

## Summary of the Evaluation Results

### Projects in the Programme:

- Project Title: Fight Hunger First Initiative – Upscaling Best Practices
- Project Numbers: AS 1639/IND 1296-1302  
BMZ: 2014.3436.4/ Indien
- Project Executing Agency: Welthungerhilfe, Living Farms, CWS, Pravah, SRAN, Vaagdhara, Jansahas
- Funding amount total: 730.000 EUR
- Co-funding: 547.500 EUR (BMZ)
- Project Duration: 01.11.2014 - 31.12.2017 (30.4.2018)

### Evaluation:

- Name of Evaluator: Dr Christine Martins
- Evaluation Type: Final evaluation
- Evaluation Time Frame: 2.-21.2.2018 in India

### 1. Brief Programme/ Project Description and Context Conditions

The project “Fight Hunger First Initiative – Upscaling best Practices” (FHFI II) was implemented by six partner NGOs in the states of Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, coordinated by Welthungerhilfe India. The target group of the project comprised of 190,882 people (33,554 households, HHs) living in 303 villages in 66 Panchayats spread in eight districts and nine blocks of the five states. Project villages were selected according to poverty, malnutrition and remoteness. Indirect beneficiaries were the inhabitants of the nine project blocks, in total 1,280,000 persons (240,000 HHs).

The project used a multi-sector approach for sustainable food and nutrition security, through behaviour change and empowerment. Nutritional behaviour change was to be achieved through improved dietary diversity, nutrition sensitive crop planning, consumption and management of uncultivated fruits, childcare practices, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and income generation. The project followed a rights-based approach realizing rights and livelihood opportunities in less developed areas.

In its first phase, FHFI had been working in nine districts of Jharkhand, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh involving seven Indian NGOs and Welthungerhilfe India (42,725 HHs, budget: 1,390,000 EUR incl. 1,000,000 EUR from BMZ, project period: Nov. 2011 up to April 2015). Further two partner NGOs were added to this process with Welthungerhilfe funds, in the states of Odisha and Karnataka. Project purpose of FHFI I had been to improve key indicators related to food, income and nutrition security in eleven selected blocks through community institution building, innovative piloting and advocacy at different levels.

Five FHFI I partners continued to be involved in Phase II, and 122 Phase I villages were also covered in Phase II, but with different activities. Five best practices identified in Phase I were to be applied and up-scaled in Phase II. These comprised:

1. Linking agriculture to natural resource management and nutrition (LANN) by Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) for behaviour change (LANN PLA)
2. Nutrition-sensitive micro planning for food and livelihood security (micro planning)
3. Nutrition camps for community-based management of acute malnutrition (nutrition camps)
4. Nutrition-sensitive integrated farming for dietary diversity and food security (nutrition-sensitive agriculture)
5. Institution building for collectivization and empowerment (institution building)

India faces a paradoxical situation – its rapid economic growth is coupled with a much slower decline in undernutrition. The project areas are characterized by a high level of poverty, a

high rate of illiteracy, a high rate of malnutrition, especially in children, pregnant and lactating mothers, available support programmes of the government insufficiently implemented (both coverage and quality) and not sufficiently known and accessed by target households, and a high rate of corruption. The prevailing malnutrition, hunger and poverty are less a problem of availability but rather of governance – inequality in access to food, rights and services. Appropriate laws have been released and different ministries have set up various support programmes, such as the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) which guarantees 100 days of employment per year for communal and individual asset building, Mid Day Meals (MDM) in schools, and the Public Distribution Scheme (PDS).

## **2. Relevance of the project**

The programme is highly relevant for the target communities which are of scheduled tribes, scheduled castes or other vulnerable minorities, in backward rural areas. It is especially relevant for the most vulnerable part of the population, malnourished children and their mothers. Project activities comprised knowledge and awareness building, advocacy and empowerment, enabling the communities to make better use of existing resources (natural resources incl. agriculture as well as government programs available) and corresponded well to the situation of the local communities as they were not based on external inputs.

The project supported Welthungerhilfe's vision of a world in which everyone can lead an independent life with dignity and fairness, free from hunger and poverty. It is in line with the Welthungerhilfe Strategy 2017-2020 to continue the strategic focus on sustainable food and nutrition security for the most vulnerable. The project follows Welthungerhilfe's Orientation Framework on Sustainable Food and Nutrition Security of 2015.

The project was very relevant to the objectives of the partner organisations fighting against poverty and hunger. With India's high level of economic development but alarming rates of undernutrition of the most deprived, the project had been highly relevant to the country.

## **3. Effectiveness of the project**

The project aimed at improved quality, coverage and access to public services related to food and nutrition, employment and education in the project area. The achievement of the project purpose was measured by three indicators covering days of employment through MGNREGA, malnutrition of children as well as school attendance. Except MGNREGA employment, the indicators were achieved in most states. FHFII has contributed a lot to improved food and nutrition security, income and primary education in the project area. In the selected blocks, quality, coverage and access to public services especially related to food and nutrition, but also to employment and education has improved. The project has also been very successful in upscaling best practices beyond the project area.

Project preparation and planning was good, except shortcomings in indicator formulation. Unspecific or less suitable indicators were not adjusted in the first year of the project. Project steering and execution was also good – the six partners implemented their projects supported by the Welthungerhilfe Programme Coordinator. There were some limitations in reporting (e.g., some partners did not report indicator achievement in their semi-annual reports). Important events for coordination and exchange were the annual review meetings for 2015 and 2016. For 2017, no such meeting was organised. Instead, the project presented the project results to a larger audience in Delhi in Sept. 2017. Cooperation with GIZ for using their channels for scaling up project results was insufficient. The project was not affected by the risks mentioned in the project proposal or by other risks.

## **4. Efficiency**

The objectives of the project have been achieved in a cost-effective way. With a budget of 730,000 EUR (i.e., 21 EUR per participating HH), the project has achieved incredible results - in the 303 project villages and beyond. Six project partners with, in total, 52 staff

implemented their respective projects with limited resources. Already during project implementation, the project conducted scaling up. 49.8% of project funds was spent on personnel which is not high considering the large area covered and the emphasis on capacity building of target groups which, in most cases, does not require high funds. 42.3% of the budget was used for operational costs. Investment costs were extremely low (0.6%) as partners used their own resources.

The project approach of

- a) Identifying in a first phase of a project best practices in the fight against hunger, malnutrition and poverty and implementing these in the second phase and scaling them up
- b) Increasing the utilization of the existing government programmes by needy communities and, at the same time, improving their quality and performance
- c) Continuous capacity building of partner organisations during implementation of best practices and frequent exchange among partners

has been extremely innovative, successful and achieved large benefits at low costs.

Shortcomings were identified in the internal project M&E system: too many different monitoring activities were conducted, monitoring systems often changed, indicators were added which were not of relevance for reporting, indicators were not adjusted during year 1, no systematic recording of monitoring values, partners reported not in a unified way. There was no indication that monitoring data was systematically used for project management or steering (e.g., adjustment of activities). The data collected in baseline and endline survey did not cover indicator values needed.

## **5. Impacts**

Project measures resulted in manifold outcomes and impacts – in economic, socio-cultural, institutional and environmental fields. Food and nutrition security, maternal and child health, income, local service delivery and primary education in the project areas have improved to a considerable degree. Dietary diversity of women and children increased, local institutions were strengthened, awareness about rights and entitlements raised. All leading to improved livelihoods of the target communities. Negative outcomes and impacts were not identified.

Economic impacts included reduced household expenses due to vegetables grown in nutrition gardens, in some cases even income from sale of vegetables, less expenditures buying agricultural inputs due to organic farming (this even led to some degree to reduced indebtedness), income generation through the sale of vermi-compost, income from MGNREGA employment which also included individual benefit schemes, e.g., construction of cattle sheds or fish ponds which is expected to provide future income. In Rajasthan, income will be generated through fruits trees of National Horticulture Mission which was linked to MGNREGA employment. In some cases, project activities resulted in reduced temporary work migration. This can be seen as indicator for improved livelihood as the family could compensate the reduction or loss of off-farm income.

The improved nutritional status of children has long-term effects on income: Nutrition during pregnancy and in the first years of a child's life provides the essential building blocks for brain development, healthy growth and a strong immune system. The right nutrition during the first 1000 days has a profound impact on a child's ability to grow, learn and thrive - and a lasting effect on a country's health and prosperity.

The nutrition camps helped to treat malnourished children and taught their mothers in child care and nutrition using locally available resources. Knowledge about nutrition improved, attitudes of caregivers changed with respect to childcare and feeding, the use of toilets increased, personal hygiene of women improved, harmful traditional practices in mother and child care reduced, child marriages are less frequent. Also, VHND attendance of the communities improved – while at the other side, Anganwadi Workers (AWW), Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) and Auxiliary Nurse and Midwife (ANM) came more regularly and provide better services. Thus, immunisation rates and deworming of children, IFA tablet

intake of women and registration of pregnancy increased. Services in the village improved (health, ICDS, schools, PDS). Hunger periods reduced, dietary diversity improved, the nutritional status and health status of children and their mothers improved considerably. Communities, grassroot service providers and officers better understand the linkages of agriculture and natural resources with nutrition.

The decision making power of women improved – due to their experiences in the self-help groups (SHGs), in the LANN PLA and in the nutrition camps. They have now a different role and are more respected by their husbands and in the communities. Before women were scared to talk to outsiders and covered their faces during meetings. During the project period, they gained self-confidence and are more open and outspoken.

Awareness was also generated in the field of education. More girls are sent to school. Facility audits of the schools led to improved school services, e.g. furniture and MDMs. School attendance has improved as parents and teachers give more priority to it. All this led to improved primary education.

The project (re-)introduced growing of pulses, traditional crops and forgotten varieties. Eating uncultivated food (UCF) is now seen as part of the cultural heritage. Now, people make better use of the biodiversity available. Awareness raising, nutrition gardens, crop planning, seed processing, seed preservation, food preparation and preservation and the use of UCF resulted in reducing the hunger gap. Where possible, the cultivation of second crops was introduced. In some cases, the integration of livestock and aquaculture further improved dietary diversity.

The project led to different organisational and political changes. Existing and newly established SHGs were strengthened and empowered. Nutritional aspects were included in the activities of SHGs. Farmer groups and farmer group federations were strengthened. In Odisha, the project re-activated traditional village committees (Kutumb).

SMC strengthening led to higher school attendance and improved quality and regularity of MDM. Especially in SRAN and Jansahas, children cabinets in schools were supported which teaches democracy and governance at young age. Some partners have promoted SMC federations to support the sensitive work of SMCs at school level.

Due to the project, information about available government programmes increased. The project provided information about entitlements and complaint mechanisms. Social monitoring tools like community score cards (CSC), social audits, and citizen report cards were introduced and practiced which helped improving service delivery (e.g., services of ANM, quality of MDM, SDP). Due to the project, the capacity of local service providers to address malnutrition improved; the target HH benefited from improved services at the Anganwadi Centres (AWCs - mother and child care centres) such as the village health and nutrition days (VHND), in schools (MDMs), at the PDS and of MGNREGA.

The involvement in FHFII increased the capacities of the six partner organisations, especially in the field of LANN and nutrition. There are now capable institutions in India who can act as trainers and provide backstopping. This has been supported by the fact that Welthungerhilfe was not allowed to do such assignments itself due to its legal entity in India.

Environment-related changes were mainly due to nutrition gardens, introduction of low external input agriculture and mixed cropping, increased awareness about and sustainable utilization of traditional crops, old varieties and uncultivated foods (UCF), watershed development under MGNREGA, increased awareness about environmental issues and empowering local communities to stand up for their rights and fight against forest encroachment and monocultures and for using local tree species in afforestation projects, e.g., in Odisha. All this had positive effects on the environment and local biodiversity.

The different **scaling up** efforts led to impacts far beyond the project area. Partners are implementing best practices on behalf of government organisations and national and international development organisations in different areas. For example, microplanning is promoted on behalf of the government the two project blocks in Jharkhand, on behalf of

UNICEF in Bihar, and on behalf of World Vision in Bihar and Rajasthan. There are several programmes scaling up LANN PLA in Odisha and Chhattisgarh.

Welthungerhilfe promoted the best practices of the project in projects in India (Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh), Nepal and Bangladesh. Parts of FHFIs LANN PLA training manual was included in the training manual for AWWs of GIZ and Welthungerhilfe in Madhya Pradesh (Food and Nutrition Security Program, FaNS; SEWOH Nutrition) in order to make the training more multi-sectorial by covering the agriculture, natural resource and nutrition linkage. GIZ adopted the AWW training manual as online training platform which adds to FHFIs impacts. Further impacts could be achieved if Welthungerhilfe managed to include FHFIs best practices in the GIZ-supported projects “Environmental Benefits for MGNREGA” and “Umbrella Programme on Natural Resource Management” (UPNRM) as offered by GIZ on February 19, 2018.

The project contributed to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Most impact was achieved in SDG 2 (Zero hunger). Other direct impacts were achieved in SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 3 (Good health and well-being), SDG 4 (Quality education), SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation), and SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions). Indirectly, the project contributed also to SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production), SDG 13 (Climate action) and SDG 15 (Life on land).

## **6. Sustainability**

The positive results achieved in the economic-financial fields, in food and nutrition security, in socio-cultural, organisational and institutional/political aspects as well as on the environment are very likely to be durable. Key is that measures initiated do not require external support. Locally available government support programmes are better utilized than before. Knowledge and awareness have been created at community level; local institutions have become stronger. Nutrition gardens and crop diversification will continue; successful agricultural practices will be maintained, especially as they require less money. Additional and more diverse food is available in the project area. The knowledge gained during the nutrition camps is shared in the family, in the extended family, with neighbours, and sometimes also in neighbouring villages. In the villages where volunteers have been capacitated, they will further promote project activities.

The rights-based approach of the project supported sustainability, as awareness creation and empowerment of the deprived population as well as transparency and an improved governance of the administration are at the forefront. Successes in this field that are achieved during the programme will be followed up and carried on by local institutions after the project end.

## **7. Key Recommendations and Lessons Learnt**

The evaluation derived the following key recommendations:

### ***Recommendations for the last month of FHFIs – Upscaling Best Practices***

1. Conduct a final review meeting with all partners for concluding and sharing (e.g. , scaling up, results of impact evaluation and final evaluation)
2. Assure availability of products developed, such as information, education, and communication (IEC) materials, leaflets, brochures, project documents, films, ...) beyond the project period; open source access

### ***Recommendations for future projects of Welthungerhilfe and partners***

#### ***Planning***

3. Assure that baseline surveys cover all aspects of the project; if not, find alternative way to collect baseline values for the remaining indicators
4. For achieving impact at a certain level, always plan activities accordingly
5. Consider an exit phase for follow-up of village level and scaling up activities

### ***Implementation***

6. Put more focus on deworming and WASH, consider including teeth care at schools, put more efforts in strengthening of community-based organisations (CBOs) at higher level (e.g., federations), increase the involvement at GP level in project activities
7. Include information about the available support schemes and how access them in LANN PLA and micro planning
8. Improve advocacy at higher levels (state, national), e.g., by presenting and sharing best practices and the changes achieved through the intervention; further promote multi-sectoral cooperation (e.g., project events, project visits)

### ***Monitoring***

9. Define simple and SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) indicators, one indicator should cover one aspect only, adjust indicator formulation within the first year of the project together with project partners
10. Establish a monitoring plan at the beginning of each project (which indicators should be monitored when, by whom, how, sampling and sample size)

### ***Reporting***

11. Improve reporting by providing a well-structured report format covering all relevant information in a systematic way which have to be filled by all partners and updated periodically

### ***Recommendations to Welthungerhilfe India and Bangladesh***

12. Organise state level conferences presenting FHFII results to a larger audience
13. Make use of the capacities available at the partner organisations to update the LANN PLA manual
14. Use GIZ for scaling up at national level, assure that FHFII project experiences are integrated in the Environmental Benefits of MGNREGA Project and UPNRM
15. Assure that project proposals cover all activities (e.g., budget for baseline and endline surveys) and that indicators mirror the intended change

### ***Recommendations to Welthungerhilfe Bonn***

16. Consider an exit phase for project completion, for follow-up scaling up activities and for documentation
17. Organize training for Welthungerhilfe Delhi staff on formulation of SMART indicators
18. Improve relationship with GIZ in India for scaling up Welthungerhilfe results

### ***Conclusions and lessons learnt***

The project's multi-sector approach in fighting hunger and poverty tackling all four dimensions of food and nutrition security (availability, accessibility, utilization and stability) in very backward areas of India and scaling up best practices was extremely successful. Six partner organisations made experiences in different districts with prominent rates of hunger and malnutrition, shared their experiences, learned from each other and contributed to further refinement of the best practices which had been identified in the project's first phase.

The rights-based approach of the project was very successful – it integrated the norms, standards and principles of international human rights such as the right to adequate food into its plans, policies and processes. Target groups were seen as rights holders instead of as beneficiaries of aid. Building their capacities to address the root causes of food and nutrition security problems was a central element of the project. Civil society was supported to advocate and lobby for access to available resources. In India, with available government

structures and budgets and sufficient space for civil society to act, the rights-based approach worked well.

The best practices applied and scaled up by the project - LANN PLA, micro planning, nutrition camps, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, institution building - have proven to be key elements for successfully fighting hunger and malnutrition and linking backward communities to available government services. In countries with similar setting, they should be further promoted. Key is that measures are initiated that do not require external support and that local communities are empowered to better utilize support programmes available. This, in turn, will have a positive effect on the service delivery of these programmes.