

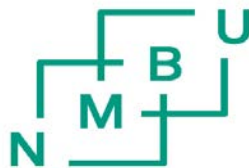
Development in Crisis: Livelihoods and Social Complexities in Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

Philosophiae Doctor PhD Thesis

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Abstract

Global socio-economic development strategies, fast communication systems, and natural and manmade disasters have put constructed social and cultural notions of developing societies into continuous processes of change. This study explores societal change in the Swat valley of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa KPK, Pakistan in light of two interlinked processes: how livelihood development projects and their implementation strategies since 2001 have influenced gender relations, and how the conflict as well as flood crises (2008–2010) have affected the social and cultural system of the pukhtoonwali (a code of ethics). The study addresses the following four objectives in individual but interrelated papers, where gender and development, gender relations in livelihood and development, and social cultural transformation in the context of crisis are central:

1) To analyse how men and women of different ethnic and social groups access livelihood resources, and how the gender relations in pursuing livelihood strategies changed during the last decade in Swat valley. 2) to study how the development project interventions, humanitarian aid, and their implementation processes (approaches) contributed to gender empowerment and livelihood development of marginalized classes. 3) to explore how the consequences of militant conflicts, military operations and internal displacement have influenced the social and cultural network of pukhtoonwali in the Swat valley, and 4) to examine the social, cultural and political constraints in the implementation of development projects, and the influence of crises on participatory development.

Primary data was collected using mixed qualitative research methods of semi-structured interviews, participant observation, informal interviews, and household survey and focus group discussions with selected village dwellers. Key informant interviews with traditional leaders, government and Non-Governmental Organization officials, and academic researchers selected from different parts of Swat were also conducted. In addition, secondary sources such as project appraisal and completion reports, historical literature and NGO progress reports have been consulted.

The historical literature reveals that the merger of the Swat state in 1969 with Pakistan as part of the KPK province brought a major shift in administrative and political systems and to the customary rules,

regulations and institutional setup in subsequent decades, such that formal law functioned under a mix of Pukhtoonwali and Islamic laws. Since 2001, the government of Pakistan, donor-funded development projects and participatory development strategies, when combined with militant conflict, Pakistan military operations and internal displacement, radically changed the roles of the major tenets of Pukhtoonwali. The tenets including the council of elders (Jirga), common hospitality, place of male guests (Hujra), gender boundaries (namoos), and truce (teega), can be claimed to be non-functional. In fact, the current militant movement and Pakistan military operations in northwest Pakistan tried to delink the Pukhtoon from their history and indigenous narrative. Nevertheless, these consequences provided opportunities and sensitized the local people to reorganize themselves and develop new social networks and revisit the cultural system in more democratic and modern ways. This is the philosophy of Khudai Khidmatgar Tehreek (Servant of God movement) – a non-violent movement which began in 1928 and presented Pukhtoonwali as a discourse of human dignity, pluralist democracy, indigenous wisdom and cultural identity. The codes of pukhtoonwali are still very prominent in verbal discussion, poetry, songs and proverbs. Therefore, more research needs to be conducted on the narratives of pukhtoonwali to make it more compatible with the needs of contemporary development perspectives.

The gender role and relations interpreted under the patriarchal structure of the pukhtoonwali embody the theoretical perspective of social and cultural constructionism. Women's roles are confined to household domestic activities while men hold the political and social power outside the home. Men are therefore represented as front-runners for satisfying the livelihood needs of their family members. The analysis reveals the inequality between gender and different ethnic and social groups in accessing livelihood resources whether social, human or natural. However, inequalities varies among gender of different groups. Socio-economic development, political reforms and development projects created and provided opportunities for skills attainment and jobs for men and women in the pre-crisis period, which to some extent changed socially constructed roles and empowered women to make decisions in terms of their children's education, marriages, use of cash income and property rights. We observed the flexibility in cultural values for women's mobility and their access to education, health services, jobs and property rights against what has been written in previous research by a number of anthropologists, sociologists, historians and political thinkers as well as by media. The inequalities in gender relations at household level need to be addressed in development programmes, which have the potential to generate outcomes that are more positive. This may increase women's access to education

and skills training and to the creation of more opportunities, which is essential for women's capacity to question, reflect and act on the conditions of their lives.

Participatory development practices applied before the crisis in development interventions have resulted in some positive impacts in improvement of socio-economic condition for the projects' beneficiaries. This is in spite of number of political, social and administrative constraints in implementation of development projects. However, the crises of militant conflict, prolonged relief and rehabilitation interventions and change in the needs and priorities of the people and organizations have significantly influenced the ability to practise participatory development. The national and local NGOs, together with civil society organizations, dropped the application of participatory development practices in relief, rehabilitation and even reconstruction activities. Nonetheless, this study suggests that it may be possible to apply participatory approaches to development in the rehabilitation and reconstruction phases, in order to achieve better results for humanitarian aid in terms of equal distribution of resources among crisis-affected populations, promoting gender equality and strengthening local institutions. There is need for more detailed studies on how humanitarian aid in crisis-affected societies can be utilized to improve livelihood conditions of the marginalized populations on a sustainable basis, which will indirectly decrease the inclination among poor people towards militancy. Improved research assessments are needed in order to identify cultural, religious and political challenges in relation to militant conflict and development, which in turn can lead to alternative options, which are both feasible and appropriate.