IMPACT OF SOCIAL MOBILIZATION EFFORTS ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOR REHABILITATION OF SALT AFFECTED AND WATERLOGGED LANDS IN TEHSIL SAHIWAL, DISTRICT SARGODHA

Waqar Ahmad, Muhammad Fiaz, Munir Ahmad, Khalid Hussain Gill and Faisal Fareed*

ABSTRACT

A number of projects are being undertaken to reduce rural poverty in saline and waterlogged areas of Pakistan. The studied project (Bio Saline-II) is operating at three districts in the Punjab namely; Hafizabad, Sargodha and Jhang. The present study was conducted during 2008 to see impact of social mobilization services provided under the project, Punjab Community Development Project for Rehabilitation of Salt Affected and Water Logged (Bio-Saline-II) in the rural areas of Tehsil Sahiwal, district Sargodha. Out of 47 project villages, 12 villages were selected randomly and 25 respondents who were members of Salt Land User Group (SLUG) were chosen at random from each village making total number of 300 respondents. The data were collected through an interview schedule. The results revealed that majority (67%) of respondents reported that social mobilization procedure and strategies were satisfactory while remaining respondents (33%) rated social mobilization services as unsatisfactory. Further, the results depicted that vast majority (89%) of respondents was not involved in project activities (identification of problems, solution, monitoring evaluation, suggestions and recommendations).

KEYWORDS: Saline soils; community development; Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Salinization of soils and ground water is one of important limiting factors for agricultural productivity, particularly in arid and semi-arid areas of the world (3). According to different reports, saline soils cover about 380-995 mha of earth’s land surface. The ground water in salt-affected areas is also saline and unfit for crop production. Agriculture sector faces a big challenge of food security for ever-increasing population of the world. In Pakistan large portion of irrigated area is threatened by salinity and water logging problems which

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are responsible for taking out production of 5.8 million hectares of agricultural land, for which farmers receive very little or no returns (10). Vast saline areas “wastelands” provide grazing, fodder, fuel, feed and raw materials to some extent that could be increased significantly under better management of neglected or wasted resources: saline land and saline water. Reclamation of saline lands seems difficult because of economic and climatic constraints. There is no single effective solution of this problem as such land degradation problems need many years to develop and good farm practices and sustainable management is required to restore for production improvement. Some areas, however, are badly affected to be cost effectively reclaimed, so will remain unproductive (11). Salt-affected soils can be managed by reclamation, but due to less availability of good quality water, low soil permeability and high cost of amendments, this approach is not feasible on large scale (8). It is worth mentioning that an integrated approach to irrigation and drainage management and saline agriculture is required to combat the problems of salinity/sodicity. Biosaline agriculture is a low input and environment friendly approach for utilization of saline soils. Use of salt-affected land and saline (brackish) irrigation water through integrated management of genetic resources (plants, livestock, fish, insects, microbes) and improved agricultural practices on sustained basis is profitable. A quick, inexpensive and beneficial way is to exploit salt affected soils by using salt tolerance species i.e. biological approaches or saline agriculture (2). Water logging and salinity have very adverse social and economic effects on communities in Pakistan, causing poor living standard and health problems both for human and animals in affected areas crumbling of mud and brick houses and difficulties in transportation. Many people are forced to migrate to other areas (12). Rural community despite significant contribution in economic set up of country is more vulnerable to poverty (1).

A number of projects have been launched to tackle this problem and aiming to improve living standards of poor people through community development. A project is in operation commonly known as Punjab Community Development Project for Rehabilitation of Salt-affected and Waterlogged Lands (Bio Saline II). Basic objective of this project is poverty alleviation through increased farm income. The project outcome is to increase land productivity and agriculture production. Outputs of project include; (a) mobilized communities that are partner with the Government on agriculture and land rehabilitation schemes, (b) rehabilitated lands and promotion of improved agricultural techniques and (c) better access to services, market, increased farm incomes and employment. The formation and nurturing of effective, strong and viable development oriented community organizations is heart and soul of social mobilization.
approach. While forming the organizations, project teams should ensure that the poor participate as subjects and not as objects of development process (5). Further social mobilization is based on acknowledging that community is a centre of all development activities. It is only informed and engaged community members, who can plan and undertake sustainable roots development (6, 7).

The present study was conducted to evaluate social mobilization services provided under Bio Saline II Project in tehsil Sahiwal, district Sargodha.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The present study was undertaken in tehsil Sahiwal, district Sargodha during 2008. Total area of tehsil Sahiwal is 1, 98, 575 acres, out of which 37.78 percent is salt affected. Out of total 143 villages of this area 12 villages (project operational villages) were selected randomly for study. From these villages, 25 farmers were selected at random from each selected village. The data were collected following an interview schedule and analyzed by using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) software.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The data (Table 1) reveal that majority of respondents (67%) reported that social mobilization procedures, tools and strategies were satisfactory. While remaining respondents (33%) expressed their dissatisfaction. Similar study was conducted earlier (9) where overwhelming majority (98.3%) of respondents reported that social mobilization procedure and strategies were adequate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data (Table 2) further revealed that 89 percent of respondents from SLUG were not involved in project activities. Moreover, 30 percent of respondents were involved in problem identification, 5 percent in project planning, 9 percent in monitoring and evaluation of project while none was involved in project execution. These results are contradictory to earlier
findings (9) where majority (91.7%) of respondents was not involved in project activities. Out of remaining 8.3 percent, 8.35 percent of respondents were involved in identification of problems and 3.4 percent in planning of project. None of respondents was involved in execution and monitoring/evaluation of project. The results show that only minor percentage of respondents was involved on basis of experience, knowledge and valuable suggestions. This contradiction regarding involvement of farmers/respondents might be due to different management style of executing authorities and approaches to achieve the project goals.

Table 2. Distribution of SLUG members according to involvement in project activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project activity</th>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem identification</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project planning</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project execution</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring and evaluation</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q = represents number of respondents (overall involvement in project activities = Q1/1200 x 100 = 11%, (overall involve in project activities = Q2/1200 x 100 = 2000 involvement).

Table 3. Respondents response regarding their perception about performance of project staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedures, tools and strategies</th>
<th>Q</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q = represents number of respondents

The data (Table 3) show that majority (88%) of respondents was satisfied with performance of project staff. The reasons assessed during interview for dissatisfaction of 12 percent respondents over performance of project staff (project representatives for the field are listed below):

- Communication gap
- Unidentified discrimination
- Bias/favourtism
- Staff rotation from one portfolio to other
- Odd fortnightly meeting schedule
- Lack of local language and tradition
- Lack of awareness about project

These results are in agreement with earlier findings (9) which report that about 5 percent respondents were not satisfied with performance of project.
Mobilization efforts impact on community development

staff due to changing and non-provision of permanent staff. Whereas, bias/favouritism and inequal treatment by project staff was observed by 3 percent respondents. Remaining 1.6 percent observed improper utilization of funds and remaining 0.8 percent blamed that there is no practical work but only showing of efficiency changed their satisfaction regarding the performance of project staff.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A majority (67%) of respondents expressed their satisfaction about social mobilization procedures, tools and strategies employed by the project representatives. Majority (89%) of respondents was not involved in project activities. Remaining 11 percent respondents were engaged in project activities out of which 30 percent respondents were involved in identification of problems. 5 percent in project planning and 9 percent were involved in monitoring and evaluation process. None of these respondents was involved in project execution. A minor percentage of respondents was involved, depending upon the basis of their experiences, knowledge and valuable suggestions. Majority (88%) of respondents was satisfied with performance of project staff and 12 percent respondents were not satisfied due to certain factors i.e. communication gaps, changing in staff, bias or personal favour and inequal treatment by project staff, odd meeting hours/timing and lack of local language and customs.

On the basis of interview and field surveys of SLUGs, following suggestions/recommendations are made to enhance project efficiency and outreach for extracting maximum benefits from project interventions to improve living standard of farming community.

- Capacity building of social mobilizers and project staff
- Flexible timing for approaching farmers (slug members)
- Recruitment of local stuff in the project
- Formation of farmer vigilance committee to monitor working of project interventions in their respective villages
- Involvement of print and electronic media to promote and expedite the work.

REFERENCES