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EVALUATION REPORT

UDF-PAK-07-182: Democracy for Women's Rights in Sindh, Pakistan

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Disclaimer
The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluators. They do not represent those of UNDEF nor of any of the institutions referred to in the report.

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I. Executive Summary

(i) Project data

The project *"Democracy for Women's Rights in Sindh, Pakistan*" was implemented by Aasthan Latif Welfare Society (ALWS) from 1 September 2008 to 31 August 2010. The UNDEF grant amount was US$ 325,000 with a project budget of US$ 300,000, and an evaluation component of US$ 25,000.

The project's goal was to "increase the quantity and quality of rural women's political life" by creating awareness of fundamental rights, the advantages of democracy and the importance of participation, mobilizing and motivating rural females to actively participate in political life, and organizing them to take collective efforts on their own behalf. Project activities were targeted at both women and men in 680 communities in Sindh Province, Pakistan, and included data collection, various types of participatory meetings, extensive media campaigns, social gatherings to stimulate community discussion, and the organization of local groups to promote and protect women's rights.

(ii) Evaluation findings

The project was clearly consistent with UNDEF's mandate and was **relevant** to needs in the districts covered. Reasons included the fact that democratic participation, especially of women, is low. Underlying causes include the male-dominated social system. low awareness of fundamental freedoms and democratic rights, and general lack of confidence in democratic processes. The poor record of Pakistan in democratic governance gives good reason for the latter.

As extensively documented in the Final Narrative Report written by ALWS, the project aimed at reaching an exceptionally high number of people and succeeded in doing so. Targets were either met or exceeded, and combined with the generally high quality of project interventions, this leads to the finding that the project was **effective**. Based on interviews and focus groups, however, the effectiveness of the project, as well as its impact, might have been higher if it had delivered a smaller set of more tightly focused interventions. As it was, interventions were broad rather than deep. Little can be said about the effectiveness of mass media interventions. The hierarchical structure of interventions, with different institutions defined at different geographical scales, appears to have worked in practice, but it is not clear that roles were sufficiently differentiated and defined to ensure long-run sustainability. More intensive training of Taluka Women's Voice Groups (TWVGs) was desirable. The project was able to achieve its goals despite the 2010 floods, which occurred towards the tail end of project implementation.

When the large number of persons reached, and the impacts achieved, are compared to the amount expended, the project may safely be judged to have been **efficient**, that is, to have delivered good value for money (read chapter IV, page 12). Activities were implemented at reasonable cost, project management did not siphon off an immoderate share of resources, and, most importantly, good use was made of domestic institutional and human resources.

A large number of voters were registered as a result of project interventions, a concrete **impact**, although, unfortunately, the evaluators were not able to determine how many as these numbers were not made available to them. Most, without doubt, were women. Interviews and focus groups with project beneficiaries leave no doubt that direct beneficiaries gained tangible positive impacts. How successfully these will translate into enhanced democratic participation remains to be seen, as traditional social forces inhibiting

the full democratic participation of women remain strong (an issue for sustainability, as well) and overall democratic governance remains weak**.** An especially important impact of the project was that it encouraged a large number of women (sometimes despite the concerns of male relatives) to obtain national identity cards. This mapped the general awareness raising due to the project into a concrete entitlement to public relief in the wake of the tragic 2010 floods, which heavily affected the project area.

The **sustainability** of the project has perhaps been compromised by the fact that elections were delayed. Given the prevailing lack of confidence in democratic processes, the failure to be able to exercise the rights of which project beneficiaries have been made aware may eventually compromise the progress made. Evidence collected during interviews and group discussions, and as self-reported by the implementing NGO, indicated that women's new-found confidence to exercise their democratic rights is sensitive to the attitudes and decisions of their male relatives. Now gained, if not soon translated into voting, awareness of democratic rights may weaken.

Better training of TWVGs would have enhanced sustainability, and it must be remembered that the floods will continue to affect the project area for years. However, a positive factor for sustainability is the long track record of the implementing NGO in the communities identified and its proven ability to attract funding. So, too, is the positive impact that many women obtained national identity cards, a potentially life-changing event for many.

(iii) Conclusions

All of the findings from the evaluation taken together suggest that this was a successful project with a reasonable chance of having lasting impact. **The grantee / implementing NGO's network/contacts and local history were critical to the success of the project.** ALWS's familiarity with local culture and institutions, its position of trust in communities, and its expertise all contributed to project success. The good capacity of the NGO also raises prospects for sustainability, since it has a track record of attracting support.

The breadth of the project was impressive, but leaves it open to criticism that messages were only superficially received. Focus groups and interviews with beneficiaries, as well as those involved in implementing the project, show that the emphasis was on volume – number of persons reached – not on the depth of the engagement. While the project scores well on impact, it might have been more effective if a more focused set of interventions had been targeted at a smaller number of beneficiaries. Not much thought was given to, and there was no impact assessment of, the mass media campaigns at the beginning of the project.

Although the hierarchical advocacy structure implemented was logically consistent, the ongoing role of TWVGs with respect to communities and VWVGs was not sufficiently elaborated, and their training was adequate at best. One benefit of the more focused approach might have been to improve the training given to Taluka Women's Voice Groups (TWVGs), enabling them to better carry out their role of supporting Village Women's Voice Groups (VWVGs). In general, the role of the TWVGs could have been more explicitly set forth in the project strategy.

Despite the success of the project, the evaluators are cautious in assessing the long-run sustainability of its impacts. **Even a well-planned and implemented project such as this, despite significant evidence for near term impacts, may be debated from the standpoint of longer-term sustainability.** Factors include the delay in elections, which may allow the awareness raised and empowerment achieved to dissipate through disuse and the persistence of a male-dominated social system. While the flood just prior to the end of the project did not significantly affect activities, its impacts will be felt for years. Positive

factors for sustainability are the good track record of ALWS and the fact that many women obtained national identity cards as a result of the project.

This project attests to the great importance of encouraging beneficiaries to affiliate with the administrative system, as well as the unexpected positive impacts that this can have.

"Empowerment" is sometimes discussed in rather idealized terms, as though it follows automatically from awareness raising and education. Yet, it also has a very concrete dimension; it follows from the entitlements that arise from being a recognized member of the administrative system. As was proven after the flood when only officially registered persons were eligible for public relief, an identity card is an asset.

(iv) Recommendations

Following from the conclusions, it is recommended that ALWS should s**trategically address the breadth-depth dimensions of future project designs, paying special attention to differentiating the needs of different project beneficiaries.** As we pointed out, more focused interventions benefiting fewer persons might have improved project efficiency. TWVG members could have been better trained, strengthening the backup received by VWVGs, which will be crucial for sustainability as communities move into the post-project period. Mass media campaigns could have included a qualitative market research component, even as simple as a few focus groups, to help assess impact and revise messages and materials accordingly.

Finally, the experience of this project gives a clear signal to ALWS that it should continue to integrate registration and identity cards into its future project activities, whether in the area of girls' literacy or other domains. **In future work on empowerment, continue to stress the importance of administrative affiliation.**

II. Introduction and development context

(i) The project and evaluation objective

This report evaluates the project *"Democracy for Women's Rights, Sindh, Pakistan*," implemented by Aasthan Latif Welfare Society (ALWS) from 1 September 2008 to 31 August 2010. The total grant was US$ 325,000, of which the project budget was US$ 300,000, and US$25,000 was reserved by UNDEF for Monitoring and Evaluatoin. The project's goal was to "increase the quantity and quality of rural women's political life" by creating awareness of fundamental rights, the advantages of democracy and the importance of participation, mobilizing and motivating rural females to actively participate in political life, and organizing them to take collective efforts on their own behalf. Project activities were targeted at both women and men in 680 communities in Sindh Province, Pakistan, and included data collection, various types of participatory meetings, extensive media campaigns, social gatherings to stimulate community discussion, and the organization of local groups to promote and protect women's rights.

(ii) Evaluation methodology

The methodology for this evaluation, agreed upon by Transtec and UNDEF, was detailed in a *Launch Note*, and consisted of a two-phase procedure, guided by an international expert, Mr Landis MacKellar, and a national expert based in Karachi, Mr. Murtaza Mughal. This methodology was designed on the basis of project documents provided to the evaluators in May 2011 (see Annex 2 for a list of documents consulted).

Evaluation design was affected by security issues and difficulties encountered in obtaining a visa for the international expert. Following document review by both experts, a project site visit to Thatta (27-30 June, 2011) was undertaken by Mr. Mughal, who interviewed key personnel from ALWS, project staff and volunteer trainers, female and male participants in and beneficiaries of workshops, and representatives of the newly created Taluka Women's Voice Groups (TWVGs). [1] Interview protocols, strategy, and key issues to be probed during the site visit were determined by both experts in consultation with the Director of ALWS prior to the site visit. A list of persons consulted is presented in Annex 3.

The evaluation was organized around a series of Evaluation Questions (Annex 1) which cover the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, plus the criterion of UNDEF value added. In addition, UNDEF requested that the following issues be addressed:

- What was the relationship between the project and broader regional issues?
- How effectively were print and broadcasting media used?
- How can women be mobilized in future to participate in training and social life where male family members are opposed?
- How credible is the reported change in attitudes towards registration for and participation in future elections, in particular for women in the project communities?
- What are the future plans and follow up activities of the newly formed VDPCs/VWVGs? Are there any significant differences between the male and female groups?
- Is there the potential that workshop participants, and particularly women, will actively become involved in politics, e.g., stand for local elections?
- What lessons have been learned for possible applications elsewhere in the country?

[1] A *taluka* is an administrative division roughly equivalent to a *county*.

- What are the main constraints to building on project achievements, and how might these be addressed by future activities?

(iii) Development context

Pakistan is a rapidly-developing lower middle-income country with a semi-industrialized economy. Though its economic growth over recent decades outpaced the global average, Pakistan has, over the past few years, faced significant political, economic and constitutional challenges. Devastating floods in mid-2010 further added to economic woes of the country. With an estimated damage of over US$ 10 billion, the floods interrupted economic recovery and added to inflationary pressures. Pakistan's gains in poverty reduction over the last 7-8 years may have been partly reversed. Flood-related reconstruction activities will span several years.

In recent years, Pakistan made moderate progress in human development, improving its Human Development Index (HDI) from 0.311 in 1980 to 0.490 in 2010. [2] To date, however, significant progress has been made on only about half of targeted indicators of Pakistan's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). For example, overall literacy, at 57%, is low among other developing countries, and the MDG target of 88% by 2015 is unachievable. Similarly, recent developments make it unlikely that poverty will be halved to 13% by 2015, the MDG target. An indicator of particular interest is net primary enrolment. Just 46% in 1990-91, and rising to 52% by 2004-2005, it will not reach the target of universal enrolment by 2015. Research has shown that better-educated societies generally perform better with respect to the democratization process (see Annex 5).

ALWS-Sponsored Women's Community Meeting

Women are still widely considered inferior in Pakistan, and are vulnerable to violation of their rights, liberty and security of person. They are often restricted from participating in political life, and in cases where they do, may be constrained to vote or voice opinions according to the desires of fathers, husbands, brothers or other male acquaintances. Discrimination against women is wide spread, and social and health indicators reflect this: malnutrition, mortality and illiteracy are higher for girls than for boys. A sex ratio at birth of 110 results in a significant surplus of men and indicates considerable selection in favor of boys. [3] However, the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments has increased significantly, from 0.9% in the National Assembly (the lower, directly elected body) and 1.0% in the Senate (the upper body, elected by provincial assemblies) to 21% and 17% respectively. Pakistani law requires that at least 17 Senators and 20% of National Assembly members be women. Public confidence in the democratic process and public institutions is low in Pakistan, a view reinforced by the country's low scoring on common international indices.[4]

[2] HDI for South Asia as a region increased from 0.315 to 0.516 over the same period, placing Pakistan below the regional average.
[3] Pakistan Demographic Survey 2007.
[4] According to Transparency International (Annual Report 2009.), Pakistan ranks 139th of 180 countries on an index of perceived public sector corruption (Corruption Perception Index—CPI), while the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) ranks

Pakistan has witnessed positive civil society development. In 2001 there were an estimated 10-12,000 active and registered NGOs in Pakistan—up to 60,000 if unregistered groups were included--as well as 8,000 trade unions.[5] Because the political space afforded to civil society organizations is limited, these have little impact on policymaking and implementation. Nevertheless, they are increasingly emerging as an important group.

III. Project strategy

(i) Project approach and strategy

The grantee / implementing partner. ALWS was founded in 1989 for the promotion of women's rights, focusing especially on literacy, skills development and basic education, but also encompassing the improvement of rural livelihoods through programs on water and sanitation, environmental awareness, tree planting, disaster relief, etc. It has been significantly involved with advocacy, community mobilization, capacity building and participatory development. Through these activities, ALWS has been a highly visible presence in the rural areas of Sindh Province, hence developing a strong relationship with local communities. Its nuanced understanding of local social stratification, power relations and cultural norms serves it well in engaging with the beneficiaries of its programs.

Prior to this project, ALWS had implemented projects in partnership with a variety of local and international NGOs and international organizations. Among the more notable of these was their Non-Formal Primary Education for Girls project (1990-96), supported by UNICEF, which benefited about 10,000 rural girls through the construction of over 300 education centers. Other projects have been implemented with funds from the World Bank, USAID and UNDP, in addition to an extensive list of local donors.

Targeted beneficiaries. This project's main beneficiaries were rural women in 680 communities in Sindh Province, with the expectation that broader impacts will be felt through the region as a whole. Parts of Sindh Province are among the most deprived areas of Pakistan, with poverty and illiteracy on a large scale—most residents are rural farmers, tenants, agricultural workers or bonded laborers. Society is male-dominated, and women often have limited power to make decisions on their own behalf. This is reflected in the very low female voter turnout during elections—less than 25% in recent years. Where women do vote, their choices are at times compelled by male relations or landlords. Given ALWS's extensive history of local action and the visible needs, the choice of geographic and socio-demographic focus seems appropriate.

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it 94th of 125 countries on political and economic management (http://bti2008.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/119.0.html?&type=98&L=1). The World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators project (WGI) gives Pakistan negative scores, corresponding to poor governance outcomes, on political stability (-0.76), corruption (-1.1) and government effectiveness (-0.93) (http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp).

[5] According to Civicus, an international alliance of civil society groups. Civil society organizations included non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, think tanks, trade unions, cultural groups, and informal citizens' organizations.

Project structure. The targeting strategy of the project was advanced, with increasingly sophisticated messages communicated to different groups in a tiered hierarchy. The purpose of this approach was to prime the region for increased democratic participation by women while also motivating individuals and creating community-level actors to promote the process. On the most basic level, three print and broadcast media campaigns targeted the region as a whole, including communities beyond the 680 chosen for intensified activities. Within the latter communities, Community Awareness and Education Meetings (CAEMs), held separately for men and women, aimed to increase the level of basic knowledge about democratic and political participation, while Social Gatherings provided a forum for interaction on these issues. Subsequently, Community Motivation and Mobilization Meetings (CMMMs) for men and women aimed to translate increased knowledge into motivation to participate. A main outcome of these meetings was the creation of Village Democracy Promotion Committees (VDPCs) for men and Village Women's Voice Groups (VWVGs) for women, small groups which accepted responsibility for promoting women's rights at the community level. Community Organization and Capacity-Building Meetings (COCMs), presented in conjunction with CMMMs for women, were designed to give them the skills and training to carry out collective political action—particularly important in this social context. Finally, a smaller set of TWVGs were created, comprised of women with greater experience in social and community action, as a mobilization and support mechanism for women in the region.

ALWS Social Gathering

Paraphrasing the project document, the three overall strategic objectives were:

- To create awareness and raise consciousness in rural communities, especially among women, about women's fundamental and constitutional rights, the need for and advantages of democracy, and the importance of voting;
- To mobilize and motivate rural females to actively participate in political life for their own welfare and development and the protection of their interests;
- To organize and build the capacity of rural females to take collective efforts for the protection of their fundamental and constitutional rights through democratic participation.

AWLS identified a set of proximate activities that led to specific outputs in support of six intended outcomes of the project, which are as follows:

- Increasing and strengthening the capacity of ALWS to carry out project activities smoothly and effectively;
- Identifying communities' (and especially rural women's) needs, concerns and key issues and their level of understanding/knowledge about democracy and women's rights through a baseline survey accompanied by selection of intervention communities;
- Strengthening staff/volunteer capacity to carry out project activities and training of trainers to train women's groups;

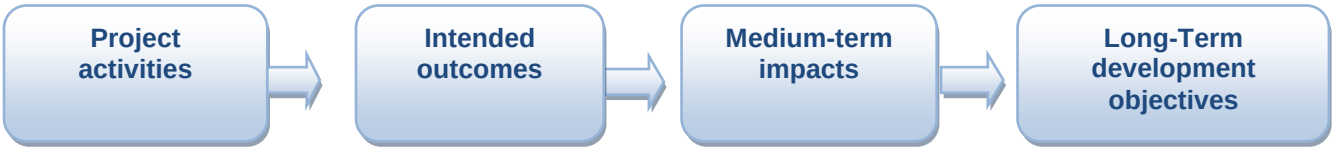
- Creating awareness and raising consciousness among rural community members about women's fundamental constitutional rights and democracy;
- Motivating and mobilizing rural communities (and particularly women) to take active part in political activities for their own welfare & development;
- Enhancing/strengthening rural women's capacity to undertake collective actions for protection of their basic constitutional rights through democracy.

These intended outcomes were approached sequentially, as detailed in the Project Document and in the Final Report. The first three are intended to strengthen and/or build the capacity to achieve overall project objectives, while the last three map directly onto—and are essentially identical to—those objectives. The Project Document also articulated an expected set of impacts, some proximate, medium-term expectations, some long-term development goals.

Women's Meeting

(ii) Logical framework

An approximation of the project logical framework, drawn from the project document, is given below. The considerably simplified figure maps the logical path from activities/outputs through intended outcomes/objectives to anticipated impacts. The mapping of activities and intended outcomes to medium and long-term impacts is not one-to-one: an individual intended outcome may give rise to various impacts through the influence of particular activities, and multiple intended outcomes are likely to have similar impacts.



Opening field offices & upgrading resources	**Strengthening ALWS Material Capacity**		
Adding necessary staff/ volunteers			
Baseline survey/ selection of participating communities	**Identifying Community Needs**		
Training staff/volunteers	**Strengthening ALWS Operational Capacity**		
Community awareness & education meetings	**Creating Awareness & Raising Consciousness**	Rural women's knowledge and confidence increased	
Community mobilization & motivation meetings	**Motivating & Mobilizing Rural Communities**	Rural women motivated and trained to protect their interests	**Freer, more inclusive elections as rural women increase the quantity and quality of their participation in the political process**
Establishment of village women's voice groups (VWVG)		Women better understand the power of voting and benefits of political participation	
Establishment of village democracy promotion groups (VDPG)		Increased registration of unregistered eligible women voters	**Societal benefits through changed attitudes/behavior of men towards women**
Social Gatherings			
Community organization & capacity-building meetings	**Enhancing Capacity for Collective Action**		
Establishment of Taluka Women's Voice Groups (TWVG)		Organized and trained VWVG/TWVGs will act on behalf of rural women raising concerns and proposing new legislation	

IV. Evaluation findings

(i) Relevance

The project's stated objectives were clearly relevant to needs and priorities for democratic development in the local context. In the targeted districts of Sindh Province, women are under-registered, and voter turnout is low (<25%) among women who are registered. Poverty and illiteracy exacerbate these problems, especially among rural populations, which comprise 88% of the three targeted districts. Many women are unaware of their rights or of the potential role of democracy and political participation in addressing their needs. The lack of participation of women in the political process diminishes the likelihood that issues important to women will be addressed. In promoting the demand for democratic governance, the project was relevant to UNDEF's mandate.

In this context, increasing awareness about democracy, mobilizing and motivating individuals to participate in political life, and creating community structures to support this participation are worthwhile initial steps towards effective democratization. An important and largely unanticipated project element was the engagement of staff in helping beneficiaries (especially women) to obtain Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs), a prerequisite for voting. This was a concrete and direct step towards democratic participation in the region, and can be considered to be of importance from multiple standpoints – relevance, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

> "I am so thankful to ALWS for giving me an opportunity to learn about my rights and democracy… My life will change when I will vote with freedom in elections for [the] future of my children."
> **Village Women's Voice Group Participant**

If lack of education and awareness are the main barriers to political participation by rural women in the region, a close second is the male-dominated social milieu, which discourages women from active involvement. Moreover, even the low voter participation rate among women masks the fact that voting choices are frequently coerced by women's male relatives or landlords. Within the feudal Sindhi system, not only women but men are often subordinated in the landlord-tenant setting. The inclusion of village men in project social mobilization efforts was thus an important factor in ensuring project relevance, as real change is unlikely without their involvement.

The relevance of the project is clear from the reactions of interviewed beneficiaries. In the words of one female participant: "I am so thankful to ALWS for giving me an opportunity to learn about my rights and democracy."

(ii) Effectiveness

ALWS identified several risks to project completion, including the heavy work burden incumbent upon rural women and their lack of transport, and the likelihood of interference by males and by local politicians. Their proposals to minimize these risks—consultations with women on meeting times, provision of transport where needed, separation of male and female meetings and mobilization of community members to interact with local politicians—were appropriate, and strongly benefited from ALWS' standing in the community. Although, in the event, some of these risks materialized, it is likely that ALWS' efforts minimized their impact.

The effectiveness of this project, in terms of achieving its stated goals, has been extensively documented by ALWS in the final narrative report; these observations were confirmed during the national expert's project site visit and by the Milestone Report. For the large majority of specific objectives, the project met or surpassed its initial goals, indicating adequate pre-planning, a working organizational structure, and selection of objectives on an appropriate scale. Specific activities completed included the establishment of field offices, hiring and identification of staff and volunteers, implementation of a baseline survey and selection of intervention communities, print and broadcast media campaigns, social gatherings, meetings (CAEMs, CMMMs and COCMs) in intervention communities and creation of community and district-level groups for promotion of women's rights and political participation (VDPCs for men, VWVGs and TWVGs for women).

The final report lists two major challenges to project management. The first was the difficulty of identifying and retaining qualified female volunteers at the inception of the project—high illiteracy and the low honoraria offered are cited as causes. As ALWS resolved this by advertising more widely on radio and increasing honoraria out of organizational resources, this appears not to have significantly affected results.

> "[a] lot of NGOs [are] now coming to us with material support for rehabilitation of flood victims, but we could never forget the services of ALWS, which really gave us light through their training. Although [they] didn't give us any material support they opened our minds [to] how we are being exploited so we will remain grateful."
>
> **Resident of flood-affected village**

The second, and more serious, situation affecting completion was the major flooding experienced by Pakistan in August 2010, during the last two weeks of the project period. This had four concrete consequences for ALWS: first, it required the cancellation of planned activities in 56 villages, including CMMMs, COCMs and 3 Social Gatherings, where residents were displaced or roads impassable; second, it resulted in significant damage to two project offices; third, it delayed data collection and submission of the final report; finally, it resulted in a surplus budget of about US$ 3,800, which, with UNDEF's approval, was used for flood relief.[6] The floods also had knock-on consequences for the project, for example in the halting of the legal process of voter registration arising from project activities in some areas—in one District ALWS had directly funded a clerk to assist in this process. It also hampered and delayed ALWS' plans to provide additional training and capacity-building to TWVGs. In the event, these factors do not appear to have significantly diminished the impact of the project, at least in the near term—in fact, the value of ALWS' efforts is apparent in some beneficiaries' responses to the flooding.

Beyond achieving its numeric goals, it appears that the project was mostly effective in communicating its desired educational messages to beneficiaries. The collection of the baseline survey, and the administration of pre- and post-training tests, in particular, allow for confirmation of this observation. Judging from the pre- and post-training tests, the project messages were indeed received by beneficiaries, but more in-depth activities in a smaller target population would probably have been of benefit.

One critique of the project strategy was that it allowed for insufficient contact on an individual level: more meetings were necessary in individual communities, more training sessions may have been needed for TWVGs and project staff, etc. This general sense was articulated by

[6] ALWS' flood relief activities were noteworthy. It reports raising over 2 million Pakistani rupees (US$ 23,000) in local donations, while providing shelter food, water, transportation and/or medical care to several hundred affected families.

many, if not most, of participants interviewed, including, on the one hand, field supervisors, trainers and volunteers, and on the other beneficiaries, both male and female. In the words of one supervisor: “There should have been more meetings as we just had 3 to 4 meetings with females in targeted villages during project. There should also be continuous training of staff members.” The decision to take a broad approach was a conscious one by ALWS, and in so doing, it reached a very large population.

It is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of broader elements of the program such as media campaigns, though the variety and scope of prepared and disseminated materials makes it likely that these were successful at the community level. Male and female beneficiaries interviewed generally found media campaigns to be worthwhile, but there was no assessment of whether messages reached the broader community.

It is also difficult to estimate how much potential effectiveness (and impact) was not realized because individuals chose not to participate, which happened in several contexts. For example, there was evidence that many women were discouraged from attending, and in some villages social tensions related to the caste system decreased attendance. Also, in some cases the fact that ALWS provided only information rather than material incentives is likely to have diminished attendance, as respondents indicated that such incentives were at times available from other NGO projects.

The hierarchical structure of the project approach was generally effective, with several caveats. First, the inclusion of men was recognized as an important prerequisite for achieving needed change, but it perhaps did not go far enough. Scepticism on the part of men and fear of landlords were listed in the Final Narrative Report as two barriers to implementation. Local politicians on occasion felt threatened by the goals of the project to the point that they interfered in its operation. The project Milestone Report acknowledges TWVGs as a “major output” of the project, but notes that “this may not be sufficient given the various constraints related to level of backwardness, poverty and male dominated social milieu.” Under the circumstances, there may not have been much ALWS could have done to address these problems.

(iii) Efficiency

This project was efficient. The project was able to organize 3 separate multi-media campaigns, over 100 social gatherings and over 2,700 community meetings, while organizing and mobilizing over 1,300 community groups of men and women, all pledged to increasing and protecting women’s participation in political life. It is likely that these groups will continue to have an important regional influence going forward. In all, over 100,000 individuals participated directly in group activities, and a significantly larger number was exposed to media messages. This high output was significantly aided by the close community ties ALWS has built up over the past two decades. Project management did not account for an immoderate share of total resources, in large part because the project was able to utilize domestic, as opposed to international, institutional and human resources. When costs are compared to impacts (assessed below) the project can be judged to have delivered good value for money.

(iv) Impact

The impact of this project, as related to its intended outcomes, is apparent in various ways. First, there has been a project-related increase in community mobilization with respect to the democratic participation of women through the creation of men’s and women’s village-level advocacy groups and TWVGs trained in mobilizing collective action at the taluka level.

Second, AWLS has documented a significant increase in knowledge related to democracy and women's rights for participants in their community meetings, of which there were over 100,000. Third, resolutions were signed after each meeting pledging attendees to support women's political participation—this is a concrete outcome, symbolically important, which may be drawn upon in future to encourage support for women's rights. Fourth, although numbers were not available to the evaluators, there was a reported large increase in the number of registered voters, especially women. Finally, through the course of the project, extensive lists of unregistered voters were prepared, with a commitment to help these individuals get their CNICs—a prerequisite for voting.

A community gathering

Media campaigns were not nearly as well documented relative to other project interventions. In particular, an evaluation of their impact on non-project participants would be useful.

Whether these proximate impacts will translate into the longer-term development goals envisaged by the project—i.e., freer elections with greater participation by women, and societal changes arising from changed attitudes of men toward women—remains to be seen. There is some reason to think that they will. AWLS reports that many women involved in the project indicated their intent to participate in the next election by voting, and the project initiated the process of registering large numbers of voters; however, this was hampered by red tape and, in the end, by the floods of 2010. In a few cases, women indicated their intent to stand for local elections, though this was often followed by strong pressure to desist. Initial victories by rural women in the political arena are unlikely in the face of powerful elites, but this remains an important starting point with long term impacts.

> "I will vote freely without any pressure even [if] my brother beats me."
>
> **Young girl interviewed on the project benefits**

Despite efforts to be gender-sensitive by including men, the issue of continuing male dominance of Sindhi society cannot be avoided in assessing long-term impact and the sustainability of short-term impacts achieved. When asked how the project affected her life and thinking, one woman responded: "[It] may be effective if my father does not create many hurdles and lets me vote with freedom." Interviews identified a number of situations where women faced strong family pressure, or even violence, as a result of their decision to participate more fully in politics. Both men and women expressed their scepticism about the effectiveness of voting in achieving social change, a scepticism related to the poor democratic governance situation described in the development context section previously.

One unanticipated outcome which speaks to the impact of the project is the creation, through the apparently self-motivated merging of TWVGs and VWVGs, of an independent "Voice of

Women Organization," which legally certified and registered itself with the local social welfare department as an independent organization striving for women's rights, especially their right to participate in politics. ALWS, in its Final Narrative Report, sees the overall project as the "first step towards realization of [the] importance of democracy and participation of rural masses especially females in politics in the region."

The best evidence of a lasting impact from the project would come from greater and more gender-equitable participation in the next elections; however, these have been postponed until 2013. Given this reality, increased awareness of democracy among participants may be short-lived, especially given the brevity of direct contacts. The small number of meetings was, as described above, identified by many participants as a shortcoming of the project. In a similar vein, increased awareness of the importance of democratic participation without the opportunity to put this awareness into action could reinforce disillusionment with political life. Continued action to maintain awareness and address community needs on the part of the many groups established by this project is important, and is probably the best predictor of the project's long-term high-level impact. This echoes the point made in the Milestone Report, that continued support will be necessary for TWVGs to reach their potential as a forum for collective action by rural women, and that an effective exit strategy in this sense has yet to be clearly articulated by ALWS.

> "After [the] floods, we realized why ALWS pressed us so hard to get our CNICs; not just because of votes. Now, due to lack of CNICs, we have been unsuccessful in getting government financial assistance. A CNIC was compulsory for getting such assistance."
>
> **Resident of flood-affected village**

One unforeseen positive impact of the project was that participants who obtained their CNICs were eligible for government aid following the flooding of 2010. Less fortunate villagers were unable to get access to government assistance due to lack of CNICs. As in this case, access to other benefits of participation in political life is likely to reinforce the messages emphasized in this project.

(v) Sustainability

There is some indication that project achievements are sustainable at least for the near-term. The registration of large numbers of new voters, especially women, is a precondition for their participation in political life; as such, it bodes well for the future. The very large number of community groups established by ALWS (VDPCs/VWVGs), their connection (in the case of VWVGs) with groups organized at a higher level (TWVGs), and the written resolutions on a village-by-village basis to continue promoting women's rights all speak to the likelihood of continued impact, though this is likely to be uneven depending on local community norms and social pressures. The ongoing role of VDPCs/VWVGs is essentially twofold: to identify and assist in the registration of unregistered male and female voters respectively, and to ensure that women's voting and basic rights are respected at the community level—to the extent that these roles continue to be implemented, this will greatly enhance the sustainability of the project. The establishment of an independent "Voice of Women Organization" by members of the VWVGs and TWVGs also demonstrates that project beneficiaries have the desire to continue applying lessons learned. There is also evidence that TWVGs are taking on other roles: in one village, a group set up a centre for women's development; another has obtained material support from the ruling party's district president for ongoing activities; yet another was significantly involved with flood relief activities. Importantly, ALWS itself has an over-20 year history of active involvement in these communities, and has demonstrated its ability to acquire funding from national and

international agencies. Its continued activity in the area is likely to reinforce systems and processes implemented in the course of this project.

While duly noting these positive factors, it also seems evident that the project would have benefited from a clearer articulation of the relationships among hierarchical groups and the sequencing of activities, and perhaps a more consistent allocation of effort. Project documentation makes it clear, for example, that TWVGs were intended to act at a higher level of organization than VWVGs, playing a role in motivation and coordination—TWVG members are to be "social workers, community volunteers, etc." and to "assist ALWS in advocacy and social mobilization activities"; however, it is not clear that the training and resources devoted to them was in concordance with their greater responsibilities—training of TWVGs amounted to a single week of sessions. Moreover, it does not seem that ALWS has concretely outlined how the VWVGs should interact with the community—and especially with TWVGs—after project completion.

> "Representatives of the local politician used to come in a Land Cruiser jeep and force us to cast our votes however they ordered. We obeyed due to fear, violence and our unawareness about the power of our votes. But now [we are] aware and it is like a ray of light to us. W we will nominate our own candidate for contesting coming election"
>
> **Member of a Taluka Women's Voice Group**

There is a need for contingency planning; in the case of this project, two unforeseen but not unforeseeable situations—the postponement of elections and the flood disaster—had the potential to seriously affect the completion of the project or the sustainability of its impacts. Both in pre-planning and in post-evaluation, ALWS identified barriers to completion, but this could be done more systematically. In particular, it would be useful to know if there are patterns—geographic, social or otherwise—that could inform future targeting of resources.

As discussed above in assessing impact, long-term sustainability is not assured. The postponement of elections, the undermining of electoral processes through widespread rigging and intimidation, common, to date in Pakistan, and/or the continued influence of the male-centric social system may erode confidence and awareness gained through this project. In the near term, however, there has assuredly been attitudinal change that has a chance of persisting into the long run.

V. Conclusions

The conclusions presented here represent a synthesis of the answers to the Evaluation Questions presented in the previous section.

***(i) The grantee/implementing NGO's network/contacts and local history were critical to the success of the project*.** By virtually all measures, this project was highly successful. This success was due, in large part, to the NGO's history of action in the target area and their close familiarity with local culture and power structures. ALWS was able to recruit participants for meetings, attract important local figures to social gatherings, broker agreements among various groups and defuse potential conflicts. It seems unlikely that a group with less of a long-term visible presence would have accomplished as much. In this way, the strong local presence of the NGO contributed to project effectiveness This conclusion is based on Findings (ii), (iii), and (v).

(*ii*) *The breadth of the project was impressive, but leaves it open to criticism that messages were only superficially received*. In Finding (ii) relating to effectiveness, we cited evidence from focus groups and interviews that messages were broad rather than deep. Relative to other project interventions, much less is known about the effectiveness and impact of media campaigns. The need for more intense personal contacts, in the form of more trainings, as well as trainings focused on a narrower range of subjects was frequently cited by both project staff and beneficiaries.

(*iii) Although the hierarchical advocacy structure implemented was logically consistent, the ongoing role of TWVGs with respect to communities and VWVGs was not sufficiently elaborated, and their training was adequate at best*. As laid out in Finding (v), given their higher importance and stated role of "assist[ing] ALWS in advocacy and social mobilization activities" the project should have provided more intensive training for TWVGs; also, the mechanisms by which they could continue to interact with and support VWVGs and local women should have been more explicit. The need for more training was noted by both TWVG members and training staff, as noted in Finding (ii) related to efficiency, and the Milestone Report noted the lack of an ongoing strategy for integration of TWVGs into community life and democratic mobilization. One option, which would have made full benefit of the sequential nature of the project cycle, would have been to select and train TWVGs at the very beginning and use them alongside project training staff to increase awareness, motivate and mobilize communities. An apprenticeship of this sort would likely have been far more effective than a single week of training in making the TWVGs a valuable forum and advocate for the dissemination of women's democratic rights.

(iv) *Even a well-planned and implemented project such as this, despite significant evidence for near term impacts, may be debated from the standpoint of longer-term sustainability.* Based on Findings (iv) and (v), a number of project impacts, particularly acquisition of national identity cards (which had an unexpected impact in the form of allowing holders to benefit from post-flood relief) and increases in female voter registration will not be undone quickly or easily. However, it must be remembered, first, that impact may be eroded the longer elections are delayed. Second, the strength of the predominately male-dominated local culture cannot be discounted. Difficulties in encouraging women to participate in project activities were already noted at the peak of

the project cycle; they may grow in the post-project period. Finally, the flood catastrophe occurred very late in the project cycle and its effects will continue to be felt moving forward. However, it can at least be said that the grantee /implementing NGO has excellent capacity and a good track record in securing support, a strong plus factor for sustainability.

(v) This project attests to the great importance of encouraging beneficiaries to affiliate with the administrative system, as well as the unexpected positive impacts that this can have. With hindsight, the most lasting impact of the project may turn out to have been the encouragement of women to obtain identity cards. Not only did this enable voter registration, it has integrated women into the entire dense network of administrative institutions and procedures. This represents empowerment in a very practical sense. As we have seen, an unanticipated benefit was that, after the flood, persons with national identity cards were able to assert their right to public relief, whereas those without were essentially thrown upon the charity of others, notably NGOs and international donors. Administrative legitimacy creates entitlements from which those outside the system are excluded, and entitlement promotes empowerment.

VI. Recommendations

***(i) Strategically address the breadth-depth dimensions of future project designs, paying special attention to differentiating the needs of different project beneficiaries*.** Based on Conclusions (ii) and (iii), the project would have benefited if a stronger strategic foundation had been laid for the extremely broad approach chosen. The impact of the media campaigns has not been very accurately assessed. Building in a qualitative market research component, even one as simple as a handful of focus groups, could have allowed a more reliable estimate of impact and, if needed, revision of materials and approach. While the number of persons benefiting from the project is impressive, more focused, frequent, higher level interventions might have had more lasting impact. These may have particularly added value at the TWVG level, as it is likely that the continued activities and support of these higher-level organizations will be crucial to ensuring the sustainability of the project, which is by no means assured.

***(ii) In future work on empowerment, continue to stress the importance of administrative affiliation*.** "Empowerment" is sometimes treated as a rather vague concept that flows in and of itself from enhanced awareness and raised aspirations. Yet, based on Conclusions (v) and (iv), the greatest impact of the project may derive from the fact that it encouraged many women to obtain identity cards, with unexpected benefits. As stated above, administrative legitimacy creates entitlements, and entitlements are the essence of empowerment. Awareness raising and, especially, literacy (an area with which ALWS is familiar) are pre-requisites, but without the access to resources that being within the system affords, may be of little personal advantage. A woman with an identity card, like and elderly household member with a pension, is a family and community asset who will see her status rise.

VII. Overall assessment and closing thoughts

This project constituted an extensive effort by an established NGO to lay the groundwork for a grass-roots movement for women's rights in Sindh, Pakistan. The numbers are impressive: the project interacted directly with over 100,000 rural residents of an area where women are often poor, illiterate and actively discouraged from participation in political life. In the process over 1,300 local community groups dedicated to women's rights were established and a wider audience was reached through media campaigns. The high level of competence—evidenced by extensive and detailed documentation—and deep local knowledge of ALWS was a critical factor in the project's success. Its long-term impact and sustainability likely depend on continued reinforcement of lessons learned and on the ability of beneficiaries to apply them in a functional democratic process in a difficult social and cultural milieu, which is by no means assured. Regardless, the project produced meaningful results and was a highly effective use of UNDEF resources.

VIII. Annexes

Annex 1: Evaluation questions

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	▪ Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? ▪ Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? ▪ Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	▪ To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? ▪ To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? ▪ Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? ▪ What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	▪ Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? ▪ Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? ▪ Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?
Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	▪ To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address? ▪ Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative? ▪ To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization? ▪ Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?
Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	▪ To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? ▪ Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?
UNDEF value added	To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	▪ What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project, that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc). ▪ Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?

Annex 2: Documents reviewed

Project-related documents

Project Document
ALWS Presentation
ALWS Profile
Mid-term/Annual Progress report
Milestone Verification Report (UNDP)
Verification Mission Report (UNDEF)
Final Project Narrative Report
Final Financial Utilization Report

Other documents

Transparency International Annual Report 2009

Pakistan Demographic Survey 2007

"*Pakistan: at a glance*." World Bank 2011

Lutz et al. Demography, Education, and Democracy: Global Trends and the Case of Iran. Population and Development Review, 36(2): 211–418

Annex 3: People interviewed

NGO Personnel	
1. Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Alasti	Founder, Aasthan Latif Welfare Society
2. Mr. Riaz A. Memon	Chief Executive, Aasthan Latif Welfare Society
3. Mr. Nazir Dayo	Vice President, Aasthan Latif Welfare Society
Project Personnel (Staff & Trainers)	
1. Mr. Qadir Bux Otho	Project Manager
2. Mr. Ashraf Gul	Area Supervisor
3. Mr. Muhammad Rafique	Area Supervisor
4. Mr. Hasan Ketai	Male Volunteer/ Trainer
5. Ms. Aliya Bhatti	Female Volunteer / Trainer
6. Ms.Shahnaz Manjhan	Female Volunteer / Trainer
7. Ms. Sana Bhatti	Female Volunteer / Trainer
Beneficiaries	
1. Ms. Shazia,	Member, Taluka Women Voice Group (TWVG)
2. Ms. Razia	Member, Taluka Women Voice Group (TWVG)
3. Ms. Zeenat,	Member, Taluka Women Voice Group (TWVG)
4. Ms. Najima,	Member, Taluka Women Voice Group (TWVG)
5. Ms. Nasreen,	Member, Taluka Women Voice Group (TWVG)
6. Ms. Raqila,	Member, Taluka Women Voice Group (TWVG)
7. Ms. Bebi,	Member, Taluka Women Voice Group (TWVG)
8. Ms. Sharifan	Member, Taluka Women Voice Group (TWVG)
9. Ms. Bachai ,	Member, Taluka Women Voice Group (TWVG)
10. Ms. Amina,	Member, Taluka Women Voice Group (TWVG)
11. Mr. Deen Mohd Jokhio	Member, Village Democracy Promotion Committee (VDPC)
12. Mr. Atta Muhammad,	Member, Village Democracy Promotion Committee (VDPC)
13. Mr. Arab Jokhio	Member, Village Democracy Promotion Committee (VDPC)
14. Mr. Saleh,	Member, Village Democracy Promotion Committee (VDPC)
15. Mr. Saleem Jokhio,	Member, Village Democracy Promotion Committee (VDPC)
16. Mr. Ali Mirbehar	Member, Village Democracy Promotion Committee (VDPC)
17. Mr. Photo	Member, Village Democracy Promotion Committee (VDPC)
18. Mr. Aurengzeb,	Member, Village Democracy Promotion Committee (VDPC)
19. Mr. Mallah,	Member, Village Democracy Promotion Committee (VDPC)
20. Mr. Ramoon,	Member, Village Democracy Promotion Committee (VDPC)
21. Ms. Maryat,	Member, Village Women Voice Groups (VWVGs)
22. Ms. Noor khaton	Member, Village Women Voice Groups (VWVGs)
23. Ms. Rozina,	Member, Village Women Voice Groups (VWVGs)
24. Ms. Beghi,	Member, Village Women Voice Groups (VWVGs)

25. Ms. Amina,	Member, Village Women Voice Groups (VWVGs)
26. Ms. Zebu	Member, Village Women Voice Groups (VWVGs)
27. Ms. Khadi	Member, Village Women Voice Groups (VWVGs)
28. Ms. Rozan	Member, Village Women Voice Groups (VWVGs)
29. Ms. Pathani,	Member, Village Women Voice Groups (VWVGs)
30. Ms. Aisha,	Member, Village Women Voice Groups (VWVGs)

Annex 4: Acronyms

ALWS	Aasthan Latif Welfare Society
BTI	Bertelsmann Transformation Index
CAEM	Community Awareness and Education Meeting
CMMM	Community Motivation and Mobilization Meeting
CNIC	Computerized National Identity Card
COCM	Community Organization and Capacity-Building Meeting
CPI	Corruption Perception Index
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
TWVG	Taluka Women's Voice Group
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VDPC	Village Democracy Promotion Committee
VWVG	Village Women's Voice Group