


Water & Energy Security through Microhydels (WES_MHP)

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Doing homework in the dark in Laspur Valley © SDC

Phase I - SDC Brings Light to the People of Chitral

Given the rugged terrain and remoteness of many parts of Pakistan, there are still places that have no or very little electricity. The ongoing national energy crisis and incumbent costs mean that laying transmission lines and supplying electricity is often prioritised on the basis of access and population levels, and 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 micro-hydropower stations no longer produced enough electricity to meet the demand of the local population. Hence, the people cut down trees for firewood, causing environmental damage and triggering natural hazards, such as landslides and floods.

'If we had electricity we would not have to cut down our fruit and willow trees. The trees provide oxygen and we are depriving ourselves of that vital source of living by cutting the wood down.'

Aqidat Shah, farmer in Laspur Valley

In order to reduce deforestation and provide more houses with electricity, SDC together with the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) implemented this 'Water and Energy Security through Microhydels' (WES_MHP) project in Yarkhun and Laspur Valleys, both of which are not connected to the national power grid. The microhydels were completed in March 2015.

Aim of the Project

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

Time Frame Phase I:	April 2011 to March 2015
Total Budget:	CHF 1.56 million
Geographic Focus:	Laspur and Yarkhun Valleys, Chitral in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)
Achievements:	2,200 households have electricity

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 lessen environmental damage created by cutting wood for fuel and heat.

Additionally, it bridges the gap between the distant governmental supplies and remote areas, which are often not reached. It also offers a long-term solution to the problem as the microhydels are managed and maintained by the communities themselves.

Partners for WES_MHP

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



Swiss Ambassador Marc George inaugurates the micro-hydropower station in Laspur Valley (Chitral) on 29th September, 2015

Phase II – More Business Opportunities

SDC has now entered the second phase of this project. The lessons learned from the first phase have indicated a number of technical and managerial weaknesses, which did not allow the communities to get the maximum benefits from the microhydel scheme - something they had invested a lot of their funds as well as their labour in. The overall goal of the second phase is to further improve the quality of life and reduce the degradation of resources of the marginalised people of Laspur and Yarkhun Valleys in the Chitral District of KP. The generated electricity is also due to give the local population new opportunities to develop micro-enterprises, such as energy-linked trade, production ventures and value chains.

Aim of the Project

The second phase targets politically and economically marginalised communities in 21 villages (2,278 households) in the remote Yarkhun and Laspur Valleys of the Chitral District.

It further focuses on establishing a sound, efficient and sustainable management system for the 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. Phase II will also continue to work on better protecting the microhydels against natural disasters. Such precautions, known as Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) measures, protect both, the microhydels and the settlements as well as increase the efficiency of the hydels 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 local organisations and service providers

linked to planning and regulatory activities of the 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 will be included in local business groups.

The interventions are conflict-sensitive and are designed to enhance the trust between state and citizens.

Expected Results of the Project

- Efficient technical and financial management of the new power utility companies
- Efficient use of the supplies of electricity for social and commercial investments and services
- Better protection of the environment and the villages against natural disasters

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)

Further information

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