FOOD FOR WORK PROJECT

Success Stories

Tehsil Usta Muhammad, District Jaffarabad, Balochistan

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INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (IDO)
In July 2010, Pakistan experienced an appalling natural disaster which caused a humanitarian crisis of vast magnitude. One-fifth of the country was submerged, and millions of people were displaced from their homes. Areas affected by flood suffered massive agricultural and property losses and there were serious concerns about food, shelter, health, sanitation, safe water and livelihood. Along with threatening effects on the food security and economic productivity of the country, these floods also jeopardized the lives of survivors who faced severe shortages of food and water.

Along with other relief agencies who immediately began providing humanitarian assistance to the affected population, WFP also reached the affected populations thorough its Cooperating Partners who implemented the General Food Distribution project.

After the end of the relief phase in January 2010, WFP began the implementation of the Food for Work project in which participants who worked on individual or community restoration schemes received food commodities including wheat flour, vegetable oil, pulses, salt, tea and WAWA MUM.

Innovative Development Organization has worked in partnership with WFP to implement both General Food Distribution and Food for Work projects in two phases.

These success stories are based on the success achieved by beneficiaries, WFP and IDO in the second phase of the Food for Work project. In the second phase 17000 families were provided food and work on more than 1000 schemes was completed.
The victims of flood can never forget how vulnerable they felt against the might of the waves of horror. 37 year old Dilbar can vividly chronicle how worried he felt about his wife and 6 children when they evacuated the area and their home to move to a camp.

“I had neither ever heard about such a disaster nor had I ever seen one,” Dilbar recalled talking to us, “I thought what I was going to do. I had never felt so out of life and hope.”

WFP started its operations of General Food Distribution immediately after the flood and IDO was one of its cooperating partners in district Jaffarabad.

“We also got food in the General Food Distribution and WFP has always been our most reliable well-wisher since we have returned home. This food for work project is a brilliant idea.”

When Dilbar returned home, he mourned more than ever the death of his livestock. His children had not a lot to eat, and he was worried about the near future until he got his due share from the landlord for working on his fields.

It was WFP and its cooperating partner IDO who mobilized Dilbar and his other neighbors in the area to repair a water channel in return for food.

“WFP has been our lone savior on more than one occasion, Dilbar told us, “We received no help from any state institution or other organization in terms of food.”

Dilbar spoke to us as his wife prepared food for the family from the rations donated by WFP.

Dilber feels that initiatives like food for work should continue because poverty is just as deadly as a horrible flood.
When asked how he feels about WFP, Nabi Bux replied that no organization other than WFP provided them support.

“We are very happy with WFP. If this project is called off, it will be difficult for us to provide food to our families, since life over here has not returned to normal for us.”

Nabi Bux was supported in the General Food Distribution and when he returned home from displacement, Food-for-Work has enabled him to sustain domestic affairs.

Participating in rehabilitation of a water channel, Nabi Bux and other members of this community have earned themselves a month’s ration.

“I cannot explain how much of a relief it is when I don’t painfully ponder about food provisions to the family. This food will last a month.”

After being financially reduced to ruins, Nabi Bux, although now back to his village Azad Khan Khosa, still lives with his family in a tent.

“We lived a contented life before the flood. Farming was our only source of income, but life has never been the same again.” Nabi Bux told us as we walked back to his tent after the distribution. His voice quivered as he told us how his confidence had collapsed with his house and how helplessly he had watched his livestock carried away by the flood.

“I can never repay WFP for what it has been doing to help us survive.” Nabi Bux told us in a discussion about relief services after the flood.

“We are very happy with WFP. If this project is called off, it will be difficult for us to provide food to our families, since life over here has not returned to normal for us.”
According to Faqeer Muhammad, floods took away everything; his house collapsed, standing crops were swept away and his cattle were killed or separated from him. He recalled saying, “I did not have any hope during displacement.”

Now, Faqeer Muhammad is back to his village. For him, restoration of his financial stability and food security remain insurmountable tasks.

“WFP has helped us rehabilitate a water channel and also provided us food for working on it.”

One can easily imagine how hard a task it would have been for people like Faqeer Muhammad to make ends meet without the support of WFP. But WFP has done very well to support thousands of flood affected families.

“Even the smallest of our children who have merely learnt to speak just a few words know WFP,” Faqeer Muhammad told us as we closed in on his tent, outside which his children waited for their mother to finish making them bread.

It was really satisfying as cooperating partner of WFP to see the family get together for the lunch.

“WFP has made possible more than what seems,” were Faqeer Muhammad’s final words to us before he joined his family for lunch.
Rahim Hussain named food insecurity as one of the greatest threats to his family after the flood.

“It became increasingly difficult to provide food to women and children when there was water all around us, in the earliest days of the flood. Mobility and accessibility were zero and yet the need for food increased all the time.”

“Within just a few days of our return to the village, WFP Food for Work project was helping me and many other families regain strength.”

Rahim Hussain recollected the inception by WFP through the Food for Work project. He was aware of the economic implications of the project, “On one hand it was restoring our community infrastructure and on the other hand it was providing us a good return for our labor.”

Like other beneficiaries of the project, Rahim Hussain also feels that WFP, through its cooperating partners, has contributed to the return of life to the area. “WFP has added to our confidence that normal domestic life will soon be restored.”

The smiling faces of his 7 children who were busy taking their lunch were clear signs that hunger had been defeated.

The rains had terrified us for days and even when the flood seemed inevitable, my family and I remained hopeful that the rains would stop and the waters would recede before any serious damage is caused to our crops, property and cattle, but we were wrong.”

57 year old Rahim Hussain etched the scene just before the flood.
30 year old Javed Ali has had to work very hard since the flood to provide the basic necessities to his family.

“There are 8 children and 2 women in the family and my father and I have to make available within our limited resources whatever is required,” Javed Ali told us as we interviewed him after the distribution of food in his village.

“At my age, young men here were not very bothered about lending a hand in the provision of basic necessities of everyday life, but I think that the floods have taught us all that responsibility is the only way out of a difficult situation. I have seen many other men of my age participate in various schemes to earn a month’s ration,” Javed talked to us as we walked to his home to meet his family and children. 

Soon it was time for lunch and the children showed no hustle around the yard any more. All were seated in the bed waiting for the lunch to be served. It was time the family was allowed to take the lunch.

“Responsibility is the only way out of a difficult situation.”

In an answer to whether any other organization had helped this family, Javed’s father told us that they have received helped in area such as WASH in the early days after flood, but no other organization had remained attached to them and had continued to support them as WFP.

“How actually,” Javed’s father told us, “WFP is more than the name of just food. The restoration of water channels and other schemes mean that we have taken steps, otherwise difficult, with the greatest motivation.”
Not only did Rasool Bux himself realize the two-prong approach of the Food for Work project, but he also helped our Social Organizers by participating in the mobilization process.

“I understand how work on community schemes will restore financial activity in our area. The project has given a great boost to our irrigation channels,” he told us before the distribution.

Soon after the distribution, Rasool Bux gladly allowed us to visit his family to capture the impact of food commodities on the end-users.

“WFP has gained the reputation of a savior. We have been helped by WFP since the earliest days after floods.”

Rasool Bux’s children, who have resumed going to school, expressed their love for WFP in black and white and happily posed for the camera.

In response to a question about how WFP had changed their lives since the flood, Rasool Bux told us that they felt well and secure.

“Sometimes I wonder what would have happened to us, the children and women of my family had WFP not reached us with support. The thoughts are so dreadful that I just close my eyes and stop thinking about it. I think projects like Food for Work should continue.”

Rasool Bux feels that projects like Food for Work should continue.
Ghulam Nabi, 55, clearly recalled how he had been feeling after the flood when it was next to impossible for any humanitarian organization to reach them for the first couple of days.

“The Army supported us by throwing down packaged food and bottled water from helicopters,” he told us, “And my old mind was too numb to find a way out of the situation. I looked at my 8 children and sighed.”

Before

Ghulam Nabi thinks that all humanitarian organizations did very well to control the situation and provided services to his family in areas such as WASH, Nutrition and Food.

“I am really thankful to all the organizations who supported my family. They came to support when I was literally helpless.”

Ghulam Nabi really likes the idea behind the Food for Work project. He thinks that his community has really benefited from the project and that the rehabilitation of water channels will be a great support to the agriculture in the area.

“I want you to pay my regards to all the people involved in the Food for Work project,” Ghulam Nabi told us during the distribution of food commodities in his village.

Later that day when we visited his house, women were busy preparing lunch for the family and little girls were lending a hand. There was vibrant air about all the activities in the house and Ghulam Nabi happily waited for the lunch.

Ghulam Nabi feels that the Food for Work project has really mobilized the people in his community who are now very motivated to participate in other schemes of this sort.

“I think the project should not end,” he told us, “It is a great support to poor people like us.”

“Food for Work project is a great support to poor people like us”
Sixty year old Shah Bux and his family are slowly recovering from the after-effects of the most severe floods in the history of Pakistan. “We have had to work very hard to recover,” Shah Bux told us upon completion of the rehabilitation of a water channel. “And WFP has stood by us throughout our journey from ruin to revival.”

Shah Bux and his sons, who are married and live within the premises of the same house as separate families, participated in this scheme of rehabilitation of a water channel. They appreciated how WFP has rewarded and supported them to help themselves. “Our sources of income have been limited to nothing since the flood. In the absence of Food for Work project, we would have found it very difficult to restore agricultural activities in the area.”

After the distribution of food commodities, we accompanied Shah Bux to his house where preparation for lunch was about to begin. Using the wheat flour and vegetable oil donated by WFP women of the household began to prepare the lunch while children anxiously watched the proceedings. Women and children were heard mentioning WFP in their conversations. “I am pleased to express my feelings about WFP to you,” Shah Bux told us, “It has given us food security and therefore ample peace of mind as well. No other organization has supported us like WFP has.”

When asked to suggest any ways in which similar projects can be better implemented in future, Shah Bux told us that all the people in the community were more than satisfied with the assessment of beneficiaries and distribution of food commodities. “Such projects should be implemented in the future as well,” Shah Bux added, “It is great support to poor communities.”