Final Evaluation of
“Improving the Livelihood of Marginalized Groups in Salyan Project”
(Funded by BMZ and implemented by WHH)

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Report Submitted To:
Social Welfare Council
Kathmandu
March 2019

Project number: NPL 1034

Overall budget: 1,102,533 €
Executive Summary

1. Project background and objective: With funding from German Federal Ministry of Economics and Finance (BMZ), Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e.V. (WHH) has carried out “Improving the Livelihoods of Marginalized Groups In Salyan District Nepal (ILMG) Project” under agreement with Social Welfare Council (SWC).

With a budget of NPR147,487,825/- the duration of the project spans between 1 November 2015 to 31 December 2018 with no- cost extension up to April 2019. The implementing partners are: (a) Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN), Kathmandu (b) Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (Li-Bird), Pokhara and (c) Aasaman-Nepal, Janakpur. The thematic areas of the project are (i) governance (ii) agri-production and value chain and (iii) nutrition.

The objective of the project is to realise, “food and nutrition security has been substantially improved through enhanced livelihoods”. The project’s foreseen outcome is “agricultural productivity and income has increased through sustainable integrated farming systems, value chain development and nutrition.”

The project’s outputs are:

- Strengthened groups and CBOs to ensure right to adequate food by promoting good governance
- Increased productivity by adapting sustainable integrated farming systems (SIFS)
- Value chain of three commodities developed and financing models for those chains established
- Nutrition status on household level sustainably improved.

The project participants are 6,000 households with population of 35,000 from eight VDCs of Salyan District. The beneficiaries were selected from ethnic communities and vulnerable and marginalized groups. Women, people in need and children below three years of age are the priority groups. Main target groups are smallholders with land size between 0.25- 0.5 hectare (Ha).

2. Evaluation objectives:

- Explore the changes occurred and analyze the extent to which the achievements have supported the programme goal and objectives;
- Evaluate the effectiveness and extent of institutionalization of the project;
- Explore cost-effectiveness of the project activities;
- Identify the target and level of achievements as specified in the project agreement;
- Explore coordination between line agencies in the project district;
- Examine compliance with project agreement, financial disciplines and SWC compliances; and
- Assess the lessons replicable elsewhere or matters for future improvement.

The evaluation has been undertaken at programme and financial level and covered most of the project components focusing on:

- Effectiveness and sustainability of the SIFS, value chain and market linkage
- Change in food security, food habit and nutrition status of children below three years of age
- Networking and coordination at local level and
- Change in the quality of life of the project participants.

4. Main findings: The major focus of the project has been on the enhancement of agriculture production so that smallholder farmers could raise income, reduce the period of food deficiency, and improve their children’s nutritional status. In order to attain the results, the project has trained the farmers with skills, strengthened the groups and CBOs with improved techniques of high value vegetable farming and raised awareness on food quality, food diversity and nutrition of the children aged below three years. RRN
assisted in production enhancement, Li-BIRD supported on market linkage, value chain and resource mobilisation and Aasaman Nepal raised awareness on the importance of nutrition among children and mothers. In order to attain the objectives and derive the expected results the project supported the beneficiaries and their groups with:

- Technology, skill and input for high value cash crops and livestock farming (mainly goats)
- Irrigation infrastructure (canals, rainwater harvesting and sprinkler)
- Bio-pesticide and organic manure preparation
- Market linkage and value chain development
- ICS and alternative energy options
- Awareness on food diversity and child nutrition
- Organizational management training to CBOs and cooperatives
- Networking and coordination with local agencies for sustainability

5. Target and Progress: The project interventions have resulted with positive notes. Almost all of the targets were attained within the given time frame. Specific results are summarized below:

Enhanced income: Income of the participating households has drastically improved over a short period. Against the target of making 25% increase in income, the endline record shows a rise of over 100% compared to pre-project period. Average household income reached to NPR56,000 from NPR25,500.

Reduction in hunger period: The hunger period of the targeted households was reduced to 3 months from the baseline status of 7.25 months per year. The achievement is more than the target of 4.25 months.

Child nutrition: Before the project was launched the percentage of children was 21%, who were wasted. The project became successful in reducing this percentage to well below 4% showcasing a praiseworthy success. The target set under this intervention was 10.5%. This has been possible through strong coordination with the health service providers, awareness campaign on food diversity and child nutrition.

Strengthening of CBOs: Capacity building of CBOs (lead farmers, groups and cooperatives) was another tool applied for establishing coordination and attracting resources from local governments, cooperatives and micro-finance institutions for a sustainable resource base. Example of networking with the local agencies was witnessed during the team's interactions with RM officials and health-post in-charge.

Increase in productivity: Agriculture productivity increased through new construction and rehabilitation of irrigation schemes along with new technology of rain water harvesting and sprinkler irrigation system. The land area under irrigation increased by 537Ha and 3,000 farming households were motivated to cultivate at least three new crop varieties. Farm produce increased to 1,800kg from about 1,400kg per household. Hence, the project participants were able to improve their food security situation.

Changes in the quality of life: Through increased income and agriculture production, the households were able to have better and nutritious food for their families including women and children. Due to awareness on food diversity malnutrition has decreased. Likewise, promotion and installation of ICS and bio-gas for energy has reduced the workload, created smoke-free indoor environment and better health status.

6. Relevancy and effectiveness: Agriculture development is crucial to attain the government's long term goal to reduce deep rooted poverty; enhance food and nutrition security and achieve the country's road map for sustainable development goals. The interventions are helpful in fulfilling the government's target for ending poverty and hunger. Selection of the project area and beneficiaries is justified as Salyan district belongs to Karnali Province, a comparatively deprived area with lowest human development index.

7. Partnership and networking: Partnership forged with three renowned NGOs with decades of track record of working in the remote areas in people-centric interventions has resulted in synergic effects on
the project’s performance. However, partner selection process indicates some lapses because SWC rules
call for an open, transparent and accountable selection procedure. Moreover, hiring three NGOs for a
single district makes administrative and overhead costs relatively higher.

This project was initiated during the country’s transition from unitary to federal system. The project has
tried to establish coordination with major stakeholders. Though, there was a gap in having better
networking and getting better access to resources. However, the CBOs and groups have partially
mobilised local government resources with more commitments for the coming days.

8. Effectiveness of programme management system: The overall programme management was done by
WHH. It was easier for WHH to concentrate in a single district. Provision of different output/outcomes
implemented by separate implementing partners was, though, well-coordinated. Backward and forward
communication and information sharing was well established.

9. Sustainability: There are good signs of continuation of the value chain interventions and nutrition
related activities. Creation of MPCs involving the farmers and local leaders is a long lasting approach.
Likewise, collaboration with health-post/s and municipalities for various services are sustainable steps.
The ongoing income generating activities can be sustainable as evidenced by the Dalit women’s group’s
willingness to upscale their enterprises. Support for commercialization through better connectivity,
market linkage, technical backstopping, quality control and value addition can work toward sustainability.

10. Conclusion: The project’s reports indicate that targets for all interventions have been well met. The
household level yearly income has reached to over NPR56,000 from NPR25500, which is double
compared to the baseline data. Though, the logframe and the progress report have missed to mention the
exact number of such households. Likewise, the hunger period of targeted households has been reduced to
almost 3 months from the baseline status of 7.25 months per year. The percentage of children with acute
malnutrition has come down to less than 4% compared to the baseline situation of 21%.

The project is a success. Though, there are ambiguities about the number of benefitting households in a
specific intervention. Due to the shorter project cycle, the project has not eradicated the level of food
deficiency and malnutrition. The project has evidenced a rise of quality in the peoples’ lives. Now, it is
the government responsibility to fulfil the unmet needs of the marginalized communities.

11. Recommendations: a) Making tangible changes in the marginalized peoples’ lives is a slow and time
taking process. Hence, the implementers should try for minimum five-year cycle in future projects.

b) As the project was implemented along a single district, the interventions would have been possible to
undertake by one NGO, which could significantly reduce the administrative costs.

c) The I/NGOs seem to have adhered to most of the compliance requirements. Though, the project was
implemented well before the agreement was signed. SWC should monitor such ambiguity and any no-cost
extension should be timely approved. WHH should be careful of such issues in future.

e) The partner selection process MUST be competitive, transparent and accountable at all levels. Hence,
all I/NGOs should be held accountable for not complying to SWC requisites in future. Local
implementers, as far as available, should be preferably at least from the same Province/s.