

VILLAGE ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVITIES FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH WEST PAKISTAN: A CASE STUDY OF TWO UNION COUNCILS OF DISTRICT SHANGLA

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted with the core objectives to study the role of village organizations (VOs) in the execution of Malakand Rural Development Project (MRDP) development interventions in District Shangla, NWFP-Pakistan. The study also explores the structure and functioning of VOs in the study area. Data were collected from two union councils, namely Shahpur and Kozkana. A total of 80 members of VOs were interviewed. It was observed that most of the respondents formed the VOs because of getting inspiration from the development work of the VOs in other MRDP project area. Twenty five percent of the respondents mentioned that education and motivation are the main yardsticks for VOs formation. Thirty percent of the respondents held the opinion that main activities of VOs were to increase irrigation water and maximize agricultural production. Majority (72%) respondents mentioned that they arrange VOs meeting on monthly basis. Seventy five percent of the sample respondents reported for VOs network with other VOs of the area, which are mostly made for the acquiring of land for development interventions. The difficulties faced in the formation of VOs shortlisted as, are lack of awareness, cultural constraints, lack of capacity building and reluctance of the local people to NGOs in the area. As this can be addressed through creation of awareness by increase visit, trainings and allocation of more funds.

Key Words: *Village organizations (VOs), Rural Development, MRDP, Distric Shangla, VOs Structure and function, Criteria for VO's formation, VOs and development interventions*

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INTRODUCTION

Development of rural areas is the primary concern of the economic development of a country like Pakistan. As 67% of the population reside in the rural Pakistan, while share of the rural in agriculture sector to country GDP is 21% (GOP, 2007). Rural development doesn't mean merely agricultural growth, it calls for improving the economic and social conditions of the rural population by raising their incomes and providing them with necessary amenities like better housing, paved street, water supply and sewerage, health services, education, roads, power communication for participating in cultural and political activities.

Studies on rural development pointed out that an organization whose goals are perceived to satisfy the local needs, would generally expect higher participation of the community (Hatti and Rundquist, 1994). Put (1998) argued that two group of variables are central to any transaction in rural development; these are the institutional and target group. For a transaction to occur, an organization must possess certain institutional variables that would enable it to perform its work properly. These include sufficient resources like human, materials and financial, stable internal structure and stimulating leadership to achieve the desired objectives.

There is a growing recognition that social capital is important in enable individual household, or communities to participate in rural development interventions and to take advantage of new opportunities. Social capital has been shown to have a positive effect on local development and wellbeing of the households. Social capital is the ability of the actors to secure social benefits from relationships. These relationships are usually grounded in structures of voluntarily organizations called village organization (Narayan, 2001). Isham, (1999) also argued that social capital enabling individual, households or communities to take advantages of the new developed opportunities. Important indicators of social capital include membership and active participation in the local development groups, networks and social activities.

According to Karst and Rosenweig (1974) organization are goal oriented, psychosocial system, technological system and an integration and structure activities. Rogers (1995) argued that organization is a stable system of individuals who work together to achieve common goals through a hierarchy of ranks and a division of labour. Organizations are thus formally established for the explicit purpose of achieving certain goals and these goals to a large extent determine the structure and function of the organization.

In the early years of international development assistance, development initiatives were largely driven by "top-to-bottom" or performance approach. Development projects were organized and executed by government line departments which often produced inappropriate solutions. For the last twenty years there has been a steady increase in new community development activities largely by Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the voluntary group and donor sectors. As a result, community development initiatives have been transformed to what is now known as the "bottom up" or participatory approach based on the principle that people living in a community are the best source of information and the best resource to manage their needs (Badelt, 1990, welsbrod, 1997).

The concept of village organizations (VO's) groups or community organization has permeated in the society through the application of decentralization, multi-sectorial, participatory, development programmes and projects. In Pakistan, the experience gained from Village AID and Basic Democracy System and Integrated Rural Development programme are well known to the professionals, government officials and some segments of the society. In the mid 70s and later on a different approach called "Participatory approach" were initiated by Akghan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP), started the formation of VO's and women organization (WOs) for initiated the development works in their respective area and similarly other development organization followed the same pattern for development in the rural areas. Thousands of VO's and WO's have been organized by these development organizations in their respective area. Some of these are strong and sustainable while others are weak and scattered organizations (Zeb, 2001). One of the major concerns of participatory approach was to organize rural population through a small scale village committee called village organizations (VO's) or Village Development Committees (VDC). These VO's were designed to enable local population to participate in the development interventions, the management, supervision, monitoring and evaluation; implementation of development works in rural areas.

Almost all the donor funded projects in the past have an increasing stress on the social mobilization aspects of community in the project area. For this purpose huge amounts are being yearly marked for social mobilization and organization components. Concerning this trend, it is felt to undertake a study on the role of village organization (VOs) in rural development and probe into the facts that how these trend support developing phenomena, because the donors stress local government for investing more and more on social mobilization and development project. Resting on the above logic and notions of the social mobilization and community organization, the present study focused the efforts to probe into the matter that whether VO's have any role in the rural development or otherwise. In this regard, the case of MRDP in Shangla District of NWFP was synthesized with the following objectives.

- i. To examine the structure and functions of VO's formed under MRDP.
- ii. To find the role of VO's in project development interventions for Rural Development in the area.
- iii. To short list confronting issues in VO's development and suggest recommendations for their removal.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out during 2006 in District Shangla with the objective to find out the role of VO's in the development of the area. Shangla is among one of the 24 district of NWFP. It is different in its socio-economic and topographic characteristics. So here the role of VO's in success or failure activities is very prominent and has more diverse aspects. Keeping in view the limitations of resources i.e. time and material two union councils namely Shahpur and Kuzkana, where the number of registered village organizations was maximum were purposively selected. There were a total of 22 village organizations in these union councils, out of the total 22 VO's, four were in the Kuzkana and the remaining 18VO's were in the Shahpur union councils. From the total list of village organization, 20 VO's were selected on proportionate basis i.e.16 VO's were selected from Shahpur union council and 4 from Kuzkana union council. Eighty village organizations members were interviewed which includes 52 respondents in Shahpur and 28 in Kuzkana union councils. The present study was based on primary data. The data were collected from the sample respondents through face to face interview. For the purpose of interview, structured schedule was developed. Before the start of the actual field survey, the interview schedule was pre-tested in the field so that strength and weaknesses of the questionnaire could be checked and improved for quality output. The purpose of the study was also explained to the respondents to make them realize about the importance of the study. After the collection of data, as it was qualitative in nature therefore, data were transferred on telli sheet and the results were obtained through percentages and averages. More importantly we were not making a comparison of data so statistical tests were not applied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Motivational Forces for VO's Formation

Data presented in Table I shows the factors responsible for motivation of VO's formation. Mostly 38% of the respondents (60% in Shahpur and 40% in Kozkana) reported that they formed VO's by seeing the development works done by VO's in other areas. Thirty one percent of the respondents said that they formed the VO's to solve the other problems of the village. There are numerous problems in these villages i.e. shortage of water, convenience problem over river, sanitation and irrigation of village unirrigated land. So, to solve all these problems they formed the VO's. Nineteen percent of the respondents held the opinion that they have no access to clean drinking water, so for this they contacted the project workers and thus formed VO's. The data also reveals that 12% of the respondents reported that they formed their VO's to make some check on government agencies for development interventions in the area.

Table I *Distribution of the respondents according to the factors for VO's formation in the area*

Union council	Motivational Factors								Total
	A		B		C		D		
	No	%age	No	%age	No	%age	No	%age	
Shahpur	8	80	18	60	10	67	16	64	52
Kozkana	2	20	12	40	5	33	9	36	28
Total	10	12	30	38	15	19	25	31	80

Source: Field Survey, 2006.

- A. To make some check of public on government agencies
- B. Seeing the developmental works by VO's in other areas
- C. To got clean drinking water
- D. To solve other problems of the village.

Criteria for VO's Formation

The data in Table II depict the criteria for VO's formation according to the sample respondents. It was reported by 37% of the respondents (67% in Shahpur and 33% in Kuzkana) that education is the basic criteria for VO's formation. It was also reported by 14% of the respondents and 6% of the respondents that interest and farming are our criteria for VO's formation. Eight percent of the sample respondents mentioned that the people who were young and energetic can become a member of the VO's. The data further stated that 25% and 10% of the respondents mentioned that both education and interest and both energetic and interest are our criteria, for VO membership, respectively. Anyhow, the data reveals that most of the sample respondents mentioned education and interest for VO's membership as criteria

because educated and interested people proved more positive towards development interventions. This shows that people who are educated having more positive response towards a development activities in the areas. Similar observations have been reported by Hamid (2002) who argued that the position of office bearers are given to those persons who are educated, had good public relation, dedicated and had spare time for VO's activities.

Table II *Distribution of respondents on the basis of criteria for VO's formation*

Union council	A		B		C		D		E		F		Total
	No	%age	No	%age	No	%age	No	%age	No	%age	No	%age	
Shahpur	20	67	7	64	3	60	5	83	12	60	5	63	52
Kozkana	10	33	4	36	2	40	1	17	8	40	3	37	28
Total	30	37	11	14	5	6	6	8	20	25	8	10	80

Source: Field Survey, 2006.

- A. Education
- B. Interest
- C. Farming
- D. Young & energetic
- E. Both Education & interest
- F. Both energetic & interest

Main Activities of VO's in the Area

The data in Table III show the main activities of each VO's formed in the villages of two union councils. It was said by 30% of the sample respondents (58% in Shahpur and 52% in Kuzkana) that we established VO to construct water channel, with the help of the project and also get some improved seed, chemical fertilizer from the project. Hence, through this our unirrigated land in the village area becomes irrigated and the agriculture production in the area was increased. As the two union councils are situated in hilly areas, therefore, these villages faced a severe shortage of water, particularly during water scarcity periods. So, to solve these problems, it was reported by 25% of the sample respondents that our VO's activities were the supply of clean drinking water to the village people. Most of the sample respondents said that after establishing a VO's in the village every home in the village got clean drinking water. The two union councils are situated at the bank of a small river, therefore, the people faced a problem of communication between the villages, particularly, during the rainy seasons when the water level in the small river increases from their normal level. So, it was reported by 9% sample respondents stated that our VO's activity in the villages are the construction of bridges over river for easy communication. Due to the abundance of water in the rivers and having not access to government electricity, it was reported by 7% of the sample respondents said that our VO's activities are the management of natural resources and maximize their benefits for local people. So for these purpose, we formed a VO to construct a small hydropower station in the area to get easy and cheap electricity. The data also reveals that 29% of the respondents stated that our VO's main activities are the development of our village and social mobilization of village local people towards new innovations. The village development activities include street pavement, drainage system, solid waste dump, sewerage nalla and clean drinking water supply.

Table III *Distribution of the sample respondents on the basis of main activities of VO establishment in the area*

Union council	A		B		C		D		E		Total
	No	%age	No	%age	No	%age	No	%age	No	%age	
Shahpur	14	58	12	60	4	57	4	67	18	72	52
Kozkana	10	42	8	46	3	43	2	33	5	28	28
Total	24	30	20	25	7	9	6	7	23	29	80

Source: Field Survey, 2006.

- A. Irrigation of land and increase in Agric. Production
- B. Clean drinking water supply
- C. Bridges construction over river
- D. Small hydropower station construction
- E. Village development and social mobilization

Schedule of VO's meeting

The data in table IV depicts the schedule of VO's members meeting, which they organized to check the work progress and remove the hurdle which came during working. Twenty eight percent of the sample respondents (64% in Shahpur and 36% in Kuzkana) said that we arrange VO's meeting, quarterly. But the overwhelming majority 72% respondents (out of which 66% in Shahpur and 34% in Kuzkana) said that we arrange VO's meeting on monthly basis. Similar observation have been reported by Gundu (1995) who argued that to overcome the rural development problems, strengthening rural community organization, improving the rural economic base and popularizing participatory development regular meeting of VOs is compulsory.

Table IV *Distribution of the sample respondents on the basis of schedule of VO's meeting*

Union council	Quarterly		Monthly		Total
	No	%age	No	%age	
Shahpur	14	64	38	66	52
Kozkana	8	36	20	34	28
Total	22	28	58	72	80

Source: Field Survey, 2006.

VO's Member Network with other VO's Members and Nature of Network

Data in Table V shows that 75% of the sample respondents (70% in Shahpur and 30% in Kozkana) reported for the network of VO's with other VO's of the area. While 25% of the respondents answered for non establishment of VO's network with other VO's in the area. The data also reveals that the nature of networking of the VO's with each other in area. It was reported by the 27% of the sample respondents (out of which 63% in Shahpur and 37% in Kuzkana) that our VO's have a network with other VO's for the cheap labour for work. It was also reported by 33% of the respondents reported for the network with each others for land while constructing a water channel, for bridge construction, electricity supply, for water supply and all the development work. As, most of the developmental projects are participatory based, therefore the community share to the development work in form of capital is necessary. The people in the area were poor. They do not have such capital. For this purpose it was reported by 20% of the respondents for getting some of the shearing amount they developed a network with other VO's of the area. Twelve percent of the sample respondents reported for the networking both for land and labor. It was concluded for the table that majority of the network are made for acquiring land for development activities.

Table V *Distribution of the sample respondents on the basis of VO's network with Other VO's and nature of networking in the area*

Union council	VO's network with other VO's				Nature of networking								Total	
	Having Network		No Network		Total	Labor		Land		Capital		Land, labor		
	No	%age	No	%age		No	%age	No	%age	No	%age	No		%age
Shahpur	42	70	10	50	52	10	63	15	75	12	71	5	71	42
Kuzkana	18	30	10	50	28	6	37	5	25	5	29	2	29	18
Total	60	75	20	25	80	16	27	20	33	17	28	7	12	60

Source: Field Survey, 2006.

Problems faced by VO's Members during VO's Formation

The data in Table VI presents the problems faced by VO's members during the VO's formation. It is evident from the table that 27% of the respondents (68% in Shahpur and 32% in Kozkana) said for the problem of lack of experience. Six percent of the sample respondents said for project inadequate support. While 24% said that we have not share capital amount which is necessary for the development interventions. Twenty three percent of the sample respondents were of the view that people did not agree to become a VO's member, by saying that it is a NGO, due to anti NGO propoganda in the area. Twenty percent said for the in influential people problems. The data reveals that the majority of villagers are poor and they have not sufficient amount for participation to initiate a development

interventions.

Table VI *Distribution of the sample respondents on the basis of problems faced during VO's formation*

Union council	A		B		C		D		E		Total
	No	%age	No	%age	No	%age	No	%age	No	%age	
Shahpur	15	68	3	60	14	74	10	56	10	63	52
Kozkana	7	32	2	40	5	26	8	44	6	37	28
Total	22	27	5	6	19	24	18	23	16	20	80

Source: Field Survey, 2006.

- A. Lack of experience.
- B. Inadequate project support.
- C. Not possess the sharing amount for participation to activity.
- D. People are not agreeing to become a member by saying that it is NGO.
- E. Influential people problems.

VO's Member's Problems Solutions

Data given in Table VII shows the methods for the problems solutions which are faced by VO's members during development activity. It was evident from the table that 10% of the sample respondents said that for solving their problems the VO's member contact line agencies. Thirty seven percent of the respondents said that project help in solving VO's problems. Twenty nine percent of the respondents said that both VO's members and project helping each others for solving VO's member's problems. Seventeen percent of the sample respondents said that we have a committee within the VO's setup which solves the VO's member's problems. The table further stated that 6% of the respondents said that the line agencies staff visits the area for solving the problems VO's member's. Anyhow, it reveals that the VO's in the area were formed by the MRDP; therefore, majority of the respondents said that the project helps in solving VO's member's problems.

Table VII *Distribution of the sample respondents on the basis of solving VO's member's problems in the area*

Union council	Methods of solution										Total
	A		B		C		D		E		
	No	%age	No	%age	No	%age	No	%age	No	%age	
Shahpur	5	63	18	60	15	65	10	71	4	80	52
Kozkana	3	37	12	40	8	35	4	29	1	20	28
Total	8	10	30	37	23	29	14	17	5	6	80

Source: Field Survey, 2006.

- A. VO's member contact line agencies for solution
- B. Project help in solving problems
- C. Both VO's members and project help in solving
- D. Any self solution within VO's setup
- E. Line agencies staff visit area.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is evident from the main findings of the study that there were a lot of changes in village infrastructure and socioeconomic conditions of the village people. All the VOs were established by the MRDP. The main criteria for VO's membership were education. The main projects completed by the VOs with the help of community participation were water channel, water supply schemes, bridges construction, water tank and small hydropower stations constructions. The VO's of the area also developed linkages with line departments of the area for development interventions and local VO's of the area for land and capital. The study as a whole concludes that all the development interventions in the area were completed successfully with the participation of VO's and the community participation played a crucial and important role in developmental process.

- i. Community should be fully aware about the objectives of the project and it's VO.
- ii. Properly trained young and entrusted people should be given reasonable representation in VO's setup for getting higher development interventions.
- iii. Team work, leadership and problems solving skills, together with an ability to establish good relation with

community is a dire need to strengthen the developmental activities.

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