
CHALLENGE BRIEF DRA CALL FOR PROPOSALS ON SAFETY AND PROTECTION

1. MAIN DETAILS

CARE Nederland

Graciela van der Poel, Humanitarian and Gender Programme Officer

vanderpoel@carenederland.org (+ 31 (0)6-85563835)

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

“How can we increase the mental health & Psychological wellbeing of people affected by humanitarian settings?”

3. CURRENT CHALLENGE

The challenge: For past three years, drought has harshly affected Sindh in Pakistan, a province that already fares very low on the Human Development Index¹. District Umerkot, a mostly deserted region and home to the Hindu minority, remains one of the worst affected districts. Agriculture and daily wage labour are the two main sources of income for the affected community in Umerkot. According to the Sindh government, 420,000 families in eight districts of Sindh² and 43,240 families in district Umerkot have been affected by the drought³. This has led to acute shortage of water, food and fodder. According to a multi-sector needs assessment carried out in Sindh by the National Disaster Consortium (IOM, FAO, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, HANDS and ACTED) in November 2018, 71% of households are moderately or severely food insecure with 32% severely food insecure.

These conditions have led to detrimental psychosocial effects on the affected communities, particularly women. The emotional and psychological impact on women of the drought’s consequences – primarily the increased mortality rate of children due to malnutrition among infants and pregnant and lactating women, loss of income and livelihood, food insecurity, no or little access to drinkable water and poverty – is just as harmful as it is materialistically, to the extent that it has compelled many mothers from the affected districts to commit suicide⁴.

Symptoms of challenge:

- High suicide rate of drought affected people in Umerkot;

¹ Undp.org. (2019). [online] Available at: https://www.undp.org/content/dam/pakistan/docs/HDR/HDI%20Report_2017.pdf [Accessed 11 Apr. 2019].

² M. (Ed.). (2019, January 29). Humanitarian Situational Report. Retrieved April 11, 2019, from <http://www.muslimaid.org.pk/wp>

³ ACT Alliance Alert: Pakistan Droughts (14 September 2018) - Pakistan. (2018, September 14). Retrieved April 11, 2019, from <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/act-alliance-alert-pakistan-droughts-14-september-2018>

⁴ N. (2019, January 23). *Sindh Drought Needs Assessment (SDNA) Report* January 2019 - Pakistan. Retrieved April 07, 2019, from <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/sindh-drought-needs-assessment-sdna-report-january-2019>

⁴ *ibid*, 2019

- Malnutrition among children and women especially pregnant and lactating women;
- Increased morbidity and mortality rate among children and women⁵.

The problem is cyclical in nature.

Causes of the challenge: Lack of psychosocial support and means of livelihood are the two primary factors that are contributing to high suicide rates among women. It is necessary to address both the psychosocial and livelihood components simultaneously to ensure holistic support to the women in affected communities.

Relevant context: 59 suicides have been reported in districts Umerkot and Tharparkar to date, majority of whom were of women⁶.

Actors: The government, humanitarian actors and civil society are engaged in carrying out drought relief activities for the affected population of of Umerkot.

Stage of the disaster management cycle: Umerkot was declared drought stricken area in August, 2018⁷.

4. IMPACT GOAL

1. Describe the change you want to see in relation to current state.

The change to bring about is drastic decrease in suicide rate in Umerkot. The project design will focus on addressing the underlying causes that lead to suicide through a two-pronged approach that will firstly, provide psychosocial support to women and secondly, provide means of income generation to the affected communities.

For psychosocial support, the project will establish sufficiently formally-trained support networks, women support groups, use existing community centers to create happy and safe places for women, provide opportunities of recreation and relaxation through local fairs for women and children or *Melas*, dispell taboos and biases through psychoeducational initiatives and linkages for counselling support through existing free tele-counselling services. The project will also train Lady Health Workers, Skill Birth Attendants and nurses on providing psychosocial support and para-counselling services.

To improve livelihoods, the project will provide drought-resistant seeds to the affected communities and provide them training and guidance on sustainable agricultural practices in collaboration with the Arid Zone Research Institute (AZRI). Moreover, through a technological innovation, a mobile application will be created that will link daily wagger workers in Umerkot with employers in nearby cities to provide uninterrupted, meaningful employment opportunities.

While working with the drought affected communities it became evident that ongoing financial and psychosocial support through an innovative approach is required. Distributing food and Non Food Items

⁵ Arisar, A. (2019). *Death and disease stalk mothers, children in Thar*. [online] DAWN.COM. Available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1353504> [Accessed 5 Apr. 2019].

⁶ibid, 2018

⁷ "Thar, Part of Umerkot Declared Drought-Hit Areas." *Business Recorder*, 21 Aug. 2018, fp.brecorder.com/2018/08/20180821401083/.

(NFIs) alone may not be sufficient to support the communities who have undergone severe distress and are at risk of taking dire measures such as suicide. Building supportive social structures, creating resilient communities and providing sustainable means of livelihood will equip the affectees with the appropriate coping mechanisms to address their problems and assist them in improving their quality of life.

The project will also be aligned with CARE International's goal to ensure the well-being of vulnerable communities, especially women.

Potential for impact: The response to the drought in Sindh so far has mostly focused on providing immediate relief through the distribution of food, fodder and water whereas the psychosocial and economic aspect has largely been ignored. However, this intervention will adopt a unique approach to provide sustainable means of income through the creation of a mobile application that will benefit the communities beyond the project cycle and increase their financial inclusion in the economy. Moreover, the provision of social and emotional support to women in the affected district will help them become active participants in their own improvement, rather than passive victims, and facilitate women and their families to muster the courage to cherish and take part in life by engaging in social and economic activities once again. In the long run, it has the potential to challenge the harmful taboos and social norms (e.g. blaming mothers for the death of their children) and increase awareness among both men and women.

This model may also prove strategically relevant to DRA to deal with similar situations in other parts of the world.

Consequences of not identifying a new solution: One of the main consequences of not addressing the issue is a rise in the trend of suicide among drought affected families. Moreover, lack of a sustainable solution and focus on only short-term relief efforts will continue producing the same problems and make it very difficult for these drought-prone districts to exit the cycle of poverty and helplessness.

5. ASSUMPTIONS MADE

[max 150 words]

The following assumptions have been made:

- Work opportunities for daily wage workers will be available in the surrounding cities.
- Employers will use the application to engage daily wage workers and beneficiaries will increase their income due to the use of application.
- Male and female members of the affected families will be willing to avail the psychosocial counselling services.
- Psychosocial support will benefit the beneficiaries in the long term.

6. RISKS IN PURSUING THIS CHALLENGE

Following risks could be relevant in case this challenge is pursued:

- Obtaining a No Objection Certificate (NOC) could pose delay in implementation. However, this could be regarded as a medium level risk because CARE International in Pakistan (CIP) is already working in the area and has a good working relationship with the provincial and local government

that are receptive to INGO interventions. CIP has gained mileage with the host government to mitigate the said risk.

- The application may take longer than anticipated to be pilot tested and local connectivity issues could be impediments in field level activities. However, these problems will be sorted out with the telecommunication companies.
- Safety and security risk could be more pronounced during the *Melas* but those events will be carefully planned and managed by the CIP security team.
- Accountability could be a risk when beneficiaries will use the application to seek work. Accountability mechanism will be carefully designed to mitigate the risks.

7. NEXT STEPS

The next stage will require the following next steps:

- Identification of potential partners to work with for this intervention. The aim would be to capitalize on the existing expertise and solutions rather than reinventing the wheel.
- Approach telecommunication and IT companies for the development of mobile application and exploring potential opportunities to provide subsidized mobile internet packages for the target community.
- Discuss the intervention with AZRI to provide certified seeds to the beneficiaries for kitchen gardening, fodder and staple crops and possibly enter into a partnership.
- Engage reputable and expert organizations to train the trainers.
- Conduct preliminary discussion with the host government and other stakeholders.
- Costing of the activities specified in the project and development of a tentative budget.
- In light of the findings of discussions with different stakeholders, identify a team of CIP's experts and external consultants needed to develop the full proposal for the call.