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## REASON OF THE UNSUSTAINABILITY OF COMMUNITY BASED PROJECTS: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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**Abstract:** Pakistan, being a least developed and economically sluggish country, cannot widely support and implement the community projects for its nation. Community development projects in Pakistan mostly rely on foreign aids. The agenda behind this support to the least developed countries is to facilitate them in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Charter of United Nations also encourages the promotion of social progress and better standards of life by the employment of external machinery. In Pakistan, the community development professionals design projects in a closed room without doing the practical need assessment with the people, in the field and serve projects in a plate for the community. The aim of this paper is to analyze the factor which affects the sustainability of the community projects. The study has found that the projects which were designed without the consultation, involvement and participation of the community people could not be sustainable. Based on the outcome of the study, I conclude that for the sustainability of community projects it is necessary that community should identify their problems in facilitation of the social researcher by using different tools and should also propose solution to these problems. On the basis of this collected data community projects should be initiated.

**Keywords:** Community; Community based projects; Sustainability; MGDs

### INTRODUCTION:

Communities have their own syndromes and these syndromes are found in the shape of socio-economic problems. These issues and problems need treatment. When these problems are properly identified, analyzed and treated, they get vanish and other new problems arise. This cycle continues. Likewise, no community in the world is safe from such kind of problems whether they are developed, developing or under developed communities. Pakistan is also hosting many social and economic problems. Dealing with these problems needs resources and economic capacity which is unfortunately lacking in the country.

In view of this scenario, the government has given permission to UN Agencies and Donors to invest in the socio economic development sector of the country in order to mainstream its nation in the development progress. These Donor Agencies fund the community projects but most of these projects do no remain sustainable.

The main factor responsible for this failure is TopDown Approach. Mostly projects do not come from the communities directly and do not reflect community's problems. This is the primary hurdle

in the sustainability of community projects. There is a need to do practical need assessment with the community and know from them what problems they are facing in their localities. Every community project should be designed and formulated within the community by knowing their perception of problems and then forwarding the report to the donors and ask them for the community projects.

Sustainability is derived from the Latin *sustinere* (*tenere*, to hold; *sus*, up). Sustainability has different meaning in different disciplines. Sociologist, economist and ecologists have offered different meaning of sustainability.

Economists tend to treat sustainability in terms of ways to keep the production system more viable; environmentalists and ecologists tend to focus on the perpetuation of the environment and its subsystems; sociologists are more concerned with the impact on cultural and social systems [2].

According to Brunt land Commission report (Our Common Future) sustainable development is defined as 'development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'(World Bank, 2005).

According to Roy, sustainable development is for the people by the people (2003). It is the people who determine the essence of sustainable development which brings change in their attitude and leads to a change in their habits. According to International Fund for Agricultural Development sustainability is “Ensuring that the institutions supported through projects and the benefits realized are maintained and continue after the end of the project .... (IFAD Strategic Framework 2007-2010).

According to Top down Approach, ‘the starting point is authoritative decision’ in which centrally located actors are seen as most relevant to producing the desired effect (Matland, 195, p.146). The main actors are considered to be the decision makers who are responsible to formulate an efficient statute to the kind of existing problem. The top-down theory defends that, on the one hand, policy formulation and decision-making are made at the top level institutions. While, on the other hand, policy implementation and evaluation is done at the national level of member states (Sabatier, 1986). The top-down model is structured around the use of professional leadership provided by external resources that plan, implement, and evaluate development programs (Macdonald, 1995).

If development experts choose indicators simply to comply with the requirements of funding agencies, then this top-down process may alienate local community members and fail to capture locally important factors. It creates ambiguity when development experts choose sustainability indicators for the local situation because it may not be relevant to the local community.

Local engagement builds community capacity to address future problems which may be more important than the results of the actual development project [3].

For example, in community based environmental management workin Bangkok, the act of inventorying land and identifying problems played a key educational role in the community (Fraser, 2002). The methods used to collect, interpret and display data must be easily and effectively used by local communities so all stakeholders can participate in the process [3]

In Baluchistan, most foreign funded development projects such as National commission for human development, Minor community irrigation project, Baluchistan area development program which strategized women empowerment as their complementary goal failed to achieve their objectives because of the poor performance of participatory development projects especially in terms of women empowerment [4].

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology includes a critical review of the local Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) project in district Charsadda, after 2010 flood.

## CBDRM PROJECT OVERVIEW

Flood 2010 affected 20 million people all over Pakistan and disrupted more than 1.8 million households [5] while in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province it affected 545,739 households [6]. After flood many reconstruction and rehabilitation projects were initiated in severely hit ‘Charsadda’ district of KP.

District Charsadda is administratively divided into three Tehsil i.e. Charsadda, Shabqadar and Tangi. District Charsadda consists of areas which are highly prone to floods during monsoon season. High floods hit the district in July 2010 inundating many areas in the district and causing loss to life and property. Three main rivers i.e. Kabul River, Swat River, Jindai River flow in district Charsadda, which are the main Hazards to this district. Total area of Charsadda is 996km square. In Charsadda, out of 49 union councils (UCs) 34 UCs affected. The total population of district Charsaddais 1.431 million and affected population 545,739 [6].

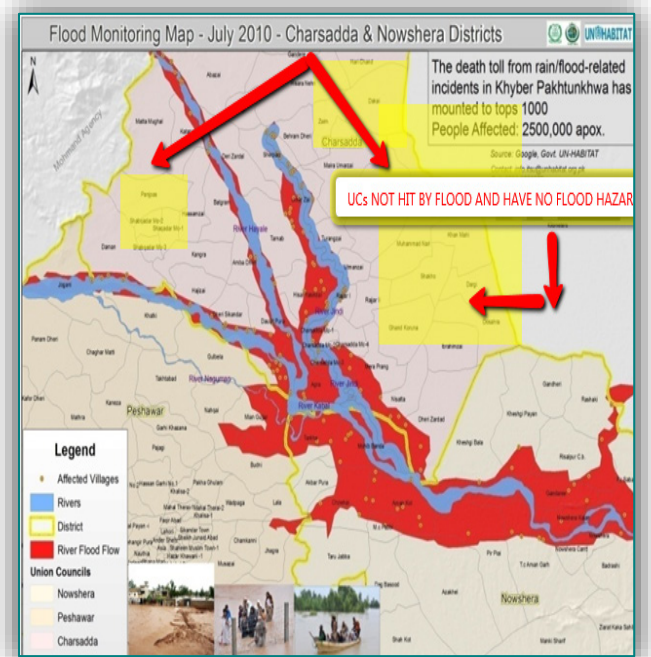


Figure 1. Flood monitoring map, 2010 - Charsadda and Nowshera Districts

Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) was proposed for the vulnerable people of Charsadda. The project aim was to increase the capacity and reduce vulnerability of the local vulnerable community.

The project was designed for the whole district i.e. 49 UCs. This project also included those union

councils (Muhammad Nari, Shaikho, Rjar II, Ghundakankana, Zaim, Harichand, Khan Mahi, Dhaki, MCI, MCII and MCIII of *Tehsil* Shabqadar) of the district which were far away from the river and were not hit by the flood 2010. When social mobilizers would visit these union councils and asked them to participate in disaster risk reduction activities for avoiding future threats of the floods, the community would show a pathetic behavior towards this project. They would usually reply that we do not need such projects and do not waste your resources in such places where it is not needed. These community people were of the view that they have not faced any flood disaster and do not have a threat of flood because their UCs are far away from the flood hazard. In view of this situation the DRR facilitators refused to conduct vulnerability capacity assessment within these UCs and just held few awareness sessions. Despite of this entire scenario, the stake pile items (related to flood hazard) were distributed in these UCs as a formality because it was in project design that every UC would receive the stake pile items.

#### ANALYSIS

The analysis drawn from this study is that if the above mentioned CBDRM project would be designed within the community in the presence and facilitation of project designer, then the chances of sustainability of the project would be higher.

This project did not attain sustainability because it was designed on the basis of secondary data, lacking the involvement of the community people. All community projects should be planned by doing practical need or vulnerability assessment by the community people.

Project designer should visit the area first and should extract the grass root problems. Research designer should provide facilitation in data collection by introducing simple tools e.g. focus group discussions, interview, mapping etc.

On the basis of this collected data, the community problems should be ranked and prioritized. The solution to these problems should come from the community. On the basis of this process, community projects should be designed. This bottom up approach will ensure sustainability of the project.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Most community projects in Pakistan miss the element of sustainability. Whenever the fund stops or NGO phase out from the project, the community interest in the project fades. They do not continue the project in the long run because mostly projects do not involve the local community's will and consent and that's the reason whenever the external support stops the community also loses interest in carrying the project in the long run.

Community projects need ownership and this ownership comes when the project arises from the community.

Though assessment done by the community is time consuming but it scratches out the sustainability indicators from the community which ensures sustainability of projects.

Engaging community people in the identification and treatment of their problems ensure empowerment and leads to sustainability.

Project designing within community diffuses knowledge from the researcher to the community and provides a valuable opportunity of education and awareness of the local people.

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