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**Title of paper: Participatory Development Practices: A Critical Analysis of Gender Empowerment and Development in pre and post Crises Swat, Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

Participatory development practices have been applied in several government and donors- funded development projects implemented since 1980s in the Swat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This paper analyzes the participatory development practices carried out in development projects in terms of their contribution to gender empowerment and the transformation of socio-cultural system in pre and post crises of Swat. Further, the paper examined how the conflict and flood crises (2007-2010) and post crises humanitarian interventions have influenced participatory development practices in Swat. We used qualitative research methods, including semi structured interviews, participant observation, key informants interviews and focus group discussions. The study found that in pre crises participatory development has been used as tool to engage local communities in implementation of pre determined projects interventions such as infrastructure schemes, skill trainings and income generating activities. The study revealed that in pre crisis, the participation of men and women through community organizations in implementation of projects' interventions was satisfactory and therefore, yielded some positive impacts in terms of improvement of socio-economic condition of marginalized people and gender empowerment. However, the crises

of militancy conflict and flood disaster affected the concept of participation in development projects due to fragility of time, changes in needs and priorities of the people and organizations. This research argues that participatory development can be applied in the reconstruction phase of post crises development, to achieve the goals of equal distribution of humanitarian aid and to uplift the socio-economic condition of crises affected people on sustainable basis.

**Key Words:** Participatory development practices, gender empowerment, participation, crises, socio-cultural impacts

## 1. Introduction

The concept of participatory development has been introduced in the 1970s as an important part of the development agenda with hope that development projects would be more successful and sustainable if the local population were to be engaged in the implementation process (Cornwall 2002). Since then participatory development has come to be considered as a justifiable process in seeking equity and has contributed to poverty reduction, empowerment, gender equality, democratization and sustainable development (De Haan 2009; Chambers 1997). Participatory development can be described as a manipulative tool to engage people in pre-determined economic, social, and political processes, and an expedient way to achieve goals or an attempt to support a democratic process for the improvement of well-being of the entire population through their free and meaningful participation in development (World Bank 2004; Keough 1998). Edwards put that ‘The real goal of the participatory development is to provide the target people with skill, confidence, information and resources to make their own choices’ (Edwards 1993:86).

Since the 1980s, the Government of Pakistan (GoP) with the support of international donors<sup>1</sup> has planned and implemented a number of development projects in north-west Pakistan. Thereafter, community development approaches were introduced following the Agha Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP), and in 1990s the AKRSP participatory development concept was extended to the whole country under the umbrella of Rural Support Programs (RSPs) followed by Social Action Program in 1993. Some of the well-known development projects in northwest province including Swat are Kalam Integrated Development Project (1982-1998), Malakand Social Forestry Project (1987-1998), Community Infrastructure Projects (CIP-I, 1995-2002 and CIP-II 2004-2009), Promoting Horticulture Project (1988-2006) and the Malakand Rural Development Project (MRDP-2000-2008), which have used participatory development practices (PDP) in implementation of their interventions.

The documentation of the above projects claims the application of PDP in planning, implementing and monitoring of the project interventions. The overall aim of these projects was to support government policies, contribute to institutional reforms and reduce poverty through capacity building, and human resources development. They sought to improve the socio-economic condition of people, and to empower them through equal participation in projects interventions and village development. Such development projects offered a framework within which to understand the nature, potential and likely effects of participatory interventions (Hickey and Mohan 2004). Government departments such

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and international organizations like UNDP, Oxfam, DFID, SDC, USAID, IUCN etc.

as Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Tehsil Municipal Administration, Health and Education remained collaborative partners of these projects. During implementation of these projects few of the famous local civil society organizations such as Environmental Protection Society (EPS), ‘Lasoon, Hujra, and Carvan’<sup>2</sup> emerged and thereafter, performed as implementing partners for some of the above and many other development projects.

The government of Pakistan, appraising the success stories of participatory development process, set out its Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2003 for alleviating rural poverty and promoting social upliftment of the vulnerable regions of the country. Under the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper of 2003, the GoP committed to participatory-based community development of infrastructure, livelihood, natural resource management (NRM) and services (SCIP-II, 2010). We analyze the factors that whether participation of local people before the crisis in development projects were successful in comparison to post crises in terms of better projects results, gender equality and acceptance.

This paper investigates the contribution of participatory development practices applied by the Government of Pakistan and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in implementation of development projects’ interventions during 2000-2007 as pre crisis period on gender empowerment and change in socio-cultural system. The research then analyze how the crises (Conflict and Flood) during 2008-2010 and the humanitarian aid in post crises have influenced the participatory development interventions in Swat, Pakistan. The paper covers discussions on perceptions of local people about NGOs in pre and post crises period in Swat.

### **1.1 The context of crisis and crises**

Defining crisis, and how it relates to a particular context is important in understanding both impacts and responses. According to Webster’s dictionary, (2014) crisis is an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending. Duffield (1994:4) linked crises with complex emergencies and states ‘.....they are protracted from political crises resulting from predatory or indigenous responses to socio-economic stress and marginalization. Complex emergencies destroy the cultural, civil, political and economic integrity of established societies, and attack social system’. The context of crises in Swat we termed as the unstable conditions caused by excessive political and religious stresses and natural disaster, which changed the social, economic and political system, and the need of development and security.

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<sup>2</sup> Name of local NGOs in Swat valley

Swat valley was an independent state from 1917 until 1969, when it was merged with Pakistan as a settled district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK)<sup>3</sup> under PATA<sup>4</sup> rules. The rise of militants in north-west Pakistan particularly in the form of Taliban movement since 1995 has deteriorated the formerly peaceful situation with violations of the rule of law and human rights.

The intrusion of the Taliban in Swat valley in the mid-2005, and occupation of more than half of Swat in 2008, compelled the government of Pakistan to oust the militants from the Swat area. The government military operation Rah-e-Rast<sup>5</sup> (straight path) carried out in 2009, caused internal displacement of over two million people from the Malakand region, 1.2 million from Swat district alone, to other parts of the country (World Bank and ADB 2009). The Pakistan army took over the administrative control of Swat and expelled the militant from major part of Swat in 2009. This was a period of intense political, economic and social crisis in the valley, where people's lives significantly disrupted. As the internally displaced people (IDPs) were returning to their homes and the process of relief and rehabilitation was in progress, a devastating flood occurred in 2010, the worst in the history of Pakistan, which created a new crisis that hindered the earlier progress of reconstruction in Swat valley. In this paper, we refer to the period 2006-2009 as the period of militancy conflict and internal displacement. The term 'pre conflict' thus denotes the period prior to 2006, and coincides with the period of pre-crisis. Since we term both the human made 'militancy conflict' and natural disaster 'flood' as crises, 'post crises' refers to the period after 2010, following both militancy conflict and flood disaster. According to CERINA (2010:21) report,

'The combination of conflict and flood crises has greatly affected the livelihood strategies of not only the poor segment but also the economically well off population of society and seriously affected human, social, physical and financial capital, and development process of the community at larger level'.

Since the crises affected all the socio-economic levels in different ways, they also affected people's social relations (CPPR, 2010). This was seen for example in the relations between landowners and tenants, where landowners lost their income resources and power both as target of militants and loss of crops for three consecutive seasons during military operation and loss of land due to flood. We found that tenants in lower Swat, whose livelihood were very dependent on land and daily labour,

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3 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) is one of the four provinces in Pakistan formerly known as North West Frontier Province (NWFP) lies in the northwestern part of Pakistan and is home to the majority Pukhtoon ethnic group.

4 Provincially Administrative Tribal Areas (PATA), of Chitral, Dir (lower, upper), Swat, Kalam and Malakand Protected Areas are the regions declared under clause (4) of Article 247 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, where certain laws apply. (for details see the article of the Constitution of 1973).

<sup>5</sup> Rah-e-Rast, an operation launched by the Pakistan Army in early May 2009 against the terrorists and militants to clean up the Malakand division particularly Swat district.

have not been much affected in term of income losses. According to tenants in villages Qamabr, they worked as daily wagers during displacement, got free foods in camps and received cash relief amount, which was much more than their regular income they were earning before crisis. However, the poor households in upper Swat who did not displace were highly affected due to closing of daily wages resources, for example market, transport, hoteling, small industries and other construction activities. Similarly, those whose houses flooded away have been highly affected in comparison to landlords, as they have other income sources than land (CPPR, 2010). It has been estimated that 30% of the villages' resources like bridges, footpaths, access roads, irrigation channels, water supply (catchment area), drains and natural resources were destroyed during militancy conflict and the flood disaster (ibid). According to a joint World Bank and Asian Development Bank needs assessment report, 'the estimated needs in the KPK Province for livelihood, social protection and housing, health and education was 272.5 million US\$ and for physical infrastructure including transport, water, sanitation and energy was 217.7 million US\$' (World Bank and ADB 2009:X)<sup>6</sup>.

To overcome the problems and losses incurred because of these crises, the GoP, humanitarian agencies and NGOs<sup>7</sup> rushed to the affected areas to provide support in relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction of the socio-economic and physical infrastructure. The conflict crisis changed the needs, priorities and processes of the development projects to focus on relief, rehabilitation and resettlement. The GoP established a new organization the Provincial, Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Settlement Authority (PaRRSA), to manage the rehabilitation, resettlement and reconstruction activities of those affected by the conflict in the province. Following the flood, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA)<sup>8</sup> took the lead role in setting up a system to look after disaster and calamities whether natural, man induced or accidents while PaRRSA was supposed to work closely with PDMA in Swat district.

The paper begins with a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of participatory development. It then introduces the case study of Swat, where two rural development projects implemented before the crisis examined in terms of their approaches to and impact on gender empowerment and development in Swat. The paper then describes the impact the crises had in the study villages, and it looks at how the crises affected the way development activities were implemented in rehabilitation and reconstruction phases as compared to the pre-crisis period. The research aims to assist policy makers,

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6 For detailed damages and socio-economic impacts of conflict and flood crises, see CERINA (2010), Pakistan Flood (Rapid Gender Need Assessment Report, 2010); Rapid Assessment Report of Swat District (Save the Children, 2009); Socio-economic baseline and displacement impacts, Swat district (Center for Public Policy Research (CPPR, 2010); Pakistan and WB and ADB combined report on Damage Need Assessment (DNA), 2009.

7 Humanitarian agencies and NGOs refer to all the international, national and local organizations including civil society organizations who were involved in process of development, rehabilitation and reconstruction in Swat.

8 For detail see <http://www.pdma.gov.pk/index.php> and <http://www.pdma.gov.pk/PaRRSA/index.php>

donors, development planners, NGOs and civil societies in formulating development projects and policies that how a better understanding of the local socio-cultural context could improve PDP and contribute to wider development perspectives of gender equality, empowerment and sustainable development.

## **2. Understanding participatory development**

The word development has been viewed with economic, social and political changes in developing countries since World War-II. Development means a better life for all and concerned with how society grant to individuals the capacity for taking part in creating their own livelihoods, governing their own affairs, and participating in self-government (Sen 2000; Peet and Hartwick 2009). To achieve the goals of better life for all, the theoretical concepts of integrated rural development, community development and participatory development emerged since 1960 to 1980s. Participatory development strategies emerged in 1980s with a shift in focus to the involvement of civil societies in projects rather than broader political communities.

Since then, the international development organizations and bilateral aid agencies like World Bank, IMF, Department for International Development (DFID), USAID, International fund for agricultural development (IFAD), Oxfam and many other UN organizations started to search for more people-oriented development approaches' (Brohman 1996). This process led to the development of alternative approach, which focused on basic needs of people and more social, economic and political power at community level (Friedmann 1997). The terms like participation, empowerment, gender, decentralization, indigenous knowledge and capacity building became popular in the development debates. The World Bank eventually acknowledged that 'social change does not take place if the external experts alone acquire, analyze and present the information' (World Bank 1997: 7).

The development agencies focusing on more decentralized decisions making and empowerment adopted participatory development process in order to achieve the target of sustainable development (Chambers 1997; Freidman 1997). For Cleaver (2001:37),

‘the theory of participatory approaches to development is reflected through the efficiency argument, which focus on achieving better project outcomes, and the equity and empowerment argument, which focuses on enhancing the capacity of individual to improve or change their own lives’.

However, participatory approaches have received criticism for their lack of engagement in issues of power, politics, and empowerment as a goal. The key arguments against participatory development are ‘an insufficiently sophisticated understanding of power operates and ..... thus how empowerment

may occur (Kothari 2001), an inadequate understanding of the role of structure and agency in social change and ..... a tendency for agents of participatory development to treat participation as a technical method of project work rather than as a political methodology for empowerment (Clever 1999; Carmen 1996, Ref: in Hickey and Mohan 2005:241).

On the other hand, feminist scholars such as Moser (1989:2) view the development process in the context that:

‘the power and benefits of development have been largely confined to men, since the dominant development approach only targeted men and saw ‘heads of households’, ‘farmers’, ‘breadwinners’ as men. Women were merely seen as ‘housewives’, ‘secondary earners’ and ‘mothers’ within the context of the family/household unit, and if at all, only addressed in these roles’.

To overcome the matter of lack of fundamental women’s rights, the policy approaches like equity, anti-poverty, efficiency, gender empowerment, Women in Development, Woman and Development and Gender and Development (GAD) were designed. The participation of women has now been almost universally endorsed by governments, donors and NGOs, with increasing political and ideological power in many contexts, however many women still experience a serious lack of rights to and control over the world’s resources (Young 1993). GAD approaches, as well as gender mainstreaming efforts have emphasized issues of inequality between men and women, lack of basic human rights, lack of access to resources, ownership, non-recognition of women’s domestic work, and the transformation of women’s roles to include productive roles rather than exclusively reproductive roles (Smyth 1999; Jan 2002; Momsen 2010; World Bank 2012).

## **2.1 Participation and empowerment in development**

Participation can be defined as ‘the process through which primary stakeholders can influence and share control of development initiatives, decision and resources which affect them’ (De Haan 2009:162).

In the language of development professionals and researchers such as Chamber, Scoones, and Cornwall, participation has been explained as a ‘process’ as well as a ‘tool’. Participation as process means to enhance the capacity and skills of individuals (men and women, marginalized, advantaged and disadvantaged groups) to improve their lives and provide equitable access to basic facilities. On the other hand, participation as a tool means refers to improving the efficiency of the individual to achieve better project results. In this paper, we define participation as the processes and tools used by a variety of actors to engage local people in the implementation of pre-determined development



project interventions in order to achieve better project results and contribute to gender empowerment and equal distribution of benefits among various social classes. In post-crisis development, where people have experienced crisis and response quite differently as they have in the Swat valley, equitable participation in this sense is a major challenge to development actors.

## **2.2. Empowerment**

Empowerment has become a buzzword in the development agenda and remains an essential objective of participatory development (Cleaver 1999). The World Bank defines empowerment as a process of enhancing an individual's or group's capacity to make and express choices and to transform them into desired actions and outcomes (World Bank, 2004). Cleaver claims that 'a number of problems arise when we critically analyze the currently fashionable version of empowerment; it is often unclear exactly who is to be empowered; the individual, the community, or categories of people such as women, the poor or the socially excluded' (Cleaver 1999:599).

Batliwala (2007), states that empowerment is a socio-political process ..... and that empowerment was about shift in political, social and economic power between and across both individual and social groups. Power is then explained as probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out one's own will despite of resistance (Kothari 2001). In this paper context of empowerment of Batliwala's (2007) is linked to the socio-political process and relationships of individual, social groups and institutions to analyze how participatory development interventions brought shift in the social, political and economic system of Swat valley.

## **3. Methodology and the Study area**

The district Swat lies in the remote northern part of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province at a distance of 265 km from Islamabad and about 160 km from Peshawar, the provincial capital (PDMA 2012). The total area of the district is 5,065 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 1.7 million, although reliable census data is unavailable. The Swat district borders the Buner and Malakand districts to the south, Lower and Upper Dir to the west, and the Chitral and Gilgit to the north.

A significant number of ethnic groups reside in Swat, including Pukhtoon<sup>9</sup> (Yousafzai, the dominant group), Syed/Miangan<sup>10</sup>, Kohistani, Gujjars, Sikh minorities etc. and the dominant language is Pushto. The people of Swat share a common identity and history regardless of their ethnic or tribal

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<sup>9</sup> According to Encyclopedia Britannica, 'Pashtun, also spelled Pushtun or Pukhtun, Pakhtoon, Pathan, Persian Afghan, are Pashto-speaking people residing primarily in the region that lies between the Hindu Kush in northeastern Afghanistan and the northern stretch of the Indus River in Pakistan. In this paper the term Pukhtoon is used for ease of understanding.

<sup>10</sup> Syed or Mian/Miangan (the persons of holy descent) are the 2nd strong political ethnic groups in Swat after the Khans (landholding persons), residing scattered throughout the Swat (Barth 1959)

background (Fleishner 2011). Swat valley, a Pukhtoon ethnic based society, where Pukhtoonwali (a code of ethics) functioned as a way of life to maintain the social, political and economic structure and homogeneity among various ethnic and social groups (Ahmad 1980; Barth 1981). The various ethnic groups dependent on each other for their livelihoods and social needs. The population of the valley dependent on multiple livelihood resources and the main sources of income is agriculture (50%), employment in government and private sector (27%), remittances both foreign and national (13%), followed by 12% in sale and retail trade, restaurants, hotels etc. and the remaining proportion is involved in construction, transport, and industrial labor (CPPR, 2010). Men in Swat are mainly responsible for provision of livelihood and they take decisions on use and access of economic and political resources while women are restricted to households' domestic and reproductive activities (Qayyum, 2010). The conflict crisis affected social and economic system of all groups and according to Rome (2010) disturbed the social fabric in terms of cooperation, trust and social relations. We analyze in this paper that how the development projects in pre crisis and the rehabilitation and reconstruction interventions in post crises have changed the roles of gender and their participation in livelihood and development.

### **3.1 Choice of projects and villages**

A preliminary survey of 10 villages was carried out to select two study villages affected by both conflict and flood and with full or partial displacement, development projects implemented by NGOs and government in both pre and post crises, having different ethnic groups and consisting of not less than 50 households. Based on the criteria, two villages, Paklea of Union Council (UC) Madyan in upper Swat and Qamabr of the UC Qambar in lower Swat, were subsequently selected for in-depth study. In addition to the selection criteria, these villages would provide insight into the different dimensions of upper and lower Swat. A number of development projects implemented before the crises in both villages, we chose to investigate relatively recent ones starting in 2001-02 and ending in 2007-08, which claimed the use of participatory development in their project interventions. The two projects chosen are Community Infrastructure Project-II (2004-2009) and Malakand Rural Development Project (2000-2007). A short introduction of the two selected projects is given below.

In Swat during 2012, more than 100 NGOs were involved in the rehabilitation and reconstruction process and now in 2014, there are 72 national and international NGOs and civil society organizations still active in the reconstruction phase (PDMA, 2012). For the post crises era, we focused on projects

of two local NGOs ‘HUIRA<sup>11</sup> and EPS<sup>12</sup>’ to evaluate their interventions in terms of participatory development and their impacts on local people social system. The EPS was a local partner for numbers of NRM activities of the MRDP project in both villages. HUIRA has also implemented a number of development projects in both villages in pre and post crises period.

### **3.1.1 The Malakand Rural Development Project**

The MRDP, an Asian Development Bank financed project with sponsorship from the KPK government. The total appraisal estimate of the project was 62.9 million US\$ (MRDP 2010). The jurisdiction of the project covered Malakand Division, comprising four administrative units: the Malakand Agency, and district of Swat, Buner and Shangla. The overall goal of the project was to reduce poverty in the Malakand division. The project aimed to the raise per capita income on a sustainable basis though community participation by implementing a number of projects interventions, including establishment of village organizations, rural financial services, infrastructure and capacity building as well as institutional reforms for the devolution of power to the local level.

### **3.1.2 The Community Infrastructure Project –II (CIP-II)**

The CIP-II, a World Bank funded project was initiated on the basis of successful experiences from a similar project CIP-I in the KPK province. The implementation policy of the CIP-II focused on the devolution process of local government system through establishment of Citizen Community Board (CCB) of male/female at village level. The total cost of the project was 53.30 million US\$. The project implementation period covered July 2004 to December 2009 (CIP-II 2004). The objective of the project was to increase the productivity and wellbeing of low-income communities in KPK through improving their living condition in the form of basic infrastructure, skill development, institutional strengthening and devolution of power at local level (ibid).

## **3.3 Research Methods**

Purposive sampling<sup>13</sup> technique was applied for selection of the households and respondents for interviews in the two villages. Primary data collected during the period of August-December 2012 and again in October-December 2013. We used an in-depth semi structured interview guide and

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<sup>11</sup> HUIRA, a nonprofit, non-governmental organization established in 1997 and registered under societies Registration Act of 1860, working in KPK and PATA areas. The detail about organization is available on [www.hujra.org](http://www.hujra.org)

<sup>12</sup> Environmental Protection Society (EPS), a non-profit and non-ethnic organization concerned with the physical, social and cultural environment. Founded in 1991 and registered under societies Registration Act of 1860 in 1994. Detail is available at [www.eps-swat.org](http://www.eps-swat.org)

<sup>13</sup> Purposeful sampling is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that can't be gotten as well from other choices (Patton, 1990)

selected 48 respondents (12 male and 5 female from village Paklea and 14 male and 6 female from village Qambar). In addition, 11 officials including four female employees from Government Departments such as Agriculture, forest, fisheries, education and Tehsil municipal administration, and NGOs interviewed. The government and NGOs officials interviewed were head of departments or organizations and those who involved in pre and post crises projects. Their practical experiences contribute to reliable information, however, proper permission sought for interview. Focus groups discussions (two per village, composed of four-six members each) were conducted in order to gather more reliable data about the process of projects implementation and people participation as well as effects of crises on development interventions. Besides these, informal discussions with more than 30 community members including key informants, like local activists, development professionals and academics professionals and researchers who had knowledge of both local culture and development practices were held in main city of Mingora and surrounding towns of Saidu Sharif, Kanjo, Charbagh and Fatehpur to substantiate and triangulate the data.

The 37 respondents selected from both villages through purposive sampling are further classified into categories of landlords (7), farmers (8), tenants (5), shopkeepers (4), hotel owners (2), political and social welfare activists (6) and daily wage labourers (7) including occupational groups. The literacy ratio among total respondents in village Paklea is 68% (men 71% and women 40%) and 73% in Qambar (men 72% and women 50%). The literacy ratio among respondents is high in comparison to overall ratio in Swat (men 45% and women 14%) due to easy access to literate men and women as interviewing illiterate women and men was not easy. The conflict and military operation internally displaced 100% of population in village Qambar while in village Paklea only 30% of the households internally displaced due to partial military operation in upper Swat. However, flood has directly affected houses, land, shops and hotels of more than 15 households in village Paklea.

Secondary data collected from government and NGOs offices in Swat, Peshawar and Islamabad. Relevant websites, online journals, government and donors' planning and completion reports as well as news reports for both the pre and post periods of crises were searched. The data collected through semi-structured interviews analyzed using MS Excel and QSR NVivo 10.

The argument in this research is based on the analysis of project documents and discussion with development professionals and government officials involved in implementation of development projects in Swat. Besides these, we used participatory observation method, conducted qualitative interviews, and focused group discussions in two selected villages, and surrounding towns with both men and women of different categories and fields. The records of village organizations and project

interventions were assessed, the composition of committees was checked and involvement of various social groups and women was compared with post crises period.

### **3.4 Challenges in Data Collection**

After the militancy conflicts in Swat, the community as well as the army or police, government departments and NGOs do not trust anyone for sharing any sensitive information and even reluctant to give interview. Everyone seeing other in doubt as may be agent of army, Taliban or foreign agencies. In the beginning, the circumstances look difficult for conducting a fearless fieldwork, however, with the support of local organizations and introducing ourselves as university employee and academic researchers, we get access to communities. But at the same time, we felt this disclosure of our identity in community as a threat particularly from militant. By introducing the research purpose, we were able to get the trust of the respondents and they agreed for a common cause of identifying issues and development of the communities in the area, which was necessary for the quality and validity of the data. The main challenge was face to face interview with women as values and norms of the Swat society do not allow an external man (either national or foreign) to talk or make discussion with women particularly young girls. However, we managed to interview women through local organizations and community activists. The threat of Taliban attack is not over and there was still heavy presence of Pakistan army and check posts established on entrance and exit of every small and big town. Sometime we waited in long queue for identity verification, which affected our timely arrival to study areas and sometime it was dangerous too as they always asked for detail of travelling in Swat.

### **4.0 Participatory development Intervention in pre crisis Swat**

This section begins with a discussion of participatory development in pre-crisis Swat. This sets the stage for a discussion of the impacts of participatory development practices on the process of empowerment and gender relations, and change in informal institutional followed by a discussion of people's perceptions on participation and development actors.

#### **4.1 Impacts of participatory development on gender empowerment and socio-cultural system**

In Pakistan, the terms gender and empowerment remained prominent among development organizations since 1990s but these got momentum during president Musharraf (2000-2008) 'enlightened moderation' where women were encouraged to get education and do jobs in the government and non-governmental sectors (Orakzai, 2011). In Swat, the concepts of gender and empowerment were popular in pre-crisis development projects, however, on the ground we found the

terms gender and women's empowerment as an affront to some of the religious and traditional leaders, who perceived these as going against their code of ethics and social system. Among common people, the word gender (*jenas* in Pashto) exclusively refers to women; even found government officials used the term specifically for women-related activities or issues. Similarly, women's empowerment (*khazina ta wak warkwal*) was also perceived as going against the culture code and patriarch structure among majority of the respondents. Nevertheless, both the projects MRDP and CIP-II emphasized both men and women in individual interventions. The projects aims to improve the socio-economic conditions of the both men and women of the poor and marginalized classes by their participation in project interventions and development of women human resources. For this purpose both project during their implementation period (2001-2008) established, community organizations of both men and women to provide ample opportunities to ordinary persons to participate in decisions making process, identify their problems and to get equal share in project resources.

According to respondents in both villages, participation in development projects raise awareness about self-reliance and created opportunities for local people to acquire skills, education, jobs, and enabled them to access local resources and participate in the local political system. Similarly, the skills and capacity building, and income generating activities of the both projects decreased the dependency of some households on landlords (Khans) for tenanting their land as source of livelihood. The development professionals like facilitators, advisors, specialists and humanitarian workers; whose work is to engage members of various ethnic and social groups, and create consensus of power relations in implementation of projects interventions, stated that PDP provided opportunities and resources, and valued the local knowledge and action of people which indirectly strengthen the decisions making power. However, the research found that the power of decisions making, political dominancy and access to resources remained in the hand of men of wealthy class and landlords such as Yousafzai Khans and Mian/Syed.

Women respondent explained that direct interaction of female officials of NGOs and government departments with village women raised awareness about women rights and increased decisions making power in terms of children education, marriages and resolution of family disputes at household level. A former employee of the MRDP project stated that the project has trained more than 80 traditional birth attendants (TBA) in Swat district and out of these, 60 women were employed by government as Lady Health visitors/workers (LHVs/LHWs) in their respective areas. According to him, 'they are earning good salaries and supporting their families financially and their role changed from being traditional housewives to income-earning members of the family'. One of the LHVs interviewed said that 'those women who earn a reasonable amount of money have a strong say in

decisions making about the utilization of income, property sale and purchase at households level'. Such changes reflect the empowerment approach (Moser, 1989) which recognizes the triple roles<sup>14</sup> of women and seeks to reach strategic gender need indirectly through addressing practical gender needs such as acknowledge the functioning of different types of organizations and assisting traditional organizations to play important roles in awareness of women issues. Female official in NGO added that,

'this approach has changed the role of few of the women in villages but the burden of their triple roles has not been reduced. Women who do jobs outside the houses still have to fulfill the reproductive and domestic roles within the households'.

## **4.2 Community participation**

The process for the implementation of the MRDP and CIP-II projects' interventions was based on community mobilization and formation of village based committees and Citizen Community Board (CCB) of both men and women. The purpose of the establishment of these village based development committees was to plan and implement the project interventions such as agricultural, horticultural, livestock, infrastructure schemes, capacity building and skill training through participatory development. We see that participation is the process of mobilization and upon realization when the people feel the benefits, they participate in projects interventions. However, in Swat, a study conducted by Israr et. al. (2009:643) shows that 38% of the respondents were of the view that they formed VOs by seeing the development work in other villages, 31% said that they formed VOs for solution of problems like retaining wall, irrigation channels, sanitation system and link roads and 19% viewed that formation of VOs was only for drinking water supply schemes. Thus this confirm that participation of communities in village organizations was limited to infrastructure projects while in actual sense they lack social mobilizations in terms of efficiency and empowerment.

According to Second-CIP-II completion report (2010), the project has contributed to the creation and strengthening of CCB as well as capacity building of the newly elected local government representatives and improvement of the implementation, operation and maintenance of village based infrastructure schemes. We analyzed the a CIP-II implemented infrastructure project of street pavement, a sewerage system and water supply in village Paklea to see how it was participatory and how it improved the efficiency of CCB. When the villagers were asked about the project activities, majority of them said that local government has carried out this scheme and a committee was established. However, they claimed that the CCB was not participatory but was under the control of

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<sup>14</sup> Reproductive, productive and community relations roles (Moser 1989)

Nazim (Mayer) and councilor, thus being participatory in name only. The CCB was functional until the completion of the project, after which it had no further role, a councilor told. The SCIP-II completion report (2010:18) revealed that ‘establishment of CCBs supported institutional changes in the grass roots local organizations and leadership, however, the leadership in CCBs is invariably formed by traditional community leaders, who hold sway in local decision making’. Similarly, women’s CCBs established for implementation of village based infrastructure schemes, but we found that women members were close relatives of the men’s committee members. Some respondents reported that all the records and authority were in the hands of male members, who received the funds and signed on behalf of the women. The ex-‘Nazim, Naib Nazim’<sup>15</sup> of Madyan and Qambar UCs criticized that,

‘it was and is not fair that women’s CCB may be established for infrastructure scheme in a culture of Swat, where women couldn’t take the initiative for any kind of infrastructure activities. But it was made mandatory by the CIP project without considering the culture of the region. This led to non-sustainability of the women committees and affected women empowerment concept’.

Key informants and activists told that majority of the village organizations established under the projects were for the purpose of achievement of infrastructure schemes, however, people participated to get the interest of community as a whole. Nevertheless, both the project has had social impacts on people through the provision of facilities e.g. in Paklea the water supply changed the female role in not having to collect water from outside sources, thus saving time taken for water collection. A female respondent reported that after receiving training in health, hygiene and establishment of a sewerage system in the village, the women now take more precautions in cleanliness of food, houses, and latrines. Based on responses, it may be claimed that there was change in thoughts, actions and relations of the people, but may not be quantified, as the process of change is very slow. Yet we cannot infer that the change in the behaviour and social system of the community is due only to participation in development projects. However, participatory development is a guiding spirit in the process of social change along with many other socio-economic and technological factors such as education, media, migration and urbanization.

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<sup>15</sup> LGO 2001, policy document: Nazims, Naib Nazim, Councilor are the name used for elected members at Union Council (compose of 5-10 villages) through LGO electoral process in the hierarchy of Head, Deputy and member.



### 4.3 Development practices and informal institutions

Since 2002, the development projects were supposed to integrate new decentralized and participative procedures emanating from the GoP devolution policies and poverty reduction strategies. The rationale behind the initiatives of the GoP was the idea that decentralization and devolving power at grass root level would strengthen local institutions and utilization of resources. Bardhan (2002) claims, that decentralization and community participation can contribute to efficiency, accountability and transparency of poverty reduction policies through the utilization of local information and resources of beneficiaries. According to respondents in this study, the new LGO system raised awareness among ordinary people and changed the local social and political system. Women took part for the first time in the local political system as 33% seats were reserved for women at district and tehsil council levels. During interviews and discussions with former Nazim, Naib Nazims, councilors and Secretaries of UCs Madyan and Qambar, we learned that the local government system (2002-2008) had transformed the informal institutional system to some extent.

For example the local Jirga<sup>16</sup> system was in state of transition due to establishment of new Jirga Masalihati committees<sup>17</sup> (Council of Reconciliation) at the UCs level where elected members were allowed to select the members of Jirga instead of traditional Khans. Historically, the Khans in Swat were supposed to conduct a Jirga in case of any disputes and development activities in the village and surrounding locality, and all the people equally participate. However, they were strong enough to make decisions and implement them. But the establishment of Masalihati committee at UC level changed the patterns of Jirga and the local people approached elected Jirga members instead of Khans to resolve their family and other minor disputes. The ex-Naib Nazim and secretary of the UC Madyan said that the LG system decreased the role of traditional Jirga system, changed the political leadership, and increased dependency of local people on elected members for justice instead of courts and police.

Over to these, Taliban also targeted the elected local bodies' members and traditional Khans throughout Swat during 2007-09 and killed few of them. Therefore, the committees and the role of elected members remained ineffective at that time and the Jirga system remained in transition. Currently in the selected villages, rare cases of minor disputes resolved by Jirga system and people take their cases to police and courts.

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<sup>16</sup> Jirga, the council of elders, comprised of elderly influential men, used to resolve conflicts and disputes among individuals, families, ethnic groups, tribes and communities through arbitration, the term widely used in the Pukhtoon belt of Pakistan and Afghanistan. (Barth, 1965, Ahmad, 1980, [www.khyber.org](http://www.khyber.org))

<sup>19</sup> The Masalihati Jirga was established under LGO-2001, Act 102 (1) at UCs level. Masalihati Jirga comprised of three non-elected members including one woman. The Insaf committee composed of elected members of the UC and selects these members from their respective UCs within 30 days of the election.

We learned through group discussions that these UCs elected Nazim and Councilor established village development committees or CCBs, however, participations in these committees were dependent on elected members, and they used people participation as tools to get funds from government and NGOs to fulfill their political motives. The competition between Khans and elected members from other groups was increased to achieve their political motives through development funds, and this process indirectly affected the social relations within the villages in the context of mutual cooperation, participation in sorrow and joys, financial support and respect to Khans and Syed.

#### **4.4 Perceptions on participatory development practices and NGOs before crises**

The perceptions about participation, NGO involvement and their activities vary among different ethnic groups and classes. Government, NGO employees and local political activists support the projects in the context of betterment of social development, while some of the religious scholars, illiterate respondents and political leaders opposed the participation in project activities. The respondents in both villages revealed that during the period 2006-2009, there were strong threats from militant groups to NGOs workers as well as their supporters throughout Swat. Therefore, the strategy for implementation of MRDP and CIP projects' interventions was changed and the specialized government departments took the leading role. A head of one NGO told that it was easier to enter community for social mobilization and formation of village committee using the name of the government department or collaborating partners rather than directly as NGO officials. A female official in NGO told that motivating illiterate women and men for participation in project activities was/is very difficult in comparison to literate persons. She said 'in majority cases, literate women until primary level participated in community organization and projects interventions, and performed better than illiterate men and women in skill training like livestock extension, agriculture, TBA and health hygiene'.

Development workers with many titles - change agents, field workers, organizers, facilitators and extension workers- are key personnel in the participatory development process to create consensus and work according to social system of community. During 2006-2009, the propaganda against NGOs as western agent was at peak. The local people doubted the employees of NGOs particularly young girls and women as characterless in terms of their interaction and travelling with non agnate male, which is considered as a shameful act and against the local cultural values of veil system. A local Imam (a caretaker and prayer leader in Mosque) said that 'NGOs' employed women coming from other parts of the country did not care about the cultural values of purdha<sup>18</sup> (veil), which defuse

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<sup>18</sup> Purdha (veil) means covering of body according to the prevailing way in village: according to Imam, purdha is the covering of women body including head with large shawl (gown) or black Burqa (a local made dress used by majority of women in Swat)

negative impacts on villages' women in terms of un-Islamic and western cultural practices'. Many households did not allow educated girls to work in NGOs because to maintain their honour in society and avoid ostracism by other villagers and family members, a key informant told. However, there are no such restrictions on boys or men to work in NGOs. The second propaganda against NGOs project as stated by the government and NGO officials that NGOs motivate women to participate in immodest or unethical activities in the name of training, often in other cities, refrained women, particularly young girls to participate in NGO committees. The male key informants in both villages highlighted the facts that people accept elderly women's involvement in project interventions and support their participation but are skeptical of women staff, as the majority of NGOs workers do not belong to Swat and sometimes the behavior of the fieldworkers create biases or may be culturally unacceptable.

However, in spite of many difficulties, majority of the respondents still appreciate the approach that in one way or another it has created a sense of responsibility, collective working, mobilized local resources and improved the livelihood conditions of many poor families. They believe that in pre crisis, the participation of both men and women was good in projects' interventions but perceptions about participatory development and NGOs were unfavorable particularly during 2007-2009.

## **5. Influence of Crises on Participatory Development Practices**

As stated in sections (4.4) that during 2006-2009, propaganda against the NGOs, and development interventions implemented by NGOs was very common and the perceptions were not favourable about participation of people particularly women. Second, the threat from militant groups to NGOs throughout the province, compelled many of the national and international organizations to shrink their interventions or leave the area, and in Swat only few local organization like Hujra, EPS, Carvan and Lasoona continued their interventions but at very limited level. Similarly, NGOs workers, and community women were forbidden by Taliban and threatened that if any one cooperate with NGOs or participate in their activities will be killed. This situation shifted the implementation process of a number of donors funded projects including MRDP and CIP-II, whose interventions were supposed to be implemented by NGOs itself or through collaboration with government departments. However, according to government officials, the government department lacks expertise in participatory development and usually follow their own bureaucratic and top down approach to implement development interventions. This period has highly affected the development interventions and reversed the progress made in socio-economic development in Swat valley, a head of government department told.

Following the Army operation and internal displacement of 1.2 million of people from Swat created a huge crisis. The crisis of IDPs and after ousting of militants from Swat, the returning of IDPs and their resettlement attracted the humanitarian organizations and the response in the form of relief and rehabilitation was very high. The people were in dire need of shelter, food, medicines etc., and the government and both national and international NGOs supported the displaced families with cash as well as in-kind relief and rehabilitation interventions. There were bulk of development projects funded by the government of Pakistan and NGOs to deal with relief, resettlement and rehabilitation interventions. Meanwhile, the devastating flood 2010 further deteriorated the situation and hindered the rehabilitation and development activities in Swat (Salman 2012). Our analysis through interviews and focused group discussion reveal that the participatory development practices have not been applied during relief and rehabilitation period because of the change in the priorities and needs of the people and complexities of the crisis.

Several development professionals revealed that PDP after the crises were hindered by a numbers of political and bureaucratic complications such as lack of coordination between various institutions and political interference in implementation of activities and distribution of aid items. For example, the Pakistan Army and civil government departments through their bureaucratic procedures are implementing major construction projects like roads, bridges, schools, and hospitals. While national and local NGOs are involved in minor livelihood projects such as distributing agricultural equipment and seeds, building village based irrigation channels, water supply, and skills trainings in honeybees keeping, livestock, poultry farming, embroidery, sewing and hygiene promotion. Some NGOs are involved in the advocacy of women rights, facilitation in court cases, and the establishment of women skills centers. However, there was no clear cut understanding between government departments and NGOs, 'who is doing what and where'? The PDMA was supposed to coordinate the interventions of NGOs and to provide them no objection certificates to operate in specific areas but we observed that in one village, there were more than five NGOs implementing their interventions simultaneously and they were claiming of participatory interventions. In contrast, we found that few households have got more benefits while many other remained without any benefits. The group discussions revealed that preferences were given to relatives and politically supported communities in provision of relief aid like cash grant, food items, and compensation against land, livestock and houses losses. This process changed the intention of people toward direct benefits without any social mobilization processes.

Nevertheless, the PDP has been revived in the reconstruction phase, the project documents we reviewed of a number of organizations reveals the applications and broader objectives of community development, gender equality and empowerment, but on the ground very few example of participatory

development has been observed. NGOs officials agreed that majority of organizations are fulfilling the target set by donors and there is strong competition among local NGOs for securing donors funds. The concept of participation, gender equality and empowerment has been used in policy documents as tools to attract the donors; however, very little attention has been given to successful involvement of local population in implementing project activities, a development professional told. Therefore, this research inferred that the efficiency and empowerment argument of participation may not be achieved without involvement of the stakeholders in planning and implementation of project activities.

### **5.1 Perceptions on NGOs interaction and participatory development after the crises**

NGOs officials reported that military operation against the Taliban, and resulting hardships of displacement reduced sympathies among local people towards Taliban and to some extent, the threat to NGOs and their workers is now over. The direct interaction of NGO workers and their support to needy people during conflict and displacement restored the people's trust to participate in development interventions. The respondents in both villages see NGOs and their interventions as less corrupted, friendlier, and more accessible in comparison to government institutions. This does not mean that NGOs are 100% transparent or applying participatory method in their interventions but it is due to direct relief aid people have received from these organizations. According to key informants and some government officials in Swat NGOs in the name of participatory development and women empowerment were wasting millions of rupees on very small scale packages (distribution of checks, goats, honey bees boxes, seedlings) , meetings, trainings, food, hygiene and cosmetics kits (composed of soap, shampoo, pampers) but there is no quantifiable results, which may be interest to whole community.

We observed that in post crises development both government and non-government organizations provided jobs to large number of people. They also imparted skills training and supported a number of men and women in establishing their own small scale business. This might have improved the socio-economic conditions of many households; however, there are many other households, which have not been involved in any such interventions. This unequal distribution of resources and non-involvement of many household may be inferred as non-participatory application in project interventions. This research found that village committees of men and women have been established but the number of households in committee is not more than 10 in comparison to more than 50 household in a village. On the other hand, a female NGO worker told that women's participation in project interventions is low compared to pre crisis because village women are scared that if the Taliban comes back they would target them for extending support to NGOs. Former Tehsil council chairperson

stated 'that there is still lack of trust on government police for protection of people. They do, however, trust the Army and believe that as long as the Army is there, the Taliban can't come'.

The finding from the discussion in the previous sections shows that in pre crises era participation was more effective than the post crises. The reasons found were: 1) the needs of the people were different 2) there was an established system of local government 3) flexibility in the projects interventions 4) the security situation favored development activities until 2005 and 5) there was low dependency on humanitarian aid agencies and international NGOs, but perceptions about the participatory development and NGOs were unfavourable. While in post crises, the needs and priorities of people and organizations changed, there is no established local government system, the security situation is still uncertain, the projects duration is very short but dependency of people and government is very high humanitarian aid, and similarly there is lack of transparency and monitoring from international organizations.

Nevertheless, the study claims that after the crises perceptions about participation in development activities, NGOs and their workers become favourable and motivation among men and women increased. We noted from a number of key informants that women from poor families and other ethnic groups besides Khans, Syed and Mian come out from their houses when they hear about arrival of NGO or Government officials in the village. Among development workers, it is a step towards women empowerment, while among the male respondents, women participation and interaction with external people are against the cultural norms and may bring taunt to some families and may be the cause of disputes that sometimes lead to honour killings. However, the above factors have highly influenced the concept of development theories in terms of gender empowerment, equality, social change and sustainable development, and overall hindered the achievement of Millennium Development Goals.

## Conclusions

Participatory development has been promoted in developing countries since the 1970s as the preferred path to achieve wider perspectives of development goals in terms of the improvement of human lives, poverty reduction, empowerment and gender equality with varying degree of success. This study analyzed the application of participatory development practices in both pre and post crises of Swat, to see how participatory development and project interventions contributed to socio-economic development and gender empowerment. We then analyzed how the crises affected the participatory development interventions. The research reveals that local village organizations and CCBs of both men and women established in order to ensure maximum participation and to achieve pre-determined targets of small-scale infrastructure schemes and improve socio-economic conditions of poor and marginalized classes. However, the local cultural and political system hindered the successful involvement of local population in implementation of project interventions.

Nevertheless, majority of the respondents claim that participatory development practices in pre crisis played an important role in gender empowerment through community organizations and strengthening of local institutions. Similarly, the local government system of 2001 promoted the empowerment of the lower classes including women, who were able to participate in the local body's election in 2001 and 2007. This has brought changes in informal institutions like Jirga and decisions making power on development interventions.

The militancy conflict followed by military operation and internal displacement of over million people and their resettlement affected the participatory development. The fragility of time, needs and priorities of people, and organizations changed the applications of participatory development in post crises. Nevertheless, participatory development revived to some extent during the reconstruction phase but we found that many of the households did not received the aid of relief and rehabilitation and this may be because of non-participatory interventions. This has resulted in that some of the poor and other ethnic groups as well as political leaders received more benefits from the government and NGOs and thus moved to a good economic position, while many of the other household received fewer benefits.

We see that in spite of a wide range of constraints in involvement of men and women in development project interventions, the participatory development in pre crises were quite satisfactory in terms of their contribution to gender empowerment, improving the socio-economic conditions of both men and women, and changes in social cultural system. This research argues that participatory development contribute to wider perspectives of development theory in terms of equal access to resources, gender

empowerment and sustainable development, however, local cultural and religious perspectives should be considered while planning participatory development interventions. We conclude that during the period of conflict and disaster crises as well as relief and rehabilitation phase, participatory development is extremely difficult due to change in needs of people, organizations and security. Nevertheless, participatory development practices can be applied during the reconstruction and resettlement phase, which may contribute to achieve the broader goals of development theory in terms of equal distribution of humanitarian aid, improving livelihood conditions of crisis affected people and maintaining peace and security through strengthening institutions and more long-term projects on sustainable basis.



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