

**ROLE OF VILLAGE ORGANIZATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN
CHITRAL**

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Abstract

Development is one of the key concerns for governments in geographically isolated rural areas. Rural development programs such as Village based Organization (VO) can play a pivotal role in developing geographically isolated rural areas. Chitral is one of the geographically isolated rural areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. In this connection, this study is an investigation to the role of Village based Organization (VO) in rural development in Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This study is quantitatively designed and is cross-sectional. Sampling for the study has been done purposively and an interview schedule has been utilized as a tool for data collection. The collected information has been analyzed in tabular form including frequencies and percentages. Findings of the study enumerates that village-based organization are important developmental agencies in the

study area. Village based organization plays a key role in developing infrastructure, facilitating education, provision of health facilities and empowering people of Chitral.

Keywords: *Rural; Development; Village based organization; Education; Health; Infrastructure*

1.1. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

1.1.1. What is Rural Development?

Rural development is the process of improving the quality of life, for instance, improving the economic well-being, provision of appropriate health facilities and education, and enhancing the infrastructure (Bhatia, 1999). According to Hussain and Mehmood, 1990) rural development is the process of helping rural people in terms of setting their priorities in their lives through effective and democratic bodies by improving the local capacity, investment in basic infrastructure and provision of social services, justice, equity as well as security.

1.1.2. Problems Faced by Government in Developing Geographically Isolated Rural Area

Development is one of the key concerns for governments in geographically isolated rural areas. There are many reasons for it; first, it is difficult for government to make good communication infrastructure in geographically isolated areas because of unsupportive landscapes, hills and mountains, snowfall etc. Second, many governments are unable to bear the economic expenses while providing same facilitation to geographically isolated areas when compared to settled and urban areas. Third, it is also evident that often governments are unable to manage geographically isolated politically. Fourth, the poor socio-economic profile (e.g. unemployment, lack of education) is responsible for ignorance of governments to develop geographically isolated areas (for further details see Ahmad, Israr, Shaukat and Khan, 2009 and Abbasi, 2002).

1.1.3. What is Village based Organization?

Village organization (VO) is a voluntary organization based on the community in which people live. It refers to a group of people who work for the development of a small community (e.g. village). Village organization focuses on small scale activities such as construction of water tank, arranging a free medical camp, provision of food and medicine to the poor in the community and arranging activities to empower and educate people for surviving in difficult conditions (AKRSP, 1995). There are many instances that governmental efforts are being made for the uplift of rural community in most of the developing countries village-based organizations.

1.1.4. Village Organization in Chitral, Pakistan

Economic development of countries mainly relies on developments in rural areas. This is particularly true of Pakistan where the rural population constitutes 67% of the overall country and their share in agriculture sector to country's GDP is 21% (GOP, 2007). It is also important to mention that Village Organizations (VOs) were properly approved by the government in devolution plan 2000 resulting in increase in their activities. It has a proper structure, for instance, according to local government ordinance (LGO) 2001, local people from a Village Organization with chairman, a secretary, and general members. Further, Village Organizations are registered with government and the funding is provided by donor agencies, government as well as from wealthy individuals. There are many Village Based Organizations in Pakistan, however, Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), Malakand Rural Development Project (MRDP), and Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP) are the notable organizations who worked in Chitral based on Village Organizations (Ahmad, Israr, Shaukat and Khan, 2009).

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Village based organization plays a pivotal role in rural development. Pakistan is a member of south Asian community characterized by lower income. In South Asia, economic development is characterized by a moderate success in economic growth with a substantial failure in human development such as basic health; education and gender equality considering rural areas (see Dreze and Sen, 2012). Considering the mentioned situation, it is important to start developmental work from gross-root level, and for that Village Organizations are pivotal (JICA, 2003).

Development of rural areas has remained a primary concern in Pakistan and various regimes have formulated policies to this end. The main reason is the demographic landscape with more than 76% people living in rural areas and the share of agriculture sector to the 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 (Ayaz, 2002). The current study in this regard, focuses on rural development and the role of village-based organization in rural development in Chitral.

1.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To illustrate the role of VOs in provision of basic facilities and enhancing infrastructure in the study area.
- To explore the role of VOs in facilitation of education in the study area.
- To know about the role of VOs in provision of health facilities in the study area.
- To investigate into the role of VOs in empowering the people of the study area.

1.4. METHODOLOGY

Study Design: This research is framed under quantitative research design and is cross-sectional on the basis of timeframe.

Sampling: Purposive sampling technique has been utilized for selection of samples from the population of interest. A total of 50 respondents were selected from two villages whereby, all the respondents were the members of village-based organization working in the locality.

Tool for Data Collection: An interview schedule was designed in relevance to the current study in order to collect information from the respondents. The interview schedule contained questions regarding socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent and regarding the work of village-based organizations in terms of developing infrastructure in the area, provision of health facilities, facilitating education and empowering the people in the study area.

Data Analysis: The collected information has been analyzed in tabular form including frequencies and percentages against each category of opinion along with description and discussion at the end.

1.5. DATA ANALYSIS

Socio-Demographic Information

This portion of analysis is devoted to socio-demographic information about respondents whereby age and gender wise distribution, educational and marital status, family type and income level of respondents are presented in tabular form along with its description. For further details see the tables below:

Table No. 01: Socio-Demographic Information

Gender of the respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Male	20	40%
Female	30	60%
Total	50	100%
Age (in years)	Frequency	Percentage
18-30	17	34%
31-42	19	38%
43 & above	14	28%
Total	50	100%
Educational level of the Respondent	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	10	20%
Metric	09	18%
Intermediate	16	32%
Higher	15	30%
Total	50	100%
Occupation of the Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Farmer	11	22%
Business man	02	04%
Government servant	14	28%
House wife	13	26%
Student	10	20%
Total	50	100%

Table No. 01, is the description of the socio-demographic information of the respondents. In this regard, various indicators are mentioned in the table whereby 20 (40%) of the respondents were male while 30 (60%) respondents were female. As per table No. 01, 17 (34%) respondents were in the age category of 18-30 years. 19 (38%) respondents were in the age category of 31-42 years while the remaining 14 (28%) respondents were in the age category of 43 years and above. Further, in terms of the education of the respondents, 10 (20%) respondents were illiterate; 9 (18 %) respondents were matriculate; 16 (32%) respondents were educated up to intermediate; and 15 (30 %) respondents were educated up to higher level. Furthermore, with regard to the occupation of the respondents, 11 (22%) respondents were farmers; 14 (28%) respondents were government servants; 2 (4%) respondents were doing business; and, 13 (26%) respondents were house wives while remaining 10(20 %) respondents were students.

Table No. 02: VO's Assistance in Provision of Basic Needs

VO's assistance in availing basic needs	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	47	94
No	03	06
Total	50	100
Type of Basic need Fulfilled by VO	Frequency	Percentage
Food	06	12.76
Water	37	78.72
Shelter	04	08
Total	47	100

Table No. 02 indicates that 47 (94 %) respondents replied with YES that village organizations have assisted them in meeting basic needs. In explanation, 06 (12.76 %) respondents said that village organization has provided them with food. 37 (78.72 %) respondent revealed that village organization has assisted them in meeting water related needs whereas, 04 (%) respondents stated that village organization has provided them with shelter.

Table No. 03: Facing the Problem of Electricity and Provision of Electricity through VO's

Problem of electricity	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	43	86
No	07	14
Total	50	100
Provision of electricity	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	27	62.79
No	16	37.21
Total	43	100

Table No. 03 reveals that 43 (86 %) respondents were confronted with problems regarding electricity. Among the 43 respondents 27 (62.79 %) respondents were assisted by Village Organizations in terms of access to electricity.

Table No. 04: VO's Support in Provision of Health Facilities

Provision of health facilities	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	36	72
No	14	28
Total	50	100
Types of health facilities	Frequency	Percentage
Medicine	08	22.22
Construction of dispensaries	02	5.55
Free medical camp	25	69.44
Total	36	100

Table No. 04 shows that 36 (72%) of respondents argued that Village Organizations provide them with health-related facilities, while remaining 14 (28%) respondents said that VO does not provide them with health facilities. In explanation, among the 36 respondents 08 (22.22 %) respondents elucidated that Village Organization provide them with medicine; 02 (5.55 %) respondents argued that Village Organization has constructed dispensary; and, 25 (69.44 %) respondents stated that Village Organization arranges free medical camps for them.

Table no. 05: VO's Support in Provision of Educational Facilities

Provision of education facilities	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	39	78
No	11	22
Total	50	100
Types of educational support	Frequency	Percentage
Books	04	10.25
Uniform	00	00
Scholarships	35	89.75
Total	39	100

Table No. 05 indicates that 39 (78%) of respondents said that VO's support them in the provision of educational facilities. In explanation, 04 (10.25 %) respondents argued that they were provided with books by VOs while 35 (89.75 %) respondents revealed that VOs helps the students of community by giving them scholarships.

Table No. 06: VOs work for the Betterment of Infrastructural Development

Infrastructure development	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	46	92
No	04	08
Total	50	100
Type of works	Frequency	Percentage
Roads	00	00
Pavements	07	15.21
Irrigation canals	14	30.43
Protection wall	05	10.86
Tanks of drinking water	20	43.47
Total	46	100

As per table No. 06, 46(92%) of respondents illustrated that VO's work for the betterment of infrastructure. Explaining it, 07 (15.21 %) respondents said that VOs made pavements; 14 (15.21 %) respondents argued that VOs made irrigations canals; 05 (10.86 %) respondents elucidated that VOs made protection walls; and, 20 (43.47 %) respondents stated that VOs constructed tanks for drinking water.

Table no. 06: VO's Role in Empowerment of Rural people

VO's role in Empowerment of people	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	50	100
No	00	00
Total	50	100
Specification of empowerment	Frequency	Percentage
Decision making	04	08
Participation	11	22
Self help	23	46
Sense of cooperation	12	24
Total	50	100

Table No. 06 shows that all of the respondents revealed that VOs works for empowering people in the study area. Explaining it, 04 (08 %) respondents argued that it involves and empowers people in decision making. 11 (22 %) respondents opined that it encourages people for participation. 23 (46 %) respondents said that VOs believe on self-help, and 12 (24 %) respondents explicated that VOs improve the sense of cooperation.

1.6. DISCUSSION

Village based organization works in small communities such as villages to bring socio-economic development. Chitral is one of the geographically isolated areas where VOs works with some degree of success in bringing facilitation in the life of its members. This study reveals that VOs work infrastructural development such as making pavements, water tanks, irrigation canals etc. Further, VOs work for facilitating education in the area, for example, providing students with books and scholarships for the needy one. Furthermore, VOs are significant while considering the health of the local communities. VOs provide the needy people with medicine, arrange free medical camps as well as constructs dispensaries. In addition to it, VOs empowers the local communities by involving and helping them in decision making, encouraging community participation and self-help.

1.7. CONCLUSION

This study is titled as “Role of Village Organization in Rural Development in District Chitral”. This study is conducted in Upper Chitral. the current study aims to find out various facilities provided by village-based organizations to its members as well as its role in rural development such as infrastructural development, educational development etc. This study is framed under quantitative research design. Purposive sampling technique has been utilized whereby a total of 50 samples were selected. An interview schedule was utilized in order to select samples from the population of interest. The collected information has been analyzed in tabular form including frequencies and percentages.

The current study indicates that village organization helps in the uplift of the life standard of the rural people especially in backward areas. A village organization helps the people in the areas like supply of drinking water, construction of pavements, protection walls, irrigation canals, provision of electricity. The study also shows that village organization enables the

households to earn money from the preservation of foods, honey bee farming, sewing and weaving carpets. It also supports in the field of education by providing without interest loans to the needy students. It is also concluded that role of village organization in the field of health is highly appreciated by the local people because it provides free of cost medicines to the poor people. A village organization also helps in the empowerment of the rural people through training sessions on different subjects like decision making, participation, self-help, cooperation etc.

1.8. SUGGESTIONS

We suggest and recommend the following points;

- Weekly and monthly meetings must be held in the locality of the village organization.
- The village organization management/coordinators must ensure 100% attendance of the members.
- Proper monitoring of the projects of the village organization must be done and the result must be discussed monthly meetings of the village organizations.
- Government should also provide support to the village organization by providing developmental funds.
- The village organization should also seek support from the international donors. This can be only possible if the members of the village organization have highly educated nominees.

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