

TAWANA PAKISTAN



SCHOOL NUTRITION PACKAGE FOR RURAL GIRLS

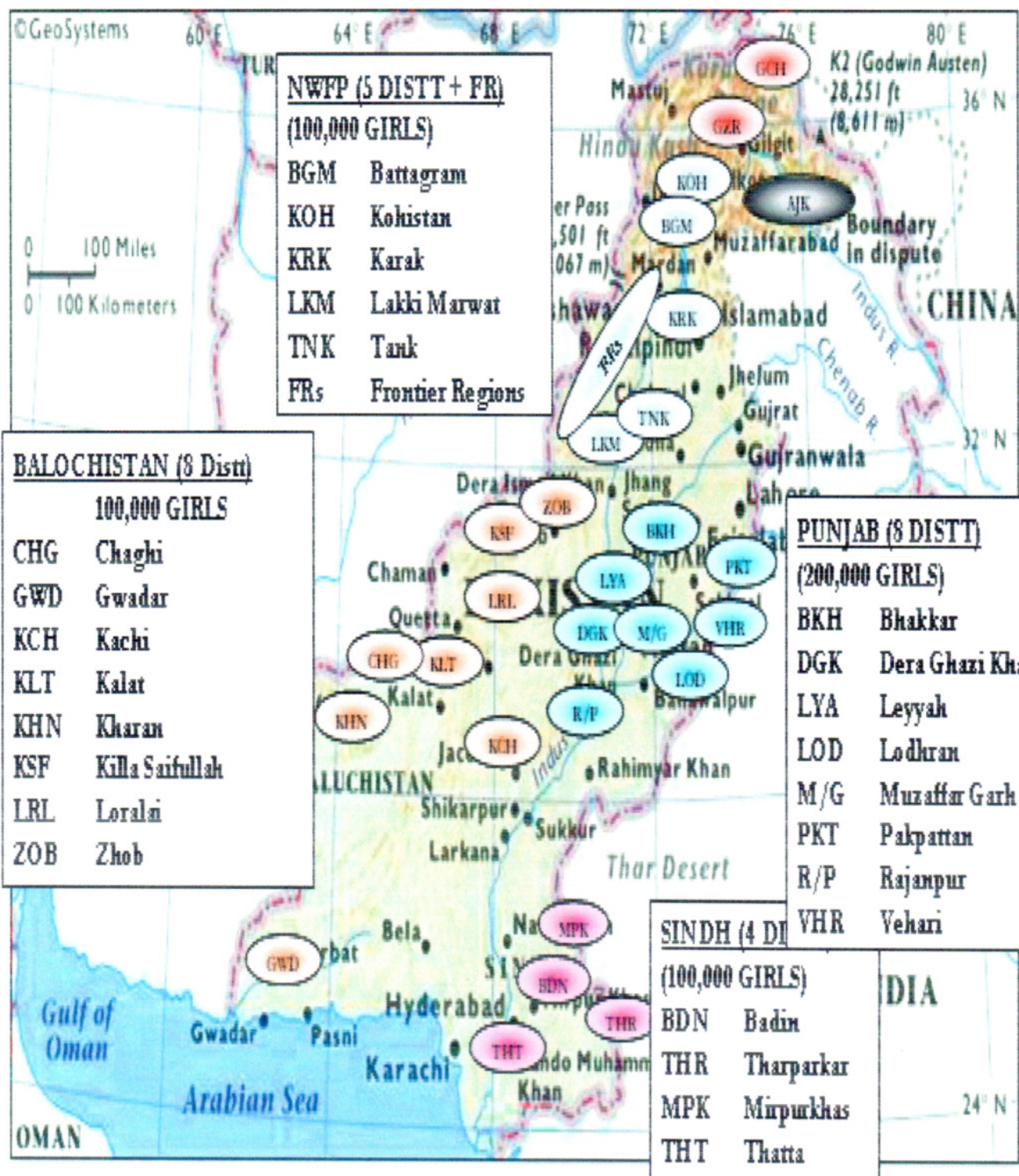
An Overview (Aug 02 – June 05)

BY

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July 2005

Selected 29 Poverty Districts for Implementing Tawana Pakistan Project



Executive Summary

Tawana Pakistan Project was a Rs 3600 million mega social safety net intervention to redress the nutritional and educational bereavements of 530,000 rural girls (5-12 years) in 5300 Government Girls Primary schools of the 29 high poverty districts of Pakistan including Northern Areas and Azad Jammu & Kashmir. The aim of the project was to improve the nutritional status, to increase school enrollment and to reduce drop out rate of girls and gender gap and to create awareness of community in nutrition. The School Nutrition Package included the provision of nutritionally balanced midday meal at a cost of Rs 7.00, providing at-least 600 Calories per meal, deworming medicine and multi-micronutrient supplements for two years. The project was designed to be executed by National Implementation Unit (NIU) through Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) and The Aga Khan University (AKU) and its eleven partner NGOs as implementers. AKU being technical advisor and major implementer of the project received Rs 406 million out of its total allocation of Rs 536 million.

The implementation progress achieved at national level at the end of 30 months was slow due to various issues/bottlenecks. The baseline data were not collected properly, correctly and timely. Out of 415,239 enrolled and unenrolled girls (78% of the target) identified, only 348454 girls (66% of the target) were reported as beneficiaries. Data on growth monitoring in 100% beneficiaries at least twice a year were not available. Due to lack of training and leadership, the School Tawana Committees (STCs) did not perform according to their TORs. The feeding was disrupted continuously from months to year in Tawana Schools and the feeding cycle of two years in schools of 12 Tawana Districts (41% of target) was not completed. However, number of active feeding schools were only 55% of the target. Out of nutrition package, only midday meal was available to girls during the last two years. The supplementation of multi-micronutrients and medication (deworming) part of the intervention suffered major set back and could not be administered to girls due to sub-standard quality, high dosage levels and side effects. 32-85% of the meals served in the monitored schools were nutritionally inadequate providing less than 600 Calories per meal and cost of these meals was less than Rs 7.00 per meal. Due to various bottlenecks including incomplete nutrition package the project may not achieve the PC-1 targets.

The award of mid-term impact assessment study to AKU, an implementer, with an additional cost of Rs. 23 million, was irregular and unjust. In the absence of control group of girls and reliable baseline data the PC-1 objectives of Tawana Project would not be measurable and the impact assessment of the project even by third party may not be feasible.

Out of total, Rs 1.627 billion was released to project implementers. The operational cost of the project was 29% whereas the utilization of feeding funds was only 12% of total feeding allocation. An amount of Rs 470 million was lying unutilized at district and school levels. Due to incomplete implementation of nutrition package, an alternate nutrition intervention and redesigning of the PC-1 have been proposed.

Background and Scope

Despite the fact that Pakistan has comfortable food supply, malnutrition among the children particularly in the rural areas due to deficiencies of protein, calorie and micronutrients (vitamin A, iron and iodine) is wide spread. Poverty, low literacy, maldistribution of food, lack of nutrition education and infections are the main causes of malnutrition in Pakistan. Malnutrition is affecting 12 million children under five having low height for their age (stunting), 9.5 million children are underweight (low weight for age) and 2.1 million children have low weight for height (wasting), 51% of the children are anemic and 77% have goiter in hilly areas due to deficiencies of iron and iodine respectively, 5.8% are suffering from vitamin A deficiency and parasitic infection is common in 60% of the population. The intake calories and iron of primary school girls has been reported to be 86% and 67% respectively of the recommended dietary allowances. Malnourished girls often grow into under-nourished mothers in turn more likely to produce malnourished babies, thus vicious cycle of malnutrition continues through generations. Malnutrition adversely affects mental development, physical development, productivity and the span of working years, all of which significantly influence the economic potential of a person. Education of girls helps them and their future children. There can be no significant or sustainable trans-formation in societies and no significant reduction in poverty and malnutrition until girls receive the quality basic education. Primary schooling of the girls can reduce stunting by 13%. In Pakistan primary school enrollment is 46% and drop out of rural girls at primary school level is 75%. Pakistan has 18 million children in the primary age bracket (5-10 years) yet 8.1 million of them are not enrolled; 5.9 million of these children are girls.

Keeping in view the poor nutritional status and low educational levels of children particularly the girls, the Ministry of Women Development, Social Welfare and Special Education, Government of Pakistan launched Tawana Pakistan: School Nutrition Package for Girls. Tawana Pakistan Project (TPP) is a Rs 3.6 billion mega social safety net intervention to redress the nutritional and educational bereavements of the rural primary school girls (5-12 years) of the under privileged communities of the 29 poorest districts including eight districts of Punjab (Bhakkar, D.G.Khan, Layyah, Lodhran, Muzaffargarh,

Pakpattan, Rajanpur and Vehari), four districts of Sindh (Badin, Tharparkar, Mirpur Khas and Thatta), six districts of NWFP (Battagram, Kohistan, Karak, Lakki Marwat, Tank, Frontier Regions comprising Kohat, Bannu and D.I.Khan), eight districts of Balochistan (Chaghi, Gawadar, Kachi, Kallat, Khاران, Killa Saifullah, Loralai and Zhob), two districts of Northern Areas (Ghizer and Ghanchay) and one district of AJ&K (Kotli). The aim of the project was to improve nutritional status, school enrollment and retention of school girls to reduce drop out rate of girls and gender gap and to create community awareness for better nutritional status. The project was to be implemented at grass root level covering 5, 30,000 girls in 5300 schools in 54 months. It also provided grass root village level job opportunities for 5300 community organizers for local women. The project was designed to be executed by National Implementation Unit (NIU) in the Ministry of Women Development, Social Welfare and Special Education through Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) and The Aga Khan University (AKU) and its 11 partner NGOs as implementers. The nutrition package included the provision of nutritional balanced noon meal providing at least 600 calories, deworming medicine and multi-micro nutrient supplements for two years.

Project's 3.6 billion cost breakdown is as follows: - Grass root direct beneficiary component Rs 2882 million further subdivided on provinces i.e. Rs 1088 million for Punjab, Rs 544 million each for Sindh, NWFP and Balochistan, Rs 109 million for Northern Areas and Rs 54 million for Azad Jammu And Kashmir: Implementation and operational costs further subdivided on stakeholders i.e. Rs 75 million for National Implementation Unit, Rs 105 million for Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal and Rs 538 million for The Aga Khan University.

The success stories of improving height and weight of school children; school enrollment and community mobilization due to school feeding programs have been reported in India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Haiti, Nepal, Congo and South Africa. The present paper covers the implementation progress, utilization of funds, bottlenecks/issues and lessons learned during the implementation of Tawana Pakistan from August 2002 to June 2005.

Achievements

The project activities were initiated in the field phase wise in 29 districts of Pakistan by PBM and AKU /NGOs and during the last 3 years School Tawana Committee (STCs) were formed in 4647 schools, 4382 community organizers and 4336 teachers were trained, enrolled and unenrolled girls identified as beneficiaries (unauthenticated) were 78% of the TPP targets. However, the actual number of enrolled and unenrolled girls and feeding beneficiaries were not known. The nutrition package was incomplete as deworming medicine and micro-nutrient tablets were not administered to girls due to sub-standard quality and side effects during the last 36 months. The feeding has been disrupted continuously from months to year in Tawana schools. The number of active feeding schools were only 55% against the 100% feeding school targets which had to be achieved by June 2003. Feeding in 45% of Tawana schools has been discontinued due to various reasons. The number of active feeding schools where continuous feeding cycle of two years had been completed was not reported. According to M&E reports, 32-85% of meals served in the schools were nutritionally inadequate providing less than 600 calories per meal and the cost of these meals was less than Rs 7.00 per meal. The achievements of PC-1 goals of improving nutritional status of girls, increasing school enrollment, reducing drop out rate and gender gap and state of community awareness in nutrition have not been reported /achieved.

Out of total Rs 1.627 billion released to project implementers, Rs 1306 million has been spent on various TPP activities so far. However, the utilization of feeding funds at school level was Rs 370.42 million and was only 12% of total feeding allocation. Due to low utilization of funds at school level, Rs 469.963 million was lying unutilized at DNC and STC levels, and may provide a massive potential for misappropriation.

Bottlenecks/Issues

The M&E Section (NIU) has been duly conveying the bottlenecks /issues affecting TPP through its district field monitoring reports, quarterly, biannual and annual reports regularly for the last 38 months, M&E reports are the main source of information

on the project implementation, identifying administrative, operational and technical (nutritional /feeding) issues to be implemented by the project implementers but most of the following issues are still unresolved resulting notable shortfalls in achieving the PC-1 targets.

- The implementation problems hindering the implementation progress were not conceived at the planning stage of the project. Due to faulty design the project may not achieve the PC-1 goals.
- The Baseline survey was initiated at a cost of Rs 8.0 million by AKU in August 2002 and its report was submitted in January 2005. The data on height and weight of 60% instead of 100 % of school girls was recorded, identification of un enrolled /enrolled school girls were not recorded properly, correctly and timely immediately before the start of feeding in the schools. The low prevalence of malnutrition reported among the girls had no justification. Some important information including control group of girls is missing in the report. According to Pakistan Medical Research Council, a control group is mandatory to compare the project results. The baseline survey data required rectification as recommended by M&E section
- Lack of leadership and mismanagement at different levels of project implementation.
- Lack of planning and ignoring the implementation protocol in the execution of the project.
- The mid-term impact assessment of the project by a third party was not conducted. However, the impact of school feeding on the height and weight of Tawana girls fed for six months in Gwadar schools revealed no significant change in height and weight of girls, as assessed by Director (M&E).
- Inadequate budget allocation to field NGOs by AKU, reducing their staff salaries, number of field teams and frequency of field visits.
- The stake holders were not performing according to their TORs.

- The STCs were not fully trained to monitor school feeding operations, utilization of funds and to create community awareness for better healthy living.
- Supply of substandard weighing machines which coupled with lack of measurement training has resulted in erratic height and weight data of project beneficiaries.
- Incomplete and flawed registration of enrolled and unenrolled beneficiaries leading to potential of misappropriation of funds.(Rs 1.9 million per month in 2722 schools).
- Reliable information about improvement in school enrolment and actual number of feeding beneficiaries and exact duration of feeding in schools is not known.
- The number of active feeding schools at the end of 3 years was 55 % against the 100 % school feeding target which had to be achieved by June 03.
- Due to disruption of feeding in schools, the information on the completion of feeding cycle for two years in number of school is not available.
- Incomplete school nutrition package for girls; feeding mid-day meal alone in the absence of deworming medicine and multi-micronutrient supplements to girls for the last two years may have no desirable impact on the health and nutrition status of school girls. The deworming medicine and micronutrient tablets primarily formulated for pregnant women were imported at a cost of Rs 8.25 million. But due to sub-standard quality, high dosage level and side effects 12.3 million micronutrient tablets have been declared unsafe for primary school girls by Ministry of Health. The quality of education during TPP implementation has affected due to diversion of part of academic time on feeding activities. The project management and implementers could not implement the complete nutrition package in Tawana schools.

- In-adequate quality of meals served in the schools. According to M&E reports 32-85% of the meals were nutritionally inadequate provided less than 600 Calories per meal and cost of these meals was less than Rs 7.00 per meal. Such poor quality meals may not achieve the PC-1 goals of improving nutritional status of the girls.
- Lack of ownership by provincial and district governments and empowerment of School Tawana Committees and Community at school level.
- Lack of training of field workers, community organizers, teachers, social mobilizers and STC mobilizers on maintaining feeding accounts, use of weighing machines and measuring tapes, planning nutritionally balanced meals and creating community awareness for better healthy living, affecting the implementation progress.
- Lack of coordination among the major stakeholders.
- Incomplete and flawed MIS to provide complete information of all field activities.
- Slow mobilization of funds from district to school level. High administrative cost (30%) of the project and low utilization of feeding funds (12%) at school level.
- Lack of monitoring Tawana operational and feeding activities and utilization of funds at school level by AKU/NGOs, PBM, NIU (E&C Section) and STCs. AKU has spent Rs 90 million on field monitoring and produced only one monitoring report covering limited activities during the last 36 months.
- The mal practices in the purchase of utensils and food items are endemic with local media projecting negative image of the project.
- Based on serious financial irregularities/misappropriation and administrative mismanagement at various levels reported by Federal Audit, the Ministry has referred the Tawana project to NAB for investigation.

Keeping in view the state of implementation and bottlenecks hampering the implementation progress, the project activities have been stopped to modify the design of the project.

Lessons Learned from School Feeding (Cooked meals) Programme

From the experience with the Tawana Pakistan Project implemented by NIU, AKU and PBM, it is recommended that the following conditions are met to ensure successful implementation and sustainable outcome.

1. Good leadership and management for multi stakeholders mega project.
2. Good performance of all stakeholders according to their TORs.
3. Good coordination/collaboration among the stakeholders.
4. Ownership of the project by Provincial Governments.
5. Revision of PC-1, modifying design of the project, introducing new nutrition package, with two qualitative goals of increasing school enrollment and height and weight of school girls.
6. Integrating feeding with locally procured deworming medicine and micro nutrient supplements, quality of schooling (school reforms programs), health and nutrition education in the community and provision of safe water and sanitation particularly in Balochistan to improve quality of life of school children.
7. An alternate nutrition package under “National Nutrition Programme for School Children” such as nutrient rich snack biscuits and milk (providing 600-900 Calories and 15-20 gm protein per serving) deworming medicine and micronutrients (vitamin A, iron and iodine) may be introduced. The biscuit fortified with micronutrients has a major advantage over cooked meal in that a biscuit is regarded as a snack rather than a meal and is unlikely to replace meals given to child at home. It is a compact source of nutrients that is easy to store, easy to deliver, distribute and monitor and needs no preparation. The biscuit has a long shelf-life and does not require regular delivery. Such nutrition package supplemented with nutrition education may be the most cost-effective, simple and safe program reducing administrative cost and less vulnerable to abuse or corruption and can be delivered by school teachers. The positive effects of biscuit

intervention on growth, micronutrient status, morbidity and cognitive function of children have been reported.

8. Select those schools where other interventions such as stipend to children, free books, oil tin etc, are not available.
9. The baseline data having control group should be collected before the start of feeding in the schools. Also follow implementation protocol.
10. The mid-term impact assessment and evaluation by a third party is important to measure true impact and benefits and to justify future continued investment in this intervention.
11. Authenticity of field data (baseline, number of enrolled and unenrolled girls, height and weight of girls, actual feeding beneficiaries etc).
12. NGOs should work direct under the District EDO (Education).
13. Getting the community involved from the beginning and giving them ownership of school feeding program greatly increases the chances for the program's success and sustainability.
14. A regular simple and practical monitoring and evaluation system not only at Federal but also at provincial/district level is required.