

Project Evaluation Series

05/2024

Evaluation of the project “The Horticulture Advancement Activity” in Pakistan

Project code: GCP/PAK/144/USA

Management response

Evaluation of the project "The Horticulture Advancement Activity" – Management response					01/2024
Evaluation recommendation	Management response Accepted, Partially accepted or Rejected	Management Plan			
		Actions to be taken, and / or comments about partial acceptance or rejection	Responsible unit	Time frame	Further funding required (Y or N)
<p>Recommendation 1. <i>To FAO, USAID (Short-Medium term):</i></p> <p>Future projects should be thoroughly reviewed in terms of their ambition vis-à-vis the implementation modality and overall socio-economic and geo-political context.</p> <p>THAZA was an overambitious attempt by the USAID and FAO to implement the project through the matching grants modality in a very challenging environment. Based on the lessons learned, before initiation, future projects need to be thoroughly reviewed in terms of their ambitions vis-à-vis the implementation modality as well as the country context, i.e. prevalent law and order situation, opportunities for public private engagements, capacity of FAO staff, consultants and grantees, and taking into account other operational limitations that might impact project performance. Similarly, depending on the circumstances, soliciting continued donor support is essential until satisfactory completion of all activities.</p>	Partially accepted	<p>All the projects, including THAZA were deigned in the 'suggested manner' and thoroughly reviewed in terms of their targets and deliverables considering all the listed parameters. In March 2022, project targets were revised and as result of this all targets were met towards the end of project life.</p> <p>Moreover, based on our learning from THAZA, the presently ongoing projects in KP and Balochistan are thoroughly thought out and designed with more pragmatic and realistic targets.</p>	KP and Balochistan Provincial Teams.	Already realized	No
<p>Recommendation 2. <i>To FAO (Medium to Long term):</i></p> <p>To minimize procurement-related delays, FAO needs to continuously refine its procurement processes and systems/procedures.</p> <p>The supply of inputs for production level grants was considerably delayed due to procurement related challenges, including FAO national and international procurement processes, lack of reliable vendors, and Covid-related logistic challenges. In particular, the selection of multiple vendors for individual interventions resulted in piecemeal delivery of inputs, which impacted the overall performance of these production level grants. To avoid this situation to the extent possible, it is recommended that FAO</p>	Accepted	<p>THAZA went through multiple acute shocks, like the locust infestation, Covid-19, fencing of border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan, influx of Afghan refugees and the devastating monsoon floods from June to August 2022. The pandemic of COVID-19 caused delays in delivery and disbursements as a result of the country-wide lockdowns creating bottlenecks for timely implementation. The donor in agreement with FAO, has suggested adaptive measures in which the project budget was de-obligated by USD and the project duration shortened. The coping strategy included de-scoping of activities where only high value grants for value addition opportunities were prioritised. Henceforth,</p>	Proc. Unit	Already in practice	No

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undertakes a review of its procurement processes for time-sensitive agricultural activities, continuously build a database of reliable vendors in the country and strengthen quality control mechanisms for delivered goods. Moreover, to ensure timely assistance to grantees, it is recommended that the project management teams incorporate anticipated procurement delays into future activity design and planning.		<p>the revised work plan was implemented within the reduced project duration.</p> <p>The incumbent International Procurement Officer (IPO) and his team has started Weekly Procurement Meetings with the Provincial teams to address the prolong delays in the procurement of various inputs. In the said meetings, weekly status of the PRs and POs are reviewed and concrete actions are taken to expedite the delivery of the various supplies and inputs, and to gradually establish a database of credible vendors. Alongside, procurement unit has initiated a new practice where they send procurement staff to provinces to expedite work, if there is some backlog.</p>			
<p>Recommendation 3.</p> <p><i>To FAO, USAID (Short-term):</i></p> <p>To ensure sustainability of High Value grants, it is imperative for THAZA to revise its exit strategy in line with the delayed implementation of these high value investments beyond the project's life.</p> <p>As envisaged in THAZA exit strategy, the project did not have nearly sufficient time to implement High Value grants as well as the complementing activities including trainings and developing linkages with public and private sectors. Consequently, to ensure the sustainability of these high value investments, it is imperative for THAZA to revise the exit strategy in accordance with the actual situation on ground; additionally, detailing risk mitigating measures that can be activated in case of potential fall outs.</p>	Accepted	<p>Despite the earlier implementation delays, the High Value grants like establishing 'cold storages' and 'corrugated cardboard carton units' both in KP and Balochistan were realized/completed; and capacities of the targeted grantees were built to successfully manage those businesses in the long run. The evidence of that has been shared with the donor / USAID Pakistan. To make the THAZA investment and related outcome more sustainable, efforts were made to link the high-value investments with viable markets. Additionally, grantees have been linked up with another USAID-funded project (in KP for their capacity building and improved market linkages).</p> <p>The exit strategy embarked on a market strategy for the sustainable continuation of investment businesses, was also developed. Some of the grantees were even registered with the local Chamber of Commerce, however, technical assistance (TA) would have been</p>	Programme team KP and Balochistan	Already materialized	No

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		provided to register these businesses with other regulatory authorities. To upscale their businesses, these grants were also linked with other FAO and donor-funded projects or grant driven programmes – working in the THAZA target districts. The project has organized and hosted a series of capacity development events for the Agriculture Extension Department officials and farmers, equipping them with the latest knowledge/improved marketing and business management skills to provide consistent support and generate long-term impact.			
<p>Recommendation 4.</p> <p><i>To FAO (Medium to Long term):</i></p> <p>To establish linkages with the private sector, FAO will need to adopt innovative approaches, particularly in case of Balochistan. Despite multiple efforts, neither of the partnerships in Balochistan could be materialised. To address this issue, FAO is recommended to explore alternative ways of engaging the private sector, such as engaging services of Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) or similar institutions, which are mandated to encourage and facilitate the development and growth of small and medium enterprises in the country. Moreover, to accrue maximum benefits, these initiatives should be aligned with Balochistan’s Public Private Partnership Policy launched in 2021, which seeks to encourage participation of private sector in the economic development of the province.</p>	Partially accepted	<p>In KP, FAO is good on this front, and trying its level best to strengthen these linkages further. The Livelihood and Food Security Improvement Activity and Economic Recovery and Development Activity are also expanding and strengthening linkages of these grantees within KP and Pakistan.</p> <p>In Balochistan, awareness sessions and information dissemination has been done through partner organizations, other UN agencies while farmers have been informed/linked up with cardboard manufacturing and cold store units. Likewise, partnership with private companies are also underway on periodic basis through other projects and the Growth for Rural Agriculture & Sustainable Development forum.</p>	Programme teams	Ongoing	No

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<p>Recommendation 5. <i>To FAO, USAID (Medium to Long term):</i> Gender-disaggregated targets should be included at output level to enhance participation of women in different project activities. By prioritizing females as recipients of multiple grants, THAZA has made an extraordinary effort in terms of supporting women economic empowerment in the extremely conservative regions of Balochistan and NMDs. However, to further enhance their participation in multiple activities, future projects should consider setting gender disaggregated targets at the output level. This is not only critical for effective performance measurement, but also highly instrumental for documenting key lessons aimed at improving the overall status of women in the target regions.</p>	Partially accepted	<p>The 'evaluation team' has already accepted and appreciated this area of the project, we do agree in further improving this domain with gender segregated data in our ongoing and upcoming projects.</p> <p>The 792 grants awarded to women were fully owned by the respective grantees. They took part in the FAO-organised trainings and exposure visits, and contributed to the overall household incomes by directly earning from their respective enterprises.</p> <p>In all current projects in both provinces, 30% of the total target is women. While in some emergency projects in Balochistan (like ECHO project), only women have been targeted for unconditional cash transfer. Similarly, within project activities in KP specific activities are designed for only women to ensure high participation from them.</p>	Programme teams	Ongoing	No
<p>Recommendation 6. <i>To FAO, USAID (Medium term):</i> Publish key technical products and manuals developed under THAZA for wider use by the government, academia, private sector and other related organizations. Key technical products and manuals developed under THAZA should be made available for use by other organizations. The knowledge repository built under THAZA such as the Grants manual, Gender in Value Chains study, and other publications can benefit related development organizations and actors who can replicate and upscale these products for similar interventions.</p>	Accepted	<p>Already available for other organizations, however, efforts will be made to ensure their wider dissemination. Communication team has been requested in this regard to ensure to coordinate with HQ and regional offices for dissemination. Technical products and manuals developed under THZA are now actively used, further advanced and disseminated amongn partners of the ongoing new projects.</p>	Programme teams	Ongoing	No

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