

2011

Inventure Private Limited
138, Street 43, F-10/4,
Islamabad, Pakistan
Ph: +92-51-2244321-2

**EXTERNAL EVALUATION
OF
INTEGRATED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND
EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME**

SUBMITTED TO: AWAZ CDS, MULTAN

Document:	Report
Type:	External Evaluation
Commissioned by:	AWAZ CDS
Evaluation conducted by:	Inventure Private Limited
Project:	ICDEP
Period of evaluation:	June 2008 to March 2011
Date submitted:	09 April, 2011

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	4
ABBREVIATIONS	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
SECTION 1.....	7
INTRODUCTION	9
1.1 ABOUT THE REPORT:	9
1.2 ABOUT ICDEP:.....	9
1.4 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION	10
SECTION 2.....	12
EVALUATION FINDINGS.....	12
SECTION 3.....	20
LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	20
3.1 LESSONS.....	20
3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS.....	21

Acknowledgements

The evaluation team wishes to thank all the individuals who participated in this exercise in any way. Specifically, we wish to gratefully acknowledge the excellent cooperation extended to the team members by AWAZ CDS staff in head office as well as in the field. We found all the AWAZ staff met during this evaluation to be very cordial, forthcoming and open. Special thanks are due to the ICDEP unit for excellent facilitation during the whole exercise. We are also deeply indebted to the members of PARCs who provided us the requested information and enthusiastically engaged with us during various evaluation related activities. Finally we wish to thank all those men, women, girls and boys who spared time to meet with the team and warmly shared their views and opinions with us.

Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AIDS	Amnesty International
ARID	Agricultural, Rural Income Diversification
AwazCDS	Awaz Foundation Pakistan: Centre for Development Services
B Z University	Bahau-din- Zakariya University
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CCBs	Citizen Community Boards
CNIC	Computerized National Identity Cards
CSOs	Civil Society Organization
CUP	Community Uplift Program
GCAP	Global Call to Action Poverty
HIV	Human Immune-deficiency Virus
HRCP	Human Rights Commission of Pakistan
ICDEP	Integrated Community Development and Empowerment Program
IDIs	In-depth Interviews
IEC	Information Education and Communication
IKM	Information and Knowledge Management
IPRI	International Property Rights Index
Karo Kari	Honor Killing
MNA	Member National Assembly
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPAs	Member Provincial Assemblies
MVs	Model Villages
NGOs	Non Governmental Organizations
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
OI	Oxfam International
PARC	Peoples Awareness and Rights Committee
PME	Planning Monitoring and Evaluation
PRAP	Policy Research and Advocacy Program
SARTI	Social Research and Training Institute
SCO	Strategic Change Objective
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
Vani	Women given in penance of the crime committed by her male relative
VAW	Violence Against Women
VDC	Vaseb Development Committee
Watta Satta	Exchange Marriages
WHEM	Water, Hazards, and Environmental Management
WPF	World Population Foundation

Executive Summary

This report is the outcome of External Evaluation of Integrated Community Development and Empowerment Programme (ICDEP) implemented by AWAZ CDS in four districts of southern Punjab. The document gives background, provides an overview of evaluation process, details evaluation findings, lists lessons learnt and finally puts forward a few recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and relevance of the programme in future. An overarching aim of the report is to help AWAZ consolidate the gains of ICDEP and expand it in a more effective and strategic manner.

The overall purpose of the evaluation was to assess whether the Programme served the intended objectives as described in the programme goals within agreed framework of strategies and approaches. The exercise focused on the following key questions;

- a) Whether the 'right things' were done by AWAZ?
- b) Whether these were done 'right'?

The evaluation was conducted during March 2011 by a team of 3 evaluators. The exercise chiefly relied on discussions with key informants and direct observation of the evaluators. Key findings, lessons and recommendations of the evaluation are listed below.

Key Findings

- ICDEP targets and interventions were generally found to be highly relevant to the contexts in which they were implemented. There is also empirical evidence to support that considerable progress has been made towards achieving the goals and targets of the programme.
- Throughout the evaluation process it was evident that AWAZ has positively impacted upon the lives of target communities. The main beneficiaries of the program were girls, boys, men and women living in the target villages. Interventions have contributed primarily towards changing people's perceptions about the significance of education, health, awakening a desire for improving their lives and to some extent creating awareness about rights.
- In the absence of any meaningful forums of civil society and organizations of the poor in the region, AWAZ approach of setting up VDCs and PARCs is apt for empowering communities.
- Perhaps one of the most notable contributions of ICDEP is that the programme interventions have helped to create a new cadre of community activists and leaders who have gained varying levels of skills, exposure and capacities to advocate for their rights at the grassroots level.
- In general, AWAZ's coordination with other civil society organizations working in southern Punjab was not very strong. However, it was noted that this is not unique to AWAZ. Instead almost all the NGOs working in southern Punjab such as Pattan, Caritas, NRSP, ITA, Marie Stopes and many others had little coordination with one another.
- With regards to sustainability of results, ICDEP can be categorised as partially successful. Majority of VDCs have not yet reached a stage where these could be expected to sustain as organizations on their own without AWAZ support. Nevertheless, a few of the AWAZ supported VDCs reached maturity during the period under review and are now ready to take

on development work on their own.

- Women involvement in community building interventions by ICDEP remained weak. It was observed that women VDCs are sometimes trivialized by men VDCs which assign them relatively unimportant tasks and responsibilities.

Lessons

- AWAZ's role as a facilitator and catalyst remained dominant as opposed to provider of resources and services during the period under review. However, it was learnt that some services are crucial such as those needed by survivors of gender based violence, without which mere advocacy becomes meaningless. Making use of this learning would imply paying more attention to leveraging resources through effectively linking AWAZ communities with other service providers, in the next phase of ICDEP.
- Enough efforts could not be directed to create mechanisms which systematically capture and use organisational learning. Creating such mechanisms would require revisiting the entire spectrum of documentation, record-keeping, monitoring and evaluation processes and redesigning these to focus on this important aspect.
- It was noted that in some cases, women VDCs were trivialized through assigning them relatively unimportant tasks and responsibilities. An important learning from this finding is that when constituting mixed forums is not possible and creating separate women forums is the only means through which women can participate, it is very important to give women forums such roles and responsibilities which are at least as important and meaningful as those assigned to the men forums.
- It was learnt that baseline study and need assessment is carried out in each village before setting up VDCs. However, it is important to repeat need assessment process after reasonable intervals (yearly or two yearly bases) to take into account changing needs of the groups and revisit relevance of interventions.
- The idea of culminating VDCs into CCBs so that these could access public funds, needs to be revisited after the rollback of local government systems.
- Majority of women VDC members praised the usefulness of vocational and skill enhancement trainings received through ICDEP. However, not many of them were found to be regularly using the newly acquired skills for income generation. It is also to be stated that more often than not skills enhancement do not automatically translate into increased economic activity. Skills enhancement training only lead to tangible income gains for communities when these are part of a carefully crafted and well coordinated programme which provides a number of related services such as seed capital or credit, market identification, marketing, negotiation and other business development services.

Recommendations

- **Mainstream DRR:** Floods in the target districts of AWAZ altered contextual realities of the area and expectations of the people. It is therefore pertinent for AWAZ to include DRR in its strategic plan to mainstream it into its programs so that AWAZ communities are better equipped to deal with any man made or natural disaster in future.

- **Track Results:** The monitoring and reporting in AWAZ is excessively focussed on inputs and activities. There is a need to overhaul monitoring and reporting formats, mechanisms and frequencies to redirect the focus on tracking results and maximizing organisational learning.
- **Focus on core competencies and build linkages:** The current interventions of ICDEP are too many and too differentiated, which sometimes results in thin spread and compromises quality. Perhaps building alliances in which AWAZ focuses on its core competencies and other actors are brought in to contribute in the areas of their respective expertise could be an option.
- **Engage with the Government:** ICDEP has so far relied almost exclusively on improving service delivery and governance through building pressure on the government. However, at times advocacy organizations also need to meaningfully engage with the relevant policy and decision makers and thus make way for policy and practice changes through working with the government rather than simply criticising it. Following this approach would require building relationship with the government at provincial and national levels.
- **Advocacy without service delivery:** It is common knowledge that mobilization at grassroots for advocacy without some level of service delivery is extremely difficult. It is high time that AWAZ starts building linkages with other service providers so that some service provision to AWAZ communities is made possible.
- **Need to work on CRS (Corporate Social Responsibility) component:** In some of the areas of ICDEP, particularly in district DG Khan (and may be elsewhere), companies involved in exploration of minerals, oil and gas are operating. It is suggested that AWAZ may consider working on CRS component with these companies to generate some resources that could bridge the service delivery gaps in these areas.
- **Functional Literacy for communities:** AWAZ should consider offering functional literacy classes to the VDCs where members are illiterate to help them acquire basic skills of reading, writing and accounting so that they could manage their committees more effectively.
- **Increase gender focus:** The efforts aiming at narrowing the existing gap in accessing opportunities and services between men and women were less evident in the communities visited. There is a need to increase gender focus in ICDEP.
- **Give alternate of CCBs.** The concept of VDCs culminating into CCBs was surely appropriate as CCBs offered huge potential within the local government system. However with the window of CCB opportunity closed for the time being and perhaps even for good, thinking is needed to identify from where and how the VDCs are going to access resources needed to do what they have learnt. Training to understand other sources of resources and ways to tap these resources seems the only plausible option.
- **Focus on Microfinance:** In most of the communities visited by the evaluation team, extreme poverty was noted and it was evident that there is a lot of demand for microfinance. Given that access to microfinance services (especially microcredit) in Pakistan has expanded very rapidly in the last few years, AWAZ may be well advised to seriously assess the demand and supply of microfinance in AWAZ communities and based on this assessment either develop a microfinance programme or preferably facilitate provision of microfinance services through other service providers.

SECTION 1

Introduction

1.1 About the Report:

This report is the outcome of an External Evaluation of AWAZ CDS's Integrated Community Development and Empowerment Programme (ICDEP) implemented during the period from June 2008 to March 2011. The document starts with providing background of this evaluation and an overview of its methodology. This is followed by findings of the evaluation which are supported by evidence and analyses to help the reader understand significant achievements as well as shortcomings of ICDEP. Following these findings, the report describes lessons learnt and finally recommendations derived from these lessons.

1.2 About ICDEP:

Integrated Community Development and Empowerment Programme (ICDEP) was initiated by AWAZ CDS in 2001, and thus at the time of this external evaluation the programme has completed the first decade of its life. The scope of this evaluation is however limited to the period from June 2008 to March 2011.

The ICDEP attempts to address issues identified by Awaz-CDS in southern Punjab during its long history of work in the target areas. Among the major challenges are lack of organizational capacity among the poor, their lack of access to information and decision making, weak and thinly spread civil society, poor service delivery by state actors, and patriarchal traditions which actively discriminate against women. People lack education, are socially backward, unaware about their rights and responsibilities, have low incomes and productivity, and are in a religious stranglehold. Feudal lords restrain the locals from participation in development activities and benefiting from the fruits of development. They are prevented from voicing their concerns and taking collective action. This environment limits coming together of people into groups and restrains emergence of leadership at the grassroots level.

Reportedly, ICDEP is a direct response to these issues and uses Awaz Development model that combines community level organization development and capacity building with national level advocacy and policy research. It builds community based leadership that can challenge the prevailing feudal traditions and practices and create space for the right based development approach to take root and flourish. ICDEP's target areas include four poorest of the poor Tehsils (Multan, Alipur, Jamur & Taunsa) of four districts of southern Punjab. The programme focuses on enhancing the capacities of the poorest of the poor communities and their voluntary groups to increase productivity and reduce poverty. Some of the key planned programme results include;

- Community leaderships' capacities built
- Development initiatives made gender sensitive
- Community groups, especially women groups strengthened
- Social services delivery and physical infrastructure development improved
- Community leadership, citizens, local government representatives and MPAs and MNAs educated
- Effective development communication tools established
- Community based issues related with citizens' rights, women rights addressed
- Policy level advocacy and lobbying carried out by strengthening local CSOs, VDCs, NGOs, network like Peoples' Awareness & Rights Committees (PARCs) at each Tehsil level in southern Punjab particularly in districts of Multan, Muzaffargarh, D G Khan, and Rajanpur.

- Issue based studies carried out, published and disseminated
- Parliamentarians follow up for policy reforms done

To achieve the above results, ICDEP was implemented through the following three components

- i) Community Uplift Programme (**CUP**): Community Development and Empowerment through formation and capacity building off Vaseb¹ Development Committees
- ii) Policy Research and Advocacy (**PRAP**) through formation of and working with Peoples Rights Awareness Committees (**PRACs**)
- iii) Social Research and Training Institute (**SARTI**)

After southern Punjab was widely affected by flood in summer of 2010, AWAZ revised its yearly work plan of ICDEP to align it with the changes in the context.

1.3 Notable developments in the national and local context

In Pakistan, the last few years witnessed a sea change in the long held government policy of virtual control over the print and electronic media. The easing of government regulations has led to a free media assuring greater access to information. Several credible channels now routinely expose incidents of human rights violations, discrimination against women and other issues that until recently, were widely considered taboo. Women and men from different walks of life are slowly but surely shaping public opinion on gender equality through their regular contributions to the TV, radio and print media. On the other hand, terrorism, religious extremism and a breakdown of governmental writ in northern parts of the country and suicide bombings are a reality for citizens.

Nonetheless, there is evidence of improved awareness, enhanced voice and positive developments at the grassroots level. Many men and women are now comfortable and also eager to address local service delivery issues. Awareness and capacity building activities have led to positive dynamic and a greater acceptance of women within traditionally male-dominated spheres of social, political and economic life.

1.4 Purpose and scope of the External Evaluation

The overall purpose of this external evaluation was to assess whether ICDEP served the intended objectives as described in the project documents. The results of the evaluation are expected to ensure documentation of best practices and lessons learned during the process of ICDEP implementation with focus on institutional learning. Moreover, this evaluation has been conducted in time to inform the development of next phase of this programme.

The evaluation covered five areas of investigation: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, each explained briefly as follows;

- **Program relevance:** how well the program addressed the key issues or problems that affected the AWAZ communities over the program period.
- **Program efficiency:** the extent to which the program used the least possible resources to achieve the required quality of outputs/outcomes.
- **Program effectiveness:** whether the program achieved what it set out to achieve in its plans.
- **Program impact:** the changes in people's lives brought about by the program.
- **Sustainability:** what changes, results and benefits are likely to continue in foreseeable future and which ones are likely to diminish or even disappear over time.

¹ Vaseb is the Siraiki word for community or a settlement of human beings. Siraiki is the language of majority in southern Punjab, especially in the districts where ICDEP was implemented.

Keeping in view AWAZ's development philosophy and also the scope of this assignment and in order to fully achieve the objectives of this exercise, the evaluation team adopted a partnership approach for this exercise, instead of an advisory approach. The approach was underpinned by flexibility and close collaboration and coordination with AWAZ staff. The evaluation team comprised three evaluators including one woman. The team spent around one week in the programme districts to collect data and information from all relevant stakeholders and key informants. However, given the tight timeframe, team had to be selective with regard to a representative choice of locations and communities to be included in the review. However while developing evaluation mission's itinerary, particular attention was paid to ensure that the quality of the evaluation is not compromised and that the mission gets all the necessary and relevant information. Efforts were made to gather information from the rich body of literature provided by AWAZ, hold meetings with identified stakeholders and observe ground practices. The large body of information was finally synthesized to arrive at assessment and conclusions which are presented in the following sections. In brief, the evaluation process involved following major steps;

1. Review of Evaluation ToRs and development of evaluation methodology, investigation tools and itinerary.
2. Documents review
3. Field work which involved meetings, interviews and consultations with;
 - AWAZ staff
 - Members of men and women VDCs
 - Office bearers of men and women VDCs
 - Men, women, girls and boys in ICDEP target villages
 - Members and office bearers of PRACs
 - Lawyers
 - Journalists
 - Social activists etc
4. Analysis of collected information and development of key findings
5. Preparation of draft report and sharing with AWAZ
6. Review of draft report in the light of comments received and submission of Final Report

SECTION 2

Evaluation Findings

This section of the report details the overall findings of the evaluation with regard to relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability;

2.1 Relevance

ICDEP's focus on rights based advocacy could not be more appropriate in a country where awareness and restitution of rights has been an unremitting problem. The issues of child rights and women rights remain at the heart of development agenda in the country and more so in the districts of southern Punjab.

The socio economic profile of the four districts where ICDEP was implemented, as determined from secondary resources and as observed during the field visits to these areas, provided enough evidence to verify that that AWAZ approach of ranking (that take into account important human, economic and social dimensions of poverty adapted from the framework of Participatory Poverty Assessments of DFID and the World Bank) in indentifying the poorest union councils in the districts has enabled it to reach out to the economically poor and the most marginalized communities in the region. It was observed that in these areas, social, economic and political marginalization and local customs have deprived poor men, women and children from accessing their fundamental rights. Evaluation mission noted that many children in a number of villages did not have access to education. The education facilities were either nonexistent or non functional and even where schools existed, these only catered to boys.

Similarly, access to basic healthcare services was alarmingly low and this coupled with poor knowledge and information about health and personal hygiene led to many health issues in the community. Poor quality of water, where people especially women were forced to bring it from lakes or nearby canals, was another important reason for poor health. For medical aid, especially in case of maternal health people rely on local quacks or untrained TBAs. With regard to gender equity, women had very little say in decision making in their homes or community level, men in most cases decide about the sale or purchase of livestock and whom to vote in election. Lack of property inheritance rights, exchange marriages and restricted mobility were main causes of violence against women. It was also noted that the devastation from floods had further pushed these communities to extreme poverty.

Keeping the foregoing in view, this evaluation found enough evidence to conclude that goals and targets of ICDEP and its three components as well as majority of the interventions undertaken by AWAZ under ICDEP were very relevant within the socio economic context of communities where AWAZ worked during this period. In most cases, activities undertaken within the programme were need based and thus contributed to improve the lives of people in these areas. *In particular, focus on increasing access and quality of drinking in target districts, child birth registration, national identity cards for women, health and hygiene awareness, some livelihood related interventions including savings and internal lending by VDCs and above all capacity building of men and women at the grassroots level were found to be highly relevant.* There is also empirical evidence to support that considerable progress has been made towards achieving the goals and targets of the programme.

2.2 Efficiency

Cost Effectiveness: According to the assessment of the evaluation mission, project activities in ICDEP were conducted in an extremely cost effective manner. It was observed that while organising programmes and events such as trainings, seminars, conferences, and press conferences etc, AWAZ makes a conscious effort to keep the costs as low as possible. Moreover review of various costs and budgets including personnel costs and their comparison with other similar programs implemented by other organizations verifies that *ICDEP can be regarded as cost efficient*.

Piggy backing on existing practices: The traditional committee system (where a group decides to save a certain amount of money for as many month as number of members and every month one members takes all the money collected) has been intelligently used by AWAZ to encourage women and men to save and utilize it as productively as possible. Evaluation mission observed that many men and some women VDCs have become regular savers and have started using this money for income generation purposes.

However, some weaknesses were also observed with regard to efficiency which are as follows.

Selection of Villages: The evaluation mission reviewed various documents related to village selection as well as discussed this in detail with relevant staff, which revealed that the process of village selection is not standardised; rather it is dependent on the discretion of relevant staff. The decision to select a village for ICDEP interventions is chiefly based on the comfort level of relevant team with the community representatives of that particular village. This approach has resulted in selection of villages scattered in a wide geographical area with negative time and cost implications. Given that social and economic indicators of adjacent villages in one Union Council or even in one Tehsil tend to be similar, it may be more efficient to work with clusters of adjacent villages reducing travel time and costs of implementation and creating opportunities for more synergistic programming.

Project Design Weakness: All the project documents corresponding to ICDEP were reviewed during the course of evaluation which exposed a major weakness in the project design as it does not include a project logical framework. Though the project attempts to list down some results as milestones and outputs, logic of results chain was not followed and thus activities were not linked to various levels of results.

Monitoring and Organizational Learning: The monitoring unit in AWAZ is seriously under resourced. This is one of the factors that has contributed to insufficient focus on distilling best practice and lessons and ongoing institutional learning. A culture of organizational learning has not taken roots as yet which would involve carefully examining what is working and why and what is not working and why not and then documenting the former for replication and the latter for avoidance in future. This is not formally happening as most of the learning remains in the heads of individuals and the crucial step of transforming individual learning into organizational learning is not happening, at least systematically.

During the course of the evaluation it was also observed that generally staff is not well honed in identification, analysis and documentation of lessons learnt. Furthermore, the current organisational structure, systems and management processes do not support systematic organisational learning. Even the positive examples in this area resulted from initiatives of

concerned individuals rather than dictated by organisational imperatives. In the words of a senior staff member, “it is only the individuals who learn in AWAZ as mechanisms to distil individual learning into institutional learning remain weak or absent”.

On the whole, the quality of reports generated by ICDEP leaves much to be desired. The documents are invariably undated and it is not possible to ascertain whether it is a draft or the final version. The reports are also replete with typographic errors perhaps pointing to the fact that these have been produced under excessive time pressure. The practice of activity reporting instead of reporting progress of achievement towards results is still common.

In the light of above findings, there is a definite and urgent need to analyse the role and responsibilities of monitoring unit and give this unit needed human and other resources so that the unit could effectively deliver what is expected of it.

Interaction with VDCs: High turnover of frontline staff was noted during the last three years. Whenever any of the FSOs leaves AWAZ, villages are reassigned to other FSOs. Needless to say that frequent changes do not serve to ensure smooth implementation of planned activities and weaken the ‘bond’ between AWAZ and its communities. Interaction of front line staff with VDCs also needs to be more frequent and more structured.

PARCs: The contractual obligations between PARC and AWAZ were not very clear, except a yearly work plan that does not exactly spell out the support around financial contribution, conflict resolution and other obligations between the two parties. Therefore, a number of issues around mode of payment from AWAZ and reporting were identified by the members that were based on lack of clarity of members about AWAZ’s contractual obligations and limitations set by its donors.

Coordination with Civil Society: In general, AWAZ’s coordination with other civil society organizations working in southern Punjab was not very strong. However, it was noted that this is not unique to AWAZ. Instead almost all the NGOs working in southern Punjab such as Pattan, Caritas, NRSP, ITA, Marie Stopes and many others had little coordination with one another.

2.3 Effectiveness

In the absence of any meaningful forums of civil society and organizations of the poor in the region, AWAZ approach of setting up VDCs and PARCs is apt for empowering communities. These bodies help to channelize AWAZ’s capacity building and advocacy support in a structured manner. Discussions with almost all the members of VDCs and PARCs confirmed that they valued these forums very much and considered these crucial for learning about important issues, gaining confidence and voicing their demands.

Most VDCs members interviewed by the evaluation mission *remembered that they had attended some training* but were not able to recall the contents or key messages of the training. Reasons for apparent lack of long term training impact include moderate relevance of training programmes, time gap, insufficient training follow up and perhaps most importantly the fact that majority of the VDC members are illiterate or semi literate and the training materials were mostly in the form of written documents.

Given that patriarchal and feudal traditions are deeply entrenched in villages where ICDEP was

implemented, women involvement in community building interventions was very noticeable and achieved against very heavy odds. However, this was just the beginning and the road to gender equity would be long and hard. So far women involvement as compared to men is generally weak. It was observed that women VDCs are sometimes trivialized by men VDCs which assign them relatively unimportant tasks and responsibilities.

Design Deficit: There appears a certain amount of design deficit in AWAZ CDS. The highest level of design effort is invested in the development of project documents. Once these documents have been developed and approved, it is perhaps assumed that these documents are ready for implementation. However given that the projects documents are deficient with regard to clear articulation of expected results and their alignment with planned activities, more detailed designing was needed at the implementation level. Design deficiencies in the ICDEP project document included;

- It does not include any outcome or outcome related indicators making it impossible to measure the 'change' that the project is committed to bring;
- Outputs are not numbered.
- It does not include a monitoring framework and performance monitoring plan to track the progress towards achievement of results.

Research and Publications: ICDEP is primarily a rights awareness and advocacy programme which chiefly relies on written materials and knowledge products for wider dissemination of information and messages among the stakeholders. Evaluation mission's review of a large body of these materials indicates that ICDEP has been very strong in producing reports, articles and research studies which have focused on right issues and are mostly in a language that their target audiences understand. During the period under review, ICDEP's research and advocacy focused on some very pertinent and relevant issues like water, gender, shadow report on millennium development goals, perceptions of local people about social disparities and violence against women.

However the quality of these materials has not been consistent. Some documents and reports have been found to be of very good quality while others were not that impressive. This is primarily attributable to inadequate research and documentation skills in the organization. Weaknesses most commonly found in these materials include poor and sometimes sloppy language and spellings and proofing and editing mistakes. Only a little more attention towards and effort in proof reading and editing could have made these documents far more credible. The need to professionalize the publications unit in AWAZ cannot be overemphasized.

Taking this point further, it is to be stated that ICDEP staff is generally very good in community mobilization, community interaction, working under pressure in physically challenging conditions and extreme weather and travelling long distance in areas where road network is generally very poor. They are also very capable of organizing and managing street processions and protests, raising issues in print and electronic media or in other words making a lot noise and thus making themselves heard. These are indeed highly relevant and very crucial capacities for ICDEP. However the programme also needs some specialised and relatively higher order skills like research and documentation which are weak. Research and publications require highly specialized skills and generalists cannot be expected to do them well. Therefore, there is a definite need for either new induction of staff who bring with them right qualifications and experience to professionally manage

research and publications or to identify individuals from existing staff who have basic skills in these areas and can be capacitated relatively quickly.

Human resources: One of the major issues noticed by the evaluation team is the need to develop human resources. There is generally scarcity of quality human resources in southern Punjab and also because AWAZ remains at the lower end of NGOs with regard to staff salaries, makes it very challenging for the organization to attract and retain quality human resources.

VDC Savings: Important maturity indicators for VDCs revolve around adherence to the practice of savings through regular contributions from members, the amount saved and the use of this amount for productive purposes. To be able to do this effectively, each VDC was supposed to open a bank account. However, opening of bank accounts turned out to be a long haul for many of the VDCs because;

- i) VDCs are not registered bodies whereas banks need certain documentation to open organizational accounts which these forums are unable to provide;
- ii) Amounts that VDCs collect through members' contributions and then lend internally usually tend to be quite small and therefore VDCs are not seen by banks as commercially attractive clients;

This is an operational stumbling block that AWAZ needs to look into urgently and find a way around this issue. In very poor communities the saving cannot be kept at home in cash because it is most likely to be used up by whoever possesses it due to fungibility of money.

2.4 Impact

Throughout the evaluation process it was evident that AWAZ has positively impacted upon the lives of target communities. The main beneficiaries of the program were girls, boys, men and women living in the target villages. Interventions have contributed primarily towards changing people's perceptions about the significance of education, health, awakening a desire for improving their lives and to some extent creating awareness about rights.

Impacts of ICDEP are visibly strong with regard to increased awareness and capacities of rights holders to claim their rights. There is also some evidence that ICDEP contributed to enhancing school enrolment of boys and girls at primary and elementary levels. Similarly there is evidence of positive changes with regard to health seeking behaviours in AWAZ supported communities. Increased capacities of many of the men and some women in AWAZ supported communities have started to generate positive dividends for the individuals as well as communities.

However, while the poverty is extreme in most of the AWAZ communities, ICDEP did not have any notable impact on the livelihoods of people in target villages. Other findings in this area are detailed below:

Grooming leadership at grassroots: Perhaps one of the most significant contributions of ICDEP is that the programme interventions have helped to create a new cadre of community activists and leaders who have gained varying levels of skills, exposure and capacities to advocate for their rights at the grassroots level. To quote one example, it was this leadership which made it possible to mobilise women in the most conservative areas of Jampur and as a result the number of women VDC members increased from 6 to 200 in the last five years. Evaluation mission also met with many spirited young women who reportedly could not leave their homes a few years back but now

they host big seminars and show great resilience when face opposition from families.

Another interesting example of enhanced local capacities was observed in one of the villages of Jampur where VDC conducted various researches at community level regarding local issues to do advocacy on such issues. For example, two years back, they conducted a survey of cigarette and tea expense by the male community members of the area. On the basis of this research they tried to convince the community members that they should quit smoking and minimise tea consumption and the amount thus saved should be spent on more important needs like education and health.

Narrow Community-base: The findings of the evaluation mission point to a narrow community-base of AWAZ's interventions in general as only a minority of men and women are active members of VDCs. In addition, children and youth, despite being much more in numbers than adults are largely ignored.

Drinking Water - An impressive story to tell: Some of the interventions carried out under the banner of ICDEP have certainly generated visible, tangible and verifiable results. One such example is the ICDEP's campaign for safe drinking water. As a result of this campaign, many of the urban areas in target districts of ICDEP have witnessed long term improvements in the supply of safe drinking water. For instance, TMA Bahawalnagar has constituted a committee which has representation from citizens to oversee working of the water filtration plant and to ensure continued availability of clean drinking water for people. Similarly, the number of filtration plants in target districts has doubled in a year. This is a very significant achievement and a testimony that through identification of a real issue which is dear to people, conducting quality research and then aptly using the findings of this research for advocacy can actually lead to real improvements in the service delivery. This is especially notable because aiming for improved service delivery through advocacy is a very hard road which most of the NGOs shy away from. Instead they take the easy route and simply start providing that service, thereby absolving the state of its responsibility, in the long run.

Voter education: Discussions with members of PARCs and other key informants pointed out that PARCs played a critical role in organizing political seminars in the run up to the last general elections. These forums brought together voters and political candidates for interaction and exchange of views and reportedly helped tremendously towards political awareness and education of masses and also contributed towards developing a culture of accountability for aspirants of public offices. However in the absence of any evaluation or assessment about how these forums impacted voter turnout and their choice of candidates, exact impact of these forums cannot be ascertained.

Database of human rights violations: ICDEP is maintaining a data base of human rights violations on its website which is accessed by media, researchers and human rights activists for advocacy purposes. This is a very commendable service and its usage and resulting impact needs to be tracked down more systematically.

Work in PATA: During the period under review, ICDEP has made inroads into Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) of Punjab which are marked by remoteness, ignorance, lack of development and inaccessibility. This is indeed commendable. However to be really effective in this challenging territory, AWAZ will have to stretch much beyond its existing capacities, systems and the way things are done. Community development and advocacy approaches and strategies which are suitable for say in and around Multan may not prove that unsuitable for tribal areas.

2.5 Sustainability

With regards to sustainability of results, ICDEP can be categorised as partially successful. Majority of VDCs have not yet reached a stage where these could be expected to sustain as organizations on their own without AWAZ support. Nevertheless, a few of the AWAZ supported VDCs reached maturity during the period under review and are now ready to take on development work on their own. AWAZ may need to start developing a phase out strategy from such villages so that organisational resources and time could be diverted to where these are most needed such as weak VDCs and new villages.

Phasing out: ICDEP needs to start planning to phase out from some villages, where it has been working for very long. In general, there are two types of villages where this can be done. The first category of villages are those where AWAZ has been working for long period of time and where VDCs have developed sufficient capacity to effectively lead development efforts on their own. It needs to be highlighted that these communities will never grow to their full potential until and unless AWAZ steps out to create space so that they take on these responsibilities on their own. The second category of villages includes those villages where ICDEP has been working over a long period of time without any visible achievements. In such cases, if things have not changed in 10 years for one reason or the other, there is little justification to continue the work. Abandoning these villages and working with more receptive communities would be a better use of resources.

Selection of AWAZ as the national secretariat for Global Campaign Against Poverty (GCAP) followed by nomination of AWAZ CEO as the regional coordinator for GCAP are milestone achievements that AWAZ can be rightly proud of. These signals that the organization is fast emerging as a convener of civil society which a very significant advancement and would help to further strengthen its advocacy role.

2.6 Additional analysis and findings

2.6.1 Peoples Rights Awareness Committees (PARCs)

Successful establishment of PARCs in 53 tehsils of southern Punjab is a very strategic achievement of ICDEP. PARCs have extended support to AWAZ communities and provided platform to AWAZ for launching advocacy campaigns. Volunteering is an important virtue of PARCs that needs to be valued and properly organized through developing appropriate systems, volunteer's data basis and mechanisms based on some incentives and recognition to encourage volunteering as an important human resource development strategy.

In order to exploit the full potential of these committees and set expectations right, it is important to conduct regular strategic planning process with the members of each network and set agenda of the network with a long term vision, detailed resource plan and identification of capacity building needs. AWAZ should formalize these plans through a partnership agreement that both parties should agree and sign. These plans should set clear indicators of maturity in agreement with each PARC and agree upon a timeframe for AWAZ to phase out after building required capacities and strong linkages to make them functional independently.

In some cases, weaknesses were observed in linkages between PARCs and VDCs and coordination between PARCS and AWAZ field offices. There may be a need to analyse the factors behind this and

improve linkages and coordination at local level. Furthermore, all the PARCs may be evaluated and best practices identified for replication.

2.6.2 Community Uplift Programme (CUP)

VDC members in general termed VDCs an important forum through which they learnt, how to organize themselves, how to conduct meetings and save money. Many of them emphasized trainings and exchange visits arranged by AWAZ provided them with the opportunity to meet other VDCs members and learn new things.

The evaluation missions observed that gender is not being the attention it deserves in implementation and monitoring of CUP. It was hard to differentiate or find examples of the indicators included in program to gather gender disaggregated data, women empowerment and gender equity such as increased number of women casting votes, making decisions about marriages or accessing services or making decisions about their savings etc.

During the period under review, ICDEP worked in a large number of areas in diverse geographical settings. Though the target areas focused in the programme are almost equally poor and deprived, yet some are worse than others with regard to remoteness and lack of access to facilities and services. This made ICDEP especially challenging.

A list of 18 or so indicators has been developed to measure and track maturity of VDCs. The evaluation team found these indicators ambitious, loaded with jargons and not very well aligned with the kind of inputs made in VDCs. The list of indicators needs to be revisited in order to unpack concepts i.e gender discrimination, equal opportunities and add few but measurable indicators.

SECTION 3

Lessons and recommendations

3.1 Lessons

1. AWAZ's role as a facilitator and catalyst remained dominant as opposed to provider of resources and services during the period under review. It was also noted by the evaluation team that ICDEP interventions generally contributed to increased awareness about rights among community groups, which naturally led to increased demand for services by these communities. However, in most of the villages visited by the team, supply of services - in education, health, water, child protection, and services for survivors of GBV etc - was seriously lagging behind the demand. *The resulting tension from this demand-supply gap is something that needs to be carefully accounted for and examined by AWAZ.* For instance, AWAZ through PARCS has contributed to increasing awareness about women's human rights and GBV. As a result every now and then some women who has been subjected to violence decides to rebel and at that stage needs support to stand up and fight against the perpetrators of violence. However, as per ICDEP approach and strategy AWAZ as well as PARCs are neither equipped nor have sufficient resources to provide services to survivors of GBV such as legal support, shelter, etc. The assumption perhaps is that when citizens are sufficiently empowered, they would be able to compel the duty bearers - relevant government departments - for delivery of needed services. However, this surely is a very long shot and usually does not serve to alleviate the miseries of people in short term. Resultantly, a few PARC members shared that sometimes they are viewed by community as mere 'talkers' who motivate people to raise their voice against abuse and injustice but when people do so and as a result run into hot water, AWAZ and PARCs do not offer them the support that they badly need. Making use of this learning would imply paying more attention to leveraging resources through effectively linking AWAZ communities with other service providers, in the next phase of ICDEP.
2. In continuation of the above, other players and opportunities often remained out of focus because AWAZ views itself only as a catalyst. *If a new expanded self image of AWAZ as an enabler, facilitator and catalyst (following a rights based approach) is fully internalized across all organisational tiers, AWAZ will be better poised to scan the environment more minutely to identify such opportunities in time and fully benefit from them.*
3. Enough efforts could not be directed to create mechanisms which systematically capture and use organisational learning. *Creating such mechanisms would require revisiting the entire spectrum of documentation, record-keeping, monitoring and evaluation processes and redesigning these to focus on this important aspect.*
4. It was noted that in some cases, women VDCs were trivialized through assigning them relatively unimportant tasks and responsibilities. An important learning from this finding is that when constituting mixed forums is not possible and creating separate women forums is the only means through which women can participate, *it is very important to give women forums such roles and responsibilities which are at least as important and meaningful as those assigned to the men forums.*
5. It was learnt that baseline study and need assessment is carried out in each village before setting up VDCs. However, it is important to repeat need assessment process after

reasonable intervals (yearly or two yearly bases) to take into account changing needs of the groups and revisit relevance of interventions. For example in village Joya of District Jampur, women were aware that exchange marriages are bad and trigger violence and health problems. However, apparently communities find it difficult to free themselves from this harmful practice because of dowry which is deemphasized in exchange marriages. When poor parents wish to marry off their girls without exchange marriage, they have to arrange handsome dowry which poor parents find very difficult to manage. However in case of exchange marriages, both parties mutually agree to accept a much smaller dowry and thus manage to marry their girls and boys without getting into extreme financial problems. This indicates that simple advocacy against exchange marriages may not work unless it includes a campaign against the custom of dowry.

6. The idea of culminating VDCs into CCBs so that these could access public funds, needs to be revisited after the rollback of local government systems. *The capacity of these groups to access funds from alternative sources such as individual and corporate philanthropy and national and international development organizations need to be enhanced.*
7. Majority of women VDC members praised the usefulness of vocational and skill enhancement trainings received through ICDEP. However, not many of them were found to be regularly using the newly acquired skills for income generation. It was noted that follow up by AWAZ team to transform those skills in viable livelihood opportunities remained weak. It is also to be stated that more often than not skills enhancement do not automatically translate into increased economic activity. *Skills enhancement training only lead to tangible income gains for communities when capacity building training is part of a carefully crafted and well coordinated programme* which provides a number of related services such as seed capital or credit, market identification, marketing, negotiation and other business development services.

3.2 Recommendations

1. **Mainstream DRR:** Floods in the target districts of AWAZ altered contextual realities of the area and expectations of the people. It is therefore pertinent for AWAZ to include DRR in its strategic plan to mainstream it into its programs so that AWAZ communities are better equipped to deal with any man made or natural disaster in future.
2. **Increase Organisational Capacities:** Over the years and primarily with the help of ICDEP, AWAZ has very successfully developed its organisational image and identify as an advocacy organization. However the programmatic as well as functional capacities of the organizations sometimes seem to fall short of its image. AWAZ needs to further enhance its competencies in advocacy, research, documentation, publications and building alliances that focus on policy level changes.
3. **Develop LFA:** The project document for the next phase of ICDEP should be a more usable document than the current one. It should be designed in a way that allows its operationalization right down to the level of activity implementation. More importantly, the logic of linking activities with various levels of results made popular by the logical framework model should be used while designing the next phase of ICDEP.
4. **Track Results:** The monitoring and reporting in AWAZ is excessively focussed on inputs and activities. There is a need to overhaul monitoring and reporting formats, mechanisms and frequencies to redirect the focus on tracking results and maximizing

organisational learning.

5. **Focus on core competencies and build linkages:** The current interventions of ICDEP are too many and too differentiated, which sometimes results in thin spread and compromises quality. Perhaps building alliances in which AWAZ focuses on its core competencies and other actors are brought in to contribute in the areas of their respective expertise could be an option. For instance, PRAP relies heavily on research done by AWAZ for advocacy purposes, whereas the research capacity of the organization is still not fully developed. Therefore, it may be better to create linkages with organizations which specialize in research and piggy back on their work.
6. **Engage with the Government:** ICDEP has so far relied almost exclusively on improving service delivery and governance through building pressure on the government. However, at times advocacy organizations also need to meaningfully engage with the relevant policy and decision makers and thus make way for policy and practice changes through working with the government rather than simply criticising it. Following this approach would require building relationship with the government at provincial and national levels.
7. **Acknowledge Private Sector:** In addition to the above, so far AWAZ has been exclusively focusing on improving service delivery through the public sector. However, since private sector is emerging as a significant player, especially in health and education service delivery; this factor needs to be kept in focus while developing the next phase of ICDEP.
8. **Child protection:** Prevalence and acceptance of child protection in AWAZ communities has been largely ignored during the implementation of ICDEP. Child labour and little involvement of children in ICDEP interventions point to the need for an increased emphasis on child protection in next phase of ICDEP.
9. **Village selection and monitoring:** There is a need to refine the village selection criteria as well as develop 'capacity and performance standards' for selection and continuation of VDCs.
10. **Gender mainstreaming and development of gender indicators:** It was observed in field level meetings and in meetings with AWAZ staff of that the component of gender needs to be improved further and to be mainstreamed as well. At field level lot of things are happening and improving regarding gender but the documentation of these trends and patterns remains weak. It was also observed that for measuring change mostly general development indicators are being used at community or VDC level like model village or model VDC etc and information regarding gender is mostly anecdotal and specific gender indicators are missing. These can be included in the Monitoring and Evaluation system of the program to make it systematic and structured in future.
11. **Advocacy without service delivery:** It is common knowledge that mobilization at grassroots for advocacy without some level of service delivery is extremely difficult. Now that in the post flood scenario, some of the AWAZ communities have received some goods and services from AWAZ as well as other sources, this may both be a good as well as a bad news for AWAZ community development model. On one hand the recent supply of food and non food items and house building assistance have induced an element of gratefulness among communities towards AWAZ which has helped to

reinforce their bond with AWAZ. On the other, community expectations have increased and if nothing tangible flows from AWAZ towards these communities in future, maintaining a strong relationship with them and keeping them motivated may become even more challenging. As suggested elsewhere in this report, it is high time that AWAZ starts building linkages with other service providers so that some service provision to AWAZ communities is made possible.

12. **Need to work on CRS (Corporate Social Responsibility) component:** In some of the areas of ICDEP, particularly in district DG Khan (and may be elsewhere), companies involved in exploration of minerals, oil and gas are operating. For instance, in district DG Khan, oil and gas companies are operating and similarly some cement companies like DG Cement are also operating. AWAZ has already been working on the environmental aspect of such operations which has helped the organization in acquiring a greater understanding about these companies and their policies and practices. Capitalizing on this work, it is suggested that AWAZ may consider working on CRS component with these companies to generate some resources that could bridge the service delivery gaps in these areas. The approach for this component could be first defined and discussed at organizational level and then it can be incorporated in the research and advocacy component of the program. To start with AWAZ may prepare its strategy to work on this issue by equipping itself with the legal and technical aspect of this component and how to approach companies for CRS and afterwards it can take this message to the communities for advocacy. In this way communities could be told about their rights toward such companies and how to approach them for realization of their rights in the form of resources etc.
13. **Functional Literacy for communities:** AWAZ should consider offering functional literacy classes to the VDCs where members are illiterate to help them acquire basic skills of reading, writing and accounting so that they could manage their committees more effectively.
14. **Increase gender focus:** A regular TNA of VDCs should be conducted after suitable intervals to ensure that trainings offered are addressing gender differentiated needs of the group and are relevant to their needs. The evaluation mission got the impression from field visits that men and women were getting similar trainings. The efforts aiming at narrowing the existing gap in accessing opportunities and services between men and women was less evident in the communities visited. The program interventions and budgets should be analyzed from gender perspective and the practices of gender based budget be adopted if possible. For example, there may be a strong justification to create more economic opportunities for women or to increase focus on the education of girls.
15. **Give alternate of CCBs.** The concept of VDCs culminating into CCBs was surely appropriate as CCBs offered huge potential within the local government system. However the local governments have been practically abolished for more than two years. While several appeals and cases challenging their dissolution and revival of the old district management system are pending in the courts, it is hard to predict when and in what form local bodies would be reinstated. This seems to have dealt a serious blow to the conceptual framework of VDC development which viewed CCB as very important and possibly the final point of VDC maturity. In the absence of CCBs, now AWAZ staff seems unsure as to what they are building VDCs up to? With the window of CCB opportunity closed for the time being and perhaps even for good, thinking is needed to

identify from where and how the VDCs are going to access resources needed to do what they have learnt. Training to understand other sources of resources and ways to tap these resources seems the only plausible option.

16. **Focus on Microfinance:** In most of the communities visited by the evaluation team, extreme poverty was noted and it was evident that there is a lot of demand for microfinance. Given that access to microfinance services (especially microcredit) in Pakistan has expanded very rapidly in the last few years, AWAZ may be well advised to seriously assess the demand and supply of microfinance in AWAZ communities and based on this assessment either develop a microfinance programme or preferably facilitate provision of microfinance services through other service providers.

Microfinance has been tested by AWAZ and some initial lessons learnt. Interviews with AWAZ staff reveal that the organization faced some difficulties with regard to loan recovery and thus after burning its fingers, AWAZ is now going through a period of reflection, wondering whether to continue this programme and if yes, in what form and with which safeguards. Therefore organization's reluctance to aggressively pursue and expand microfinance is quite understandable and perhaps even justified. Nonetheless, based on discussions with men and women from AWAZ villages and observations of the members of the evaluation mission, demand for microfinance services, especially microcredit is immense in AWAZ communities, whereas the services are in short supply. Keeping this in view, a couple of options are being floated in the following lines for the consideration of AWAZ management. AWAZ may take up either one of these two choices or start implementing these concurrently.

Option 1: AWAZ microfinance programme is transformed into an action research programme where say 5 VDCs in poorest communities are selected and given a loan of around 50,000/- for internal lending with some guiding principles but without very complex and rigid terms and conditions. Subsequently these VDCs are closely monitored with respect to whom they are lending, recovery and delinquency rates, income generation impact on the borrowers and so on. On completion of one year, VDCs which have done well may be considered for another grant of a similar amount. In three to four years, it is very likely that some VDCs would be ahead of others. If the programme is closely monitored and both successes and failures, good and bad practices are carefully documented and analyzed, it is hoped that AWAZ may be able to lead the development of a **new community led model** of microfinance service delivery.

Rationale for this option: The rationale for this recommendation is quite simple. At the heart of microfinance lies the belief that poor are bankable. Still most of the microfinance programmes are rigid and usually offer very inflexible terms and conditions to their clients which include;

- Fixed weekly or monthly instalments,
- Repayment of the entire loan within a year,
- High interest rates,
- Social collateral ensured through requiring each prospective borrower to first become a member of a group of usually five members and then making the group responsible through its group leader for timely recovery of loans, and

- Small and pre determined loan amounts,

However the needs, circumstances and situations of poor vary greatly. For instance, someone borrowing money to buy seed and agri inputs will not be able to return the money till the harvest. Similarly investment in livestock usually doesn't start paying back within weeks. Taking these considerations into account, there is strong justification to start an intervention that attempts to let the poor decide what suits them best. In other words, this would an experiment that fully trusts the poor rather than the half hearted trust implied in conventional microfinance models.

Option 2: Given that microfinance is best done by specialized organizations rather than multipurpose development organizations, it may be best to engage with microfinance service providers like ASSASAH, NRSP etc and facilitate their entry into AWAZ communities.

---end.