

Evaluation of national solidarity program



EUALUATION OF NATIONAL SOLIDARITY PROGRAM: PEOPLE PARTICIPATION, CHALLENGES AND SUSTAINBALITY

The case of Sayed Abad District of Wardak Province

- Tariq Salari

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ABBREVIATIONS

AF Afghani (Currency of Afghanistan)

ANDS Afghanistan National Development Strategy

AREU Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit

AusAID Australian Agency for International Development

CDCs Community Development Councils

CDP Community Development Plan

CRDP Comprehensive Rural Development Program

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CSO Central Statistics Organization

DAC Development Assistance Committee

DFID Department for International Development

EPA Environmental Protection Agency

EU European Union

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization

FP Facilitating Partner

IFAD International Fund for Agriculture

GDP Gross Domestic Product

HIV Human Immunodeficiency Virus

ILO International Labour Organization

IWG-PA Informal Working Group on Participatory Approaches & Methods

KW Kilowatt

N Number

NEPA National Environmental Policy Act

NGO Non Governmental Organization

NSP National Solidarity Program

OECD Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

PDPs Provincial Development plans

PIDRA Participatory Integrated Development in Rain-fed Area

SAHEE Sustainability for Agriculture, Health, Education and Environment

SCA Swedish Committee for Afghanistan

UN United Nation

UNDP United Nation Development Program

UN ESCAP United Nation Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific

UNESCO United Nation Economic and Social Council

UNRISD United Nation Research Institute for Social Development

USAID United States Agency for International Development

USFAA United States Foreign Assistance Act

WB World Bank

WCARRD World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development

WECD World Commission on Environment and Development

WMP Watershed Management Program

1. INTRODUCTION

1. 1. Context of the study

In the 1950s and 1960s many top-down development programs failed because of the wrong policies of the governments, donors and non-governmental organizations, which people were not involved in the design and implementation of the projects. World Bank (1994) proclaimed that top-down fashion entailed long bureaucratic process; they prefer participatory approaches because it is “ learning by doing” which means people learn throughout the process. Top-down forms provide limited opportunities for participatory learning and decision-making as well. It obstructs local culture and habits (FAO, 1997). Shah (2012) stated that it is assumed that if local people were involved in the project cycle, it would be more successful. In most countries top-down policies caused the isolation of the people, increase in poverty, social and economic inequalities and deprivation.

Many governments, non-governmental organizations and development agencies have acknowledged that traditional top-down approaches in many developing and developed countries failed to reach the benefits of rural people (FAO, 1991). Moreover, Binns et al. (1997) asserts that top-down strategies have failed to raise living standards of rural people; these approaches ignore rural people’s perception, needs and understanding. It is clear that without people’s participation it would be difficult for the planners to understand the socioeconomic and cultural situation, needs, problems and priorities of the rural communities.

In the last few years the term of participation has become popular, especially in relation to sustainability of rural development projects (Bagherian et al, <https://assignbuster.com/eualuation-of-national-solidarity-program/>

2009). In the 1970s people's participation recognized as a missing component of development projects which caused intensifying poverty (Karl, 2000). Participatory approach got momentum after the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) organized in 1997. WCARRD emphasized on the organization and active participation of rural people in the development programs (UN ESCAP, 2009). Local participation is considered as a vitally important factor for rural development projects, since rural people are the only one who knows their own problems better than anyone else. Hence, participation improves ownership, helps with rural people's knowledge and boosts sustainability of rural development projects. In 1990, after more than four decades of providing foreign aids to developing countries, the assisting and major donor agencies came up with the issue of benefits and activities in long term after stopping aids fund. They tried to establish local governance to manage resources and ensure long term sustainability (Bossert, 1990; Mohammad, 2010). A project can be sustained when the beneficiaries are involved in the project cycle; they will train throughout the project and would be enabled to work for their community in the future.

Agriculture and livestock sector plays a vital role in the rural economy of Afghanistan. According to the World Bank (2012) rural population measured 76. 14% where agriculture is the primary activity. Despite of the many challenges rural economy contributes to more than half of the country's GDP. The three decades of war, turmoil, instability, revolution and social disruption enormously affected rural people in terms of social development and economic growth. Social institutions and economic infrastructures have

been destroyed, sources of livelihoods, housing, schools and hospitals were demolished (Rahimi, 2013).

After a long time, the government of Afghanistan and International Community in 2002 began some initiatives to reconstruct and stabilize the country through local communities. Zakhilwal and Thomas (2005) suggest that for longer peace and stability, rural participatory policies are needed to include those people who were often excluded from the decision-making before, especially women who have historically been victims of imbalanced development. The Transitional Government of Afghanistan in 2002 has started national programs. One of these programs was National Solidarity Program (NSP) to create, build up and maintain Community Development Councils (CDCs) as effective foundations for local governance and socioeconomic development (NSP-Web, 2014).

NSP as a bottom-up program was created in 2003 to develop the ability of Afghan communities to identify, plan, manage and monitor their own development projects (NSP-Web, 2013). Development projects have a crucial role in the local development, since they improve the living standards of local people, empower local people and educate rural communities. Hence, it is important to be sustained which depends on the project selection, project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Without active participation of local people, it is impossible to achieve this goal (sustainability), which NSP projects couldn't meet this criterion many projects have failed to produce expected outcomes.

This study examines people participation in NSP projects and it explores major obstacles of people participation and likely sustainability of two projects in Sayed Abad district of Wardak province.

1. 2. Rationale of the study

Since 2001 government have put the issue of local participation in the centre of their policies and much more attention has been paid to rural areas and community participation, to bring people together in order to utilize the local resources, as well as to improve the livelihood of the rural people. In the first couple of years government tried to build capacity at local level in the public sector and civil society but these efforts had light impact. Subsequently, Afghan government jointly with the International Community initiated national programs to cope with poverty, engage directly people in the reconstruction process of the country, empower local people and make them responsible for their own development (Rahimi, 2013). Mostly the process of these programs has been bottom up, which has mainly focused on minorities and underprivileged strata of the community. But it is supposed that in some regions these initiatives have not succeeded to perceive the objectives of community participation and empowerment in the local projects and many times it criticized that minorities, especially women have not been involved in these efforts, and still people are suffering from the elite and power-holders interference in the rural development projects. This study attempts to answer the empirical questions which often asked that whether in the NSP program people meaningfully participated and whether people's participation incorporated with sustainability of the projects. With this

background and empirical questions, the entire study was designed to meet the following objectives:

- To identify the level of involvement of local people in the National Solidarity Program (NSP) projects in the study area.
- To explore the barriers and factors that affect community participation in National Solidarity Program (NSP) projects in Sayed Abad district.
- To examine the sustainability of the NSP projects in the study area.
- To make recommendations based on the findings of this study.

1. 3. Hypothesis

1. In Sayed Abad district of Wardak province, elite power holders, socio-cultural situation and personal relationship caused isolation of minorities, especially in case of participation of women in the National Solidarity Program.
2. Threatened security conditions, lack of substantial information and conflicts among tribes are the biggest challenges for community participation in the National Solidarity Program in Sayed Abad district.
3. Meaningfully Participation of people in National Solidarity program likely lead to sustainability of projects in Sayed Abad district.

1. 4. Limitation of the Study

The limitations are mainly related to the availability of information and time, difficulties of collecting primary data in rural area of Afghanistan. It is not an easy task because of the threatened security conditions and a high illiteracy rate of the citizens.

Some of the limitations are listed below:

- Lack of time and financial limitation.
- Security problems in Wardak province.
- Unwillingness of the respondents to give information due to security problems.
- Bureaucratic policy in the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development.
- Lack of secondary data due to absence of database in the provincial office of NSP.
- Absence of the officials and members of Community Development Councils (CDCs).

1. 5. Organization of the thesis

The entire thesis has been organized in five chapters. The first chapter highlights the context of the study, objectives, hypothesis and limitation of the study. Chapter two includes an extended literature review about the history of participation, definition of participation and sustainability, typology of participation, factors influencing participation and sustainability, relationship between participation and sustainability of the projects, social exclusion and inclusion and a short description of NSP. Principle concepts, information about study area, methods and tools used in the analysis are elaborated in the chapter three. Chapter four explores the results and findings in a logical scientific manner to accomplish the objectives and test the hypothesis of the study. Chapter five presents conclusions based on research outcomes and also some recommendations for enhancing the people's participation in rural development projects and sustainability. In the

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next chapter the study is summarized and finally the sources of research materials, books and research papers related to the present investigation are listed.