

KOSHI HILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

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The Programme

The Koshi Hills Development Programme (KHDP), including two extensions, was implemented between November 1987 and June 1992. It was the successor to the Koshi Hills Area Rural Development Programme (KCHARDEP). The decision to work in the main hill districts of the region was a direct result of an agreement between the British and Nepal governments to build a road from Dharan to Dhankuta. Prominent in the programme were agricultural, livestock and community forestry projects and support for several local institutions. ODA expenditure on KHDP including its extensions was £10.5m.

Like KCHARDEP, the programme's main emphasis was on the raising of incomes and the standard of living of the people in the Koshi Hills. But unlike KCHARDEP, the aim was that a reduced number of sectoral projects would be implemented with and by individual line ministries rather than (as previously) coordinated by the Ministry of Panchayat and Local Development (MPLD).

The Evaluation

When KHDP finally ended in June 1992, a number of impact assessments had been commissioned and have since been carried out. ODA's Evaluation Department accordingly commissioned a consultant to review, by means of a desk study, all the available evaluation studies, review documents and impact assessments that have been carried out since 1990, and draw overall conclusions on the impact of the programme. The cost of the evaluation was £7,750.

Overall Assessment

The performance of the various component projects varied from *successful to largely unsuccessful* and therefore KHDP, including its two extensions, must be judged overall as *partially successful*. This judgement should be understood as in part a reflection of the adverse physical and administrative circumstances in which the project was undertaken.

The Main Findings

- Using consultants to recruit, manage and account for project activities seems not to have reduced the level and cost of SEADD's managerial inputs.

- Local administrative, institutional and infrastructural weaknesses, compounded by a lack of an agreed collaborative policy framework between KHDP and His Majesty's government of Nepal (HMGN), adversely affected the programme, especially extension work.
- Both local and expatriate programme management was weak, activities and approaches often not being consistent with project objectives; this included a failure to focus properly on specific target groups, despite the emphasis placed on this in the initial baseline studies.
- Constructive progress assessment and systematic application of data acquired and lessons learned during previous phases, and an appropriate balance between monitoring and data analysis, were both lacking owing to a failure to accord priority to such activities.
- The main findings on individual project components are that: (a) the livestock project was adversely affected by the terrain and high mortality amongst the breeding bulls; (b) the households participating in the milk collection scheme appear to have benefited from increased sales; (c) the seed component of the agriculture project is likely to increase production of crops and thereby raise income and consumption levels, but mainly among high-caste and larger-scale farmers; (d) the community forestry project achieved improvements in security of access to forest products where forests had been brought under community control, and expected improvements in the availability of forest products will have a positive impact on living standards.
- The Uttarpani Agricultural Technical School (UATS) Project was successful, most graduates demonstrating high motivation and performance and enjoying a high rate of subsequent employment, which in turn produced positive motivation of the UATS staff who improved their knowledge and teaching skills. Between 1984 and 1991, 25% of graduates were women.
- UK support for the Pakhribas Agricultural Centre (PAC) mainly took place outside the framework of KHDP, but was successful.
- Despite individual achievements, evidence of how far KHDP as a whole has had a positive impact on living standards, nutritional status and out-migration is lacking, owing both to non-collection of data and to design, implementation and monitoring weaknesses. Eventual impact is not expected to be substantial.
- There is no evidence of any KHDP success in reaching poorer households; if anything, most project benefits were captured by wealthier households. Apart from isolated successes, similar conclusions apply to impact on women, who were hardly mentioned in the project objectives.

Lessons

- Programmes such as KHDP, particularly where the use of consultants for project management is planned, require very clear mutual understanding of (i) objectives; and (ii) lines of accountability and divisions of responsibility between all parties

involved, local or expatriate, public or private.

- Institutional strengthening programmes such as KHDP which have to operate within heavy public administration constraints require careful planning. Where local institutions are weak, priority may need to be given to supporting and strengthening them rather than trying prematurely to work through them.
- To avoid fragmentation of activities and lack of overall focus it is vital that project documents specify the intended beneficiaries, how they are to be reached and how they are expected to exploit the technical activities proposed. This requires detailed knowledge of the communities in which project activities will take place, an understanding of the factors that influence individual households' ability to participate in development activities, and an appreciation that project staff must be supported throughout what can be a lengthy and frustrating process.
- Projects intended to focus on the needs of women and the poor may need to avoid having to operate through line ministries, and should have clear objectives for benefits to these groups set out from the outset.
- The impact of programmes such as KHDP can be effectively monitored and measured only with the help of good-quality, regularly updated baseline data.
- Success is clearly dependent on: (i) drawing on data and lessons from previous projects, and (ii) good internal monitoring and review systems, based on sound indicators of achievement, by which the development process can be followed closely and lessons drawn out and applied as the work proceeds.