

Addressing poverty through natural resource management: an analysis of integrated land Management Project (ILMP) intervention in village Persacha, Azad Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract

This study seeks to improve understanding of the relationship between poverty and natural resource management through examining Integrated Land Management Project (ILMP) contribution towards poverty alleviation through implementing NRM activities in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The data for this study was collected in village Persacha situated in district Muzaffarabad. The primary data was collected using various PRA techniques including household survey, focus group' discussion; transect walk, wealth ranking, resource mapping and individual interviews. The findings show that the majority of people in the study area depend on farming for their livelihood, however farm production is not sufficient to fulfil the needs of population in the area. They also depend on natural resources mainly forest and land for their lives. Forest resources are degraded over the time due to commercial and illegal wood harvesting. Poor people are depending on forest for fuelwood to meet their fuelwood consumption for cooking and heating in the harsh and cold climate of AJK. Beside poverty, the commercial harvesting of these resources is another reason of depletion.

There is increasing trend of off-farm activities in the study area as a result of increased population, land fragmentation, exposure, low farm productivity, ILMP interventions, and natural resource degradation. ILMP had started its interventions in this area in 1999 to address the issue of poverty through natural resource management and phased out in 2004. The project activities were focused on participatory development approach for mobilizing rural communities, especially women for access to productive resources, socio-economic development on sustainable basis. The approach adapted by the ILMP is participatory, flexible, and evolutionary. Programme believes in the generalized principles of cooperative behaviour through the participation, and in the concept of "learning by doing". Women's role is changing as a result of male off farm activities and ILMP interventions. The project packages of vocational schools, poultry and livestock training, credit and water tank infrastructure have been found to have a direct impact on women's lives. The project's activities enhanced the status of local assets including social (CO/WO), natural (plantation, land protection), financial (saving, credits), human (trainings) and physical (water tank, protection wall, vocational school) capitals that in return provided more secure means of living for males and females in the study area. Under project limitations the interventions has had a great impact on the rural livelihood and improving natural resources in the study area as a whole, however individual households especially poor's needs were not addressed.

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