

Empowering rural women in Kavar



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In one of Turkey's poorest regions, the Kavar Basin Rural Development Project has enabled hundreds of women to not only earn an income but take an active role in the designing and management of local initiatives themselves.



In Turkey, 39% of the population in rural areas live in poverty (less than €3 a day). The Husnu M. Özyeğin Foundation set out to address this issue and demonstrate a viable model of creating sustainable rural living through an integrated, multi-sectoral and multi stakeholder approach.

The Kavar Basin Rural Development Project was launched in the autumn of 2008 in six villages and five hamlets of the province of Bitlis in south-eastern Turkey. The area is one of the poorest in the country. Half of the population is under 15. The region was evacuated in the 90s during the armed conflict between Kurdish militants and the Turkish army.

Integrated local development

The specific objectives of the project were to build economic capacity, improve social welfare, empower women, increase sustainable use of natural resources, build multi stakeholder partnerships and change rural policies through a participatory model.

Under the project, a range of initiatives were carried out, including:

- The provision of bee-keeping training and equipment for 40 women in Kavar (In 2013 the women produced 4.5 tonnes of honey).
- The founding of a cooperative which has organised the daily collection of the milk and its sale to a dairy farm in Van.

- The establishment of walnut and cherry orchards for 124 families. All the farmers received training on managing orchards, pruning and tree inoculation.
- Improvements to sanitary conditions of the animal barns.
- The creation of 5 village rooms in Kavar. A community centre was also built as well as 2 communal bread ovens to decrease the workload of women.
- The construction of a primary school to increase the levels of school enrolment. Two kindergartens, children's playgrounds and a teachers' dormitory were also built.
- The provision of scholarships for university students as well as computer training and university preparation courses for young people.
- The setting up of a children's choir and the organisation of summer festivals.
- The offer of literacy classes and women's support trainings.

Sustainability

Through its 'economic' activities, the project has enabled hundreds of women to not only earn an income but take an active role in the designing and management of these initiatives themselves.

Finally, the project helped construct water ducts in grazing lands and trained shepherds in pastureland protection and reformation. Moreover, through the workshops tree planting and seed festivals, it is hoped that the raised environmental awareness of young people will ensure that know how is transferred to future generations.

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