

Membership-Based Organizations of the Poor; New Emerging Trends for Development in Northern Pakistan

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Abstract

Objective of this research was to assess the role of community based organizations in the process of development of Northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The data was collected from a total of 120 randomly selected households in three purposively selected villages, through face to face interview with the help of a pre-tested structure questionnaire. Findings of the study revealed that the local community based organization has a positive impact on the socio-economic status of the local people and greater participation of the local people in the development projects can have a sustainable impact on their socio-economic status. Therefore, greater role shall be given to these neighborhood organizations in the development projects for maintaining sustainability in the development projects.

Keywords: Community based organization, socio-economic status and environmental protection

Introduction

Participation of rural communities is very important for the process of development of the rural areas and is a way to identify and implement priority rural development activities through better use of existing resources. To do this, communities analyze the existing situation, identify and agree upon priority problems, develop action plans to address the priority problems, take charge of implementing the action plans, and pressure the service providers and development organizations to provide the necessary assistance. Communities also identify what incremental resources are needed and organize themselves to try to mobilize these resources.

Participatory development reinforces the process of rural development in most of the developing countries and most of the organization used it as a tool of development. It empowers local communities to form community based organizations and to discuss and address problems and to engage other stakeholders in building an improved policy environment. According to the new approach of development the community based organizations are now a day's used a tool for the up liftment of the communities in most parts of the developing world.

Community based organizations are the groups of people based on volunteerism (Bratton, 1990), or non-profit groups engaged in the service of humanity (Cary, 2003)

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working at local level. The efforts of these groups are to improve the living standard of the people of their community and even their families, that's why their efforts are more authentic than the efforts carried out by any other group, or organization. The main focus of the organization is to improve equality across the society (Claudia, 2003) and make the access of every individual to health services and education possible. These organizations are the representatives of their communities, where the vulnerable groups are highly focused, such as the handicapped and the widows.

Community based organizations have a strong sense of belonging to their community (CDU, 2006) and this sense makes every individual in the community proud to be identified by the community he belongs to. There are number of characteristics associated with community based organization that strengthen its normative role. The most important of these characteristics are the social interaction, permanence, institution and structure (Esman, 1984). Permanence allows individuals feel patriotic, while serving their people and the community they belong to, because there is strong social interaction among all the members of the community based organization, which develops a sense of adherence and protection.

Since every member of the organization been in close proximity to one another, therefore their interaction is very strong and the problems faced by them are known to everyone. This awareness attracts greater attention of the members based on their personal interest. Shared interest adds more value to the organization (Racher, 2007) thereby promoting organization of their efforts. Factors like kinship, proximity and sense of belonging increase the coherence of the organization more (Kulig, 2000), not a condition but these factors are conducive for making the organization strong and effective.

The structure of the organization varies from community to community but in almost all the community based organizations, people are ranked in accord with their ability, age and experience (Kolawole, 1982). Gender is given specific role only in those communities which are gender sensitive. Their boundaries are specified to the extent of the community and role of the organization. But awareness through education has reduced biasness against gender and female participation has been active in every community based organization, because female participation has increased penetration and access of the organization to those problems which are behind the curtain, particularly relevant to women and even the government in the developing countries is also unable to tackle these problems.

Self-governance is the basis of socio-economic development, which can be guaranteed by greater participation of the population, through the channels of the community based organizations. Community based organizations make the environment conducive for the greater diffusion of power into the local population (Morufu, 2003), where the diffusion of power is inevitable for improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the people. In addition most of the socio-economic problems arise in the developing countries due to unequal distribution of power, giving birth to social insecurity and political pandemonium. Wahab (2000) is of the view that the birth of the community based organization is the result of the failure of the government in the developing countries. People want their problems to be addressed by the state but the persistence of these problems has compelled them to organize their efforts at local level for the eradication of these problems through self-governance. These efforts though hardly extend the community they operate in, but their influence is more genuine and far reaching and most of these neighborhood institutions have been the elixir of socio-economic diseases. Self-help is the basis of engagement of the people (Ogundipe, 2003) and these neighborhood institutions are particularly associated with self-help. As self-help is the aim of their association, therefore their efforts are more result oriented.

Collective efforts at local level can guarantee greater stability and eradication of the socio-economic problems faced by the people, but require local concerns to focus and deliver fast and long lasting solutions. Every individual member of the community adds value to the

efforts he carries (Abegunde, 2003), while feeling his role through proper participation in the planning and development of the area, he inhabits. Even the local governments also delegate greater responsibilities to the community based organizations (Akinola, 2000) because the efforts carried by these organizations are far reaching, where every member of the organization knows better, than anyone else, the problem he faces and the purpose he works for. Individual's efforts carry more strength and their collective role reaches to new lengths, when the purposes and objectives are known.

Community based organizations is a new concept in the area that has been focused by the national and international organizations in the development projects; because community based organization allows greater participation of the local people in the development process. This research paper is focusing on the community based organization in order to expose its impact on the socio-economic status of the people in the Northern Pakistan, because here the culture of community based organization is quite nascent.

Hypothesis

It is assumed under the null hypothesis that the community based organization has no impact on the development of the community while the alternative hypothesis stated that community based organization has a positive impact on the development.

Methods and Materials

This research involved participatory research methods through a mixture of techniques. These techniques included focus groups, face to face interviews, group discussions, and other life histories. The main target group of this research was local community in the Northern of Pakistan in three villages i.e. Lilownai, Alpuri and Larai of the Shangla district. The main aim of focusing on these three villages for data collection was the operation of the community based organization in these villages. Majority of the people in the community based organization were from Lilownai, Alpuri and Larai. The data was collected from a total of 120 households, each household on average consisted of 5-7 members. Five basic survey methods were used, including questionnaire, interviews, group discussion, case studies and gender based approaches. This also included field observations and participant observations. In interviews, both personal and impersonal, a simple pre-tested questionnaire, pertinent to the research area, was prepared. Questions of the interview, their wording and sequence were in accord with the structure and schedule of the interview. Personal interviews were carried out face to face and impersonal interviews were taken on the telephone. The entire population was sufficiently large therefore carefully chosen samples were used to represent the population. The sample included the characteristics of the population from which it was drawn. The number of CBOs members in village Lilownai was comparatively large therefore a total of 50 samples were taken, where the number of CBOs members in villages of Alpuri and Larai was not as large as that of Lilownai and thus the total sample size reached to 120 respondents. The way the samples were selected for the study was as follows:

Selection of the sample household in the study area

Village name	No. of total membership of CBOs	Percent distribution in population	No. of selected CBOs members
Lilownai	200	42	50@ 25%
Alpuri	150	31	35@24%
Larai	130	27	35@27%
Total	480	100	120@25%

Results and Discussion

Shangla district is a scattered populated area, but the culture of community based organization was not yet developed in all the villages. The people of the three selected villages were active for social change, and they had organized their efforts for the development of their area through linkages with other non-governmental organizations and social groups. These three villages were far away from the city and parts of rural areas. Majority of the people were dependent on cultivation of their own or tenancy land, but they had their children enrolled in local schools and colleges. The young people in this area were approximately literate and they could read and write easily and have joined different services of the government. But the aged people in the three villages were illiterate and majority of them could not even read or write. The discussion start form the age of the respondents;

Age of the respondents

Age, as one of the main factors, affecting the socio-economic status of the people shows that the people of Larai were more energetic and young therefore they were enthusiastic towards the development of their area as compared with the people of Lilownai. The people of Lilownai were comparatively aged and this was a determining factor in their membership in the community based organization. About 10 percent of the total respondents in Lilownai were aged between 51 -60, while in Larai there was not even a single respondent in that age. Differences in the developmental activities were determined by the educational background of the people. Those who were educated they were socially included and those who were illiterate they were not as active in the organization as the literate. The people of Larai village were comparatively educated and their educational background was their determining force behind their engagement in the developmental activities of the area through community based organization. Though the population of Lilownai was larger than that of Alpuri and Larai villages but the inhabitants of Lilownai did not actively participate in the community based organization. One factor was their age and the other factor was their educational background and educational background was a strong determinant than age. The chi-square value indicates that there is significant association in the age of the respondents in the selected villages and hence contributes positively to the formation of community based organization in the area.

Table-I: Age wise distribution of sample respondents

Village name	Age in years				Total
	20-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	
Lilownai	20 (40%)	15 (30%)	10 (20%)	05 (10%)	50
Alpuri	12 (34.3%)	10 (28.6%)	08 (22.9%)	05 (14.3%)	35
Larai	18 (51.43%)	12 (34.28%)	05 (14.29%)	00 (00%)	35
Total	50 (41.9%)	37 (30.96%)	23 (19.04%)	10 (8.1%)	120

Total Chi-square statistic at 5% level of significance is 6.7694 and P-Value is 0.342705.

Source: Field Survey, 2013

Education level of the respondents

Education and health care and other social and development activities, which may require public action, complement individual opportunities of economic and political

participation and also help to foster our own initiatives in overcoming our respective deprivations. If the point of departure of the approach lies in the identification of freedom as the main objective of development, the reach of the policy analysis lies in establishing the empirical linkages that make the viewpoint of freedom coherent and cogent as the guiding perspective of the process of the development (Sen, 1999). The data in table-II shows the education level of the respondents in the area. It is evident from the data the in the area 37% of the respondents were illiterate. The same table also explains the level of education in the area. In village Lilownai 6 percent people had post-graduate degrees. In Alpuri only 3% of the respondents had post-graduate degrees. About 28 percent people in Larai were unable to read or write, while in Alpuri and Lilownai this percentage was 37 and 44 respectively. When we compare this percentage with the rest of the villages in the rural parts, the people of these three villages were ahead in education as well as in communication and adoption of new culture. But still there was big difference in their capabilities as compared with the people of the urban areas. Difference in the education level was the determining force for social inclusion and change. Value of the chi-square explained that there is no significant difference in the percent literacy status of the sample respondents in the area also followed by the non significant level for the percent level of education in the selected villages.

Table-II: Education levels of the sample respondents

Village name	Literary status	Literate level of education						Total
	Illiterate	Primary	Middle	Matric	Inter	Graduate	Postgraduate	
Lilownai	22 (44%)	4 (8%)	05 (10%)	06 (12%)	06 (12%)	04 (08%)	03 (06%)	50
Alpuri	13 (37%)	2 (6%)	04 (11%)	07 (20%)	05 (14%)	03 (09%)	01 (03%)	35
Larai	10 (28%)	4 (11%)	03 (8%)	06 (17%)	05 (14%)	04 (11%)	03 (09%)	35
Total	45 (37%)	10 (09%)	12 (09%)	19 (16%)	16 (13%)	11 (10%)	07 (06%)	120
Total chi-square statistic for percent literacy level at 5% level = 2.0937 and P-value is 0.351039		Total chi-square statistic at 5% level = 1.9061 and P-value is 0.983758						

Source: Field Survey, 2013

Performance of community based organizations in development process

The community based organization, operative in the three villages, Lilownai, Alpuri and Larai had a significant impact on the socio-economic conditions of the people in the area. District is situated in the Northern Pakistan, where majority of the people are farmers and tenants. The source of income of these people is farming and livestock. Communication among the people is not very fast, infrastructure development is of no mean and the people have been travelling to long distances for daily purchases and other stuff. The state has not been active in this area in bringing development, but non-governmental organizations are actively engaged in solving local problems. In this regard, the local community based organization has a significant impact on the daily life of the local people.

Three main projects were completed by the local community based organization, which had a positive impact on the socio-economic life of the local people. Soft water to drink was a main problem in the area, the local community based organization installed wells in different parts of the three villages with the support of local non-governmental organizations, which resulted in the availability of soft water to almost all the residents of the area. Majority of the people in this area were using stream water flowing from the hills,

which was very difficult for the local women to travel to long distances with water pitchers on their heads. Filling water from the streams, on the one hand, was time consuming and on the other hand it affected the health of the local women because women were the only labor force available for filling water. Local people were facilitated up to a greater extent by the installation of these wells. In Lilownai 70 percent people were provided access to soft water, in Alpuri 76 percent and in Larai 68 percent people were facilitated with soft drinking water. Though the water supplied to them through these wells was hard, however this had a positive impact on the health of the local women as well as, the time which local women spent on filling water was saved. In addition, in Lilownai, 78 percent, in Alpuri 80 percent and in Larai 72 percent of the respondents reported that these wells facilitated access to clean water.

In the hilly areas of Pakistan, rain water is more catastrophic and destructive, resulting in huge damages to human life, soil, forest and livestock. In Shangla, a water course flowing down to the villages from upper hills was a threat to local people especially in time of seasonal rain. In rainy days, torrential water caused huge damage to livestock, forest, soil and crops. In this regard the local community based organization with the financial support of the non-governmental organizations constructed a wall on both sides of the water course, which was really effective in giving protection to local crops, livestock and soil. On average 76 percent people in the three villages viewed the construction of this wall as a protection to local forest, crop and soil.

In rural parts of Pakistan, majority of the people cover long distances by foot because road transport is not available for the people everywhere. Local roads in the villages are muddy and in rainy days these roads are devastated with torrential rain. Most of the people try to follow short link roads to reach their destinies; therefore they use cattle tracks to walk. People face huge difficulties in rainy days to pass through these roads and even sometimes carriages through these roads become impossible for the local people.

The local community based organization in order to facilitate the local people, constructed a local road that had a positive impact on the residents of the three villages. The local people actively participated in the construction of this road, which greatly facilitated their transportation. In the three villages, on average 42 percent of the respondents reported that the construction of the road saved their time, 26 percent said that their distance was decreased, 27 percent of the respondents said that the construction of road saved their cost of transportation and 5 percent of the respondents were of the view that the construction of road made their travelling easy.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study revealed that community based organization has a significant impact on the socio-economic development of the people. Though the three villages are situated in the rural parts of the country with quite low level of literacy rate, however there is a tendency among the people for social change. It is evident from the data that the local community based organization formed by the three villages was very much effective in bringing change in the local community. The construction of the local road, installation of wells for soft water and the construction of the wall on the sides of the water course had a significant impact on the environment, as well as on the socio-economic conditions of the people. While comparing these three villages with other local areas, the efforts made by the people in these villages were quite influencing. Such neighborhood organizations were not formed in other villages and Lilownai, Alpuri and Larai were the only three villages where the people were more organized and robust. Community based organization was the only platform where individual participation was guaranteed, where greater participation of individuals in the development activities generated more benefits for the community. Individual participation gave more strength to the community and broke powerlessness among the individuals of the community.

Mutual understanding was developed because there was close interaction among the members of the organization. On the basis of the study findings the following recommendations are forwarded for policy formulation about the community based organizations for development approach.

- I. The data revealed that community based organizations have been effective in the socio-economic change in the three villages therefore, in order to expedite the development process and to solve the problems of the local people in a more effective way, such neighborhood organizations shall be formed in other villages in the adjacent area.
- II. Local educated people shall be involved in these community based organizations and they shall be given greater role in the activities of the organizations, so that the local resources could be easily and effectively managed.
- III. The state as well as the local non-governmental organizations should focus on these neighborhood organizations for greater involvement because local participation in the development activities will generate more benefits and increase sustainability of these projects.
- IV. The local non-governmental organizations should disburse their funds through these local community based organizations or involve the members of these organizations in their training and development activities so that these organizations could maintain their status in the area.
- V. The local neighborhood organizations should develop their network and cooperate among themselves on local activities and the solution of their problems. This network of community based organizations will promote mutual understanding and increase participation of individuals.

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