

Full Length Research Paper

Improvement of project sustainability by community participation: A case of Abbottabad District in Pakistan

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People's participation is considered as an integral part of both the ideal as well as the practice of democracy, and reflects the basic aspirations of the people. Citizen Community Board (CCB) is a community based organization that was introduced in Pakistan in 2001, under which people identify and implement their own need base projects by registering their own CCBs upon approval of funds from local government. With the intervention of Devolution Trust of Community Empowerment (DTCE), the number of registered CCBs not only increased, but also the projects implemented by CCBs are more than that of the local government. The paper investigates the improvement in CCB's registration with the intervention of DTCE in Abbottabad District from December, 2003 and also the contribution of CCBs in the developmental activities with respect to the local government. Results show that CCBs are playing a more effective role in citizen empowerment than that of the local government and thus, show a sustainable way to improve the capacity of the local community.

Key words: Community empowerment, decentralization, empowerment, participation.

INTRODUCTION

The world has achieved a level of economic prosperity that was unimaginable just one hundred years ago. The past several decades have seen a significant improvement in the lives of the people in developing countries (Sandstrom, 1994). In the theory of development economics, the role of community in economic development has been one of the focal issues (Hayami and Godo, 2005). The rationale behind the initiatives is the idea that decentralization through community participation can contribute to efficiency, accountability and transparency of poverty reduction policies through the utilization of local information and resources and the nurturing of the sense of ownership (Bardhan, 2002). However, as Bardhan (2000) show theoretically, such initiatives may be vulnerable to be captured by local elites. Whether the decentralization and local participation improve the welfare of disadvantaged people or not, thus becomes an empirical question. Bardhan and Mukherjee (2003) demonstrate that within-village targeting is more pro-poor

than between-village targeting in West Bengal where supporters of the leftist government supervise resource allocation at the local level. Griffin and Khan (1982) show that within-village targeting to the poor improved in Bangladesh's food-for-education program, though they find some evidence of local capture. Yahaya (1979) also finds that targeting performance improved after devolution in Indonesia when communities had high administrative capability. According to the survey by Mansuri and Rao (2004), the evidence on whether devolution improved targeting and public goods formation is mixed, but tends to be positive under enabling institutional environment.

According to the advocates of participatory rural development, participatory development aims at accomplishing certain specific functions including: (1) Identifying and eliciting development priorities by the target community itself (2) Strengthening the civic skills of the poor by nurturing community organizations and (3) Enabling communities to work together for the common good (Mansoori and Rao, 2004). The transfer of power from the central government to more peripheral levels has been seen as a means for overcoming physical and administrative constraints of development, improving the

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management of resources and increasing community participation (Vaughan et al., 1984; Morgan, 1986; Manor, 1995). By the 1970s, the meaning of participation in the development context began to be redefined. Rather than being identified with political and electoral processes, it became associated with the administrative or implementation process. A number of reasons account for the redefinition of the political scope of participation (Shakil and Iqtidar, 2009). People's participation is considered as an integral part of both the ideal and practice of democracy, and reflects the basic aspirations of the people (Oakley and Marsden, 1984). The recent revived interest in participation is linked to concepts of good governance and democracy, which make the governments more accountable, and government accountability is considered essential to benefit the poor (World Bank, 1994).

Japan International Cooperation Authority (JICA) collected data from the most populated province of Pakistan (that is, Punjab), and it showed that only 37% of the Citizen Community Board (CCB) have submitted project proposals and just half of those proposals were approved. Similarly, from 2001, both the number of CCBs and that of the approved projects have been below the expected level. This raises a concern that the Pakistani society with limited historical experience in CBO-based development is too handicapped for the CCB scheme to be successful (Kurosaki, 2006). This paper addresses whether the CCBs are contributing in empowering the grass root by comparing the projects implemented by CCBs with those implemented by local government and to what extent is the Devolution Trust of Community Empowerment (DTCE) playing its role in empowering communities.

DEVOLUTION AND CCBs IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan is one of low-income countries located in South Asia. Economic development in South Asia is characterized by a moderate success in economic growth with a substantial failure in human development such as basic health, education and gender equality (Shakil and Iqtidar, 2009). This characteristic is most apparent in Pakistan, as seen in country-level statistics reported by UNDP (2005). There is an unequal distribution of income and assets where the core network is based on familial, clan and tribal relations, with limited historical experience in CBO-based cooperation in development efforts (JICA, 2003).

The previous government led by Gen. Pervez Musharraf, which came to power in October, 1999, has been attempting to change this situation through two policy measures. The first is the 'devolution of power' (Cheema and Rondinelli, 1983), while the second policy measure is the 'poverty reduction strategy' based on the World Bank funded poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) (GOP, 2003). Devolution is listed as one of the four

pillars and thus are closely linked with poverty reduction policies in Pakistan. Figure 1 shows the governance structure in Pakistan under the devolution initiatives. Devolution is designed in three spheres (Cheema and Rondinelli, 1983). First, in the delivery of services and public goods, the government together with the district government is responsible for the service delivery in Tehsil (sub-districts) and unions (smallest administrative units). Secondly, in the decision making sphere, three-tier local bodies of elected representatives has been established. Thirdly, in the financing sphere, direct budget allocations to districts and lower bodies have begun. A union is the unit of local administration, which have a population of 10,000 to 25,000.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The sample

Data were collected in spring 2007 from Abbottabad district. To achieve the objective of the study, the sample and sampling techniques were used. The advantages of using a sample are saving time, reducing costs and giving more accurate data if it is chosen correctly, due to the high rate of response from the respondents (Bailey, 1987). Stratified random sampling is used to collect data from 51 union councils, in which 7 were selected namely: Dhamtor, Kakul, Mirpur, Jhangi, Nathiagali, Namlie Maria and Central Abbottabad. There are 413 villages in Abbottabad district, and 3 villages were selected randomly from the 27 villages that data were collected from.

To study the impact of CCBs on community participation, research design is divided into two groups: control group and treatment group. Treatment group consist of those villages having CCBs supported by government in order to implement the projects, while control group consist of those villages which are without CCBs and projects implemented by the local government itself. Data for both control and treatment group are collected from the same 7 union councils and 23 villages. CCBs projects' sector includes clean drinking water supply, sanitation, education, public health, sanitation, social welfare, work and services and women development. The study is conducted to compare the percentage of projects implemented by both treatment and control group in the same sector. Between January, 2007 to April, 2007, interviews were conducted and the interview questionnaires were open ended. Interviews were open-ended, so diverse descriptions of sustained programs could be elicited (Mancini and Marck, 1998). A parallel set of open-ended questions were asked to over 180 respondents including 90 respondents from control group and 90 from treatment. In the treatment group, 30 respondents were community members and 60 respondents include nazims and CCBs' officials, while in the control group, 60 community members and 30 nazims and local government officials filled the questionnaire. Questionnaires included in these interviews focused on registration of CCBs, project sustainability, access to information, community participation and assessment need. Throughout this process of quantitative and qualitative research, these five elements were identified as consistently contributing to community empowerment.

RESULTS

Role of DTCE in CCB's registration

DTCE launched its field operations in May, 2004 and since

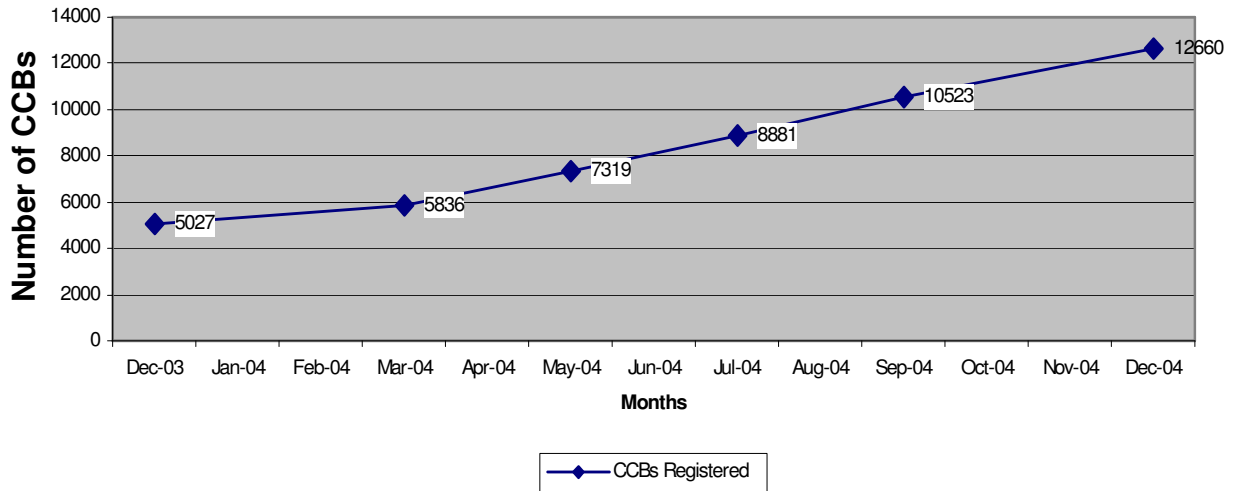


Figure 2. Registration of CCBs in Pakistan from December 2003 to December 2004.

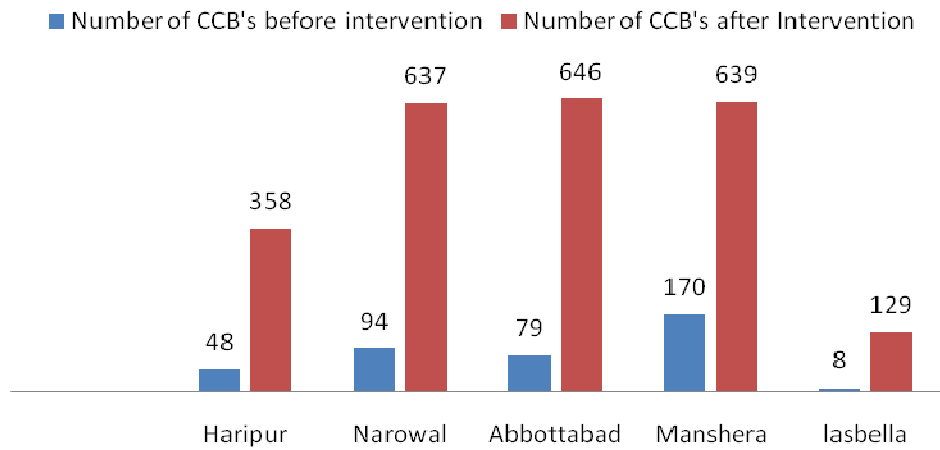


Figure 3. The registered status of CCBs before and after intervention of DTCE. Quarterly newsletter of devolution trust for community empowerment: December 2004; vol 3 issue III.

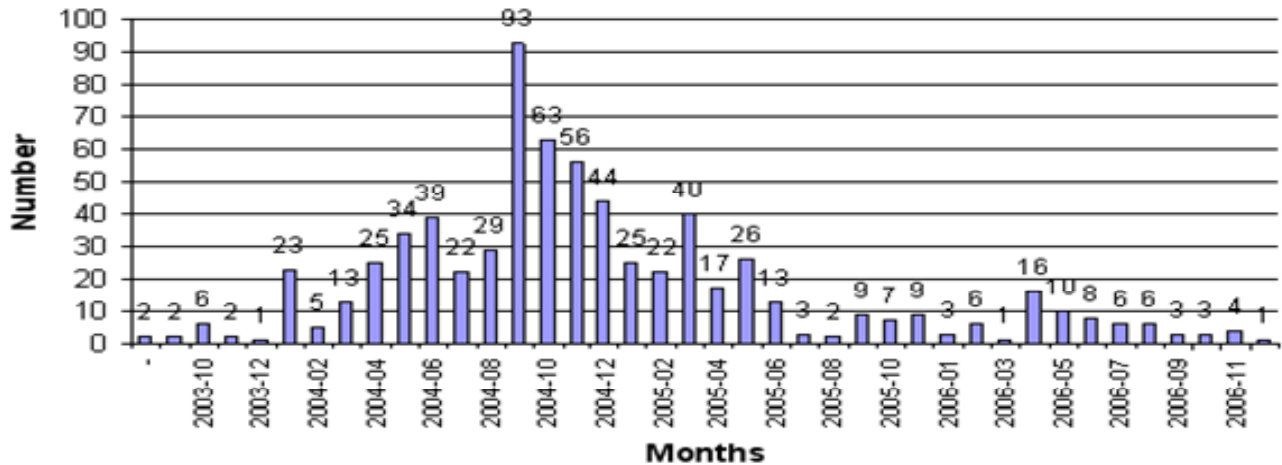


Figure 4. Month-wise registration of CCBs.



Figure 5. Year-wise registration of CCBs.

initiatives to build the capacity of local peoples. As skilled community members can better participate and less wastage of resources.

Projects status comparison of CCBs and local government between FY 05 and 06

Tables 1 and 2 show the comparison of different sectors of the projects' status. As CCBs' projects are need-based projects and involve 20% of the community share, so these projects are considered as more need-based projects. So we have to compare the projects status of CCBs with that of the local government. Data for CCBs and local governments' projects had been taken from the district of Abbottabad to know the impact of these projects on community lives. In Abbottabad district, CCBs completed a total of 24 projects (35.8% of the total projects), while the local government approved 52 projects (32.9% of the total projects) in clean drinking water sector, out of which, 52 local governments completed only 10 projects, 3 projects were in progress, site disputed for 1 project, 21 projects still in the tendering process, work order issued for 5 projects and 1 project site still not identified. Similarly, in the construction sector, CCBs completed 18 projects (24.7% of the total projects), while the local government approved a total of 24 projects. Out of these projects, 18 are completed, 3 are in progress, 2 projects sites are disputed and 1 site is still not identified. In the work and services sector, CCBs proposed 13 projects (17.8% of the total projects), 10 of which are completed and 3 are in progress; while in the same sector, the local government approved a total of 46 projects (35.1% of the total projects), 22 of which are completed, 10 are in progress, 7 sites are disputed and 7 projects sites are still not identified. In the sanitation sector, CCBs completed 2 projects (2.7% of the total projects), while the local government approved 6 projects (4.6% of the total projects), 3 of which are completed, 1 is in progress, 1 project site is disputed and 1 project site is still not identified. In the social welfare sector, CCBs proposed 10 projects (13.7% of the total projects), 9 of

which are completed and 1 project work is still in progress. In women development, education and public health sector CCBs have 1, 3 and 2 projects, respectively, but local government has no projects in these important sectors. As such, the results indicate that the community completed more projects than the government. These results indicate that this community based development scheme reorganize the people to judge their own needs and improve their own living conditions.

Conclusion

The result shows that there is increase in percentage of CCBs' registration with the intervention of DTCE, but yearly numbers of registered CCBs are decreasing. Similarly, the number of projects completed by CCBs is too low than that of the registered CCBs. Mostly, registered CCBs' members consist of villagers, who are illiterate and cannot write project proposal and lack knowledge or skill to develop cost estimation. Similarly, registration process takes too much time. After developing a proposal, the project proposal along with 20% of the total estimated cost is submitted to the local government community development office. The local government approves 80% of the funds, but all the CCBs do not get funds because politicians and local government officials undermine the CCBs' progress. Politicians use CCBs' funds to improve their vote banks. Likewise, percentages of CCBs' completed projects are more than that of the projects implemented by local government. As CCBs' projects are need-based projects and people identify and implement all the projects by the local community, it shows that there is no site disputed projects, while in the local government, percentage of disputed projects is more. CCBs can better identify and implement projects if they are provided with proper funding and technical skill required in implementing the projects. The following are the economic benefits related with the current research.

CCB's community group is a source to motivate local

Table 1. Sector-wise projects' status of local government.

Project sector	Completed	Work in progress	Site Disputed	Tendering process	Work order issued	Site not yet indentified	Total Projects
Construction							
Count	18	3	3	0	0	1	24
% within the project's status	33.3	17.6	18.2	0	0	4.3	18.3
Drinking water							
Count	10	3	1	21	5	12	52
% within the project's status	18.5	17.6	9.1	100	100	52.2	39.7
Water and services							
Count	22	10	7	0	0	7	46
% within the project's status	40.7	58.8	63.6	0	0	30.4	35.1
Sanitation							
Count	3	1	1	0	0	1	6
% within the project's status	5.6	5.9	9.1	0	0	4.3	4.6
Electricity							
Count	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
% within the project's status	0	0	0	0	0	4.3	0.8
Social work							
Count	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
% within the project's status	1.9	0	0	0	0	4.3	1.5
Total							
Count	54	17	11	21	5	23	131
% within the project's status	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

local people to judge their need and implement only those projects from which they can get benefits. At the individual level, people learn to work for the community (a concept of group work), while at the community level, working together in group require different skills like leadership, management,

controlling and evaluating skills. These groups once learnt that this collective work can improve their lives; and as such, they must keep them motivated for other socio-developmental activities.

From these results, we can extract several suggestions to promote the CCBs. First, government

has to make policies that will collaborate more closely NGOs with local influential people. On the other hand, when administration itself targets at unions and villages directly, those without NGOs should be given high priority.

Secondly, support to male-dominated CCBs is

Table 2. Sector-wise projects' status of CCBs.

Project sector	Project status		Total
	'Completed'	'Released fund'	
'Clean drinking water supply'			
Count	24	0	24
% within the project's status	35.8	0.0	32.9
'Sanitation'			
Count	2	0	2
% within the project's status	3.0	0.0	2.7
'Education'			
Count	1	1	2
% within the project's status	1.5	16.7	2.7
'Public health'			
Count	2	1	3
% within the project's status	3.0	16.7	4.1
'Construction'			
Count	18	0	18
% within the project's status	26.9	0.0	24.7
'Social welfare'			
Count	9	1	10
% within the project's status	13.4	16.7	13.7
'Work and services'			
Count	10	3	13
% within the project's status	14.9	50.0	17.8
'Women development'			
Count	1	0	1
% within the project's status	1.5	0.0	1.4
Total			
Count	67	6	73
% within the project's status	100.0	100.0	100.0

is required and will be effective, considering the result that male-dominated CCBs are more successful than the mixed and female CCBs. Thirdly, the interior management of a CCB has to be monitored rigorously. Holding a CCB meeting regularly and keeping activity records properly are an effective way to create more successful CCBs. Fourthly, technical support to CCBs in preparing project proposals is required. Therefore, technical support in preparing project proposals should be provided with more efficiency from the CCB administration.

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