

**SOCIO-POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL
CHALLENGES TO NGOS IN PROVISION OF WATER
SANITATION SERVICES IN DISTRICT MANSEHRA, KPK
PAKISTAN**

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Abstract

This research aims to explore those challenges which restrict the performance of NGOs in provision of services to the community. This study is carried out in two different villages Hangrai and Talhatta of Tehsil Balakot, District Mansehra. The data was gathered through administering of questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussion. ERRA is authoritative body that provides guidelines for NGOs to work in an area. The NGOs working in the area claims that due to lack of involvement and participation especially of females is a primary challenge in achieving desired outputs. NGOs in the area have no such mechanism of identification of hazard prone sites and they mostly rely on primary data. This is surely question mark on the sustainability of the services.

Keywords: Socio-political, challenges, water sanitation, NGOs,

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1. Introduction

The new policy agenda in the last twenty years has increased the popularity of the NGOs in the field of development (Robinson, 1993; Moore, 1993; Clayton *et al.*, 2000). NGOs mostly operate independently, and their work is of voluntary nature. These organizations have their own supporters and constituency and have shared interest with them, therefore these organizations have public benefit purpose (Fisher, 1997). Rural development can be analyzed and witnessed through interventions in rural water and sanitation sectors, as these sectors are the key for rural development (Peet & Hartwick 2009). The provision of safe drinking water, sanitation and solid waste management are the key factors that influence the health and the economic status of the community (Thompson *et al.*, 2001). The lack of water infrastructure can also cause problems for poor people. They have to travel a long distance to bring water and incurring additional costs for the storage and boiling of water (Khan & Javed 2007). The ultimate target of these organizations is to lift the poor in developing countries out of poverty (Jorgensen, 1996). There is also some evidence that internally the bureaucratic influence is prevailing in the NGOs like in the government organization. The hierarchical system is sometime inflexible that influence the performance of these organizations in the fields (Fyvie & Ager, 1999). NGOs have competition among each other for donor funds; therefore fail to learn from one another. The promotion of innovation suffers because of this competition and it affects the performance of NGOs (Riddell & Robinson, 1995). Most of the donors are foreign and NGOs are increasingly dependent on these donors, therefore less accountable to the local government and the community. This fact has negative influence as if NGOs are not accountable to the local government and communities, their programmes may not be that much legitimate in the eyes of recipient communities (Hulme & Edwards, 1997). Because of the needs and requirements of the donors, NGOs sometimes compromise the effectiveness and sustainability of the interventions. Similarly, to comply with donors concerns sometimes long-term impacts are compromised at the expense of easily reachable short term targets (Desai & Howes, 1995). Pakistan is one of the populous underdeveloped countries of the world with per capita income less than \$400 (WHO, 2003). About 25, 0000 child deaths occur annually due to unsafe water (UN, 1997). The limited capacity of public sector in Pakistan increasingly expects NGOs to play its role predominantly

for children and women (Government of Pakistan, 1997). Some of the NGOs combine services with community development where as some of the NGOs work in isolation (Kamal, 1997). Sometime NGOs work in an area and they have no coordination with each other and they even work on the same target in the similar area (Government of Pakistan, 1990). The current scenario raise certain questions in the effectiveness of NGOs and this study aims to explore those socio-political and institutional challenges that restrict the efficiency and performance of NGOs in provision of water and sanitation services. Further, this study will suggest those possible measures that maximize the collaboration between private and public sector in provision of water and sanitation services.

2. Material and Methods

2.1 Framework of the study in Ontological and epistemological perspective

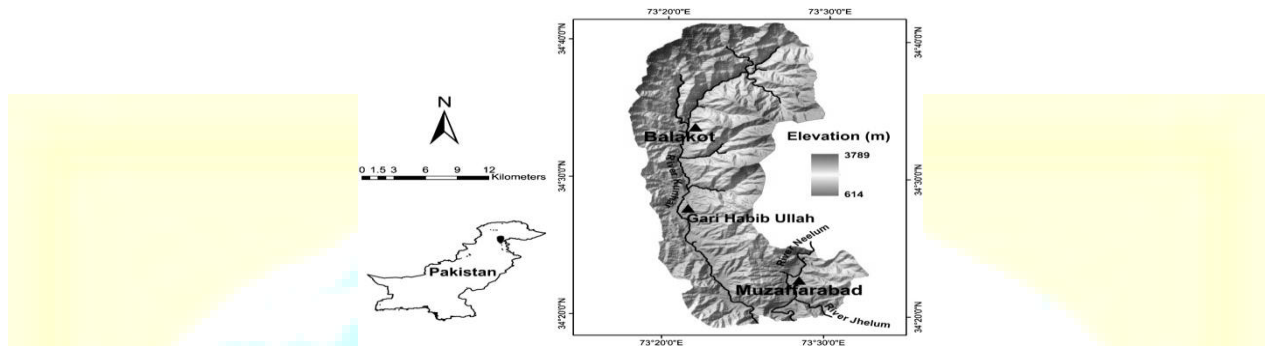
The word "ontology" seems to produce a lot of argument. It has a long history in philosophy, in which it refers to the theme of way of life. It is also often mystified with epistemology, which is understanding and knowing (Gruber, 1993).

2.2 Research approach and design

The approach used in this research is interpretive approach that is identical to constructivist approach. It provides a deep inside into the multifaceted world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (Schwandt, 1994). Interpretive research assumes that reality is socially constructed and the researcher becomes the vehicle by which this reality is revealed. The research paradigm under which this study is conducted is constructivist paradigm. A cross-sectional study design was applied to collect the data from the field. This design is best suited to ascertain any problem, an ongoing process, situation, problems, attitude or issue, by taking a cross section of the population. These studies are useful in representing an overall picture of the situation prevailing at that nick of time at which contact is being made with the study community (Babbie 1989: 89).

2.3 The study area

Two Villages of Tehsil Balakot District Mansehra were selected for the study. These Union Councils were *Hangrai* and *Talhatta* respectively. The study area was selected on the basis of frequency of work done by NGOs in water and sanitation sector. Both of these Union Councils were targeted areas of NGOs in provision of water and sanitation services.



2.4 Sample unit/ Target groups

The members of NGOs working in the study area and the households of the villages were selected as unit of analysis. The experts working in provision of water and sanitation services have always a practical experience of hurdles and barriers in the field as well as within organization. Seven different organizations were selected as a target group. These organizations are SDO, RDP, UNICEF, HRDS, SRSP, SANGAI and Al-Khidmat Foundation. These NGOs had their water and sanitation related project in the study area. The members of the organizations such as project managers, field officers, social mobilizers and coordinators were interviewed to get the insight of political, social and institutional challenges that those organizations encountered during their stay and operation in study area. In every organization two of its officials were selected as sampled respondents. In total of seven organizations there were 14 respondents. The other target group to accomplish this study was community members. The total population of the village Talhatta was around 2300 having 287 households. Among these households 110 were found to be beneficent from the interventions made in water and sanitation sector. Where in village Hangrai the total population was around 2700 people having 385 households. Among these households 100 were found to be beneficent households. In this way, in both the villages there were 215 beneficent households and total of 80 households were selected as a sample size to accomplish this study. This makes 38% of the total beneficent households.

2.5 Data collection tools

Data collection includes interview, Questionnaire, focus group discussions and key informants interviews.

2.6 Primary data collection

Primary data was collected from the NGOs, donors, Governments departments and community directly in the field.

2.7 Focus Group discussion (FGD)

One focus group discussion was conducted with the members of the community in village Talhatta and the other was in Village Hangrai. This focused to explore the prevailing water and sanitation situation in the area and the level of satisfaction among the community towards these services provided by NGOs. The participants of the focus group discussion in both villages were mostly educated people working in both private and public sector.

2.8 Questionnaire

The questionnaires were carried out in order to know the socio-political and institutional challenges to NGOs. Most of the questions were structured, open ended so that respondent can express his/ her view point with freedom. The questionnaire for the community was mostly close ended and designed in way to extract the information regarding availability and adoption of the services.

2.9 Interview schedule & key informants

The interviews was conducted with local politician, religious leaders, and teachers, Health workers, members of NGOs, key position holders in NGOs, donors and officers of governmental departments. The focus remained on the present water and sanitation situation of the area and the barriers in provision of these services. The qualitative study demands for a clear and concise research question (Mantzoukas, 2008).

2.10 Personal observation

To accomplish any research personal observation of the researcher contributes significantly to understand the ongoing phenomena. In this regard personal observation to understand relation between different aspects of intervention was very helpful to accomplish this study.

2.11 Secondary data

Secondary data was collected from different published reports. Member of NGOs and community members and local government are also part of secondary data collection source in this study.

3. Result and discussion

3.1 Selection criteria

NGOs have different selection criteria to intervene in an area. The site selection mostly depends on the nature of intervention. The areas are mostly selected by the implementers with the approval of donors. In case of water and sanitation NGOs mostly follows the rule of equity. Most deprived community and most vulnerable usually children and women remains the main focus of NGOs. The site is usually selected on the bases of primary data collected from the field. Any natural or human induced disaster can also motivate the NGOs to intervene in that specific area.

3.2 Selection of beneficiaries

NGOs follow a certain pattern to select the beneficiaries. The most important factor to select the beneficial is the vulnerability. The most vulnerable from any hazard is the prior target of the NGOs. The vulnerability analysis is usually done before any intervention. The other important factor is poverty level and access to the resources. Most poor and backward communities are in the priority list of the NGOs. It was also revealed that some political pressures also exist in the selection of beneficiaries.

3.3 Major Focus of NGOs

NGOs have different kind and nature of interventions. Some focus areas of interventions of NGOs include education, health, water and environmental sanitation, child protection, physical infrastructure, social mobilization, capacity building, emergency response and early recovery.

3.4 NGOs limitations

NGOs are not free to intervene in any sector and at any place in country. They can only work after the coordination and NOC from government. There are certain areas where government does not allow NGOs to work, because certain areas are very sensitive and can be a security risk for NGOs. The widening gap between government and NGO resources makes state inefficiency a “self-perpetuating reality” (Farrington & Lewis, 1993).

3.5 Current Water and sanitation situation in the area

After the earthquake the situation was quite worse. The areas under consideration were badly damaged in the earthquake. Not only thousands of people died but it also destroyed houses and infrastructure. Due to geographical changes in the earthquake many drinking water sources were dried. So after earthquake situation of water and sanitation was different.

According to local government respondents as in figure 3.1, in Talhatta, NGOs intervention in the water sector consists of 45% hand pumps, 30% water supply systems, 15% overhead tanks and 10% water channels. In Hangrai NGOs intervention in the water sector consists of 55% hand pumps, 15% water supply system, 25% overhead tank and 5% water channels.

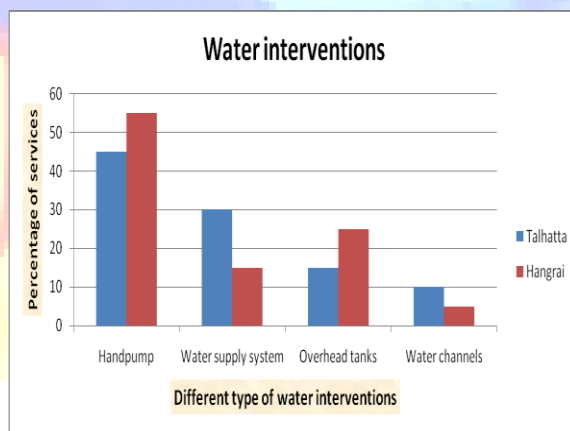


Figure1: Different types of water interventions in the study area

3.6 Sanitation facilities

After earthquake NGOs in the area build up ventilated improved pit latrines on emergency basis. After the construction of shelters and houses they provide flush toilets. As most people of the

areas practice open defecation so to change this NGOs also start hygiene promotion program in the area. They involved school teachers and children in this program to get maximum output. There was one lecture in week on hygiene promotion in schools. NGOs also help in construction pavement of streets and sewerage system.

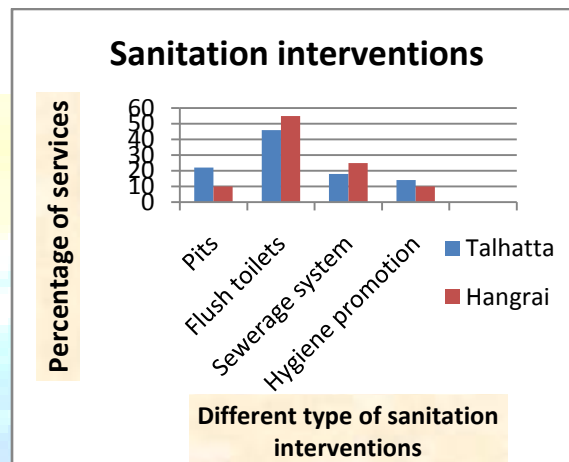


Figure 2: Sanitation facilities provided by the NGOs

3.7 Cultural norms/values

People have concerns over the presence of NGOs in the area because they think NGOs are tempering and deforming their norms and values. They mostly hired females in the organization and these females worked in field without proper dress code.

3.8 Role of gender

People did not allow females in the NGOs survey because after earthquake they think this earthquake is because of their own actions. They think NGOs behind services provision want to fulfill their own hidden agenda. So they will avoid and resist any activity which is against the religion and social norms and values. NGOs attempt to introduce modernization and developmental programs to improve women's lives, the policies, procedures and practices of these institutions often reflect and perpetuate unequal hierarchies in their operational and organizational structure (Dema, 2008).

3.9 Communities Level of satisfaction

In Talhatta about 36% people think NGOs facilities are not interrupting and influencing their culture and norms. But 47% people think there should be more perfection in the design and construction of these sanitation structures. About 17% respondents have no opinion about the matter. In Hangrai 62% people were not satisfied with the facilities and 26% have opinion that there is no problem in these services while 12% respondents have no opinion about the matter in hand.

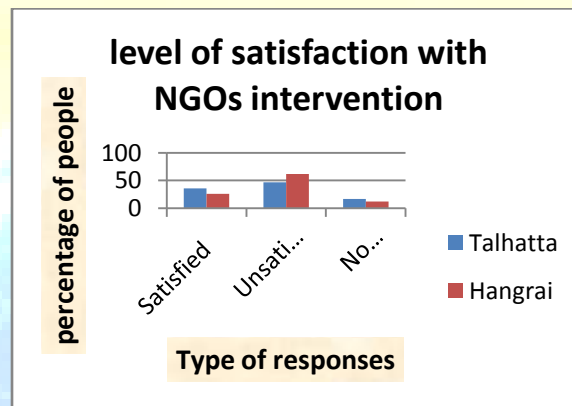


Figure 3: Level of satisfaction from the community

3.10 Social challenges to NGOs

Whenever there is provision of services in the community, aim is to help and facilitate the people. In the community NGOs have direct contact with the local people. In the study area NGOs faced different social issues which are:

- In local survey for need assessment, it was not possible for the NGOs to involve females of the community because socially and culturally it was not acceptable for the people.
- In the study area open defecation was also common. When NGOs provided latrines, it was quite difficult to convince the people to use latrines because they have a mindset only for open defecation.
- People have no sense of service development and sacrifice. They try to get whatever is provided to them.
- There was resistance from the religious people as they think that NGOs only have negative role in the society.
- Due to resistance from the religious people, the most serious hurdle prevailing is the law and order situation.

- Acceptance of NGOs from the people is also a problem. That is why when NGOs left an area after service provision, people do not care. The primary reason for low level of ownership among the community is lack of their participation and clarity about their financial and technical role in successful running of the scheme (UNICEF, 2009).
- Influential person like sardars, maliks etc influence the NGOs.
- When NGOs follow rule of equity to select beneficiaries, other people do not cooperate with NGOs.
- NGOs also face problem in the community to find out people with volunteer attitude.
- Sometime NGOs found no expert in the area and training of local people is again hurdle.
- If water supply scheme is implemented in one area and source of water is in another area, people claims stay orders from the court and demands for extra payment from the NGOs.

3.11 Political challenges

It is not possible for any organization to work freely in the community without involvement and cooperation of the local political leadership. During this NGOs face different political challenges which are:

- One of the main problems that NGOs face is that political persons want that NGOs may operate according to their own desires. In this way they want to pretend in the community that this work is done by them not by NGOs.
- Political persons also want that they must be extra facilitated. For example if NGOs provide one hand pump for 10 households, political person wants that a special hand pump should be provided only for his home.
- Corruption from the political persons is also serious problem. Political persons are even not sincere with their own people. For example when NGOs provided hand pumps and then they give kits to political person for the distribution among the persons having hand pumps. Kits were given to maintain the efficiency of hand pumps. When NGO members visited in the area, most of the hand pumps were not in working condition. They surprised to know that only 35% kits were provided to those people having hand pumps and 20% kits were provided to those which are not related with the water supply scheme and 45% kits were not distributed by the political persons and they have no record.

- NGOs also face problems from the political persons while implementing water supply schemes. If source was present in an area of political person but water has to distribute in area which is not under his control, he was not willing to coordinate. Problems that confront the Water supply schemes are linked to sustainability, quality, operation and maintenance of services. These issues are mainly due to lack of resources and also lack of evaluation and monitoring of provided services (UNICEF, 2009).

3.12 Institutional challenges

After earthquake when NGOs were in the area to provide services, many NGOs were new in the area. They have no idea about the local community because of lack of proper data. For this purposes NGOs tried to get help from the local institutions like PHED and TMA. The role PHED is primary in the water services delivery. Design, plans and implementation of WS and sanitation schemes is predominantly the role of PHED (IUCN, 2009).

NGOs faced different challenges which are:

- Officials in public institutions are not properly trained
- There is no proper management and setup in public institutions
- Officials in institutions reluctant to work and coordinate with NGOs. They do this only to hide their performance and capacity of work. NGOs officials' shows some serious concerns in working together with public departments and their officials. They argued that in any public office the workers and officials are untrained and they never take the matter seriously as they got regular pays from government. It is argued that the major obstacle to development is not the absence of technology or lack of savings but the unresponsiveness of administrative systems and weak institutions (North, 1993).
- At lower level staff is not so much educated and they even do not know what their exact role is.
- Due to their weak capacity of work they have no planning to meet the needs of the future population.
- Religious people think that NGOs are here with some hidden agenda of Jews and enemies of Islam. NGOs will disturb their social and cultural norms and values, so they resist NGOs in the area.
- They have weak learning process

- To work in coordination with governmental departments, NGOs always faces different challenges regarding approval of the project. As in government departments there is lengthy hierarchical management system that does not strengthen innovation. The documents need to be signed from different offices before final approval. This takes a long period of time which NGOs cannot afford especially in emergency circumstances.
- There are many vacant seats within institutions and also continuous internal changes that affect program vision.

3.13 From local government

NGOs also face hurdles from local government while doing any intervention. Due to weak capacity of the government officials they take much time to issue NOC for NGOs to work in an area. They also have very lengthy documentation process and sometime not possible for NGOs to work immediately in an emergency situation. Government officials also want some incentives form NGOs during this process and if not so it may take months to get NOC from local government. They are also not up to date and no proper setup for operation and maintenance.

3.14 Compatibility of NGOs with guidelines provided by ERRA/PERRA.

To evaluate the compatibility of NGOs with the guidelines of ERRA in water and sanitation sector, a separate structural interview was designed. The officials of the NGOs were respondents. Interesting findings were noticed after completion of interviews. When the respondents were asked about the guidelines of ERRA, majority of them that is about 75% were unable to give a satisfactory answer. They were either not aware of the guidelines or simply stated that every intervention in water and sanitation sector is according to guidelines of the ERRA, failed to justify the statement.

3.15 Identification of hazard prone site

The interesting debate started when they were asked about having such system which identifies the hazard zone before constructing water and sanitation infrastructure. According to ERRA guidelines “*water and sanitation facilities will be located away from the hazard prone site*”. The surprising fact was that none of the sampled organizations has any specialized system that identifies the hazard prone site or red zone. Most of the respondents were with the view point

that this information was based on geological survey and they mostly rely on primary data gathered from these departments.

3.16 Interim Design codes

Most of the respondents were also not aware about the revised interim design codes published by ERRA. Sometime NGOs have limited capacities and they mostly rely on their own capability. They have got the revised codes but their operation is not compliance with these codes.

3.17 Material testing

One of the interview questions was based on the quality of material. Some of the respondents were with the view point that they have gone through the process of material testing and they use it only once approved. It was observed in the field that most of the pipes used in water schemes were made up of local material not with those directed in the guidelines of the ERRA.

Conclusions

Private sector is also somehow failed to provide adequate water and sanitation services because of some socio-political and institutional challenges. Therefore, the major theme of this study was to find out these socio-political and institutional challenges that NGOs encountered in field. Apart from that the study also focused on the prevailing water and sanitation services in the area and compatibility of NGOs in provision of water and sanitation services with the guidelines provided by ERRA and PERRA. NGOs made water intervention such as provision of hand pumps, water supply system, water channels and overhead tanks. People were satisfied with the quality of water and they also think there is no need to purify this water as it is clean, clear and tasteless. In the sanitation sector most dominant intervention made by NGOs was provision of flush toilets which is perhaps itself not a sustainable option. ERRA is authoritative body that provides guidelines for NGOs to work in an area. According to NGOs officials due to lack of trained people, mismanagement, weak capacity of work and hierarchical management system of the public institutions, create an environment where NGOs are not able to get their desired outputs. Sometime it is not possible for NGOs to work immediately in an emergency situation due to lengthy documentation process of the local government.

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