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Project for
Livelihood
Improvement

Project Report

Project for Livelihood Improvement (PLI)

Background and Project Report



Working with the Swiss Agency for Development (SDC) to Improve Rural Livelihoods

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Area Development Plan

FIDA takes the Union Council as a basic geographical unit for planned interventions and begins work with a comprehensive Area Development Plan (ADP) using the latest Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools and techniques. Union Council Bilot Sharif was selected as a target area for FIDA and a detailed ADP helped the communities to identify their issues, priorities, resources and potentials.

The ADP revealed that the major source of livelihood in UC Bilot Sharif is farming. The majority of the population is engaged in agriculture or farm labor. The women are also experts in handicrafts, particularly those using natural resources. The main issues concerning natural resource management (NRM) are low productivity of crops, limited profits, and reduced availability of fodder and fuel wood resulting in a high incidence of poverty. A main factor behind these issues has been a lack of awareness among local farmers. In the NRM sector, communities prioritized needs as: 1) introduction of improved breeds of crops and livestock, 2) disease control in crops and animals, 3) introduction and plantation of fast growing multipurpose tree species, 4) low cost fruit plants produced locally through home based nurseries and 5) capacity building in enterprise development and NRM in general.

With the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's (SDC) Project for Livelihood Initiative (PLI), FIDA undertook participatory livelihood development initiatives in four villages of UC Bilot Sharif. The initial project duration is one year, though it may be extended on the basis of lessons learned.

The Area

Union Council Bilot Sharif in Tehsil Pharpure has a total population of 189,750 (DCR 1998). The targeted villages in Union Council Bilot Sharif are Bhatania, Hakim Ragho, Darrab, and Karti Khasur.

Objective

- To enhance the competencies of rural communities to address their livelihood needs. This is achieved through strengthening self-determination and self-reliability of the natural resource users (communities) through participatory NRM development, while emphasizing a multi-dimensional view of livelihood, thus placing people's priorities and potentials at the center.

The Cluster Approach

The "cluster approach" is one of the most popular concepts in economic development in recent years. The cluster approach believes in the joint and consultative management of activities within the same interest group. Interest groups within a wider geographical area then joined together to form broader clusters at local and/or regional levels. This not only facilitates a two-way flow of information (i.e. top-down and bottom-up), but enables small and medium clusters to interact at a wider level and to access previously unavailable services and technologies. It also enhances incomes at the grassroots level by decreasing the dependence on middlemen.

FIDA considers the cluster approach an appropriate tool to address the vulnerabilities and livelihood insecurities of the communities in its working area. For this particular project, FIDA defines "cluster" as a grassroots entity or a group of 5-15 persons having similar socio-economic or livelihood characteristics/interests, who work in a joint, participatory environment in the same geographical area to enhance their livelihood security.

Main Activities

- A detailed Village Development Plan (VDP) is conducted in each village, focusing on NRM/livelihoods.
- Three clusters (Livestock Farmers, Cereal Crop Farmers and Craft Persons) are formed in each of the 4 villages of UC Bilot Sharif with 5-10 small farmers as members in each.
- Regular fortnightly meetings are held by each cluster to discuss relevant issues, identify priority needs, plan interventions and share experiences in a participatory manner. A FIDA Field Coordinator shall take part in these meetings.
- After completion of VDP and identification of needs, a work plan and budget is chalked out for each activity and ToPs are signed with each cluster. The micro-initiatives focus on three areas, namely agriculture, livestock and local crafts.
- Members identify cluster representatives to be trained in different skills pertaining to their cluster needs. Cluster representatives will provide basic advisory and technical services, as well as be involved in the marketing of local products.
- Each cluster representative participates in the Union Council Cluster (UCC)/Area Coordination Council (ACC) to share experience and link the village level cluster with a wider body.
- The UCC/ACC is responsible to market local products and link line agencies and services with the village level clusters.

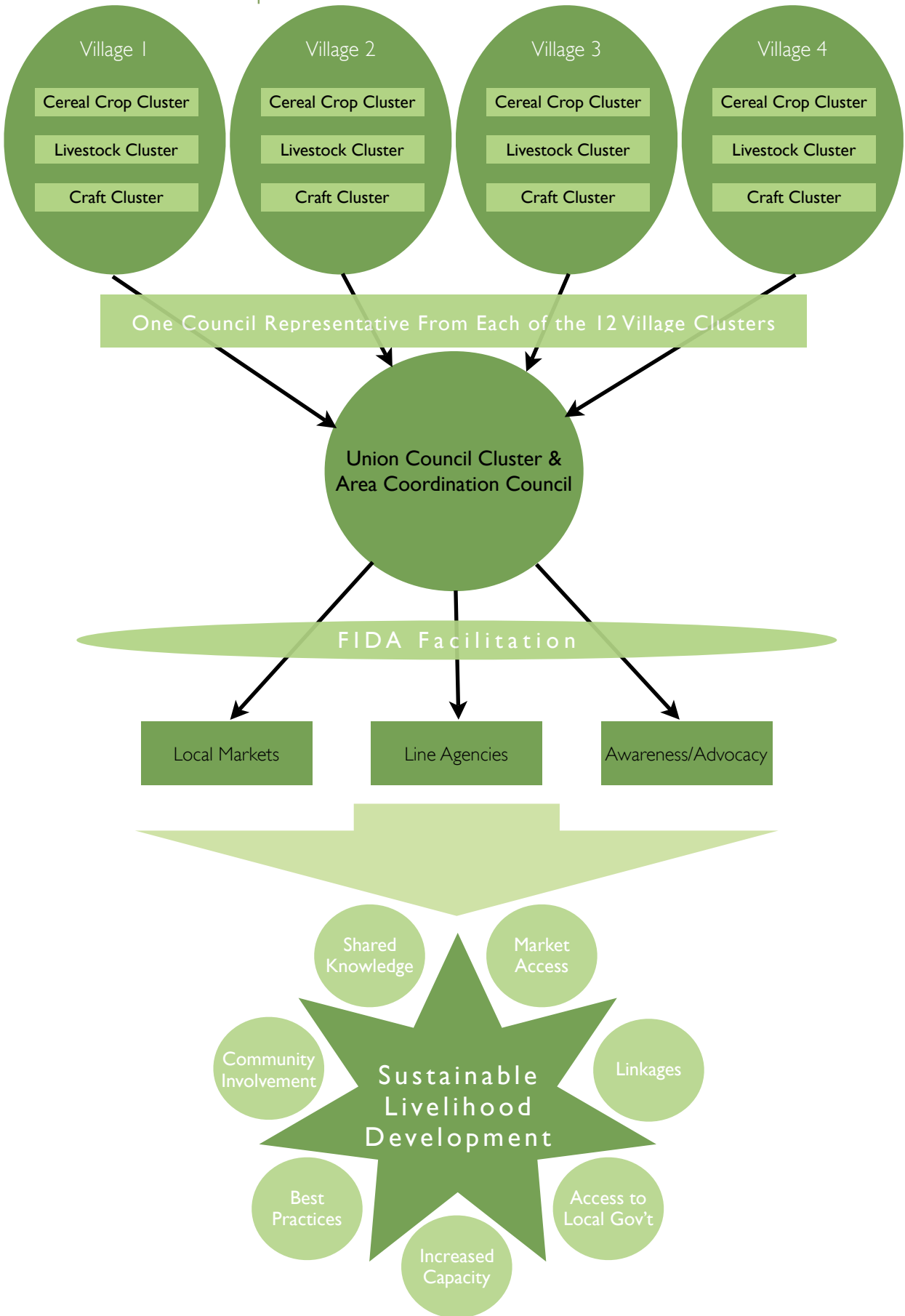
Major Outcomes

- Trained cluster representatives are available in the area to provide primary awareness, services and access to latest technology and information.
- Farmers learn from each other's experiences and their knowledge will be enhanced.
- Farmer have greater access to market with less investments as cluster representatives and UC/ACC are facilitating the marketing of local products.

Outcome Indicators

- 12 clusters are functional.
- Regular cluster meetings are held and minutes recorded.
- Small farmers are active and have better access to information, experience sharing and problem analysis.
- Each cluster and cluster member contributes in planning and implementation of their own priority livelihood activity.
- 12 cluster representatives are trained in different locally identified need based skills.
- Union Council Cluster exists within the regime of Area Coordination Council.

PLI Cluster Concept



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