

Women selling and promoting energy efficient products in Northern Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Aga Khan Planning and Building Service, Pakistan (AKPBSP) has developed appropriate Energy Efficient House Improvement (EE-HI) Products through participatory approach by including women, which improves the thermal efficiency, ventilation, illumination, and space management in rural houses. To sustain its interventions at the local level, AKPBSP trains local entrepreneurs, craftsman, and Sales Persons (50% female), in manufacturing, installing and selling EE-HI products. This paper identifies the great value addition female Resource/Sales Persons have brought in scaling-up the EE-HI products through an incentive based sales and promotion market mechanism.

Most (80%) [1] of the households in northern Pakistan can buy more than one product given that families have easy access to BACIP EE&HI products and are linked with microcredit facilities. At-least combination of 03 BACIP EE&HI products can have a cumulative impact on increasing the thermal efficiency of houses. AKPBSP therefore, is applying a twofold incentive based approach to scale-up the replication of product combinations, which includes training Sales/Resource Persons in Promotions and Sales of energy efficient products and linking them with AKPBS trained and certified manufacturers and microcredit organizations to sell EE&HI products on 10% commissions. In the pilot phase, more than 60 Resource/Sales Persons took part in the initiative throughout Northern Pakistan and as a result (in two years time) more than 2354 EE-HI products were sold to 1812 household in 15 remote villages. Among the 1812 households, 444 households were linked with microfinance institutions to purchase EE&HI products.

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1. Introduction

The Aga Khan Planning and Building Services Pakistan (AKPBSP) initiated the Building and Construction Improvement Program (BACIP) in 1997 to improve rural built environment. BACIP is an applied research program conceptualized to design and deliver energy efficient and house improvement (EE & HI) products to the entire population of the region on a cost effective basis. BACIP has developed a variety of appropriate EE & HI products that improve the domestic living conditions through thermal insulation, better lighting, ventilation and space organization. After an intensive research and development phase, the organization is currently working on disseminating and improving accessibility of energy efficient products (Table 1).

For promotion of EE&HI products, different strategies are being adopted, including awareness through local radio stations, village

bussing schemes, road shows, model installation and involving locals especially Village Resource Persons (RP). Village RP is selected by the community with the criteria that s/he will play a coordination role between the community and the organizations. Their other responsibilities also include ensuring community participation, and monitoring the progress of BACIP field activities especially the performance of BACIP EE-HI products at the household level and timely reporting on progress and field related issues. During the research phase RPs were working as volunteers. Due to their effective role in promotion and dissemination, an incentive (10%) based sales mechanism through the RPs was applied, Village based sales units were also established involving village women to ensure products availability within the village proximity. Sales/Resource Persons (50% female) were trained in sales, promotions and were linked to the product manufacturers.

This paper elaborates on the effective role of villagers both men and women in promotion and sales of BACIP EE&HI products by assessing their income earnings and products sales volume. The paper also highlights the role of female resource and sales persons in the business of energy efficient products and how effective and efficiently they are performing this new role.

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Table 1
Selected BACIP EE&HI products.

BACIP products	Major benefits or impact
Water Warming Facility	Facilitates women in domestic chores, significant savings on fuel wood consumption, measurable benefits for health through reduced smoke emissions and improved hygiene practices
Fuel Efficient Stove	Significant savings on fuel wood consumption, measurable benefits for health through reduced smoke emissions
Roof Hatch Window	Improves light and ventilation and saves fuel wood
Floor Insulation	Reduces the outflow of internal heating through the floor

2. Methodology

The information and data used in this paper has been collected through different approaches and methods, including:

2.1. Monthly sales record of Sales/Resource persons and manufacturers

A monthly monitoring system of has been implemented at the village level to monitor the total sales of products through Sales/Resource persons and directly from manufacturers on monthly basis.

2.2. Baseline and follow-up surveys

A baseline was established through a sample-based survey regarding the exiting income earning of female resource persons. After the intervention, the survey was conducted again to assess changes in income earning.

2.3. Household visits

Sample based household visits were conducted to verify the product installation using the village excel sheet, containing village wise record of households with energy efficient products.

3. The demand-driven approach of women's inclusion in the sales process

In villages of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral (GBC), there are young and educated women who through distance learning have acquired secondary or higher secondary certificates (10–12 years of education) and are looking for income generation opportunities, but there are dearth of paid work at the village level, especially for women. The idea of involving women in the sales of BACIP products came from villagers especially women, therefore an inclusive approach to sales and marketing was applied. Through the inclusive approach female sales persons were also trained on incentive based sales, promotion and record keeping mechanism (Fig. 1).

To develop a sustainable market for the EE&HI products, BACIP has been promoting commercial approach rather than subsidizing products. This required establishing a critical mass of regular private manufacturers and distributors and outsourcing the out-bound logistics [2]. Around 20 manufacturers were set up at different localities of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral with a provision of initial seed capital. Village level Sales Force was set up and linked to BACIP trained and certified manufacturers. On communities' demand 50% of the sales force consisted of female villagers. A pricing strategy was worked out to control the prices of products and to ensure proper payments to the Sales Persons (Fig. 1).

3.1. Establishment of incentive based sales mechanism

All volunteer resource persons (including females) fervent to work as Sales/Resource Persons, were shifted onto a commission-based selling mechanism [3]. Different levels of incentives were set from demand generation to household registration and sales. These Sales Persons started promoting EE & HI to generate demands and receive orders from the communities. The more houses were registered with the project, the more incentives were received by the Sales/Resource Persons. Once the households were registered with the program the products (at least three) were installed and the sales/resource persons received PKR 200.00 per household.

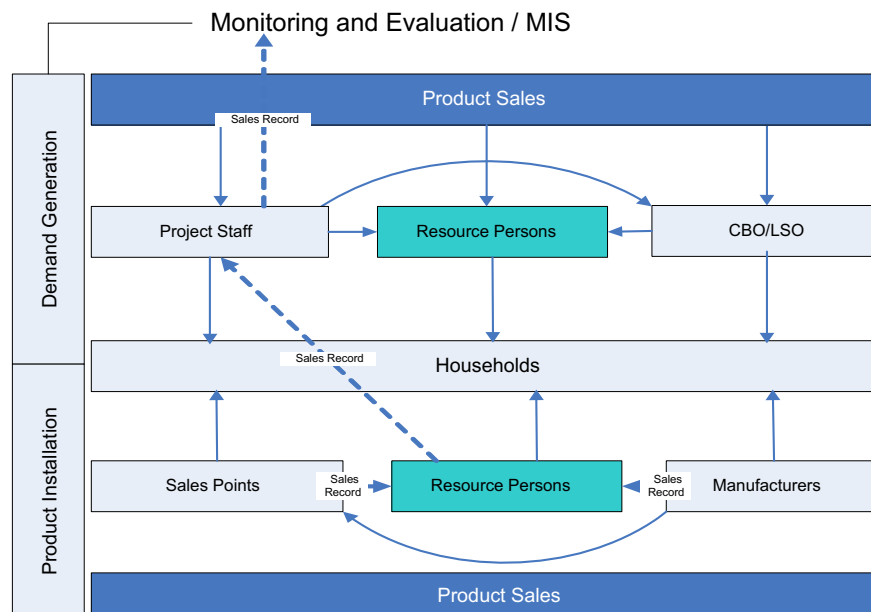


Fig. 1. S.RP Product Sales Demand Recording System.

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