GROUP DYNAMICS FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN PAKISTAN

Allah Nawaz Samoo

Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund, Islamabad, Pakistan
(Corresponding author: nsamoo@gmail.com)

Abstract

Community Organization has been considered as one of the major preconditions for successful poverty alleviation in developing countries. It led the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) and 19 of its partner organizations to implement a program to organize about one million households in 50,000 Community Organizations (COs) in 25 poorest districts of the country. The study analyzed these COs for the process of their formation, gender dimension and the readiness of office bearers or developed leadership cadre to mediate the local development that matters to them. A sample of about 5,213 COs with a confidence level of 99 percent and an error margin of ±2 percent was surveyed using a questionnaire that asked qualitative and quantitative information on the said aspects of community organizations. The findings revealed that the democratic processes in these organizations have yet to be evolved as the office bearers on top ranked positions in almost all COs were selected instead of election process. In away, the gender dimension has been well taken care of during the group formation process as 55 percent of the COs correspond to female, 40 percent to male while the remaining 5 were mixed of both gender. Most of these organizations have reported community savings at the time of survey. However, on average a group of 16 households could not save more than 50 USD – an amount certainly inadequate to start lending operations. Besides, some increase for both males and females members having Computerized National Identity Cards, vote and marriage registration could be attributed to the emergence of COs. About three-fourths of the community organization reported having development plans while one third having linkages with public and private organizations and Village Organization. Nevertheless, only 6 percent of COs joined the Local Support Organizations – networks at sub-district level. Last but not the least, trainings seems to have contributed to smooth functioning and record keeping of COs although the decision regarding the training were mostly done by the Social Organizers of Partner Organization instead of the communities on their own. The study has useful policy implication for the empowerment of the poor by organizing them at household, village and Union Council level to build their voice and scale for an effective interface with government and market.
Keywords: Community Organization, Poverty alleviation, Local Support Organizations, Village Organization, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund

Introduction

Community organizing is a process where people who live in proximity to each other come together into an organization that acts in their shared self-interest. A core goal of community organizing is to generate durable power for an organization representing the community, allowing it to influence key decision-makers on a range of issues over time. In the ideal, for example, this can get community organizing groups a place at the table before important decisions are made. Community organizers work with and develop new local leaders, facilitating coalitions and assisting in the development of campaigns.

Organized community groups attempt to influence government, corporations and institutions, seek to increase direct representation within decision-making bodies, and foster social reform more generally. Community organizers generally seek to build groups that are democratic in governance, open and accessible to community members, and concerned with the general health of the community rather than a specific interest group. Organizing seeks to broadly empower community members, with the end goal of distributing power more equally throughout the community.

The three basic types of community organizing are grassroots or "door-knocking" organizing, faith-based community organizing (FBCO), and coalition building. Political campaigns often claim that their door-to-door operations are in fact an effort to organize the community, though often these operations are focused exclusively on voter identification and turnout.

In Pakistan, various national and international organizations have been involved in the process of formation, capacity building and providing financial and technical support to community based organizations (CBOs) and groups of citizens since 1990. With the support of Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), more than 50,000 community organizations were developed under a project ended during June 2010. In order to know the existence as well as capacity to carry out activities envisaged for community organizations, a sample of about 5,000 community organizations was selected and surveyed. Estimates of the survey reveal the level of competency of community organizations and assess the training needs for their development and progress.

Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The primary purpose of this study was to verify the existence, quantify some selected indicators describing strengths and weaknesses of community organization and evaluate the progress before closing the Project i.e. June 2010. Therefore, name of the design used for this study is descriptive research with special reference to descriptive survey. Descriptive survey is appropriate for obtaining people's perceptions on social issues and social facts concerning the current status of phenomena and/or for describing the nature of existing conditions in a situation (Cohen and Manion, 1980; Trochim, 2000).

2.2 Population / Area of the Study

This study reflects all the community organizations in 25 poorest districts spread over 4 provinces of Pakistan, namely Punjab (56%), Sindh (21%), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (14%) and Balochistan (9%). Total number of community organizations is reportedly more than 50,000 covering one million households. These organizations were developed with the support of Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund under the project ended during June 2010.

2.3 Sample Size and Sampling Method

In all, 5,213 community organizations, which constituted about 10% of the total, were surveyed; which reflected population parameter at less than 5% error rate (Wunsch, 1986). Distribution of the sample by province reflected as 2,894 (56%) from Punjab, 1079 (21%) from Sindh, 748 (14%) from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and 492 (9%) from Balochistan. A sample of community organizations were selected using 2 stage cluster sampling method. Provinces and districts were considered clusters at the first and second stage, respectively. From each cluster, a random sample of community organizations was selected using systematic sampling method whereby every K[th] item is selected from sampling frame of community organizations (Anderson *et al.,* 1993).

2.4 Development of Questionnaires

Research team of working within the subject area of social sciences developed indicators particularly focusing on general information to verify the existence of social organizations; selection procedure of key persons; details of saving and utilization; record keeping;

awareness and training programs; proactive initiatives; access to public and private sector offices; and impact of training programs.

Closed ended questions were developed on the above mentioned indicators; thus, a questionnaire was designed for survey of community organizations. The fundamental principle of the questionnaire was taken in consideration i.e. keep it simple and short (KISS). Necessary changes were made during pilot survey.

Impact of training programs on three subject areas viz. conducting meetings, planning and record keeping was measured using 5-point Likert Type Scale (1 being poor, 2 being average, 3 being medium, 4 being good, and 5 being excellent) was used.

2.5   Training of Enumerators and Data Collection
Data were collected by 25 enumerators particularly hired for the present investigation. Prior to data collection, a training session was conducted on the questionnaire. At the first hand, each and every question was discussed in detail. Enumerators were asked to fill in the questionnaire hypothetically. After making possible corrections, the enumerators were asked to collect data from community organizations as a pilot survey. Supervisors checked the quality of data and passed instructions to the data collection team from time to time.

2.6   Statistical Analysis
Data collected from the field was checked thoroughly and fed in Microsoft Excel package. Using filters, data were cleaned for outliers and influential observations. Data were transferred to Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the same were analyzed. Descriptive statistical methods namely frequencies, percentages, minimum, maximum, and mean were computed.

Results and discussion

3.1   Selection Procedure
Selection of the office bearers through election was rarely reported as only 1% organizations declared. It was reported that active members of community organization are selected as office bearer particularly on the top ranked positions namely president, vice president, and secretary.

3.2   Recording of Selection Procedure
Recording of selection procedure was informed by overwhelming majority of the community organizations (97%) while the remaining 3% had no any record in this regard. Disproportionately, more number of community organizations having no any written record/ minutes of the selection was found in Balochistan. This may invite attention that capacity building programs for the community organizations may be launched especially in Balochistan. Except Balochistan and KPK, recording of selection procedure was observed in almost all the organizations in Punjab (99.6%) and Balochistan (99.6%).

3.3   Type of Community Organizations
On an overall basis, female organizations were found in majority (55%) followed by male (40%) and mixed (5%). Traditional variations are crystal clear when data were segregated on provincial basis. There were 77% female community organizations in the Punjab against 6% in Sindh, 2% in Balochistan and only 0.5% in KPK. During the last many years, development of female organizations in KPK and Balochistan remained stagnant especially due to poor law and order situation and illiteracy in rural areas.

3.4   Average Number of Members by Gender
On an overall basis, there were 16 male members in an organization while the female number was almost the same (15%). The highest average (about 20 members) number of male members was found in KPK followed by Sindh (18 members), Balochistan (16 members) and Punjab (11 members). Like male membership, exactly the same trend across the provinces

was also recorded with the highest average number of female members in KPK (18 members) followed by Sindh (17 members), Balochistan (16 members) and Punjab (15 members).

3.5 Proportion of Poor Households in Community Organizations

Average number of households organized in each community was about 16; thus total population was enumerated about 80,000 in more than 5,000 community organizations. Out of these, about 51,500 were categorized as poor regardless of operational definition of poverty. However, poverty in terms is considered as lack of money to purchase especially food items and lack of access to education and health facilities. The proportion of poor households was computed as 64%. The highest poverty level was recorded in KPK (79%) followed by Balochistan (69%), Punjab (62%) and Sindh (54%).

3.6 Frequency of Meetings

On an overall basis, meetings were organized on monthly basis as reported by 82% of the community organizations while the remaining 17% reported that meetings are organized fortnightly. Frequent meetings (fortnightly) were relatively more common in Sindh (29%) and Punjab (20%).

3.7 Whether Poverty Cards Filled

On an overall basis, about 13% of the community organizations reported that the poverty cards were filled. Remarkably more proportion (33%) of community organizations of Balochistan province reported that poverty cards were filled. About one-fourths (25%) of the community organizations of Sindh province reportedly filled poverty cards.

3.8 Average Savings Per Community Organization

On an overall basis, 92% of the organizations reported to have savings. This ratio increased to 96% for Punjab, followed by KPK (92%), Sindh (82%), and Balochistan (81%). The average saving per community organization was 3,263 Pakistan Rupee (Rs.), on an overall basis. The highest average (Rs. 4,776) was computed for Sindh province. Although Punjab had more proportion of COs reported savings, the average amount (Rs. 2,741) was minimal in comparison of other provinces.

3.9 Bank Account of Community Organization

On an overall basis, only 42% of the community organizations had Bank accounts. This proportion varied from 10% (Sindh) to 63% (KPK). There were about 54% community organizations in Punjab and 17% in Balochistan having bank accounts. From these figures, it may be concluded that these organizations were very much formal in financial dealing because of bank accounts.

3.10 Average Amount of Internal Lending

About 16% of the organizations reported internal lending while the average amount was Rs. 2,486. Little less than one-fourths (24%) of the community organizations of Punjab reported internal lending with average amount of Rs. 2,242. Very small proportion (1%) of the community organizations of Balochistan offered money to their members with a minimum amount of Rs. 1,466.

3.11 Beneficiaries by Gender of Internal Lending

About 2% of the community organizations were found in internal lending to male members while 14% of to female members. Very small number (1.9 males and 1.3 females) of members could be captured as beneficiaries of the internal lending. Interestingly, Balochistan had small proportion of organization with internal lending while the average number (3.14 males and 14.0 females) of beneficiaries was relatively larger than other provinces.

3.12 Beneficiaries by Gender of Internal Lending

On an overall basis, 6% of the community organizations used their savings for different purposes. Segregation of data by province revealed that 13% of the organization in Balochistan used savings of community organizations while the minimum proportion (1.1)

was recorded for KPK. Proportion of community organizations of Sindh and Punjab was 11% and 5%, respectively.

3.13   Record Keeping of Community Organization

Record keeping is one of the most important indicators to know their organization development. Initial training programs for the capacity building of the community organizations are related to record keeping. Record of members was reported by 84% of the community organizations, on an overall basis. This ratio was the highest (93%) for KPK followed by Punjab (85%), Sindh (80%), and Balochistan (71%).

There were 94% of the community organizations with meeting record. Proportion of community organizations possessing meeting record was the highest (97%) for Punjab while 88% of the meetings were correctly recorded. These estimates reflect that quite good efforts were taken for the capacity building of community organizations surveyed. Relatively weaker position was observed for COs of Balochistan where 69% of the COs shared record of 82% meetings. Almost the same estimates were recorded for attendance record. Relatively less proportion (70%) of COs with saving record was found in COs of KPK.

3.14   Members having CNIC[48] and Registered Votes

In comparison of male members, impact of joining community organization on making CNIC and registering votes is very much obvious. Before membership of community organization, 13.8 males had CNIC which increased to 14.9 after joining community organization. On overall basis, 8% growth rate was calculated for male members while 43% for female members (from 8 to 11 members).

Likewise CNIC, growth rates in registration of votes for males and females were 5% (from 14.1 to 14.8 members) and 13.3% (from 8.3 to 9.4 members), respectively. From these figures, it may be inferred that community organizations are playing better role to get the women have right of citizenship and access to vote.

3.15   Married Members and Nikkah Nama[49]

Average number of married members by gender and possessing Nikkah Nama before and after joining community organizations was estimated. It was informed that there were 14.2 married members of community organizations. Out of these, 14.1 were married even before joining COs. In other words, only 1% male members got married after joining community organizations. Relatively more proportion (2.7%) of females was recorded who got married after joining community organizations (12.2 before CO and 12.6 after CO).

There were 8.4 male members who had Nikkah Nama before joining community organizations and the same increased to 8.5 after joining; hence, the growth rate was 1.3%. For females, the growth rate for Nikkah Nama was 2.6% (average number of 9.7 before CO and 10 after CO). Moreover, it was recorded that 60% male and 80% females had Nikkah Nama.

3.16   Self Help Based Initiatives Taken by Community Organization

One of the prime goals of community organizations is to develop the capacity building so that self based initiatives may be taken. However, the collected estimates show that there is a lot of room to enhance capacity of these organizations for solving their problems themselves without looking at others. On an overall basis, about 29% of the community organizations under this survey reported that self help based initiatives are taken by community organizations. This proportion ranged from 26% (recorded for Punjab) to 35% (estimated for Sindh).

---

[48] Computerized National Identity Card

[49] Registered Marriage Contract

3.17 Members Development Plan

Proactive initiatives of community organizations can be gauged from perception regarding development plans. On an overall basis, about three-fourths (74%) of the community organization reported that they had development plan while 58% of the all organizations had evidence. Settlement/community development plan was reported by 48% organizations which reduced to only 39% organization with some evidence.

3.18 Linkages Developed by CO with Public and Private Organizations

Public and private sector partnership for the development of the country is being encouraged at all levels. At the grass-root level, community organizations contact various offices for organizing various programs. On an overall basis, 30% of the community organizations reported that they had linkages with public and private organizations. This proportion ranged from 13% (Sindh) to 37% (Punjab). Estimates are evident of poor linkages of the community organizations of Sindh with public and private sector organizations/offices.

Relatively community organizations of the Punjab had better linkages with almost all the public and private organizations at different tiers. Disproportionately more percentage of community organizations of Balochistan and KPK had links with local and international NGOs.

3.19 Selection of Community Organization Members for VO/LSO

The primary function of the Local Support Organizations (LSO) is to support community organizations social mobilization and serve as a technical advisor for large development projects that are beyond the capacity of village or community level organizations.

On an overall basis, about one-thirds of the organizations were member of village organizations (VOs) while only 6% were members of Local Support Organizations. About 46% of community organizations of KPK were members of Village Organizations followed by Balochistan (36%), Punjab (31%) and Sindh (31%). Interestingly one of the organizations of Sindh province was member of Local Support Organizations against 10% in Balochistan and 9% in Punjab.

3.20 Perceptions Regarding Clarity of Objectives

On an overall basis, majority (54%) of the respondents were of the view that objectives of training were clear to them while 39% rate as partially clear and 7% categorically opted "not clear". The highest proportion of respondents with the clear objectives were recorded in Punjab and KPK (56% for each).

3.21 Decision Maker for Attending Training Programs

Social Organizers (SOs) are the frontline extension agents involved in social mobilization and development of community activities. On an overall basis, 76% of the respondents were of the opinion that SOs made decisions about attending training programs while 22% selected community organizations. Role of office bearers (1%) and members (1%) of COs was almost negligible (1%).

3.22 Perceptions Regarding Impact of Training Program

Majority (72%) of the respondents were optimistic that training programs were very effective. Slight variations across the provinces were observed since the highest proportion was recorded for Balochistan (77%) followed by Sindh (73%), Punjab (72%), and KPK (69%).

3.23 Level of Impact of Training Programs

Capacity building of the community organizations is one of the prime tasks of national and international NGOs for the sustainable rural development.

Before training programs; knowledge, information, and skills was estimated as poor for all the provinces. However, after training programs, the same was measured as between average and

medium for conducting meetings (2.4) and record keeping (2.4) while almost average for planning (1.9). No any remarkable variations were recorded across the provinces.

Conclusions

Community organizers generally seek to build groups that are democratic in governance, open and accessible to community members, and concerned with the general health of the community rather than a specific interest group. Organizing seeks to broadly empower community members, with the end goal of distributing power more equally throughout the community.Organized community groups attempt to influence government, corporations and institutions, seek to increase direct representation within decision-making bodies, and foster social reform more generally. In response to the Social Mobilization Project (2008-2010), Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) has to form 50,000 Community level organizations covering 1 million households in 25 Poorest districts of Pakistan. Taking a sample of 10% of all community organizations, community organizations were evaluated based upon various quantitative and qualitative indicators. Remarkable findings of the revealed that selection of the office bearers through election was rarely reported as only 1% community organizations declared. Overwhelming majority of the community organizations (97%) had record of selection. Female organizations were found in majority (55%) followed by male (40%) and mixed (5%). There were 77% female community organizations in the Punjab against 6% in Sindh, 2% in Balochistan and only 0.5% in KPK. On an overall basis, meetings were organized on monthly basis. About 13% of the community organizations reported that they have poverty cards filled. About 92% of the organizations reported to have savings. The average saving per community organization was Rs. 3,263. About 42% of the community organizations had bank accounts, on an overall basis. About 16% of the organizations reported internal lending. About 6% of the community organizations used their saving for different purposes. There were 94% of the community organizations with meeting record. Growth rate in preparing CNIC was 8% for male while 43% for female. Growth rates in registration of votes for males and females were 5% and 13.3%, respectively. About three-fourths (74%) of the community organization reported that they had development plan while 58% of the all organizations had evidence. Settlement/community development plan was reported by 48% organizations which reduced to only 39% organizations with some evidence. About 30% of the community organizations reported that they had linkages with public and private organizations. About one-third of the organizations were member of village organizations while only 6% were members of Local Support Organizations. Majority (72%) of the respondents were optimistic that training programs were very effective.

References

Anderson, D. R., D. J. Sweeny and T. A. Williams, 1993. Statistics for business and economics.

Cohen, L. and L. Manion, 1980. Research methods in education. London: Croom Helm.

Trochim, W., 2000. The research method knowledge base, 2nd edition. Atomic Dog Publishing, Cincinnati, OH.

Wunsch, D. R., 1986. Forum feature: action research in business education. Business education forum. February 1986. Vol. 5. pp. 31-34.