

Conservation linked to livelihood opportunities

Resource-centered to people-centered

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“Poverty reduction through sustainable use of natural resources” is the mission of the Innovation for Poverty Reduction Project (IPRP), which is working in main parts of Malakand Division with an initial focus on medicinal and aromatic plants. However, working on other innovative potentials related to natural resources has also been under consideration with the project. The following case studies demonstrate that improvement in income and livelihoods is possible through linking skill development of the local communities in conservation with value addition aspects and market linkages.

1. Poverty reduction through sustainable use of medicinal and aromatic plants

In order to achieve the aforesaid objective in the medicinal herbs sector, the project has started working through the local based institutions in the area. After organizing the community into various gender segregated interest groups, the project initiated a market survey with the objectives to identify various products which are endangered in the area and have a market potential, which communities could make use of, if linked with relevant market players.

During the market study and field visits, one of the most important gaps in the whole market chain was the lack of pre and post harvest management skills. Majority of the players were



ignorant about the proper harvest timings of the various medicinal plants. Due to which they were not getting optimum benefits of their produce on



one hand and created conservation problems on the other hand. For this purpose, the project imparted various pre & post harvest-training events through the expertise of Qarshi Industries. These trainings were imparted to both collectors and local buyers. As far as the training of the buyers is concerned, it was imparted with the objective to keep balance on both sides i.e. supply as well as demand side.

After covering the conservation part, the project linked the interest groups with markets and the herbal industry. The response of this initiative was tremendous as the interest groups of the Chail valley of District Swat earned 15% more income in case of Pershoshan (*Adiantum*) whereas, in Karim Abad valley of District Chitral interest groups earned 60% and 63% more income by selling Black Cumin and Kaweer (*Capsicum*) respectively to the local market.

2. Poverty reduction through sustainable use of Pine Nut and Walnut

Chitral Innovative Development Organization (CIDO) is a small village based organization working in the Southern part of Chitral, i.e. Shishi Valley. Its main focus is to work on poverty reduction through some innovative work on pine nut and walnut. This venture is supported by IPRP in collaboration with the IUCN-Programme Support for Northern Areas (PSNP) with the aim to promote conservation

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oriented practices in nut harvesting and increase the income of the poor by streamlining the trade of pine nut and walnut. For this purpose, CIDO has been mandated to mobilize the community and to organize them into different interest groups. IPRP has assisted them in two stages. In the first stage, the interest groups were supported in pre harvest management techniques and in the second stage with post harvest management practices, including direct linkages of the interest groups with down country markets.

Pre-harvest management training:

An in-depth analysis of pine nut and walnut revealed that collectors are unaware about the basics of pre harvest management techniques and are using inappropriate traditional tools. They usually cut the whole branches of the tree especially in case of pine nut and thus unnecessarily lose four years of crop. These traditional, often unsafe practices are a direct threat to conservation, have economic repercussions and have resulted in the death of many collectors. The project imparted a four days pre harvest-training course to the interest groups of pine nut and walnut. A total of 28 collectors of four different groups were trained. The four group leaders were also trained as master trainers to impart further training to other groups in the



community. At the end of the training, a complete tool kit was handed over to CIDO's president who further gave it to individual group members with the guarantee that it should be returned to CIDO after the completion of the collection season of pine nut and walnut. A proper agreement was signed between CIDO and IPRP for the tool kit and CIDO further signed an agreement with each group leader for onwards handling it to their individual group members. Each tool kit included the following items:

1. A safety belt
2. A bamboo stick with iron hook
3. A file



Post harvest management training and marketing to Bannu and Lahore markets:

After covering conservation aspects, a four-day practical training on post harvesting of pine nut and walnut was imparted to group members. The training mainly included skill development of the interest groups in value addition in pine nut, i.e. nut separation from the cones, sorting, grading, drying and packaging whereas in walnut, mainly grading and packing techniques were practically demonstrated. In addition to this, they were also educated in recording the individual quantities within the group before combining all the harvest. The most crucial stage of the training was to ensure and maintain transparency and confidence of the group members amongst each other.

After imparting the post harvest management training, the next important step was to market their produce to the down country markets. A total of 15 group members including CIDO staff were taken first to Bannu and later to Lahore markets for selling pine nuts and walnuts respectively. The response of marketing trials was tremendous. A total of 354 kg of pine nuts and 814 kg of walnuts were marketed to Bannu and Lahore market, which earned 77% and 33% extra price over the existing local price at Chitral. In addition to this, the entire effort contributed to reducing life losses in the communities to almost nil – which can never be valued in monetary terms. Now, the local partner is supporting the interest groups in further adding value through roasting of pine nuts and packaging nuts further enhancing their income margin.