

FACTORS AFFECTING THE MOBILIZATION OF RURAL WOMEN THROUGH SARHAD RURAL SUPPORT PROGRAM (SRSP) IN DISTRICT PESHAWAR

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines the role of Sarhad Rural Support Program (SRSP) in gender development in rural villages of District Peshawar. To study the role of SRSP, data were collected from the women respondents of three villages of the study area. In all 60 respondents, representing 20% of the total household from the selected villages were contacted. Results show that the SRSP had introduced a number of interventions to mobilize women. Woman Community Organizations (WCOs) were established which were reported as the most primary source of motivation. Because of patriarchal nature of society; males, social workers, religious leaders and teachers were contacted to pave way for the formation of the WCOs. This enabled SRSP to form WCOs and contact the females. To accelerate social mobilization, the women community were sensitized through social organizers and interventions were designed and implemented that were based on societal needs. All these efforts mobilized the women to an extent where they started making decisions independently. In spite of concerted efforts of SRSP to mobilize women for socio-economic development, a lot of work is still needed to make WCOs an independent and functional institution.

INTRODUCTION

North West Frontier Province (NWFP) is one of the four provinces of Pakistan. It is a province of villages. About 83% of the population lives in villages (Government of Pakistan, 2002). It is believed that development of any country depends upon maximum exploitation of both physical and human resources/man power (Ahmad, 1993). Human resources have an edge over the physical resources in the contribution towards the development, as human resources are instrumental in utilizing physical resources (Ahmed, 1993).

The rural development is an integrated process. It involves several activities and processes simultaneously. Past experiences show that effective participation of local communities is of primary importance to successfully accomplish the development process. Participation of community is required at all levels; in mobilization of masses, identification of projects, fixation of priorities, implementation of projects, evaluation of projects and maintenance.

Women constitute more than half of the population. Any development strategy which does not consider the participation of women will be incomplete and unsustainable. This realization will provoke new interest in an alternative rural development strategy of women's participation. It has been reported that the basic fault

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interest in an alternative rural development strategy of women's participation. It has been reported that the basic fault in the conventional approach is that the rural poor were rarely consulted in development planning and usually had no active role in development activities.

Community participation on the other hand is one of the approaches that encourage the people to participate in communal affairs through mutual help rather than emphasizing on outsiders. Rural communities are backward, primitive, and hostile to change where as the participation of both male and female partners in development activities is an inherent part of participatory approach. All programmes focus on the relationship between men and women, their role, access to and control over resources, division of labor and needs through the community organization. The main objective of the social organization is increasing the managerial and organizational capacities of men and women, enhancing their self-confidence.

To address the needs of the people and also to compensate for past negligence, several governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have initiated projects for the betterment of the people through community participation. They use different approaches but the base of their effort is to implement their activities through the participation of the target population. These organizations provide first hand information about the problems facing the rural people, how they tackle them and their proposals for gaining more control and influence over developmental activities.

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Background of Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP)

SRSP has been in operation since 1989, as a replication of Agha Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP). It aims at reducing poverty through the formation and strengthening of self-help community organizations. In order to ensure sustainable development, all the programme components of SRSP encompass the social development aspect, with a view to bring a positive behavioral change in the rural communities. It has its Gender Focus Programme (GFP), which focuses on addressing gender inequities at all levels in a gender aware manner.

SRSP's Mission

Harnessing women and men's potential to help them by establishing a network of grass root institutions for poverty reduction through equaled, sustainable, and engendering development.

Objectives of SRSP

Development of institutional and technical models for poverty reduction, sustainable, equitable, and engendered development.

- i. Raise the income and quality life of people, especially the poorest of the poor men and women, living in its programme area.
- ii. Provide an effective and cost efficient service delivery mechanism for the government and the donor agencies in order to reach the rural poor.

SRSP's Mobilization Strategy

This strategy addresses the community needs. The first step is the formation of men and women community organizations in order to make the community members participative in development process. Organizing the people at grass root level, SRSP has formed mobile community organizers (MCOs)/WCOs which enable the communities in decision making process.

SRSP strives to provide and upgrade technical and managerial skills of both the staff and communities to improve their livelihood. The final step is the provision of micro credit and saving facilities, which serves as an economic bond between all the community members and provides a motivating force to achieve the common objectives.

Objectives of the study

- i. To identify the activities or interventions introduced by SRSP to mobilize the women in each of the selected villages.
- ii. To observe the effects of the intervention approaches.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The whole women community of the District Peshawar constituted the population for this study. The Study used a cross sectional survey research design. Three villages, i.e. Shahi Bala, Khan Pur and Khwaji Payan/Bala were selected as WCOs were more functional and were working for the development of women. Before actual households' data collection, a list of the household of the selected villages was obtained from SRSP's office and the respondents were selected through simple random sampling technique. Due to lack of time, human and financial resources, and male dominated society, a sample size of 60 was employed for this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Causes of Community Mobilization

One of the main objectives of SRSP was to mobilize rural women to the extent that they are able to develop and implement various activities at village level by themselves. Several factors are relevant in order to achieve this. These factors can be classified into two groups, namely internal and external factors. Internal factors include women organization, representation on major groups, and participation in development activities while external factors refer to the effect of social organization and intervention methods employed by SRSP.

Internal Factors of Community Mobilization

This section describes the role of WCO as mobilization tool, followed by the role of important personalities in the village and community participation.

WCO as a Mobilization Tool

Data regarding WCO as a mobilization tool is presented in Table II.

From Table II, it was observed that 80% of the women as a whole were mobilized as a result of the organization of women in the area. The remaining 20% representing 8% of the study size were of the view that organizing women in the community did not play any role and that as a whole it was because of the lack of awareness. Interestingly, 7% thought WCO was against local traditions and customs of the people while 5% represented those who thought women have no desire in developing themselves. The results as a whole reveal a very high role of the mobilization of women due to WCOs. They also stated that this mobilization would provide them an opportunity to organize themselves and would do something for the country.

Data regarding the role of important personalities in the mobilization process is presented in Table III.

As depicted in Table III, 37% of the women pointed out that cooperation or approval from males was a key factor for success of their programs. This was true for all age groups. Other important factors included the role played by targeted females (28%), social workers (15%), teachers (10%) and religious leaders (10%). This result does indicate that in Pakistani society, most the women are still at the mercy of males.

Results for the role of participatory approach in community mobilization are presented in Table IV.

Table IV indicates that 56% of the sampled respondents agreed that community participation as a whole played an important role in community mobilization. The percentage of respondents who shared the same view was different for the various age groups: 43, 77, and 50% for the age group between 15-25, 26-40 and 41 and above respectively. Further, 22% each believed that success of the program was due to the participation of major groups and particularly the females. Osunde and Omoruyi (1999) referred to cultural problems, lack of time, organizational problems, family commitments and lack of interest as the factors militating against rural women in actively participating in development oriented programmes. Ahmad and Minhas (1994) and Khan (1999) reported that poor participation in the economic activities are due to less mobilization and socio-cultural barriers. While ET-Lucas (2000) noted that participation is one of the most important and essential principles in a development programme.

External Factors of Mobilization

Table V presents the effects of external factors on mobilization in the community.

From Table V, 38% of the respondents said that the most valuable external factor of mobilization was sensitization about NGOs. The same view was shared by 43, 36 and 39% for the age groups between 15-25, 26-40 and 41 and above respectively. The second important factor observed was efforts of social organizers (34%) followed by contact with women (28%).

Intervention of NGO

Data on the aspect of intervention of NGO is given in Table VI.

Table VI shows that 61% respondents as a whole stated that interventions were moderately important in mobilizing them. The same was 63, 59, and 50%

of the women respondents for the age groups between 15-25, 26-40 and 41 and above respectively. Furthermore, 17% of the women as a whole said that interventions achieved a high level of mobilization. Another 10% considered that it has achieved the level of mobilization to some extent. Only 7% thought the NGO intervention was very high whereas the rest, 5% ranked it very low. Ahmad (1993) also reported that NGOs played an important part in facilitating community participation in environmental management at local level.

CONCLUSIONS

It could be concluded from the above study that the involvement of women in the development process was mainly solved through internal and external factors. The contacts with the males, social workers, teachers and religious leaders paved way first for forming WCOs and later the support of these people motivated the women not only to organize themselves but also enabled them to be engaged in community development activities.

In external factors, sensitization by NGO (SRSP) played a major role followed by the efforts of social organizer and contact with women. The villages as a whole were sensitized to the importance of WCOs. SRSP also intervened like schools for girls, streets pavement, roads repair, bridge pavement, vocational centers like sewing and knitting among others. However, majority of the women called intervention contribution a moderate one.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the success of SRSP in many areas of NWFP, it still needs to work hard to develop the people, especially the most important and deserving segment of society; the rural women. A lot of areas need special attention for which the following recommendations are extended.

- i. It was observed that contribution and participation of rural women in community organization was not up to the desired level of participation. For this the number of women community organizations should be increased.
- ii. In most cases, WCOs still have no proper and separate places for meetings. Meeting places for each women organization should be provided so that they will be able to work properly and also show their performance.
- iii. To achieve the required goal of women mobilization, the number of girls' schools up to matric and college should be opened. At primary level education, the subject of women mobilization and development should be taught in educational institutions.

- iv. No sustainable development is possible without the follow up. In order to expedite their performance, more follow up and productive meetings should be arranged between SRSP staff and the community to encourage rural women to become a productive part of the society

Table I. Number of respondents and sample households

Villages	Total No. of Households	20% sample Households
Shahi Bala	179	36
Khan Pur	48	10
Khwaji Payan/Bala	71	14
Total	298	60

Source: SRSP, Head office, Peshawar.

All the women of each household were interviewed with the help of a well planned, pre-tested and validated interview schedule.

Table II. WCO as a Community Mobilization Tool in Sampled Area

Role of WCO	15-25 yrs		26-40yrs		41 and above		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Motivated women	23	82	18	81	7	70	48	80
If no why								
I. Lack of awareness	2	7	2	9	1	10	5	8
ii. No desire to develop	1	4	1	5	1	10	3	5
iii. Against customs	2	7	1	5	1	10	4	7
All	28	100	22	100	10	100	60	100

Source: Field data.

Table III. Role of important village personalities in mobilization process

Internal factors	15-25 yrs		26-40 yrs		41 and above		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Male's approval	11	39	8	36	3	30	22	37
Social workers	4	14	3	14	2	20	9	15
Teachers	3	11	2	9	1	10	6	10
Religious leaders	1	4	3	14	2	20	6	10
Targeted females	9	23	6	27	2	20	17	28
All	28	100		100		100	60	100

Table IV. Role of participatory approach in community mobilization

Participation factors	15-25 yrs		26-40 yrs		41 and above		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Community as a whole	12	43	17	77	5	50	34	56
Major group	6	21	4	18	3	30	13	22
Particularly females	10	36	1	5	2	20	13	22
All	28	100	22	100	10	100	60	100

Source: Field Data.

Table V. Role of external factors of mobilization in sampled area

External factors	15-25 yrs		26-40 yrs		41 and above		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Efforts of social organizers	7	25	9	41	4	40	20	34
Contact with women	9	32	5	23	3	30	17	28
Sensitization about NGO	12	43	8	36	3s	30	23	38
All	28	100	22	100	10	100	60	100

Table VI. Role of NGO intervention in community mobilization

Intervention of NGO	15-25 yrs		26-40 yrs		41 and above		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Very high	2	7	1	5	1	10	4	7
High	4	14	4	18	2	20	10	17
Moderate	19	68	13	59	5	50	37	61
To some extent	2	7	2	9	2	20	6	10
Very low	1	4	2	9	-	-	3	5
All	28	100	22	100	10	100	60	100

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