


Water & Energy Security through Microhydels (WES-MHP)

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Doing homework in the dark in Laspur Valley ©SDC

Illuminating Lives

Given the rugged terrain and remoteness of many parts of Pakistan, there are still places that have very little or no electricity. The ongoing national energy crisis and associated costs mean that laying transmission lines and supplying electricity is often prioritised on the basis of access and population levels. In spite of their huge potential for renewable and clean energy, remote rural areas are often ignored.

Despite abundant water resources in the valleys of the Hindukush range, the existing microhydropower stations could no longer produce enough electricity to meet the demands of the local population. Hence, the communities started to cut down trees for firewood, causing environmental damage and triggering natural hazards, such as landslides and floods.

In order to reduce deforestation and provide more houses with electricity, the SDC together with the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) implemented 'Water and Energy Security through Microhydels' project in Yarkhun and Laspur valleys of District Chitral. Both valleys are not connected to the national power grid. The overall goal of the project (implemented from 2011-2015 with CHF 1.56 million) was to deliver much needed energy to more than 2,200 households in Yarkhun and Laspur valleys by building 800 kWh and 500 kWh microhydel power stations respectively. The micro-hydels were completed in March 2015.

The Change

The project has not only led to an improvement in the quality of lives of the local population, but has also reduced deforestation and degradation of natural resources in the two valleys. Additionally, health facilities and educational institutions have gained a reliable supply of hydroelectric power, ensuring better medical care and more consistent school attendance.

Having better access to electricity makes the local population economically more stable and creates business opportunities, such as the establishment of two community based power utility companies to manage the power stations. It reduces the workload of women as they no longer have to travel outside the villages to search for firewood, and reduces environmental damage created by cutting wood for fuel and heat.

Additionally, it bridges the gap between the government and remote areas, which are often deprived of such services. It also offers a long term solution to the electricity problem as microhydels are managed and maintained by the communities themselves.

Partners

- Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP)
- Acumen Fund
- Community Development Carbon Fund (CDCF)
- Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF)



More Business Opportunities

The SDC has now entered the second phase of this project with the aim of maximizing benefits from the microhydel scheme, and to further improve the quality of life and reduce the degradation of resources of the marginalised communities of Laspur and Yarkhun valleys. The electricity generated by these microhydels will give the local population new opportunities to develop micro-enterprises, such as energy linked trade, production ventures and value chains.

The second phase targets politically and economically marginalised communities in 21 villages (2,278 households) in the two remote valleys. It further focuses on establishing a sound, efficient and sustainable management system for technical and financial matters of the new power utility companies. Once this is in place, the generated electricity should be used efficiently for social and commercial investments and services. Continuous efforts will be made to work on better protection of microhydels against natural disasters. The Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) precautionary measures protect the microhydels and the settlements as well as increase their efficiency by channeling excess water.

The new utility management teams will be trained to acquire the necessary skills with initial backstopping and assistance in dealing with agreements on collective servicing of the new installations. The project will further support linking of local organisations and service providers with the planning and regulatory activities of the Chitral district administration.

The strong gender focus of the first phase will be reinforced through an inclusive policy for men, women, boys and girls. With women as shareholders in the power utility companies, it is expected that their political, social and economic positions within the households will gradually be strengthened. The SDC project team will ensure that women continue to actively participate in the project planning and

implementation, and are included in local business groups. The interventions are conflict-sensitive and designed to enhance the trust between the state and citizens.

Time Frame 2nd Phase:	Oct 2015 to Oct 2018
Total Budget:	CHF 3.98 million
Geographic Focus:	Laspur and Yarkhun Valleys, Chitral, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)

The project contributes to the improvement of social services through a sustainable supply of electricity. The initiative is fully coherent with the KP government's Integrated Development Strategy. It also contributes to their promotion of renewable energy mandate, which foresees the construction of 356 micro hydels in seven districts of KP. This intervention will facilitate in the development of technical capacities and creation of financial autonomy of the provincial government.

Through SDC's partnership with AKRSP, which is also involved in the construction of micro hydels for KP government, there is a strong potential for applying lessons learned. This partnership has provided an opportunity to establish best practices for other schemes under the AKRSP's Clean Development Mechanism programme for rural electrification.

Further information

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