 infrastructure schemes were initiated, of which 343 were completed (p2). Details on the impact of these schemes or nature of their benefit is mostly unknown. However, anecdotal evidence

provides some description of infrastructure activities. To improve livelihoods in target communities, KP-SADP built irrigation channels, street pavements and access roads. It also provided support for initiating kitchen gardening (*Long Janobi – Success Stories, Zeenat – Success Stories, Shabeen - Success Stories*). The district implementation unit in Lakki Marwat also completed solar powered drinking water supply schemes in remote villages that reported success in operations (*Pechan – Success Stories*).

Similar to other programs, FATA RLCIP's component B also concentrated on community infrastructure and services, including the rehabilitation of existing infrastructure, the construction of new infrastructure, and operation and maintenance (O&M) (*ICRR p8*). The focused areas included water and sanitation, agriculture and livestock. Component priorities were to be set through consultation with community members (p8). The implementation strategy was two-fold. First, infrastructure was provided as quick-win schemes identified through consultations with the community and facilitated by the local *jirga*. Second, infrastructure was provided as long-term “development schemes” that supported agriculture and livestock development. These initiatives were implemented and maintained by farmer interest groups or community groups identified through the project's social mobilization activities (p9). O&M committees did not fulfil their maintenance role since O&M funds were not established and committees were not consolidated before project closure (p15). Presumably, in what can be seen as a sign of institutional weakness, the intended support for these committees from relevant departments in the FATA secretariat failed to materialize (p15). Quick-win schemes, such as the distribution of seeds and fertilizers, were reported successful: farmers mentioned (in interviews) a double increment in yield as compared with the previous harvest (p21). These initiatives were considered important within an FCV context and for building trust and links between state and society. Accordingly, 3160 households benefited from quick-win schemes (against a final, after AF, target of 5014 households). Another result was related to irrigation canals, which were reported to have reduced water loss due to seepage by 30 percent; reduced time for irrigating fields by 40 percent; and increased yields by 20 percent (p16). Benefits reported from water and sanitation schemes included a 25 percent decrease in incidence of disease among local inhabitants (*ICRR p15*). As part of on-farm activities (livelihood sub-projects), items such as urea fertilizer, tree saplings, animal deworming kits, poultry packages and more were distributed through farmer/economic interest groups (p16).

FATA RLCIP's implementation completion review (ICR) noted that beneficiaries were not sufficiently trained for managing poultry, and bird vaccinations were delayed (p7). Program documents do not explain the failure to conduct these trainings or delays in vaccination. Furthermore, as an off-farm quick-win scheme, sewing machines were also provided to beneficiaries. This combined with local level tailoring, reportedly increased household incomes by 33 percent and improved savings by 40 percent (p16). The machines were, however, being used for personal use rather than income generation; beneficiaries also complained about their quality and lack of maintenance training. Ultimately, the scheme did not prove to be a long-term livelihood opportunity (p16). Some of the results are accorded to third-party monitoring and validation reports (TPMVs) but their reports and methods are unavailable. PDOI four, the indicator for infrastructure schemes (Table 11) shows that target achievements were better (85 percent) before the AF in comparison with those after the AF (61 percent) (p18-19).

3.1.4 Local Context and Needs

An important feature of community driven development (CDD) projects is the importance of local context and needs. An impact evaluation study of the Tamil Nadu Empowerment and Poverty Alleviation (*Pudhu Vaazhvu*) project discusses the diverse nature of CDD projects given the different contexts they are implemented in (Khanna et al 7). For instance, the *Pudhu Vaazhvu* project's backwardness score for select blocks from chosen districts was not strictly followed during actual identification in some districts. The reason being that it sometimes excluded truly disadvantaged blocks that were identified as backward using other measures including poor infrastructure and poor public awareness (p13). This demonstrates the variation in program strategies according to ground realities, and the importance of local context. This relevance is demonstrated in IECLP's participatory activities, which entailed carrying out a situational analysis during the project's inception stage to "assess the needs, capacity and context of project beneficiaries" (Leao 2020 p18). Although the analysis was carried out as planned, demand for alternative livelihood activities was misunderstood (p18). This is evident in the case of 24 bakery cum general stores that were established as part of the activities. Of these, only 12 stores were successful while the remaining viability depended on the availability of electricity, affordable generator fuel and demand for bakery products (p14).

A similar inappropriate demand assessment is evident with the IECLP's Nara Canal site, where the project had initially adopted the same approach as other sites in the assumption that fisheries related activities would be relevant in each target location. However, in 2017 (a year into project implementation) a baseline survey revealed a misalignment in project design as the Nara canal site was found "primarily agrarian and dependent on agriculture with limited scope for fishing activities" (Leao 2020, p6). This led to realignment of the project design, three years after the original appraisal in 2015, with key activities geared more towards agriculture in the Nara canal site (p6). The inclusion of agriculture farmers in the second PDO indicator is also likely a result of this realignment (p9). Even though minimal changes were undertaken, the timing of the realignment only a year before project closure led to 'tail-loading' of most activities—a factor that impacted the overall outcomes (p16). Further details are unavailable, but this is an important learning lesson for IECLP and future projects that requires greater investigation (p18).

In FATA RLCIP, around 700 backyard poultry packages were distributed but a third-party assessment found that most of the poultry died because of inability to adjust to the harsh local conditions: this outcome could be avoided with a proper understanding of local circumstances (ICRR p16). Similarly, in BRSP's LEP-1 program, only 42 percent of the beneficiaries reported complete satisfaction with their asset; 40 percent reported average satisfaction; and 18 percent reported not being satisfied with their received asset (BRSP p19). Weather conditions were cited as a source of dissatisfaction since it makes livestock management difficult (p19). SRSO faced the same issues with livestock management due to hot and dry weather as well as the unavailability of green fodder (*SRSO-GSR* p12). After the death of some of the animals received, beneficiaries would sometimes sell the remaining animals in response to accumulating consumption demands, which proved to be another challenge for SRSO's asset transfer activity (p15). Also, 60 percent of

the households receiving assets could not manage the business related to their asset (p9). In most such cases, the business suffered because extreme poverty forced community members to purchase commodities on a short-term loan basis, which in turn impacted the sales and cash flow of *Karyana* (food and other necessities) shops. In other instances, “gap in identification of trade or type” was noted (p9). Further details on this gap or methods to overcome these issues are not provided. Mr. Khangharani (key informant) confirmed facing this issue, particularly with the grocery-related assets. A better assessment of local needs as along with efficient community participation and management of program activities could help tackle these issues.

Similarly, FATA RLCIP’s sectoral and institutional assessment was inadequate. For instance, the creation of additional target “number of labor days” was a recognition of the limited potential of agriculture as a main source of income in FATA. But this recognition came after restructuring (2015-17) and not at appraisal (2012) (*ICRR* p11,p38). The project’s low efficiency was also attributed to little understanding of the local context and market opportunities that led to investment in irrelevant livelihoods (*ICRR* p19). Improved knowledge of local circumstances can enable project teams to orient activities and plan for contingencies—and avoid such issues.

Community mobilization remains one of the most significant themes of RSPs. Most of the key informants (for the study) spoke about community willingness and support of RSPs as key to community mobilization. While the study team found examples of both factors in the program literature, the nature and extent of mobilization, as well as its impacts, were largely uncertain and confusing in some program components while they were not mentioned in others. The program literature provides several activities relating to community mobilization but limited details on the processes and functioning of these interventions—and little appraisal of their outcomes. Importantly, community organizations under RSPs need to be evaluated to investigate issues of bias and inclusivity both of which would be important markers to further explain the extent of mobilization. Some KIIs have pointed out that these issues exist but their extent differs across programs, depending on local context and the political economy. Overall, program managers were aware of the importance of community mobilization in design but struggled with implementation and evaluation of related interventions.

3.2 Women’s Empowerment

In this section, the study examines each of the programs (covered) in terms of their design, activities and outcomes on women’s empowerment. As mentioned in the introduction, this assessment will be along the social, economic and political dimensions of empowerment. Most KIIs cited Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO) to highlight an RSP’s focus on gender and success in women empowerment. Mr. Khangharani described the provincial government of Sindh as supportive of women’s empowerment and termed the environment within the province as more socially liberal in relative terms. Concurring with him, Ms. Shandana Khan (key informant) claimed that Sindh has a greater commitment towards grassroots social mobilization of women with the biggest grassroots program for women today. She also asserted that Sindh government gives public funds to SRSO, something no other province is doing currently. Mr. Khangharani explained that

a possible challenge to women empowerment in Sindh was resistance from the program staff and not communities, citing the example of 30 engineers who quit SRSO because the dialogue and consultation for their work was with women—something they shied away from doing.

On the other hand, RSPs in Balochistan have a long way to go towards empowering women. Mr. Qazi Azmat Isa (key informant) elaborated that Balochistan fared poorly on gender-related indicators, with 9 percent female literacy and a maternal mortality rate that is 6 times higher than the rest of Pakistan²³. Given these circumstances, gender issues in the province need far more attention from RSPs. Admitting that Balochistan was lagging behind in women’s empowerment, Ms. Shandana Khan, however, added that some of the best community groups were in Balochistan. She also mentioned that some of the activists aligned with RSPs had done impressive work at the ground level. Given the limited evidence, it will be useful for programs and donors to conduct evaluation studies to assess the variations in gender impact across provinces.

Based on the literature review and key informant interviews, this section has been divided into three parts: women’s inclusion in program design and activities; asset transfer; and training.

3.2.1 Women’s Inclusion in Program Design and Activities

Inclusion of women in program design is a good indicator of the ways in which RSPs plan to focus and empower women in their intervention areas. This inclusion can comprise gender mainstreaming in program activities and objectives; undertaking interventions targeted at women, and designing goals with respect to gender. Their inclusion in program design also helps gauge the impact of RSPs on women’s empowerment.

The LEP-I program under SRSO demonstrated considerable gender focus in program design and activities but left significant room for improving the program’s impact on women’s empowerment. The number of female beneficiaries is not provided in program documents but the poverty score card (PSC) was completed with 368 women (3.5 percent of total beneficiaries) (*SRSO-PCR p8*). The literature noted that 100 percent of the female beneficiaries were below the poverty line and 60 percent were ultra and vulnerable poor (according to the PSC score) (*SRSO-PCR p21*). Mr. Khangharani (key informant) also confirmed that this program focused on poor women. An important step by the program was the appointment of six women to implement the graduation survey. The aim of the survey was to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of data to be collected from female beneficiaries (*SRSO-GSR p5*). On the other hand, IECLP’s overall program design had a limited focus on gender and comparatively more focus on activities and assessment. The PDO did not have any gender focus and the project failed to meet its only gender target (which required 25 percent of the total beneficiaries to be women) as only 17 percent of the beneficiaries were women (see Table 6) (*Leao 2020 p9*). The ICRR also notes that it is uncertain how the external monitoring and evaluation team “arrived at the definition for female households.” According to the evaluation agency, a female household was characterized as one which was headed by a widow or one in which the female was the primary decision-maker” (p9). The indicator was defined as “5,500 households (HHs), of which 25 percent are headed by a female”. The achievement notes

²³ The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics reports female literacy in Balochistan as 24 percent (PSLM 2018-19). The Pakistan Maternal Mortality Survey 2019 reports the maternal mortality rate for Pakistan as 186 and for Balochistan as 298.

that the targeted number of female HHs were not reached (p9). This definition raises certain questions: were female beneficiaries in male-headed households excluded from this assessment? Would females belonging to male-led households and female-led households considered in this measure? These details would enable a better assessment of gender focus in program design. Interestingly, none of the indicators are disaggregated for gender (p15).

For BRSP's LEP-1 program, women's empowerment and focus varied across the 2 districts but overall success was limited. Mr. Shahnawaz Khan (key informant) reiterated that there was overall low literacy in Balochistan and, in particular, low literacy rates among women in the province. This hinders gender mainstreaming and women-specific interventions of RSPs. A predominantly tribal culture along with inflexible social norms with regard to gender relation further contribute to this situation. Mr. Khan asserted that some gains in gender focus and women empowerment have been achieved through the LEP-1 program. These include leveraging women's role in livestock rearing and participation of women in LSOs. Gender-related achievements differ within Balochistan as well: areas such as the Pashtun Belt have a lower female presence in community institutions as compared with areas such as Mastung. Mr. Qazi Azmat Isa (key informant) offered a different perspective in this regard, claiming that if development programs and workers reconciled to these limitations and declared certain areas inaccessible (with regards to gender), then that reconciliation is a bigger issue. In effect, it means the areas requiring the greatest gender support are receiving the least. He asserted that it was imperative to resolve such issues in these areas.

In Pishin, BRSP's LEP-I Program did not have adequate or sustained gender focus. Limited gender-related results were available from the Pishin graduate survey (Table 14). Beneficiaries surveyed included 71 percent men and only 29 percent women (BRSP 3). Mr. Shahnawaz Khan asserted that these numbers are on the lower side, but provide an accurate picture of the situation on the ground: in reality, women's empowerment is largely prevalent on the surface in Balochistan, and men continue to be in-charge even in interventions that are focused on women. For instance, interventions that promote female entrepreneurship may show successful numbers but, in actuality, it is men (related to the targeted women) that are running these enterprises. This means benefits of interventions aimed at women may well be acquired by men, even if women seem to be the recipients.. This also provides critical insight into attempts at mainstreaming gender, as is evident in PPAF's conditionality for its funded programs to guarantee 40 percent membership to women in community institutions²⁴. Although this mandate demonstrates focus on gender, it requires regular monitoring and follow-up to ensure women are able to participate and gain the benefits of mobilization. Similarly, Mr. Amjad Rashid (key informant) claimed that elite capture of programs by men is common in LSOs, and that it is a significant barrier for female participants.

The LEP-1 program's Kharan study provides greater details regarding gender focus (Khan). Firstly, the study itself demonstrates gender sensitivity in its methodology by conducting random selection of households within the two selected gender wise clusters (Khan p4). The study's objectives also include the assessment of project interventions to empower poor women entrepreneurs (p4). Additionally, the study selected and assessed 5 key aspects around women's economic and social empowerment (p28). These are indicators 4 to 8 in Table 14, from

²⁴ See <http://www.ppaf.org.pk/what-we-do.html>

improvement in ownership of household assets to mobility outside home. The majority of the respondents reported a lot of improvement in all these aspects and ‘substantial improvement’ in ‘mobility outside home’ (p28). These are significant results relating to gender and it would be useful to support them with further evidence. It is essential, however, that these results are linked to specific program interventions. The Kharan study also claimed that one of the objectives of the project was to “improve skills of women entrepreneurs to lessen their workload and create recognition of their role as a main contributor in [the household] through economic empowerment” (p28). All the women surveyed in Kharan reported being engaged for the poverty score card (PSC) survey (p8).

RSPs in KP had some interventions focusing on women’s empowerment but the overall gender focus and impact of related interventions are limited. Available literature suggested that KP-SADP’s program activities had limited focus on genderimp, while inclusion of women in program design was largely absent. The project’s component B had some emphasis on gender, addressing the need for asset building among vulnerable groups including women-led households (Syed *ISD* p3). One of the project’s important contributions is gender disaggregation of data on indicator results. However, the implementation status and results (ISRs) do not provide gender disaggregated results for all indicators. ISR 7 claimed that the project has the largest proportion of female beneficiaries among WB projects in KP at the time. The ninth ISR reported the project’s increased focus on women and women led households and mentioned about a youth internship program that took on board 14 women (Alvi p2). Although the number of women engaged is not high (compared to the 31 males), the inclusion of women is noteworthy. ISR 11 also placed emphasis on women’s needs and inclusion in project activities, along with greater attention to vocational training of youth and women (p2). Finally, the environmental and social assessment (ESA) notes that stakeholder consultations were carried out with women that resulted in the prioritization of a range of women’s needs, from health and education to employment, water and sanitation (p53). Based on the information available, this prioritization is not reflected in subsequent program activities. Additionally, the ESA suggested indicators such as women’s satisfaction (or lack thereof) with the program along with an indicator that tracked and assessed developments such as formation of separate female organizations, consultation with women, and incorporation of their concerns in project design (p54). During consultation with children, one of the girl groups reported that they will be able to get education if facilities were provided in their own village, since parents do not allow them to attend schools at greater distances (*ESA* 53). Results that are available in Table 9 show that the project aimed for 30 percent women beneficiaries (of the total) and exceeded the target (at 52 percent) at the time of closure (Ahmed, *ISR-13* p4). KP-SADP fell short of meeting one target (female members benefiting from social and productive infrastructure). Although its focus on women’s empowerment in program design and theory was negligible, in overall terms KP-SADP performed well in its gender-related targets. On the other hand, FATA RCLIP had a negligible focus on gender. The project’s component C involved a focus on women but the extent or impact of this focus is unknown (*ICRR* p11). The gender disaggregation for project’s total beneficiaries (PDOI 1) was removed in the revised project development objective indicators (PDOIs), and no explanation was provided for this change (*ICRR* 11). None of the PDOIs was disaggregated by gender. The ICRR acknowledges this and reports that project team was did not disaggregate data by gender despite being instructed many times to do it (p20).

3.2.2 *Asset Transfers to Women*

RSPs used asset transfers to empower women by leveraging their existing skills in livestock management, encouraging their participation in productive activities, and creating possibilities of income for them. The extent of empowerment differs across programs and is not without a host of challenges. In IECLP, 140 goats, some number of ducks and domestic poultry units (DPUs) were provided to women (*Leao 2020 p15*). 25 eggs per day were acquired through DPUs, and were sold at PKR 10 each (p13). For SRSO's LEP-1 program, women received assets including livestock that were procured locally (to easy access) (p14). There were several outcomes: reduction in poverty of women, engagement at grassroots level, and increased inclination of women towards asset creation, decreased sense of inferiority, enhanced productivity and improved livestock management (p18). A more detailed examination of these outcomes will be useful since assets accrue a management and time cost. Therefore, benefits from asset transfers must demonstrate a higher return than the cost incurred on them. Additionally, benefits that are difficult to quantify, such as a decreased sense of inferiority, must have proper parameters that are used to ascertain these changes. As discussed earlier, one of the challenges noted in the program literature were the difficulties faced by recipients in managing of livestock assets due to weather conditions and unavailability of green fodder (*SRSO-GSR p12*). The proposed solution was for the program to provide livestock recipients green fodder that would help increase milk production (p12-13). Other challenges included death of animals or sale of animals by beneficiaries presumably to meet pent up consumption demands (p15). Gender disaggregated results were not available but 60 percent of the households receiving assets could not manage the business related to their asset (p9). To a major extent, this was because extreme poverty forced community members to purchase commodities on a short-term loan basis. This in turn impacted the sales and cash flow of Karyana (food and other necessities) shops. In other instances, "gap in identification of trade or type" was noted (p9). Mr. Khangharani (key informant) explained that livestock was insured by a third-party, and in case of loss all the beneficiaries received a premium, which was not equivalent to the value of the livestock but still provided substantial relief. He also explained that instances of selling the livestock were rare and those sold were mostly Buffalo Heifer and Cow Heifer—breeds that women in particular were knowledgeable about. Women knew that the best way to make a profit was to let the animal mature (for almost 2 years) before selling. However, this defeats the purpose of the activity since it was meant to support livelihoods, unless the money from the sale is used for productive purposes.

For BRSP's Kharan LEP-1 program, all the beneficiary women received assets and 83 percent were fully satisfied with the quality of the assets (Khan p8). All women except for two were still in possession of the asset received (p8). Provision of sheep and goats was observed to have significantly contributed to women empowerment as it generated income, saved time and increased their assets (p37).

FATA RLCIP also distributed some assets that generated benefits for women. Solar lamps were a boon for women who would otherwise do housework in the dark (*ICRR p15*). Sewing machines

also benefited women as stitching clothes saved money but failure to use the contraptions for generating income was a shortfall (p16). The literature did not provide any targets for these outcomes (Syed, *ICR Review* 6). Implementation completion and results report (ICRR) also notes that distributing sewing machines led to saturation of the market and ruined the opportunities for women that were already engaged (before the project intervention) in sewing as a livelihood (p31). This outcome demonstrates the need for adequate planning and assessment of the local context in projects like RLCIP. Similarly, the savings group as “a long-term phased approach to financial inclusion” was observed to be a beneficial intervention for women who got left out by the project (p31-23). Some explanations were provided for these shortcomings. The RLCIP ICRR notes in its “other outcomes – gender” that FATA’s cultural context is very conservative and, coupled with the general suspicion of NGOs that made locals hesitant, prevented direct access to women (p20). The report further states that the absence of an analysis on the gendered dimensions of livelihoods contributes to the project’s limited ability to adequately achieve its outcomes (p31). However, these explanations do not adequately address the lack of gender focus in program design and activities. Moreover, Dr. Noreen Naseer (key informant) explained that developmental projects in KP largely had a very poor focus on gender and women’s empowerment. She attributed the lacuna to pre-conceived notions about KP and FATA being considered as “lawless lands” with restrictive cultural norms—factors that programs cited an excuse for omitting women-focused interventions. She asserted that her experience has shown that such interventions can help access and mobilize women in these areas. Dr. Naseer also explained that women were included in program design, discussion and intervention after the displacement and war in the region around 2012. In other words, programs had no choice but to include women in the reckoning since women had become heads of most households by then. During this time, women empowerment was focused on activities such as asset transfer, which may not have yielded large positive outcomes but enabled individual success for women in different villages.

3.2.3 *Training Provided to Women*

Training also is a significant tool for empowering women. In the LEP-1 program in Kharan, all female beneficiaries received training and most of them considered training quality as very good (Khan). The impact of training is not provided in the program study. Under SRSO’s LEP-1, 47.6 percent of all beneficiaries that received livelihood and vocational training were women (*SRSO-PCR* p12). Training, especially the vocational category, was observed to have generated self or external employment for women. It reportedly also allowed women to use financial resources (such as CIG savings) and gain economic authority (p10, p21). An important step by the SRSO team was the provision of vocational training at various locations. “Outreach field training centers were established to provide training at the doorstep of rural poor women” that allowed a dedicated space for women (p10). Mr Sono Khangharani (key informant) described that the training centers significantly helped overcome the challenge of women’s mobility and their ability to continue participation in the activity as these centers were set up in the village. According to Mr. Khangharani, some of the more successful training outcomes were seen in courses such as stitching, tailoring and beautician. The latter particularly made decent income during wedding season. Mr. Khangharani mentioned that “medical assistantships” had become a significant vocational opportunity. In this vocational stream, women were trained in assisting doctors and subsequently were recruited in several clinics in rural areas. This meant that recruitment opened

up employment options for women alongside helping female patients. The study team did not find information about this activity in LEP-1's literature (available from SRSO). But it seems an important intervention for women's economic and social empowerment and, with adequate evaluations, can be utilized in other programs.

For IECLP, Table 6 demonstrates some of the available gender-related results, including the project's provision of social mobilization training to 600 women (*Leao 2020 p41*). 40 women received training in block printing, stitching and craft management (target was achieved) (p38). Some women were additionally trained for managerial positions so that they could "organize and supervise the production and sale process" (p15). But their number is unknown. 40 women obtained training in household poultry management, while 4 women got it in livestock management (p40).

KP-SADP's component B comprised sub-projects that focused on vocational training and skill development centers. ISR 7 reports that KP-SADP "mobilized 237 women's groups and established 13 vocational centers for women" (Akbar 2). As Table 9 shows, of the 2,082 community members that received training, 37 percent were women (Ahmed, *ISR-13 p2*). KP-SADP's *Success Stories* report mentioned that training was provided in cutting, sewing and stitching. Participants also trained other women in their village, with one of them establishing a vocational training center in their area on a "self-help basis" (*Pabor – Success Stories*). Another participant started her own business, earning income by selling ladies' purses and scarves and taking up embroidery and stitching jobs (Noreen 2). Additionally, these stories reported KP-SADP's assistance in setting up kitchen-gardens that helped women save monthly expenses by growing their own vegetables. In cases where the produce was in excess, women were also able to sell the vegetables and earn an income (*Zeenat – Success Stories*).

3.2.4 *Entrepreneurship Support and Social Mobilization*

Women's empowerment was catalysed in other ways as well: through social mobilization, by providing alternative livelihood opportunities and technical support, and by fostering entrepreneurship. One intervention by SRSO's LEP-1 in this regard was livelihood investment plans (LIPs), which was not very successful in mobilizing women since only 2 percent of the applicants that filled the LIP form were female (10). The reasons for this failure were not discussed but it is possible that LIP forms were provided to households where it was more likely for a male member to fill and return them. On the other hand, 100 percent of the women surveyed in Kharan for BRSP's LEP-1 were engaged in the development of LIP, although details are not available on the impact linked to this intervention. Similarly, SRSO's focus on easy and proper access of women to health facilities was reported but no specific, corresponding activities were found. Moreover, there is no investigation on what greater access to health facilities meant in terms of the adequacy of supply, quality of available facilities, and issues of access with regards to socio-cultural norms.

The "visible achievements of outcome" of SRSO's LEP-1 noted the utilization of CIGs by female members to execute their plans (not described) and avail maximum benefit (*SRSO-PCR 4*). This outcome is confusing since, despite the formation of 200 CIGs, the program results indicate that zero percent of the target "CIG members" was achieved (p8). Similarly, the literature claimed that

project interventions gave women financial resources through CIG savings (p21). However, as observed in the program results (Table 2), the achieved target of CIG savings is zero percent—and it is unclear how women benefited from an intervention that did not take place. For BRSP’s LEP-1 program in Kharan, 65 percent of the surveyed female beneficiaries were CIG members (78 percent male) (Khan p8). This was a significantly positive result compared with SRSO’s “CIG members” indicator. However, none of the women surveyed in the Kharan study responded positively to inquiries about CIG meetings, indicating its limited benefit to them (p22).

SRSO’s completion report also claimed that women CIGs were linked with various private local dealers that helped open new avenues of business for them. Along with SRSO’s *Sartyun Sang Shop*, these dealers also ordered different, customized items from the women CIGs. This linkage was observed to have provided employment to many women in the village (*SRSO-PCR p22*). IECLP similarly established a connection with an e-platform based social enterprise called *Hunarmund* which was working with local artisans engaged in block printing. The partnership allowed female beneficiaries to receive training for improving their block printing techniques, business management, and marketing skills (*Leao 2020 p13*). To their credit, heads of households were observed to have “encouraged their women members to participate in the various interventions organized by the project” (*Leao 2019 p1*). These are important outcomes for women’s social and economic empowerment; evaluations and follow-ups on these interventions will prove to be useful for future projects.

KP-SADP also attempted to mobilize women and introduce initiatives for empowerment, although information on these interventions is very limited in the program literature. ISR 7 reported that the project formed CBOs and EIGs for women and developed 75 CAPs that were to be implemented for women organizations. While the results were not mentioned in the final ISR, and it is difficult to ascertain their current status (Akbar 2). Some intermediate level indicators are also available and presented in Table 9. One success story reported that the women CBOs (WCBO) provided awareness sessions through KP-SADP that resulted in promotion of school enrollment (*Koru Khan – Success Stories*).

FATA RLCIP’s social mobilization process entailed the participation of women in village-level development activities by initiating dialogue and raising awareness on the benefits of greater female economic participation. TPMVs suggested that implementing agencies had secured sufficient trust of local communities to connect with women directly in some tehsils (*ICRR p20*). The ICRR noted that dialogue regarding female participation was deemed crucial in the context of FATA; reduction in cross-border trade had led to gradual changes in perceptions of gender roles in the region, especially with respect to employment and income generation (p20). The ICRR also claimed that the project attempted to select and implement activities that were directly related to reducing women’s workload at home and involve women in productive activities (p20). There is barely any evidence to support the latter claim, apart from a mention of kitchen gardening and poultry packages (p20). For the former, some activities can be noted, such as the redefinition of component B to “quick-win packages at the household level for quicker impact and greater ability to address women’s needs” (*ICRR p11*). These schemes range from water supply and sanitation to laying streets and renewable energy technologies. As part of water and sanitation schemes (PDOI

4), housewives reported 30 percent reduction in the time to fetch water from distant places (p15). “Model village” households were also modified to ensure that women also benefited (p11).

BRSP’s LEP-1 program attempted to address social and economic empowerment in various ways. Pishin’s graduation survey (GS) noted that while cultural norms posed a challenge for women to pursue employment or avail opportunities outside home, the project enabled 38 percent women to be engaged in income generating activities (such as livestock management) at the household level (p24-25). Although this is a positive result, further evidence is required to assess the purported causal link between program activities and greater economic participation by women. Other gender-related results reported for Pishin included access to better medical treatment for 61 percent of the beneficiaries: the percentage/number of women was not provided (BRSP p24). Additionally, the ‘better access’ is attributed to improved financial status—but a link to program interventions is not established and this causation seems to be an assumption. The report also credits the project for providing 37 percent females with access to education (p25). Other results in the report included land ownership and access to social space, but these are not credited to program activities. No targets for the available gender-related results were mentioned in the literature. Despite the gaps in the provided results, BRSP’s disaggregation of data according to gender is noteworthy. Positive benefits generated by program activities included alternative employment and income generating opportunities in livestock, agriculture and enterprise sectors. This resulted in women’s engagement in non-farm activities, which led to increasing household assets and income (p36). A higher self confidence in women was also linked to this work (p36).

Program documents for all RSPs have claimed significant positive impacts on women’s empowerment, particularly its social and economic dimensions. However, evidence for these claims is very limited, which makes it difficult to assess the outcome. Most of the KIIs from RSPs confirmed that programs in Sindh had impacted women very positively. Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan (key informant) claimed that the program had a favorable effect on 2.7 million women led households in Sindh. Another key informant, Mr. Khangharani, said that women who were part of RSPs in Sindh were doing extremely well as they led their own, well-expanded enterprises and even came to Karachi, Pakistan’s largest city, for exhibitions. The impact of RSPs on women empowerment is largely limited in all other provinces. Although there are notable gains in women’s empowerment through training and assets transfers in the programs selected by the World Bank study team, the impact of other activities is limited. Even in Sindh, most of the positive outcomes cited in the KIIs were not associated with LEP-1; instead they mostly referred to the Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support (SUCCESS) Programme²⁵. Ms. Shandana Khan (key informant) also added that the Sindh government needs to take further steps towards women’s empowerment by primarily working in partnership with community organizations to implement plans (that target women).

Gendered change is also required to occur at every level of the model. Mr. Qazi Azmat Isa (key informant) pointed out that PPAF’s top management had only 2 women. He explained that the organization had attempted to rectify such structural issues by introducing different initiatives, such as mandating women’s inclusion in PPAF funded programs (40 percent of all beneficiaries

²⁵ See <http://www.rspn.org/index.php/current-projects/eu-rspn-success-programme-sindh-union-council-and-community-economic-strengthening-support-programme-rspn-component/>

must be women) and disaggregating data by gender for every indicator. He also asserted that 80 percent of all finances were allocated to women under the microfinance program. Also, he maintained that imposing such conditions (regarding gender) on partner organizations and target communities was necessary for gender inclusiveness. Mr. Amjad Rashid (key informant) also proposed various ways in which programs could focus on women, particularly by providing incentives to community members that would benefit women specifically. For instance, implementing partners could impose a condition that a water project would be implemented in a community only if each beneficiary household constructs a toilet—a stipulation that would specifically benefit women while also tackling the issue of open defecation. Mr. Rashid gave another example of Pakistan’s *waseela-e-taleem*, an initiative that offers families a stipend for sending girls to school. He emphasized that poverty has many dimensions (such as intellectual poverty) and programs need to address each of these. He also underlined the importance of advocacy and support, and concurred that PPAF acknowledges the need for a rights-based approach and was slowly incorporating the needed methods to bring better focus on women. Similarly, Mr. Isa, stressed that RSPs needed to adopt a rights-based approach and be bolder going into the future.

3.3 Sustainability

Sustainability of program outcomes and externalities is a crucial yardstick to judge whether the benefits created by RSPs have an enduring quality about them. Sustainability in the programs (selected by the WB study team) is gauged on the basis of by i) efforts to ensure that collective action and program outcomes continue beyond the life of the project; ii) assessments of positive or negative externalities generated through the programs, and iii) any scaling-up of interventions that was undertaken. This section is divided according to these criteria.

3.3.1 Continuation of Program Outcomes and Activities

Mechanisms that ensure that program activities and their associated benefits endure beyond the duration of the program are imperative for sustainability and must be incorporated in program design and implementation. SRSO’s LEP-1 program had a moderate to good focus on sustainability in terms of ensuring continuation of program activities and benefits post project closure. The graduation survey (GS) noted that beneficiaries have managed to transfer livestock effectively and even increased animal inventory—a development that was viewed as good for the project’s sustainability (p10). The survey also reported that livestock growth rate was 35 percent, mortality ratio was at 6 percent (report noted this as acceptable), livestock worth (of a single animal) increased overall from 11.5 million to 20.5 million, and inventory of animals increased by 21 percent (*SRSO-GSR* 10-15). Additionally, 40 percent of the non-livestock assets (such as sewing machines, donkey cart) were found productive; 78 percent beneficiaries reported adopting proper livestock management as guided by project training (*SRSO-GSR* p9,p11). Furthermore the sense of ownership of community organizations (COs) and village organizations (VOs) among members catalysed proactive efforts to save assets during times such as flood or rainfall, ensuring a longer life of the assets (*SRSO – PCR* p22-23). These results offered insight into the impact of interventions over a period of time and demonstrated the potential sustainability of a project.

IECLP also undertook some measures to make sure that activities and benefits survive beyond a project's life. As with other activities under the program, the implementation efficiency of these measures is not easy to ascertain. For instance, sustainability of livelihood initiatives was to be supported by piloting savings and internal lending within a few groups (*ISD* p4). Moreover, the project planned refresher courses for master trainers and exposure visits to successful sites in the region (p2). Details on these activities were unavailable. The 15 percent contribution from community was also supposed to ensure project sustainability, but its outcomes were unknown. The ICRR also claimed that project interventions such as asset provision, capacity building, and establishment of fisher/farmer sustainability schools were aimed to improve the sector's sustainability. But there are no details on how these objectives would be achieved (*Leao 2020* p7). However, an activity similar to refresher courses was a noteworthy feature: these were information-sharing workshops conducted by the EME agency for around 18 out of 24 master trainers (p11). This was a good initiative to not only review the training of participants but also foster communication with other trainees of the region. Additionally, 50 percent of domestic chicken and duck enterprises (asset transfers) sustained at the end of the completion year (p33). The ICRR also mentioned that training an internal network of fishermen and FFSs contributed to knowledge sharing and dissemination (p10). The survival of certain IECLP accomplishments after the project's closure is also uncertain. For instance, with poor or absent record-keeping, the future functionality of CBOs established during the project becomes unclear (p12). Similarly, due to issues of power, fuel and demand, the survival of bakeries cum general stores is uncertain (p14). These instances are reminders that mechanisms to ensure sustainability must be built into the project's design and activities.

IECLP's final report noted that, "the project was anchored to the Sindh Agriculture Growth Project, but the project team failed to create and sustain a clear linkage that has comprised scalability". This suggested that the lack of linkage had compromised possibilities of scaling the project (*Leao 2020* p20). It further noted that in the absence of an exit strategy, the project faced a serious risk of being unable to sustain its gains without additional funding (p21). However, the report did note that the use of BMPs in aquaculture showed that the fisher community was prepared to switch from their traditional methods to more efficient means of fishing. In other words, it demonstrated "a scope for the activities to be scaled up" (p17).

KP-SADP took some steps to ensure project sustainability but these efforts were very limited. One of the project indicators measured the percentage of CAPs with arrangements for community engagement in post-project sustainability or O&M. This was a step in the right direction. The target was not fully achieved (47.33 percent instead of the 60 percent target) but the results demonstrated a noteworthy effort shown by the project (Ahmed, *ISR-13* p4). Similarly, one of the ISRs noted that scaling up the project activities was being considered given its impact on infrastructure access and TDPs, although the outcomes of this plan were unknown (Alvi, *ISR-8* p2). The program literature demonstrated that sustainability did not receive adequate emphasis in KP-SADP's design and activities. However, Mr. Imtiaz Alvi (key informant) explained that KP-SADP's role in strengthening state-citizen trust was important for sustainability and efforts were made to train project staff, organize youth, and link beneficiaries with entrepreneurs and capital in large cities like Karachi. Thus increasing employability chances of program participants. He

asserted that anecdotal evidence is available to show that these efforts were successful in some areas.

RLCIP similarly suffered in addressing the project's sustainability and continuation of activities. To ensure sustainability of community investment projects (CIPs) after project closure, an O&M fund was introduced at the mid-term review (MTR) (*ICRR* 11). However, the fund was not established and there is no evidence of the continued existence of this mechanism (p15). The *ICRR* notes that there is a potential risk that CBOs, farmer groups and Economic Interest Groups under RLCIP would not sustain themselves as there are no built-in mechanisms to ensure financial viability; importantly, the one mechanism that did exist (O&M funds and committees) was not implemented properly. Lack of training also meant that these entities were unlikely to sustainably operate over the long term. Mr. Shahnawaz Khan (key informant) described that O&M committees were part of an RSP's built-in components of sustainability. The annual fees paid by community members made resources available to the committees for repairs and maintenance of the community schemes. Mr. Khan cited a study from last year that found that 91 percent of the community physical infrastructure (CPI) projects over the past 10 years are still sustainable. The study adds that "CO office bearers/members expressed their satisfaction in 91 percent of the projects, meaning that these projects are functioning satisfactorily with minor issues" (Baig p37).

The FATA-RLCIP *ICRR* also notes that there is no evidence that the benefits accruing to CBOs will continue beyond the life of the project (p14). Community members said they were prepared to continue the developmental work after project closure but they could not go ahead without funding from the government or NGOs (p30). Mr. Khan mentioned that lack of government support dents sustainability, particularly in Balochistan as compared with other provinces such as Sindh, which has a government that is more supportive of civil society. He added that this issue was not limited to the incumbent government. Ms. Shandana Khan (key informant) also opined that formalizing links with the government is one of the essential elements of sustainability. Communities would continue to engage in community institutions (through meetings, savings) if their activities were linked to services in the public and private sector.

The risk to outcomes was therefore rated high for FATA-RLCIP (*ICRR* p30). The Bank's mitigation efforts were regarded inadequate by the project's ICR review (p10). It did note the government's commitment in 2019 to financially support CBOs through the Qabail Development Program, which was conceived as part of a 10-year development plan for the merged areas (p9). However, there is no proper plan of action for this commitment and the risk remains high. As part of lessons learnt through FATA-RLCIP, the *ICRR* emphasizes the importance of sustainability in areas of FCV, as "even the most marginal gains, if sustained over time, have a significant impact on the well-being of beneficiaries" (p30). Unfortunately, this emphasis was not found in the project design and activities, and it is likely that most project activities would find it hard to sustain over time.

For BRSP's LEP-1, available literature show that the program design was not heavily focused on sustainability but certain results were promising as in the case of Pishin: here, 90 percent of the recipients were still in possession of their assets while 10 percent were not—for reasons such as asset lost/died, sold due to an urgency or domestic need; 84 percent of the beneficiaries were

utilizing skills acquired from project training while 16 percent were not (BRSP p16, p19). In Kharan, all recipients were still in possession of their asset at the time of study (Khan p14). These results demonstrate the continuation of project activities beyond project life as well as the durability of project impact. Verifications of these results would make them more reliable and robust. Additionally, the Kharan study noted that sustainability of livelihoods was emphasized during implementation, leading to “identification and establishment of livelihoods that matched this criteria” but no evidence or details are provided (p36). Mr. Shah Nawaz Khan agreed that sustainability remained a persistent issue as target communities require resources to continue organizational operations after the closure of a project. Also, complex legal requirements served as a hindrance. For instance, the registration requirements required by the provincial Balochistan Charities Registration and Regulation Authority (BCRA) made the process of registering institutions like the LSO time-consuming and difficult. On the other hand, Mr. Amjad Rashid (key informant) described the problems of sustainability with LEP-1 as an inherent design issue. He explained that the program’s duration of 2 years was too short for meaningful, sustained change in the community’s poverty status. Drawing from successful collectivization approaches in China, Mr. Rashid maintained that although PPAF had done large investments (in poverty alleviation), they had been able to neither attract public institutions nor pull in the private sector to create shared funding. Observing that government funding remains untapped, he maintained that sustainability issues will persist given these circumstances. He also emphasized the need for evaluation, studies and research on implementation, benefits and sustainability.

Ms. Shandana Khan (key informant) felt that RSPs were performing fairly well with regard to sustainability of program interventions. She cited a DFID study based on a large sample size that found that 40 percent of the COs established by RSPs across the years were active. RSPs have an approximate 500,000 COs and many of the active COs are in areas where these programs have completed the project. Ms. Khan said that an active CO meant that the organization was actively meeting, saving, taking decisions. She pointed out that at least a quarter of the COs were part of the category where members don’t meet or save every month and the organization was dormant—but they have the required systems in place and can mobilize if required (for developmental work or implementation of another project). There are also inactive community organizations, she added. The World Bank study team was unable to access the DFID study but evaluations listed above offer important insights into the working of an RSP model and its impact on different levels.

3.3.2 Externalities

Another important aspect of sustainability is the externalities generated by program interventions. Some important positive externalities generated by SRSO’s LEP-1 program include improved household nutrition (particularly for children) through livestock milk production and collective social harmony through community work and employment generated through training (as observed), particularly for the youth (*SRSO-GSR 3* and *SRSO-PCR p20, p21*). The note on best practices also observed that the program connected 5 poor households with the “TB dot initiative” in order to find treatment that was unaffordable otherwise (23). This apart, an awareness meeting on child rights was conducted to discourage child labor in target union councils (UCs) (*SRSO-PCR p23*). Mass awareness sessions were carried out through the program in UC Bagho Daho for polio

vaccination, and similar sessions were conducted for prevention of open defecation and hepatitis in 24 different villages (p23). The program also collaborated with the district government to arrange four medical camps for hepatitis vaccination in target UCs (p23). Following results from GS LEP-I, the program added artificial insemination in the list of activities to increase livestock growth rate in LEP phase II (*SRSO-GSR p10*). The literature noted that asset transfers improved the confidence of poor rural women, reduced poverty, created an inclination in them towards asset creation, and opened avenues for new businesses (p18). There were, however, no targets or indicators to measure these outcomes; nor was any detailed analysis of their impact is available.

For IECLP, the establishment of indigo plots and revival of indigo cultivation generated positive externalities in the form of indigo plantations. The ICRR noted that these plantations had the potential to be scaled up, and created a local market for indigo in Sindh (*Leao 2020 p21*). The project also undertook activities that positively contributed to the environment, such as launching clean-green village campaigns that promoted cleaner villages through waste segregation, and trained selected CBOs in waste management and collection. IECLP's ICRR observed that this intervention significantly reduced recyclable waste (p34). The project's "lessons learnt and recommendations" also emphasized environmental conservation as imperative for sustainable development (p21). IECLP also resulted in some negative externalities. Several anonymous complaints about the use of potential toxic plastic drums in the construction of fish cages were received. Moreover, there were allegations of misuse of 700 mobile handsets distributed to CBO members (*Leao 2020 p18*). The nature of the misuse was is not explained. The ICRR mentioned in its compliance issues that WWFP maintained "an effective complaint redressal mechanism" and that "all project complaints were effectively investigated and concluded to the satisfaction of the Bank" (p19). Details on the process or outcome of these investigations were not available.

KP-SADP also generated a positive externality that was reported in the "success stories" section. Through linkages established with district wildlife department, KP-SADP assisted in wildlife conservation in DI Khan, with a 28 thousand square kilometer area of various villages marked as a 'reserve area' where all kinds of hunting was prohibited (*Mandra Kalan – Success Stories*). Another 'possible' positive contribution is the promotion of female school enrollment as a result of the project's awareness sessions (*Koru Khan – Success Stories*). A detailed environmental site assessment (ESA) was also carried out, with potential impacts of each initiative under KP SADP along with mitigation measures. The ESA observed that some activities could lead to negative environmental and social externalities but these were expected to be temporary—and confined to the local environment, direct and reversible (*ESA-KP-SADP iii-iv*). Consultations with stakeholders, as part of the ESA, also generated a positive benefit by highlighting the needs of female students during the children's consultation.

RLCIP too was observed to have generated negative externalities as components B and C were expected to cause adverse environmental and social impacts but the project's environmental assessment found these potential impacts were temporary, localized and easily reversible through adequate mitigation and control measures (*ESA-FATA-RLCIP iii*). Another negative externality was due to the distribution of sewing machines which saturated the market and ruined prospects for existing users of the machines (*ICRR p31*).

The project also generated some positive externalities. According to a third-party assessment, the project's social mobilization process aided collective decision making and identification of development interventions by community members, thereby stimulating employment and livelihood opportunities (14). The third-party assessment is not available, and the methods of identifying and analyzing these outcomes were unknown. Community members also reported increased government attention towards tribal areas and greater community interaction and cohesion among people although it is unclear how the program generated this outcome (p14). Other positive externalities included possibility of longer studying hours for students through the provision of solar lamps, and increased time for farmers to engage in other cultural practices because of irrigation schemes (p15-16). The ICRR also notes that CBOs participated in refresher courses and exposure visits. However, no targets were provided for these activities; nor were their specific benefits discussed (20).

BRSP's LEP-1 program also generated some positive externalities. In Kharan, women reported generating enough income (possibly through program interventions) to be able to send some of their children to school and build better houses (Khan p36). Furthermore, women's engagement in non-farm activities as a result of project interventions increased household assets and income—and importantly, boosted their confidence. The Kharan study shows greater participation of women in household decision making and community development (p28). However, proper parameters and comprehensive evaluation are needed to support these findings. No externalities were reported in Pishin.

3.3.3 Other Mechanisms to Ensure Sustainability

Our KIIs provided further insight into achievements and challenges for RSPs on the path of sustainability. Mr. Shahnawaz Khan (key informant) described training and capacity building of community resource persons (CRPs) as another method that improves sustainability of RSP interventions since CRPs continue working after the project has been completed. CRPs were used in BRSP for facilitation and mobilization. Key informant, Ms. Shandana Khan (key informant) provided the background of CRPs, who were included in the RSP design after a team visit to Andhra Pradesh (a state in south India) in 2008-9. This visit was arranged after the RSP model faced criticisms for being too “expensive and staff intensive”. In Andhra Pradesh, the RSP team observed that active and vocal campaigners in the community were being utilized as trainers and social mobilizers.

A similar approach was adopted in Pakistan's RSPs where some community members were selected as CRPs and rigorously trained at the VO level by the social mobilization team (SMT) of the RSPs (Maheen and Khan, p12). They were subsequently paid to marshal members of the community in the target area and train others. Ms. Khan explained that the RSP model had adopted this approach to some degree but improvements could be made as the programs remained very staff intensive. RSPN's Institutional Maturity Index (IMI) analysis report, which assesses strengths and weaknesses of Community Institutions (CIs) with the aim to identify capacity gaps and subsequently provide required support, also emphasized the role of CRPs in improving IMI scores of CIs as they motivate community members and organizations, create awareness about objectives and are active in community engagement (Maheen and Khan p.iii, p20, p28, p34).

Mr. Shahnawaz Khan also explained that RSPs did not work in isolation and were attempting to institutionalize government support by engaging them through forums such as joint district development committee-forum (JDDC-F) which includes several development players in a district. Such forums foster a development culture that can continue and grow even after an RSP's departure. Another effort by programs towards improved sustainability was to get legal status for community institutions established as part of the program. This would confer them the recognition to mobilize resources from different sources. Mr. Khan also pointed out the aforementioned difficulties with this process, including the financial action task force (FATF)'s²⁶ requirements, bureaucratic red tape and an overall challenging environment for civil society organizations. BRSP also cited the example of Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) programme's sustainability plans, particularly the one that involved developing a policy framework for rural development, getting it approved by the cabinet and pursuing its implementation. The framework created a standard, and incorporated mechanisms to ensure sustainability in the program design. EU first attempted this framework in KP where such a policy was developed and approved by the KP cabinet. Sindh also received technical assistance from EU in this regard and developed its own "poverty reduction support policy" (PRSP). The same thing is being supported in Balochistan where BRSP and NRSP enabled and emphasized the needs of a community at the grassroots level, and drafted a rural development policy and followed its successful implementation (once approved). The policy allocated a certain percentage of the budget for sustainability and scaling-up.

Several of our KIIs spoke about a prominent solution for sustainability issues faced by the RSP model: the community investment fund (CIF), which is a revolving fund given to each LSO for use as an internal lending mechanism. RSPs established CIF by "providing a capital grant to community institutions as a revolving fund" (RSPN p2). The fund had a minimum financing of PKR 2 million that could go up to PKR 8 million. CIF also played a role in social mobilization as the community managed this fund itself and lent to people for productive and income generation purposes. Having these financial resources made the LSOs sustainable and functional. Ms. Shandana Khan explained that CIFs kept communities engaged and active through meetings and management. Although the fund provides interest-free loans, there is a processing fee to help the fund grow as well. CIFs were mentioned several times in the KIIs as an important mechanism that ensured sustainability and engagement of participants, including women. However, the WB study team did not find any mention of this activity in the program literature. The prevalence of elite capture remains a cause for concern in such a fund, as does discrimination in access and usage of funds for non-productive purposes. Although it is a good starting response to tackling sustainability issues in the RSP model, a greater investigation into the CIF mechanism is required to understand its functioning and utility.

RSPN's IMI analysis report also discussed a savings program being operated as part of the model's social mobilization process in around 90 percent of the COs that were surveyed (Maheen and Khan, p7). The purpose of the program was to encourage saving habits and "facilitate local capital". Participation in it was voluntary (p14). Members were able to deposit and withdraw their savings anytime. The total savings of COs reported were PKR 3.1 million (p14). Contributions differed from members and the money was mostly used for emergency purposes and not for

²⁶ See <https://www.dawn.com/news/1609329>

income generation. The savings program route seems to be another mechanism to sustain community engagement and financial support. However, it is unclear if this method was adopted in all programs implemented by RSPs and in all the possible outcomes for sustainability that this method generated.

Overall, sustainability remained a crucial issue for the RSP model. For one, a detailed evaluation was needed to accurately grasp how the model addressed sustainability. For another, programs need to incorporate the concept of sustainability in their designs to ensure that the positive impact of interventions persists beyond the project cycle.

3.4 Political Economy

The political context plays a crucial role in the functioning of RSPs. In this section, the study team attempts to understand the nature, shifts and role of this context with regards to the selected RSPs. It also presents the RSPs' response (or lack thereof) to the political economy in which they operate, and the impacts of interface between the two entities. Specifically, the team focuses on the broader political context in which the projects operate, the impact of local power structures on the success and sustainability of the projects, the nature of elite capture across programs, and finally on the relationships that the programs have managed to forge with different tiers of government.

3.4.1 Recognition of the Political Context and Power Structures

Though the selected RSPs did give some recognition to local power structures in their program design, the realization of the context seemed limited much in actual interventions. IECLP, for instance, demonstrated some understanding and incorporation of local context and power structures in its programs. The situational analysis conducted during the inception stage of the program, although insufficient, was a positive step. Additionally, the project locations were at places where WWFP had an understanding of the needs and challenges of the communities (*ISD* p5). The project team also incorporated into the design of IECLP the lessons learned from an earlier project funded by JSDF (*Leao 2020* p17-18).

From the available program documents, BRSP's LEP-1 program did not address political economy issues at any level. The only attention to the local context was the Pishin survey's acknowledgement of water and electricity issues in the area, which made agricultural activities impractical for poor communities (BRSP p14). Mr. Shahnawaz Khan (key informant) said that Balochistan is a sparsely populated province with rugged terrain, large distances, difficulties of access, and higher operational costs due to lower population density and low literacy rates. Security concerns also make some areas difficult to access for both RSPs and government. Mr. Qazi Azmat Isa (key informant) outlined the same challenges as described by Mr. Khan, besides pointing out that poverty in Balochistan was higher compared with other provinces. Mr. Khan also maintained that Balochistan's local power structures operated across the province irrespective of the regional characteristics (urban or rural, progressive or conservative). Despite the KIIs, the WB study team was unable to analyze the nature of these local power structures.

For projects such as KP-SADP, the political economy—particularly local power structures—play a very significant role due to the political circumstances in the region, including several years of fragility, conflict and violence (FCV) and significant infrastructural damages. The project was given a high-risk rating in the political and governance category. In theory, KP-SADP’s design did account for regional conflict at the time and geographical constraints (terrain) at project target areas, and also recognized the program’s limitations (Syed *ISD p4*). The reasons expressed for selecting the specific target districts—including the area’s poverty, number of internally displaced people⁵, and proximity to tribal agencies of FATA— demonstrated KP-SADP’s attention to the local context (Ahmed, *ISR-3 p1*).

The program also accorded recognition to both formally or informally organized local community institutions, such as tribal elders/Jirga and peace (*Aman*) committees, and they were involved in the project through stakeholder consultations that informed them of assessment and safeguard policies (Syed *ISD p6-7*). Executed by the planning and development department, these consultations provided a platform to exchange views and knowledge for the greater efficiency of the project (*ESA iii*). They were used in ESA’s study methodology and the post crisis needs assessment (PCNA) report, which had details such as the stakeholders involved, the consultation process and subsequent suggested indicators available in the ESA report. Complete outcomes of the consultations are in a separate report, which is not available on the WB website. An ISR report also noted that the project was relevant to the region’s ongoing repatriation process through its focus on temporarily displaced persons (TDPs) but did not elaborate on this assertion (Akbar 2). There are no indicators to assess the project’s contribution towards TDPs, nor are details available of any intervention targeted at TDPs. Some insight is provided by Dr. Noreen Naseer (key informant), who explained that host communities in the region have significantly benefited through donor funds and programs for displaced communities. For instance, if schools were made for TDPs, host communities benefited as well since they are also participants in the bigger community, and are using the infrastructure built as part of the development programs (for instance, school renovations in Peshawar benefit both host and displaced communities).

Similar to KP-SADP, a political economy lens was crucial for FATA RCLIP with its context of fragility, conflict and violence (FCV), emergency status, and constant political turmoil in the region. The project succeeded in addressing the political economy in some instances while failing in others. In theory, the project consistently addressed the political situation of the region (in terms of insurgency and its effects, governance, economy and more) and accounted for the limitations this situation imposed. It was aligned with the foundational assessment in the long-term peace building of FATA, the “post-conflict needs assessment (PCNA)”, and responded specifically to two of the PCNA’s strategic objectives (*ICRR p17*). PCNA objective 2 was related to “employment and livelihood opportunities” while objective three was related to “provision of basic services” (p17). Additionally, FATA’s scale-up in 2015 was a response to the emerging needs of the region post the military operation Zarb-e-Azb (p10) and project extensions were undertaken to address the issue of TDPs (p11). The interface with local power structures was forged by recognizing the importance of a tribe or clan in the power equation, and the project’s use of “indigenous structures, including agency development councils, peace (*Aman*) committees, *Jirga* (council of elders), and tribal elders (*Mallack*) as facilitating partners for ensuring the participation of local

communities, especially the poor and marginalized members” (p8). These structures were to be used in identification of beneficiaries and activities, village mapping and implementation of project initiatives (*ICRR p8*). The extent of participation by these local institutes is unknown and no indicator is assigned to assess their role.

3.4.2 Impact of Local Politics on Programs

A greater understanding of the political economy’s role in the operation of RSPs can be developed by examining the impact of local politics on program activities and outcomes. Local politics were said to have affected IECLP’s activities, such as post-terror financing allegations and changes to Pakistan’s financial and banking regulations that made CBO registration and management difficult for the WWFP team (p16).

Political factors also significantly contributed to delays and problems in implementation after FATA RLCIP’s restructuring: a court case between the project staff and FATA secretariat, allegations of staff corruption, a staff hiring ban issued by Pakistan’s Electoral Commission and the merger of KP and FATA (*ICRR p13*). The project’s financial management (FM) performance was rated ‘unsatisfactory’ towards project closure when the internal conflicts emerged between the PMU and project staff members (p26). FATA RLCIP’s ICRR points out serious implementation issues in community contracts, which were alarming since the project’s financing was mostly allocated to community development schemes (p27). These issues included contracts awarded to firms with no professional registration; missing dates and signatures on official documents; one scheme approved without signing the contract; missing certification of completed work even when payments were made; incomplete progress reports by consulting firms; payments made through open cash cheques; and final payment installments released without satisfactory results (*ICRR p27*). Dr. Noreen Naseer (key informant), provided some critical insight, explaining that the KP secretariat—the main implementing agency in the region—faced issues of incompetence and corruption, where even funds allocated under the Ehsaas Program were alleged to have been embezzled. She, however, described that there was an issue of political will and commitment (on part of the KP secretariat) particularly in the former-FATA region. For instance, the KP secretariat raised issues about disbursing PKR 2 billion to FATA annually for development (as part of the conditions of merger). Their concern about FATA’s ability to “absorb these funds” was an excuse to reduce disbursement, according to Dr. Naseer. Majoritarianism plays a significant role in the lack of political commitment. There were a total of nine seats (in political office) from FATA and these seats had limited political clout. KP also had certain turfs and political agents focused on those areas only, having little interest in the limited seats from FATA.

Security concerns of the KP-FATA region have often been cited as a reason for limited targeting of interventions and delays in implementation/failure to meet targets. In fact, Providing a different perspective, Dr. Naseer mentioned that several development projects continue targeting settled districts instead of the tribal ones (even when the allocated funds are for tribal districts) on the basis of security and restricted access. This is used as a justification to avoid allocating funds to the tribal districts. However, with the programs such as Sarhad RSP, she pointed out real challenges while accessing areas for program activities in KP. Moreover, it is difficult to secure the no-objection certificate (NOC) (from the government), which is required for working in the tribal areas. Dr. Naseer mentioned that donors were also aware of the “red zones” places that were not

accessible. She pointed out that if a government claims it cannot work in a certain area (due to security reasons)—as is the case with certain districts in KP-FATA—it is logic dictates that the same rule applies to an RSP and/or NGO as well.

3.4.3 Elite Capture

Elite capture is another dimension of the political economy that has a significant role in RSP interventions. IECLP addresses risk of elite capture in the event that terms and conditions associated with voluntary land donation (VLD) for community program activities were left unchecked (*Leao 2020 p22*). Although elite capture is not defined, the discussion suggests that this meant possible domination by landowners/powerful community members of voluntarily donated lands where program activities are carried out or infrastructure is built. This compromises the availability and benefit of these interventions to the intended audience. The report does not discuss the issue but instead focuses on resolving it through the usage of existing VLD framework, emphasizing communal use and the spread of donations over several owners rather than a single owner (p22). For IECLP, the risk of elite capture was aggravated by the tenure of ownership, which was set to three years after project life and not to the life of the asset, risking serious consequences if a landowner/titleholder decided to reclaim their land after the tenure period (p22). For SRSO, Mr. Khangharani (key informant) mentioned that in his 22 years of experience, elite capture and “intrusions” had happened to a great extent. This was one of the reasons why women’s organizations were targeted strongly in Sindh. Similarly, Mr. Khangharani explained that programs need to target specific populations to avoid elite capture through mechanisms such as the poverty score card (PSC). In cases where activities were targeting all community members it provided an opportunity for elite members to divert resources for themselves. For instance, when activities under RSPs such as lending did not have a targeted audience, several elites borrowed and defaulted.

Mr. Shahnawaz Khan (key informant) claimed that BRSP’s LEP-1 had no elite capture even though such pressures were brought to bear on program design and implementation. Key informant, Mr. Amjad Rashid (of Balochistan Development Network (BDN)’s Taraqee Foundation), however, claimed that significant elite capture happened in community organizations (COs), the bedrock of RSPs. Describing the evolution of PPAF model, Mr Rashid said that the first two phases of PPAF focused on “institutions for the poor”, such as BRSP and Taraqee Foundation, which received support to work with the communities. The third phase of PPAF shifted focus to “institutions of the poor”, and this is where the elite capture happened, he added. Mr. Rashid explained that most LSO leaders were not poor and belonged to a wide spectrum of society: community elders, well-off teachers, union members or an official supported by a tribal elder. However, further investigation and evaluation is required to support this perspective and to determine the extent and impact of elite capture in Balochistan and RSPs in general.

3.4.4 Programs’ Relationship with the Government

Finally, the relationship of programs with various tiers of government is a crucial element in project financing and implementation. Considerable attention was accorded to political linkages in SRSO’s LEP-I. The program team collaborated with the district government in arranging four medical

camps for hepatitis vaccination in target UCs (*SRSO-PCR p23*). Mr. Sono Khangharani (key informant) explained that since the Sindh government was supportive of the project, government officials in each area would receive the message that LEP-1 is a government project or a government sponsored project. This played a crucial role in not only curbing opposition to program activities by government officials but also helped garner support from these officials.

On the other hand, IECLP had intended to seek support of the local and provincial governments in activities (such as the export of marine species), utilization of past initiatives such as an MoU with the fisheries department for access rights (both legal and physical) along with lobbying effort for improving landing sites and infrastructure (*ISD*). However, details of other stakeholders in the co-management of activities or factors necessitating collaboration are unavailable. Further inquiry is needed in the case of MoUs, especially their utility for development projects, given that they are not legally or financially binding. A key factor affecting IECLP at the planning stage was a “strong buy-in from the government of Sindh” and the ministry of livestock and fisheries’ interest in supporting the freshwater fisheries sector, a sector not covered previously (*Leao 2020 p15*). The IECLP report also mentioned that WB engaged with the agriculture sector again through the Sindh Agriculture Growth Project. This initiative proved useful for the Bank in “piloting a project that focused solely on freshwater fisheries with the hope that successful interventions would eventually be scaled up” (15). More information is required to better understand these interfaces with the government, particularly details about the process of establishing collaborations or the outcomes of this relationship.

KP-SADP, on its part, had noteworthy interactions with the local government. The project was reported to have played a key role in strengthening ‘state-citizen trust’ that SADP had been consistently building (with the PCNA objective 1 serving as a “working pillar” for this exercise) (*ISR-5 p2*). The quarter six report findings of third-party monitoring agent (TPMA) also endorsed the progress in building community trust of the state. ISR reports also claimed that the project’s social mobilization initiatives had enhanced capability and visibility of relevant departments of the KP government (in remote parts especially), and contributed towards strengthening institutions (p2). There is no specific section that links program activities to these outcomes.

While the WB study team was unable to get precise details about the relationship forged with tiers of government in BRSP’s LEP-1, Mr. Shahnawaz Khan (key informant) provided an overall picture. He stated that the provincial government was not supportive of civil society organizations, including RSPs—and this impacted the functioning of the programs. For instance, he pointed out that a major challenge for RSPs in Balochistan was the frequent turnover of government officials such as the district commissioner (DC), who rarely completed a year of their tenure (as part of the program). This means that RSPs that had established an understanding and rapport with a particular official, had to build connections again with the new government official—and often, depending on the official, a positive working relationship is not achieved. For the LEP program, Mr. Khan claimed that concerns raised with PPAF on local needs were not addressed at all. Balochistan, he added, required a greater budget allocation as compared with other provinces, given its regional characteristics and challenges. To understand such contexts, donors need to trust implementing agencies or undertake examination of local needs themselves, as done by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The organization got a better grasp of

BRSP's concerns about local needs after their staff visited the relevant districts and engaged with local communities.

The study team's research makes it clear that political economy had a significant role to play in the functioning and impact of RSPs. It also acknowledges the presence of local power structures and their ability to facilitate and obstruct program operations. Additionally, the study offers some clear pointers: i) local politics have a significant impact on the functioning of a program; ii) elite capture is observed in certain activities and scenarios despite some conflicting narratives; and serious attempts were made by program management and staff to forge relations with the government. Observing serious gaps in political contexts of programs, the study recommends that RSPs should prioritize the inclusion of various dimensions of political economy in design, implementation and evaluation.

4. Conclusion and Way Forward

This study has attempted to cull together a wide array of rural support programs across different regional, geographical and socio-political contexts. While the study team disaggregated the assessment across the themes of community mobilization, women's empowerment, sustainability of programs and the political-economy context in which they function, there is considerable overlap across these themes. In this concluding section, the team has attempted to identify these intersections and suggests the way forward.

Community engagement and organization are the central precepts of rural support programs. The success of community engagement has a strong bearing on women's empowerment and sustainability of projects. In other words, community mobilization will only be deemed successful if it is inclusive of women and results in improving their social and economic well-being. Similarly, if the collective action forged is not sustainable beyond the duration of the project, then the very purpose of mobilization for reducing poverty in the community is defeated. Except for IECLP and FATA RLCIP, none of the programs reported sustainability of their community mobilization effort. The LEP-1 programs and KP-SADP did report results of some program activities after closure but a concentrated focus on sustainability of collective action was not found.

At a procedural level, an important pre-requisite for effective community mobilization is a detailed benchmark study that identifies issues around which collective action should take place. Among the programs chosen by the WB team, only IECLP had conducted a benchmark study. In the future, however, such exceptions would have to become the rule. The way forward for every RSP intervention would be to conduct benchmark studies on the social, economic and political contexts. Moreover, the project design should be based on assessments that are an outcome of community needs rather than those pre-determined by program organizers. For instance, if the priority need of the community is a school, a medical facility or any other public good that can be provided by the state, then community mobilization should be done to lobby the state. Lobbying, advocacy and rights-based mobilization are crucial elements missing from the menu of interventions that RSPs engage in.

In the sample of projects chosen, emphasis has been on capacity building through training and asset transfers as important vehicles for poverty alleviation of communities. The evaluation of these projects, however, do not give us a proper assessment of the impact of these trainings. The

efficacy of training in a particular craft is contingent on the economic context of that region in which that skill is useful and ultimately on the rates of return on that training. Except for BRSP's LEP-1, none of the assessments have metrics on the rates of return that the training yielded or on employment opportunities that exist for those crafts.

Similarly with asset transfers, the assessments do not incorporate existing market conditions that can yield a high rate of return on the assets. For instance, a common asset transfer for women across a number of programs is livestock. There is no assessment that provides an actual rate of return on the asset, the marketing process of livestock and associated products—and whether the women were able to retain the returns of these assets. There is also no research and study on improving returns through training and asset transfers, or by advocating for workers' or producers' rights.

The issue of sustainability of program objectives beyond the project life cycle is critical to the success of the RSP model. Ms. Shandana Khan (key informant) informed the WB team that close to 60 percent of the COs established over the years are functional. However, the mere presence of COs beyond the project cycle does not necessarily translate into fulfilling the larger objectives of pulling communities out of poverty. As mentioned above, the only instrument mentioned by the key informants on sustainability was the CIF. Apart from the fact that CIF was not present or planned in any of the projects the team studied, its efficacy is limited beyond being a useful contingency fund for both idiosyncratic and cross-variate shocks.

While some positive externalities were observed, notably in SRSO LEP-1 and BRSP's LEP, the study team did not notice any long term and sustained effort from COs towards either providing critical infrastructure in a project area, or lobbying the government for community development. This is not surprising as the entire process of community mobilization is 'apolitical' in nature, and thus does not lend to rallying a group of people around lobbying or rights. The team's exploration on political economy also highlighted the importance of the broader political structure that impacted project execution and sustainability. Pakistan's macro environment, where registering CBOs and for them to financially function has confronted hurdles because of a general anti-NGO environment created by the state and restrictions imposed by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) which has created an important bottleneck for RSPs to carry on their 'business as usual.' While the RSPs, particularly the RSPN and PPAF should find project level solutions to overcome these hurdles, they also need to carry out advocacy campaigns at the national and international levels against the encroachment of space for civil society.

Elite capture, as mentioned earlier, is a feature that overlaps across the themes explored in this paper. Khan and Short (2020) claim that several dimensions of elite capture have been prevalent in RSPs in Pakistan. The most striking among them was the capture of COs and LSOs by local elites. The study came across possibilities of elite capture through land donations. While this is identified as a 'risk' in project documents, there has been no follow up on whether—and to what extent— this risk materialized and whether there was a strategy to 'ring-fence' this phenomenon.²⁷ It appears that ring-fencing is the only plausible strategy in most social and political contexts in Pakistan. Indeed, there is no doubt that wherever the social structure at the local level is hierarchical across any dimension—whether it is large landholdings or a 'middle class' of traders,

²⁷ Key informant, Mr Imtiaz Alvi, used this term, and said it will not be possible to fully eliminate elite capture in an unequal social structure.

or multiple castes or religious groups—those in a position of power will attempt to divert resources in their direction.

SRSO's LEP-1 and BRSP related projects attempted to overcome the issue of elite capture through community mobilization based on the poverty score card (PSC). RSPs need to incorporate the PSC method to avoid elite capture in terms of working with the poorest in the community. Moreover, there needs to be explicit indicators developed both in the inception documents and in assessments that demonstrate how the elite capture issue was dealt with and ring-fenced.

Working with different tiers of government has posed considerable roadblocks for the RSP model and its future relevance. In Pakistan, the governance at the local level has witnessed a peculiar trajectory over the past two decades owing to a few factors. For one, local government elections are held sporadically. For another, when elected local governments are not in place, their functions are performed by the provincial governments. In such a context, the ability of COs and LSOs to forge partnerships with the local government gets severely compromised. Also, the first ladder of social mobility for the more enterprising individuals in a community would be to get elected to local governments. This avenue is closed most of the time primarily due to the irregular nature of local government elections and the 'apolitical' process and nature of mobilization done by RSPs.

At the provincial level, almost all our key informants praised the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) government in the Sindh province for acknowledging, facilitating and financing projects executed by SRSO through the People's Poverty Alleviation Program. In contrast, Khaleel Tetley (key informant) stated that the provincial government in the province of Punjab never professed any interest in the RSP model for poverty alleviation. Small wonder that the province does not have much of an RSP footprint. Similarly, there was minimal buy-in by the provincial governments of KP and Balochistan for the programs, which were sustained mainly by donors.

Close to four decades since the RSP model was introduced in the country, it is in need of significant re-evaluation. It's earlier mentioned successes notwithstanding, the model appears unsustainable in its current form. The fact that it requires subsidization, either by donors or the government, in some ways illustrates the reality that an apolitical participatory model of development soon runs into a dead end if it is unable to advocate for broader community rights. In such a scenario, the way forward for RSPs will be to explicitly incorporate rights based advocacy in its community mobilization strategies.

Annexure

Glossary

ACCs	Area Coordination Committees
AF	Additional Financing
AR	After Restructuring
BCGs	Bakery cum General Stores
BMPs	Better Management Practices
BR	Before Restructuring
BRACE	Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment
BRSP	Balochistan Rural Support Program
CAPs	Community Action Plans
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
COs	Community Organizations
CDD	Community Driven Development
CEIGs	Clustered Economic Interest Groups
CRPs	Community Resource Persons
DCCs	District Coordination Committees
DFID	Department for International Development
DIK	Dera Ismail Khan
DIUs	District Implementation Units
DPU s	Domestic Poultry Units
EFA	Economic and Financial Analysis
EIGs	Economic Interest Groups
EME	External Monitoring and Evaluation
ERR	Economic Rate of Return
ESA	Environmental and Social Assessment
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
RLCIP	Rural Livelihoods and Community Infrastructure Project
FCV	Fragility, Conflict and Violence
FGs	Fisher Groups/Farmer Groups
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FSS	Fisher Sustainability Schools
FM	Financial Management
FY	Financial Year
GoP	Government of Pakistan
GoS	Government of Sindh
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanisms
GS	Graduation Survey
GSR	Graduation Survey Report

HH(s)	Household(s)
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ICR	Implementation Completion Report
ICRR	Implementation Completion Results Report
IECLP	Indus Eco Region Community Livelihood Project
IGA	Indigo Grower Association
IMI	Institutional Maturity Index
ISD	Integrated Safeguards Datasheet
ISR	Implementation Status and Results
JSDF	Japan Social Development Fund
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
KP-SADP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Southern Area Development Project
LEP	Livelihood Enhancement and Protection Program
LIP(s)	Livelihood Investment Plan(s)
LIOS	Local Indigenous Organizations
LSOs	Local Support Organizations
MIS	Monitoring Information System
MTs	Master Trainers
MTR	Mid-Term Review
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDTF	Multi Donor Trust Fund
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAB	National Accountability Bureau
NGO(s)	Nongovernmental Organization(s)
O&M	Operations and Management
PAD(s)	Project Appraisal Document(s)
PCNA	Post-Crisis Needs Assessment
PD	Project Director
PDO	Project Development Objective
PDOI	Project Development Objective Indicator
PID	Project Information Document
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PSC	Poverty Score Card
PCR	Project Completion Report
PPAF	Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund
PSU	Program Support Unit
PMU	Project Management Unit
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
RLCIP	Rural Livelihoods and Community Infrastructure Project
RF	Results Framework
SRSO	Sindh Rural Support Organization
TPMA(s)	Third Party Monitoring Agent(s)
TDPs	Temporarily Displaced Persons

TPMVs	Third-Party Monitoring and Validation Reports
UCs	Union Councils
VLD	Voluntary Land Donation
VTC	Vocational Training Center
VOs	Village Organizations
WB	World Bank
WWFP	World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan

List of Key Information Interviewees

The key informants interviewed were:

1. Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan: is one of the pioneers of rural development programs in Pakistan. He established the first-ever rural support program (RSP), the Agha Khan RSP, in 1982. He is the chairman of the Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) and the Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO). He has worked in the rural development sector for almost 60 years.
2. Mr. Qazi Azmat Isa is the current chief executive of the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF). He has experience of almost 3 decades in the development sector and worked as a senior official in the World Bank for over a decade.
3. Ms. Shandana Humayun Khan is the chief executive officer of RSPN and serves on the board of the Balochistan Rural Support Program (BRSP). She has extensive experience spanning over 20 years in rural development and policy. At RSPN, she has pursued policy advocacy with donors and policy makers at the highest levels of government and related institutions.
4. Mr. Khaleel Tetlay is the current chief operating officer of the Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN). He has previously served as the chief operating officer of the Punjab Rural Support Program (PRSP) and has almost 3 decades of experience in development, rural support, and nongovernmental organizations.
5. Mr. Sono Khangharani is the current chief executive officer of Thardeep Microfinance Foundation, a local organization providing microfinance services in the Tharparkar region of the Sindh Province. He has over 2 decades of experience in rural development and has worked in leadership positions with organizations such as SRSO and National Rural Support Programme.
6. Professor Noreen Naseer currently serves as a lecturer at the department of political science, University of Peshawar. She has worked on issues related to Pakistan-Afghanistan borderland besides women and children of tribal areas. She is a regular writer on different forums and is also associated with various academic and civil society groups.
7. Dr. Shahnawaz Khan is senior manager (programs) at BRSP. He has been working at BRSP for 14 years and was part of the LEP-1 programme.

8. Mr. Amjad Rashid, CEO, Taraqee Foundation, leads the Balochistan Development Network (BDN).
9. Mr. Imtiaz Alvi is a senior rural development specialist at the World Bank and is also a WB Team Leader under PPAF.

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