
THE NGO-GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIP: A CASE STUDY OF THE AGA KHAN RURAL SUPPORT PROGRAM (AKRSP) AND THE GOVERNMENT OF GILGIT-BALTISTAN IN DEEPENING GOOD GOVERNANCE

Ahmad Khan

Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilizations, **Aga Khan University**, London/ United Kingdom

ABSTRACT: *The study focuses on understanding the relationship between the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP), a Non-Government Organization (NGO) in rural development sector and the government of Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan. The relationship has advanced over the years by maintaining mutual respect without confronting each other by the two institutions. This progress in the relationship has brought a shift AKRSP's programs, in form of policy advocacy and partnering government in development in the region. Interviews of representatives and members of Community Based Organisations (CBOs), AKRSP officials, and government officials are analysed along with documentary review through data triangulation. This study has made an attempt to understand the relationship between the two entities with a focus on the transformation that AKRSP has experienced from a service delivery organization to a policy advocate and a facilitator in developing linkages between communities and the government with the aim to improve the governance in the region.*

KEYWORDS: AKRSP, NGOs, CBOs, Government, Gilgit-Baltistan, Governance

INTRODUCTION

The Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) sector has played a great role in the development of the people in the socio-economic and political sphere in Pakistan. NGOs are able to reach to the remote parts of the Pakistan to provide services to the rural communities. In the deliverance of the services, government and NGOs have not always remained on the same page due to the difference in the organizational functioning and the preferences. The relationship between NGOs and government never followed the linear trajectory, rather remained topsy-turvy in the organizational and the operational level. Successive governments in Pakistan followed the policies which are shaped by the internal and external interests of the country. The dynamism in the policies of the government affected the behavior of civil society organizations and NGOs. The year 2015, NGOs witnessed the crisis due to the decisions by the interior ministry in banning many NGO's and halting their work. The press conference by the Interior Minister proclaimed that there are hundreds of Internal Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) which operate in Pakistan without any code of conduct and law. He mentioned that, when the matter was contested in the United Nations' Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), majority member countries had extended their support to Pakistan's stance. Furthermore, he mentioned that the regions which fall under security zones were used by INGOs for illegal activities and against the country's national interest and security. Gilgit-Baltistan (the region where my research was based) was in the list of these declared security zone mentioned by the Interior Minister. However, the Minister also mentioned that not all INGOs will not be banned, rather an accountability strategy will be adopted to register all INGOs and to monitor their activities according to the government's

charter to protect the interest and the security of the country. AKRSP being a part of AKDN (a trans-national NGO) is working in Gilgit-Baltistan since the 1980s and has maintained friendly relations with the national and local government. The working philosophy of AKRSP and its operational limitations which it faced by working within the ambit of the government is the main theme of this study. This study will be an attempt to analyse the dynamics of the relationship between the AKRSP and the government of Gilgit-Baltistan.

The following section deals with aim of this study along with its subsidiary sections reflecting upon research objectives and research questions which the study is going to answer.

Aim of the study

In the region of Gilgit-Baltistan for more than three decades Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are working at grassroots level in community mobilization, community's capacity building, and empowerment through development initiatives with participatory approach. NGOs adopted a participatory approach by establishing community organizations at grass root level. These organizations at grass root level include Village Organizations (VOs), Women Organizations (WOs), and their clusters as Local Support Organizations (LSOs). However, in the early 90s NGOs in particular AKRSP has engaged government in development projects on partnership basis, and it facilitated community-government linkages with the aim to improve governance in the region. Nonetheless, in relation to good governance this community mobilization and empowerment efforts not channelized to effect policy making at governmental level. Still communities are absent as a stakeholder in policy making at government level in matters which directly affect their lives. NGOs' struggle seems to be a dead end in itself, where they depend on foreign aid to undertake only development projects. Moreover, the democratic and participatory values imparted in the community at grassroots level are only exercised within the circle of development projects, beyond that these values are losing their essence. This highlights the question about opportunities for communities in civic engagement and participation in decision making in the region. Within this framework, the study aims to uncover the government-NGO relationship in building good governance to the extent that empowering communities at grassroots level, may enable conducive environment to create communities' space in main stream decision making at the local government as active citizens. Moreover, the study also aims to analyse the prospects of community empowerment to form a vibrant civil society and to enhance good governance in the wider context of the country.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to assess NGO-government relationship in the region. It analysed the extent to which community empowerment has been achieved in terms of their meaningful participation in decision making at policy level, and capacity building to strengthen civil society, and to improve governance through participatory means in the region. For this purpose, AKRSP including its sub-subsidiary organizations are chosen, to assess their participatory projects aiming at deepening governance in partnership with the government.

Research Questions

Main Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of the communities who are involved in Deepening Participatory Governance project regarding their linkages with the government of Gilgit-Baltistan?
2. What are the factors that resulted in collaboration between AKRSP and the government to empower community at grassroots level?

Subsidiary Questions

1. To what extent NGOs meaningfully involved communities not as targets of assistance but as decision makers?
2. To what extent the external support is important for the sustainability of the community organizations in long run?
3. What are the prospects that community empowerment will bring to make it stakeholder in policy making at government level in the region?
4. What is necessitated to maintain a non-adversarial relationship with the government to achieve the developmental goals?

The Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP)

The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) is part of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) that works in the regions of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral in Pakistan. It was established in 1982 as a non-governmental organization and registered as “an Association-Not-For-Profit under Section 42 of the Pakistan Companies Ordinance, 1984” (Staschen, et al., 2007, p.40). AKRSP adopted community-oriented development practices to cater the needs of the poor rural population by focusing on poverty alleviation and resource mobilization. In order to impart development at grassroots level, it came up with the network of VOs, WOs, and LSOs as part of community-based organizations (CBOs), where democratic participation and community empowerment remain part of the entire development interventions. Since its inception, AKRSP’s programs have focused on social organization, physical infrastructure development, capacity and institution building, women-in-development, market development, micro-financing, and resource management for the rural communities. Though AKRSP has started its operation as a service-based NGO to meet the needs of the rural community, however, from the 1990s onward a shift has been observed in the nature of AKRSP’s programs, with an addition of policy advocacy and partnering government in development to its organizational mandate. Both the initiatives aim to foster inclusive and competent institutions that contribute effectively and sustainably to local development and to improve governance in the region at large. Therefore, AKRSP plays a role of facilitator to engage the community and other stakeholders in the policy dialogue. Moreover, the organization has been prominently successful in terms of achieving rural development efficiently and its model has been replicated in the country as well as outside the country.

Deepening Participatory Governance (DPG) In Gilgit-Baltistan

The Deeping Participatory Governance project is funded by the European Union (EU), where AKRSP works at the implementation level. The DPG project was granted to AKRSP by the European Union under the Non-State Actors and Local authorities in development in the year 2014 with the project duration of 48 months. The project is meant to support Deepening Participatory Governance in Gilgit-Baltistan through a social mobilization approach. The broader objective of the project is to promote an inclusive and empowered society in Gilgit-Baltistan along with specific objective to reduce the negative impacts of poverty through an active and effective participation of communities in development activities in the region. AKRSP pursues these objectives of the project through;

- Strengthening VOs, WOs and LSOs as inclusive and representative institutions for socio-economic development at local levels.
- Improving access to basic services through building community social Infrastructure through community participation.
- Strengthening the capacities of local government in participatory planning and supervising inclusive development.

The direct beneficiaries of the project include;

- 750 V/WOs (with at least 50% women), 30 LSOs
- 100 Local government elected representatives
- Two government departments (Local Government and Rural Development (LG&RD), and the Planning and Development Department (PDD))

The project has adopted a social mobilization approach that aims to strengthen three-tiers of communities' own institutions and their capacity building that includes community, village and union councils. While, on the government side, the project's focus is to build capacity of elected and technical officials of local government in participatory planning and monitoring in order to increase their understanding and willingness to apply inclusive, transparent and accountable development practices. Further to that, it is within the ambit of the projects to engage the three-tier of community institutions with the local government with the aim to achieve policy and institutional reforms furthering the agenda of local participatory governance and democratization at local levels.

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION AND THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF CIVIL SOCIETY, PARTICIPATION, GOOD GOVERNANCE, AND NGOS IN THE DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSES.

This chapter reflects on the theoretical framework that guides this study. A historical approach is used to build up an argument on the theoretical framework, through which civil society, participatory approach, and good governance entered into the sphere of development with NGOs as the prime movers in the post-Washington Consensus period. The chapter is divided into five sections. Section one reflects on a working definition of civil society

concept used in this study because over the time civil society is perceived differently due to changing conditions and developments. In section two it is discussed that how civil society entered into the development discourse along with the importance, NGOs received in the development sector to work for strengthening civil society. Section three is about the historical debate about the concepts of participatory approach and empowerment in development theories and practices. Further, it also engages with the debate that how NGOs are used as a conduit to advocate these concepts over the time. Section four talks about the concept of governance within the neoliberal framework. Finally, the last section is about the interaction of civil society and NGOs in Pakistan and in the region of my study in the wake of neoliberalism and national dynamics.

Working Definition of Civil Society

Civil society is one of the most contested concepts in historical and contemporary debates. It has different understandings and meanings, and therefore the concept has been applied in various forms over the time. Amidst the conceptual ambiguity about the idea of civil society, Kaviraj has traced a common aspect running through almost all accounts of civil society: these definitions are “based on dichotomies or contrasts”. Civil society is variously “defined through its opposition to “natural society” or “state of nature” in early modern contract theory...; against the state in the entire liberal tradition, and contrasted to the community (*Gemeinschaft*) in a theoretical tradition of modern sociology’. Civil society thus ‘appears to be an idea strangely incapable of standing freely on its own’ (Kaviraj, 2001, p.288).

A brief glance at the debates around the idea of civil society in late 80s and onward reveal that, at the end of the 1980s, the idea of civil society has been employed to explain “the active role of people in changing the regimes in Eastern Europe” and, more recently the term is used as “an effort to bring people into the development process in Africa, Asia and elsewhere” (Seckinelgin, 2002, p. 1). In the case of Eastern Europe civil society is explained as the creation of a space within which actions take place to bring about changes in social and political relations, while in the case of developing countries civil society denotes an ambitious formation that enables people to act for themselves by attempting to build an organization of their own.

In addition to that, one of the diverse arrays of intellectual and cultural settings into which civil society has been received is the development profession. The development practitioners who influence policy making at national governments, international agencies, and non-governmental organizations have “constructed an elaborate discourse around the role played by civil society in the process of social, economic, and political change in post-colonial societies” (Jenkins, 2001, p.250). Jenkins argues that in the context of development discourse civil society represents “autonomous centres of social and economic power that can act as a watch dog over the activities of politicians and government officials” (Ibid., p.252). Thus, it consists of both the associations that make up the independent centres of social and economic power and the enabling environment that allows them to operate freely. Moreover, these autonomous centres consist of “an arena of public space as well as a set of private actors” (Ibid., p.252). The underlying logic in perceiving civil society as an autonomous center of the public sphere and individual actors in development discourses is that it has been perceived as “the key component among foreign aid agencies of advanced capitalist countries in promoting democracy” (Ibid., p.252) in the less developed states of the South. Whereas, Khilnani also argues that “civil society constituents have been seen as ‘essential to the construction of social preconditions for more accountable, public, and representative forms of

political power” (Khilnani, 2001, p.12). Further to that, “development requires sound policies and impartial implementation” (Jenkins, 2001, p.252), these can only be delivered by governments that are held accountable for their actions. Accountability in turns depends on the existence of “autonomous centres of social and economic power”, that constitute civil society for the development practitioners. This implies that, in development discourse, civil society entered as a dominant force symbolizing freedom, anti-statism, and defence of democratic norms. Thus civil society is referred to as the “segment of society that interacts with the state, influences the state, and yet is distinct from the state” (Chazan, 1992, p.281). Moreover, while arguing about the civil society concept in the developing countries Khilnani asserted that ‘in the South “civil society” has come almost exclusively to mean all those forces and agencies which oppose the state and its efforts at regulation: it has been used to describe agents and practices which wish to ‘recapture’ areas of life from the state” (Khilnani, 2001, p.30). Thus there is a stark opposition between civil society and state, such opposition according to Khilnani then “drift civil society towards political indeterminacy” (Khilnani, 2001, p.30). The same theme runs in the argument made by Zubaida while reflecting on the concept of civil society in the Middle East. He argues that Middle Eastern thinkers have inclined to stress “forms of associations and non-state institutions and grouping as the basis of a civil society containing sources of social autonomy and generating powers which may eventually counter-balance state power” (Zubaida, 2001, p.248).

Despite different connotations of the civil society concept, most of the divergences reflect to the point where civil society is viewed as “a realm or space in which there exists a set of organizational actors which are not a part of the household, the state or the market” (Lewis & Kanji, 2009, p. 121). Therefore, the associations in the public sphere are intermediaries between the state and the people with pursuing the interest of later constitute civil society.

Hence, within the development discourse the aid agencies, donors, and development practitioners do not rely on one inappropriate definition of civil society, but on a range of comprehensive specifications, any one of which can be pursued depending on which developmental objective they seek to achieve. However, by and large within development discourses the ability of civil society thus defined to contribute to regime change, to place democratic politics on a broader footing, and to hold future governments accountable to the rule of law.

Civil Society in Development Discourses with NGOs as the Prime Movers

With the end of cold war era and the struggle against the authoritarian rule in Eastern Europe and Latin America, the late 20th and early 21st century witnessed the presence of the political concept of civil society in the language of development policy and practice. The struggle against the authoritarian rule resulted in the “emergence of good governance policy agenda in 1990s” (Lewis & Kanji, 2009, p. 17), where civil society become a “source of civic responsibility, public virtue and a place where organized citizen can make a contribution to the public good” (Ibid., p. 128). Further, in the 1980s the idea of civil society within development policy became part of a wider debate about politics and democratization, public participation and improved service delivery with “NGOs as the prime organizational vehicle for strengthening [it]” (Howell and Pearce, 2002, p.235).

This [idea] was further deepened in the early 1990s by the neoliberal theories as a result of Washington Consensus, where civil society occupied the mainstream of development policy making. Furthermore, the “liberal discourse of civil society emphasized the socializing

effects of association to build better citizens. The idea of association to build better citizens was based on interdependence of market economy, state and civil society with each other as a ‘virtuous circle’ (Lewis & Kanji, 2009, p.128). Thus the growth of civil society was considered a potential sphere to contribute to the building of a more democratic process because it strives to shift the balance of power between the state and society in the favour of the later.

Moreover, in the 1990s the policy objectives of aid agencies were accompanied with improvements in intellectual, material, and organizational capacities based on civil society organizations (CSOs). These CSOs were supported as “mission oriented” and “social change organizations” (Ibid., p.130). Thus NGOs started to strengthen democratic process through strengthening these civil society organizations. For example, **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)** has been a leading donor in supporting NGOs as “vehicle for strengthening democratic processes through advocacy and voter education” (Ibid., p.131). Therefore, the growth of neoliberal policy agenda and alternative development concepts and practices brought NGOs into the arena of development.

A Shift Towards Participatory Approach and Empowerment in Development Discourses and the NGOs

From 1980s onwards development was “focused in terms of practice and interventions within the context of liberal capitalism” (Ibid., p. 71). Undertaking policy advocacy within communities and at a broader level, NGOs adopted an alternative development strategy as a practice rather than a theory. Fundamental to this alternative development was the concept of participation; “the need to build a central role in decision-making processes for ordinary people, instead of their being acted upon by outsiders in the name of progress or development” (Ibid., p.72). Participatory development emphasizes the idea that people themselves know better about their problems and should be vigorously engaged in devising strategies and solutions. It is usually used as “an umbrella term to refer to the involvement of the local people in development activities” (Willis, 2005, p. 103).

In addition to that in the late twentieth century with the rejection of the statism and top-downism of 'normal' development, the new development approach of “neo-liberalism focused on participatory development at grassroots level” (Mohan, 2014, pp. 4-5). This has permitted a plurality of developmental goals to be realized as well as giving the communities the self-determination it needs, in order to be able to make decisions on matters that affect their lives. Given this, the state was seen as the main hindrance to participation, and much of participatory development is organized through the realm of NGOs. Willis argues that the “move away from the top-down approach has been associated with in particular with the growth of NGOs” (Willis, 2005, p. 97). NGOs are regarded as the answer to the perceived limitations of the state and the market in facilitating development for a range of reasons. Two of them are the capability of NGOs to reach communities at grass root level, and provision of services efficiently through drawing on local people’s knowledge and their participation. Thus, NGOs are considered beneficial to the non-material aspects of development, particularly in “processes of empowerment, participation and democratization” (Ibid., p. 99).

Moreover, the alternative concepts of development under neoliberalism also include ‘empowerment’ in addition to “participation, gender and range of people-centred approaches” (Lewis & Kanji, 2009, p. 24). Multilateral organizations took these ideas on board. For instance, **United Nations Development Program (UNDP)** in the 1990s put forward the idea

of “human development” (Ibid., p.53) to combine both material and non-material needs. Central to this was the ‘capability approach’ of Amartya Sen, who conceptualized development, not as economic growth but also the capacity of individuals to make choices in order to improve the quality of life. Then it comes to the post-development era where ‘development as empowerment’ approach began to emerge as a part of a new discourse to link theory and practice to engage with the relationship of power and inequality. Cumulatively the end of cold war, and the emergence of neoliberal theories integrated civil society into development discourses with NGOs as prime movers.

Good Governance in the Neo-Liberal Discourse

Neoliberalism primarily emerged as an economic agenda that included a ‘negative connotation of the state and the public sector’ (Demmers, et al., 2004, p.1). Both the stabilization programs of the late 1970s and the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) of the 1980s were carrying this negative connotation. Dimmers, et al argue that ‘more market and less state’ (Ibid., p.1) was the prime objective of these programs. Nonetheless, with the end of Cold War era, a new discourse on the political system and governance arose within neoliberal policies with the idea that for global neoliberalism in order to proceed, needs a sound governance environment.

The concept of good governance for the first time was used by the World Bank in its report on Sub-Saharan Africa in 1989. The publication identified ‘poor governance’ as the prime reason for the failure of Africa’s Structural Adjustment Programmes. The report summarized that ‘Africa needed not just less government but better government’ (Demmers, et al., 2004, p.2). Therefore, good governance was taken as a remedy to the African’s development predicament. In this context, the World Bank report asserted that “political legitimacy and consensus are a precondition for sustainable development” (World Bank, 1989, P.60).

The failure of SAPs in Africa brought a twist in the neoliberal policies from the early 1990s onward where the “call for less state has gradually been substituted by a call for a better state” (Demmers, et al, p.1). The new approach implies an improved and accountable governance of what is been left of the state after the SAPs. Therefore, the stress on good governance was “often combined with a call for democratization” (Ibid., p.1) to fill a conceptual and policy gap that resulted after the implementation of SAPs.

The World Bank report on ‘Governance and Development’ defines governance as “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development” (World Bank, 1992, p.1). In relation to this definition, the Bank had identified three aspects of governance. That include the “form of political regime”, the “process by which authority is exercised in the management of country’s economic and social resources for development”, and the “capacity of governments to design, formulate and implement policies and discharge its functions” (World Bank, 1994, p.xiv). In few years’ time, the concept of good governance was incorporated into development policies by major multilateral organizations. Further to that, this idea has been accepted at the global level as an important mean for poverty eradication. For instance, in the United Nations Millennium Declaration of 2000, it is mentioned that “success in meeting these objectives [poverty eradication and development] depends on, inter alia, on good governance within each country” (UN, 2000, p.4).

However, Abrahamsen argues that “governance is conceptually linked to economic liberalization, and civil society is regarded as emerging from the liberation of the economy and reduction of the state” (Abrahamsen, 2000, p.65). Hence, a more economic and less political approach is being pursued within the neoliberal framework of good governance. Although the political approach of Good Governance stresses the need of democratic decision-makings in policy-making through active citizen involvement. Nonetheless, the idea of good governance within the neoliberal agenda is presented as a non-political and non-ideological program. Thus, it can be inferred that the neoliberal policies with reference to good governance are ideologically non-political owing to the prevalent agenda of economic liberation to open up spaces for capitalist democracies.

Confluence of Civil society and NGOs in Pakistan

Civil society in Pakistan has emerged as a significant force in addressing social and human development in the last decade. Historically, the development of civil society in Pakistan is conflated with conflict and coordination depending upon the nature of activity the civil society organizations involved. The government has shown a dichotomous attitude, leaning towards facilitation in the case of organizations involved in service delivery and hostility in the case of those engaged in social or political advocacy. The community development-oriented NGOs emerged in the 1980s to fill the vacuum created as a result of government’s failure to provide basic services. The failure was due to the over centralized planning and the top-down approach adopted by the government. These NGOs engaged in the provision of development services to communities that were traditionally the realm of the government. On the other hand, the sustainable development and advocacy NGOs who are engaged in community empowerment, social and economic transformation of society, emerged between 1985 and 1995 as a result of Zia Ul Haq’s military government’s policies, which curtailed progressive trends in the country. This event created an environment for civil society into the discourse of development in last decades or two. Moreover, civil society is considered to be an umbrella for a range of “non-state and non-market citizen organizations and initiatives, networks and alliances operating in social, economic and cultural fields” (Sattar & Baig, 2001, p. 1). Major civil society organizations in Pakistan among others include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), women’s right groups, student organizations, workers or professional associations, trade unions and faith-based organizations. However, “Pakistan’s civil society is characterized by hybrid forms, multiple inheritances and the unresolved struggle between the practices and values of pre-capitalist society and new modes of social life, between authoritarian legacies and democratic aspirations” (Ibid., 2001, p. 1). Analyzing the global trends of civil society and NGOs’ interaction along with alternative development concepts of community empowerment through participatory approaches seems to coincide with the societal dynamic of Pakistan in the late 1990s. Thus NGOs engaged in Pakistan on the same footing to strengthen civil society with a shift in their policies to focus community at grassroots level participations. In the recent past, the community development-oriented NGOs in the region of Gilgit have shown a shift in their work, from service delivery and physical infrastructure development towards community empowerment and social and economic transformation. This case study explores NGO-government relationship in the context of good governance as a wider part of development discourses, and in the social transformation of the region in particular. Here NGO-government relations are explored in term of communities’ engagement in collective action for a social and policy change.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter includes the methodological approach which is used to carry out this study. It is divided into five sections. Section one gives an account of the research design used in this study. The research design includes case study approach, ethnography, and data triangulation method. The second section discusses the sampling and selection of interviewees, where sampling is carried out for structured and unstructured interviews. Further, this section also highlights the stratified sampling technique employed while selecting respondents for an unstructured interview. Section three is devoted to explaining the tools of data collection. Here the main data collecting tools like document reviews, face to face interview and questionnaires are discussed in relevance to the nature of this study. The fourth section moves on to describe the ethical concerns that are addressed in a research study. And section five is about limitations encountered during the fieldwork. Moreover, it also gives reflection about the management of insider biases in the research.

Research Design

Research design provides a systematic model through which the research is carried out. It provides direction and procedure for how the researcher pursues to answer the research questions. Research design mainly deals with the plans that can be adopted within the practical constraints of the research study. However, the research design in a qualitative study do not follows a linear path. In qualitative research, any component of the design may need to be reconsidered or modified in response to any change or development in the study. As Maxwell argues, “research design should be a reflexive process operating at every stage of the study” (Maxwell, 2012, p.2). Thus, qualitative research follows the concept of construction and reconstruction of research design.

The design for this research is a case study approach in addition to ethnography, where NGOs-government relationship is assessed in relation to its contributions to strengthening civil society to foster good governance from the communities’, NGOs’, and governments’ perspective. The case study as a methodology in research limits, the research study to a predefined context to pursue the research objective with a specific focus on questions in the defined context. Iacono et al, 2009 argue that a “case study is a research strategy which focuses on understanding a phenomenon within its natural setting [where] attention is paid to contextual conditions, regarded as highly relevant to the phenomenon being investigated” (Iacono et al., 2009, p. 40). I have used the NGOs’ engagement in empowering communities through their initiatives and communities’ participation at local level organizations. This helped me in understanding the context, ways, and means in which NGOs in Gilgit are contributing to strengthen civil society as a part of a wider goal to achieve good governance.

The second method used is ethnographic study accompanied with triangulation of data. Ethnography is the study of “social interactions, behaviours, and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organizations, and communities” (Reeves, et al., 2008, p. 512). The main purpose behind the adoption of ethnographic study is to provide holistic intuitions into people’s views and actions and the nature of the context they inhabit through a collection of detailed interviews. The ethnographic study allows examining reflexive loops by revealing the general perception in a particular context which then reveals that how things are happening, what effect they bear on the ordinary life of people in a broader social setting.

Thus changes in a society can be captured through ethnographic study: the “ethnographic approach is uniquely suited to the study of societies in transformation, as it allows the researcher to pay attention to uncertainty” (Ogawa, 2009, p.14). The region of my study is going through socio-economic and political transformations that have started in the recent past. In contemporary times, NGOs on the one hand engage communities at the grassroots level in development and on the other hand, facilitate government-communities’ linkages to improve governance. Thus in such social contexts, the ethnographic study is helpful to get insights from the grassroots level. Moreover, ethnography also facilitated the inclusion of diverse voices, because “voices are not seen as products of local structures, based on community and tradition, alone or as privileged sources of perspective. Rather they are seen as products of the complex sets of associations and experiences which compose them” (Marcus, 1994, p. 49). Thus ethnography remains flexible to collect responses from diverse voices. However, given the nature of my case study ethnographic study could not alone serve the purpose, and therefore data triangulation is also added to the research design. Data triangulation is one of the types of methodological triangulations that uses different sources of data to examine a given phenomenon in number of different contexts and points in time or space. Thus it provides a strategy to validate the evaluation and research findings. In this case study NGOs’ project reports, structured interviews from NGOs’ personnel and government officials, and unstructured interviews from the representatives and members of community organizations at the grassroots level are used for data triangulation. This is discussed in more detail in the research methods section.

Sampling and Selection of Interviewees

My sampling procedure remained directive in the sense that the respondents were the representatives and members of the community who have been and are part of development initiatives in the NGO-government partnership phase. Further, my respondents included NGO and government officials, specifically those who were and are part of those NGO-government partnership projects that aim at good governance. The actual population is stretched over a large geography covering the entire Gilgit and Baltistan region with 30 LSOs, 750 V/WOs and two government departments including Local Government and Rural Development (LG&RD) and Planning and Development department. The sample for this study is selected from the Gilgit region where it covered twelve LSOs, eight VOs and eight WOs, AKRSP Officials and government officials from LG&RD department. For sampling purposes, population stratified sampling is used, where stratification is made on the basis of regions and gender. Stratified sampling is a technique where “sampling process is divided into subgroups (i.e. strata), and the sampling is executed separately on each stratum” (Reis and Judd, 2000, p.231). Stratified sampling provides greater control over the composition of sampling to assure the representativeness in terms of stratification. Then from both strata, an equal number of interviewees have been selected using proportional stratified sampling technique, defined as “the use of the same sampling fraction from each stratum” (Ibid., p.231). The reason behind using proportional stratified sampling is to assure a balance between the two strata, classified on the basis of region and gender.

Tools of Data Collection

The main data collection tools which I employed in this study include documentary review, structured and unstructured interviews, and questionnaire. The data obtained from interviews and questionnaires are used to assess the material from the documentary reviews of the NGOs so as to carry out data triangulation.

Documentary Review

The documentary review primarily relied on review and analysis of NGO documents. The resources consist of project and program reports including concept notes, midterm progress reports, MoUs signed, and annual reports. Further to that, other correspondence material such as posters, brochures, and newsletters are also used. In this regard the resource center at AKRSP has served the purpose to access the project documents and other materials. Document analysis is a methodical procedure for reviewing or assessing documents. It can also be used along with other qualitative research methods as a means of triangulation in “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon” (Denzin, 2009, p.271). As a research method, document analysis is relevant to qualitative case studies that provide a holistic description of a single phenomenon, organization or program. Payne (2004), quoted in Mogalakwe & Bostswana (2006), explains the documentary method as a technique used “to categorise, investigate, interpret and identify the limitations of physical sources, most commonly written documents, whether in the private or public domain” (Mogalakwe & Bostswana, 2006, pp. 221-222). Given the nature of this study, document analysis seemed to be one of the relevant methods to use. Furthermore, document analysis is a “cost effective way to obtain empirical data as part of a process that is unobtrusive and nonreactive” (Bowen, 2009, p. 39). In addition to that, this study has used primary and secondary documents. Primary documents refer to eye-witness narratives produced by people who experienced the particular event under study. On the other hand, secondary documents refer to documents produced by people who were not present at the event but received eye-witness accounts to develop narratives. Thus NGO reports are treated as primary documents while any reviews or reflection on the project reports are considered as secondary documents.

Interviews

Apart from documentary review, I have used interviews for data collection. An interview is a form of social interface which is shaped by the motives, expectations and perceptions of both interviewer and respondents. In this study, I have used structured and unstructured interviews. The structured interviews consisted of verbally managed questionnaires, in which a list of predetermined questions were asked, with little or no change. This method is employed while interviewing the NGO officials who were my key informants in addition to the government officials. The NGO officials whom I interviewed included the officials of Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) in Gilgit, while the government officials were from LG&RD department. On the other hand, unstructured interviews that do not reflect any predefined thoughts were used while interviewing the representatives and members of LSOs, VOs, and WOs who are or remained part of the NGO-government partnership projects. I was also mindful that not every interview may be fruitful in receiving response that will answer the questions of this study. However, it is mitigated to some extent by replacing the interviewee.

I also opted for telephone interviews when I came to know about unique case studies in LSOs other than Gilgit region regarding my subject of inquiry. In this case, I had a telephonic interview with the representatives of two LSOs from Astore district and two from Nagar region and two LSOs and one WO from district Ghizer.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a set of systematically structured questions used by researchers to obtain needed information from respondents. In my study, I used the questionnaire as a tool of data collection only for those respondents with whom I conducted unstructured interviews. The questionnaire was presented after the unstructured interview. This helped me to triangulate the data. For the purpose of not bothering my respondents the length of the questionnaire was kept short as much as possible.

Ethical Concerns

Ethical considerations are an important part of a research study that need to be upheld. Working within the ethical boundaries of this research, the permission from institution overseeing research, the permission of the NGOs under focus and consent of the respondents have been obtained. In addition to that, the protection of their reputation and confidentiality of the data obtained is ensured. Ethical issues include “getting informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, avoiding harm and exploitation” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 275). During the field work, precautionary measures were observed to avoid any violation of ethical considerations required by a research study. Before conducting face to face to face interviews, interviewees’ consent was obtained and the purpose of the study was explained. Moreover, data and results of the research are kept and used for the intended purpose of this research and are and will not be shared with third parties that are not related to this study. Also, it is also ensured not to use the results in any inappropriate manner that might harm my informants. Thus the ethical principal of “doing no harm” was followed throughout the research.

Limitations

The extent of limitations in this study seems to be manageable. I belong to the same region and this helped me to adopt the concept of ‘going native’, which implies that I was familiar with the nature of people and the general situation of the region.

However, the constraint I encountered during this research was that the respondents from the NGO sector were not very much open to talk during the interviews. This was also because of the recent crises for the NGO sector in Pakistan where government banned some NGOs and manifested its future intentions towards NGOs in Gilgit-Baltistan. This could have to some extent influenced their responses concerning about AKRSP’s policy in its relationship with the government.

In addition to that, this research had time constraints. The period of this research was one month, which included traveling, data collection and analyzing. Given the length of the period, it was not possible to adopt a detailed collection of data with a broad base of respondents and thorough analysis from different standpoints. This research can nevertheless be taken further to the next step with a broad respondent base to capture a holistic view of the phenomenon under inquiry.

Managing Insider Bias

I was mindful of my status as ‘insider’ to the region and ‘outsider’ to the AKRSP. My status of ‘insider’ to this research was owing to the fact that I belong to the region. Therefore, reflexivity became a vital aspect in this study to attain objectivity. Within social science,

particularly with reference to qualitative research, the idea of objectivity in the research to isolate researcher from research object is widely contested. Researcher's background, experience, and knowledge, in some way or another, influence the research object. The notion of "absolute objectivity" is an illusion rather than reality" (Gelman & Henning, 2015, p.10). This impossibility of keeping the researcher as an outsider to the research has led to the introduction of reflexivity in research. General, reflexivity refers to introspection, while in research it is a "process of looking 'inwards' and 'outwards' in order to examine the relationship between one's experiences, knowledge, and understanding of the world" (King & Horrocks, 2010, p.126). Moreover, Davies argues that reflexivity in research simply "means a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference" (Davies, 2008, p.4). Therefore, it is necessary to take account of circumstances under which research is carried out in order to know the possible influence such conditions may have on the research object. These factors have been dealt with care in each and every stage of this research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reflects on literature that has discussed NGO-government relationship, participation, and governance. It is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on NGO-government relationship within literature. The second section talks about participation and governance as debated in the literature.

The NGO-Government Relationship

The relationships between governments and NGOs are sometimes given the label of "partnership" for development. These "partnerships" currently have a substantial place in the development discourse, in which organizations like government and non-government are encouraged to work together (Hulme & Edwards, 1997; Lewis, 1997; Najam, 2000; Brinkerhoff, 2003). The phenomenon of NGO-government relationship emerged as a new concept within academics in the late 1980s. In this context, Salamon laments that the "government and non-profit organizations ties have been largely overlooked not because of lack of research rather there are major weaknesses in the prevailing theories" (Salamon, 1987, p.29). He associated the absence of sound theoretical foundations to explain the relationship. Nonetheless after few years Hulme and Edward acknowledged that "the theoretical basis for the NGO-government relationship are partially developed" (Edwards & Hulme, 1997, p.4). However, Coston argued that "with all its pros and cons the relationship between governments and NGOs has been accepted as an inevitable on both sides" (Coston, 1998, p.358).

Thus, some form of linkages between governments and NGOs remain inevitable despite being undesirable or controversial. Scholars within the development field are divided between functionalist and liberationist perspectives in relation to the linkages between governments and NGOs. Cotter (1998) explains that the functionalist perspective favours more linkages between these institutions, whereas the liberationist argues for fewer linkages with governments. However, Cotter argues that "it is the quality not the quantity of the relations between the two institutions, that determines the effects of the relationship as negative or positive" (Cotter, 1988, p.47). Moreover, according to Ramanath & Ebrahim (2010), typologies of NGO-state interactions can be put into two categories. In the first category, relations are based on the policy space accessible to NGOs. The second category

presents relationships as the result of strategies that both state institutions and NGOs adopt. This is further explained in Najam's (2000) Four Cs model, which gives detailed account of NGO-government relations by probing the extent to which organizational goals and means of both institutions overlap.

The availability of policy space to NGOs implies that relationships between NGOs and governments are mediated by the context in which both entities operate. Hulme and Edward argue that "within the NGO, donor, and state categories there is enormous diversity; the associational cultures and context of NGOs vary greatly from country to country" (Edwards & Hulme, 1997, p.4). While Clark (1991) presents that, that NGO-state interactions depend on the socio-political setting of the country and NGOs may seek to oppose, complement, or to reform the state. In the same context Coston emphasizes that "NGOs must inform themselves as to the political and legal context of government operations and government must be aware of the needs and activities of NGOs, as these have a significant influence on overall service patterns" (Coston, 1998, p.358). Whereas Smillie & Helmlich (1993) highlight that, the purposes of NGO-government relations are varied "as the governments, the NGOs, and the societies they serve" (Smillie & Helmlich, 1993, p.16). Further to that, Mercer (2002) asserted that whether NGOs reinforce or weaken the government and or civil society "is a highly subjective issue, interpreted from a range of standpoints of different actors, institutions and organizations" (Mercer, 2000, p.19).

In this context, while accessing NGO-government relations in Africa Bratton (1987) has highlighted that political considerations, the nature of NGOs' activities, and the geographical location of NGOs' operation play a role in determining NGO-government relationships. He argues, that the behavior of government towards the voluntary sector and the contribution of NGOs to development are determined "more by political rather than economic considerations" (Bratton, 1987, p. 1). Thus the relationship between government and NGOs is a political question that depends upon the legitimacy of different institutions in relation to power dynamics "to assert leadership, to organize people, and to allocated resources in the development enterprise" (Ibid., p.2). Further to that Bratton mentions that NGOs can encounter a confrontational response from governments if they opt to operate programs of civil and political liberties in disputed territories where there exist "risk of becoming embroiled in national political disputes" (Ibid., p.2). Similarly, the region of my study Gilgit-Baltistan is also constitutionally disputed between Pakistan and India. Moreover, the Pakistani state has a strong grip in the region through civil and military means. However, NGO-government relations in the region have been cooperative, because of the apolitical position of NGOs, where their focus on community empowerment is limited to development projects.

Assuming the heterogeneity of the contexts, Coston (1998) came up with a model that suggests possible types of NGO-government relationships. The model outlines eight possible types of relationships based on multiple dimensions. These include "government's resistance or acceptance of institutional pluralism, the relative balance of power in the relationship, the degree of formality and level of government linkage" (Coston, 1998, p.360). Relationships like repression, rivalry, resistance, and competition are characterized by the "absence of institutional pluralism in governments" (Coston, 1998, p.361) with asymmetrical power relation and unfavourable policy towards NGOs in general. On the other hand, relationships like third party contracting, "government do accept institutional pluralism with moderate to high linkage with NGOs" (Coston, 1998, p.361). However, the government dominates the

power relation. Further to that, in the case of cooperative relation in addition to institutional pluralism, NGOs rely on low linkage with neutral government's policy towards them. It is the complementary and collaborative relations where in addition to institutional pluralism there "exist symmetry in power relation where NGOs exercise autonomy with the inclusive policy of the government towards NGOs" (Coston, 1998, p.361). Nonetheless, such linkages are based on "comparative advantages and mutual benefits" (Farrington & Bebbington 1993; Hulme & Edwards 1997; Najam 2000). This implies that the relationships are also shaped by the strategic interests of the both government and NGOs.

Reflecting on government-NGOs relationships as the result of strategic interests, Najam (2000), presented a Four Cs model. This model explains that the relationships are based on 'strategic institutional interests rather than determined by factors such as "type of government, the state of development and the economic ideology" (Najam, 2000, p.376). This is in contrast to that of Bratton's (1989) argument that, political, geographical factors and nature of NGOs' work also influences NGO-government relationship. Furthermore, Najam (2000) argues that at the policy level the goals, interests, and priorities of NGOs and the government collide in harmony or discord. However, a more holistic approach may suggest that the strategic institutional interests at policy level are also influenced by the political and geographic factors in addition to the nature of NGOs' programs.

Within the policy arena, the Four C's model accesses NGOs- government relationship with reference to the ends (goals) pursued and the means (strategies) adopted by both institutions. Their interaction with each other result into one of four possible combinations: "seeking similar ends with similar means (Cooperation), seeking dissimilar ends with dissimilar means (Confrontation), seeking similar ends but preferring dissimilar means (Complementarity), or preferring similar means but for dissimilar ends (Co-optation)" (Najam, 2000, p.383). Thus NGO-government relations are based on strategic choices the institutions adopt and can be explained in terms of difference and uniformity in institutional interests. However, the model stresses that even where government is the dominant player, the ultimate nature of this relationship is a "strategic institutional decision" (Najam, 2000, p.390), even though the NGOs may have limited space to play in order to reach its decisions, but the very choice NGOs to stay in the game is in itself a strategic choice.

Najam's (2000) institutional goals and means are dominant in the relationship between AKRSP and the local government. The nature of the relationship between AKRSP and government remained positive, "did not involve a compromise on the principles, and served the strategic interests of both AKRSP and government in the region" (Najam, 2006, p. 429) where AKRSP operates. This type of NGO-government relation is contrary to what civil society and government have elsewhere in Pakistan and other developing countries where the relationship is categorized by animosity on part of both sides. Elaborating on the prevailing cordial relation between the two institutions, Najam argues that, "the purpose [of AKRSP] was always to influence the government, and it was always stressed that [government] is to be influenced not to be opposed" (Ibid., p.429). However, within the organizational philosophy of AKRSP it has been a dominant strain that getting too close to the government must be resisted. This implies that good relations with government are mandatory in order to influence it, but the relations must be at arm's length. Though AKRSP has played a substantial role "both as an advocate of policy reform and service provider to the government" (Ibid., p.435) but it's role in monitoring government activities is absent. This is because, it is in the interest of both government and AKRSP not to engage at the monitoring

level. In this context case, studies of NGOs working in Bangladesh and India reflect that “NGOs can play roles in policy advocacy while managing the relationship with governments only when they able to transform themselves into a strategic institution in the long run” (Garilao, 1987, p.117).

In the light of Najam’s Four C’s model (2000) pursuing certain goals with a preference for certain strategies, AKRSP and government came into a complementary type of relationship, where the goals of both institutions are similar in development terms. This complementary relation is also attributed to the inefficiency of government in service delivery that led to AKRSP’s intervention in the region. Garilao (1987) while elucidating the case of Bangladesh and India lamented that, in relation to government, NGOs in the third world “constitute a reliable alternative to governments as channels of development assistance based on their responsiveness to the poor with effective service provision” (Garilao, 1987, p.113). Moreover, a “profound collaborative relation can develop when the government comes with a positive social agenda” (Clark, 1993, p.5). However, such relations happened to be few even the “conditions are met due the existence of mutual distrust between NGOs and governments” (Tandon, 1987; Clark, 1993).

Furthermore, “the existence of AKRSP neither needed nor threatened government in any ways other NGOs do” (Najam, 2006, p.443). This implies that NGOs dependency on government and threat to government adversely affect the relations. In the first case, AKRSP is quite affluent in terms of resources, while in the second case it has maintained an apolitical status owing to the socio-political sensitivities of the region. Thus, maneuvering of strategic interests also results in cooperative relations.

Brinkerhoff (2002) divides the literature on NGO-government partnerships into three streams, each with their own defined perspectives. According to her, the first one is the normative category, which views ‘partnerships as ends in themselves’ and argues that “partnership is the most ethically appropriate approach to sustainable development and service delivery” (Brinkerhoff, 2002, p.20). Further, the literature, in this case, highlights that partnerships should seek to maximize equity and inclusiveness. It should adopt democratic means to mobilize, and involve all stakeholders potentially affected by or potentially contributing to a particular public service delivery effort. Thus it promotes partnership values of mutual influence and accountability. The second stream is the reactive category, which describes that “an organization’s partnership work in glowing terms, in an attempt to counter criticism of the past” (Brinkerhoff, 2002, p.21), with the aim to promote better relations between governments and NGOs. This perspective is illustrated by some international donors, governments, and corporations. Moreover, the third perspective as mentioned by Brinkerhoff (2002) is the pragmatic category, which views “partnership as instrumental” (Brinkerhoff, 2002, p.21). It implies that partnerships are efficient and effective means of achieving objectives.

However, in south Asia countries, the NGO-government relationship is determined by the level of power symmetry between the state and NGO. Power symmetry between the two institutions in turn results multi-facets of relationship including “repression, rivalry, competition, contracting, third-party government, cooperation, complementarity and collaboration” (Najam, 2000; Teamey, 2010). As according to Haque (2004) three forms of cooperation between the state and NGOs exist in the case of Bangladesh. These include “joint implementation of projects by both partners”, subcontracting of public sector services to major NGOs, and direct financial support of NGOs by the government. Haque concludes that

the most prevalent form of collaboration between the government of Bangladesh and NGOs is the sub-contracting in which the state has formal contracts with major NGOs to implement specific projects.

One another aspect that leads to developing linkages between governments and NGOs is the comparative advantage in service delivery, where the linkage stems out to be a third party contract. Most of the comparative advantage argument stems from a negative perception owing to governments' failure in provision of services to the citizens. Thus the rise of NGOs and the subsequent case for NGO-government relationships in developing countries arose in response both to perceived state failure to provide services and comparative advantage in the third-party contract. However, Hulme & Edwards lament that the greater interest of international donor agencies in NGOs has been viewed as a part of the process to reduce the influence of the state'. Many donor organizations have favored NGOs as a means of democratizing, alleviating poverty, strengthening civil society, and substituting for government institutions. Matsunaga & Yamauchi, (2004) while accessing the cooperative nature of the governmental and non-profit sector relationship in the US argue that "the existence of demand heterogeneity in the services sector leads government's failure to deliver services" (Matsunaga & Yamauchi, 2004, p.227). Whereas, the "size of the non-profit sector varies dramatically according to locality" (Ibid., p.228), thus enabling non-profit organizations to be feasible solutions providers for the economic and social problems of the society. Here government failure theory provides a significant observation in terms of the contractual relationship between governments and non-profit organizations. As governments recognize that the non-profit sector has a significant comparative advantage in service delivery. Hence the relationship between government and non-profit sector depends on upon the degree of mutual interdependence and the objective of the government.

Literature suggests that NGOs- governments relationships do not follow a linear trend. Over the time both the institutions are found in harmony or discord. One of the factors that attribute the uneasy relationship between NGOs and state institutions is the difference in the ideological approaches. In this context Sanyal (1994) argues that the conflict between the state and civil society emerged as a result of urbanization and industrialization in the 70s under capitalism. By the mid-1970s new set slogans like "development from below, bottom-up development, grassroots development, development as if people mattered" (Sanyal, 1994, p. 35) appeared in development discourse as an alternative counter model to the "top-down approach of the 1950" (Ibid., p.35). Thus the rise of anti-government feeling during the 1980s seems to have connections with the rise in the popularity of the civil society. The NGOs then acted as catalytic agent for nurturing development from below with organizational priorities and procedures sharply in contrast to those of the institution's advocated top-down approach. This implies that NGO came in direct confrontation with the states. Moreover, with the community cooperation NGOs neither rely on the oppressive strategies used by the state nor the profit-seeking alternatives of the market institutions. Because if NGOs were to work in collaboration with the State, eventually they would be either dominated or co-opted by the State, thereby losing their legitimacy and effectiveness and, if NGOs were to work with market institutions, they would be influenced by profit-seeking motives in market-based exchange relationships. Despite the strategy of avoiding government and market institutions by NGOs, over the years the economic and political impact of their bottom-up approach is lacking. Sanyal argues that one of the causes for lack of political impact by NGOs is their lack of linkages with the government and other political parties. This suggests that in order to bring a political change, NGOs need to bridge up linkages with government and political

parties. Such “linkages were avoided on the grounds that they would reduce the NGOs' autonomy and, hence, the effectiveness of their operation” (Ibid., p.41). Though development literature has portrayed NGO and government as having opposite characteristics and suggested NGOs to observe a certain distance from the government. However, it is argued that “the successful NGOs need to work closely with government entities” (Ibid., p.44). Because development “does not trickle down from "the top", neither does it effervesce up from "the bottom". Development requires a ‘synergy between "the top" and "the bottom"” (Ibid., p.44) a collective effort between the both, each with a different comparative advantage in the process of development.

Participatory Approaches and Good Governance in Development

The development arena has been preoccupied with participatory approaches to local development from the last three decades of the 20th century. Despite criticisms of its capability the participatory approach has remained the central theme of development practices with the creation of participatory spaces at the local level. Cleaver (1999) asserts that “participation has therefore become an act of faith in development” (Cleaver, 1999, p.597). Both in the practice and theory the participatory approaches have changed over the time under different circumstances. Pozzoni & Kumar (2005) mentioned that, the World Bank experience shows that during the early phase of research, in the 1980s, a lower level of participation in form of “information and consultation” is transformed into higher one in form of “collaboration and empowerment”. While, Kyamusugulwa (2013) acknowledges that, the participatory approach is not a static framework rather has changed, “with time, context, and circumstances”. Nonetheless, it appears that all the diverse forms are embedded with a common notion of “people’s involvement in a common objective or public goods activities regarding either economic or social life” (Kyamusugulwa, 2013, p.1266).

Participation implies people’s involvement in developing planning, projects, practices, and in decision-making processes. In this context, the literature has made a broad distinction between “community participation and citizen participation initiatives” (Gaventa & Valderrama, 1999, p.1). The community participation involves “communities as partners in the implementation of a specific development project” (Pozzoni & Kumar, 2005, p.v), whereas, citizen participation encompasses institutional reforms beyond the boundaries of development projects. it entails making “governance more participatory by engaging citizens directly in policy-making” (Ibid., p.v).

Community participation as a sing of people’s involvement in development projects, is pursued by the World Bank with the aim that “by enabling communities and citizens to define investment priorities, decision making in a project or its implementation, the development process becomes more inclusive and responsive to the needs of the poor” (Ibid., p.v). Thus, community participation is presented as a means to enhance the effectiveness of service delivery, in reaching the target groups as well as in attaining sustainability of project investments. With the notion of community as a stakeholder in development projects, the world bank adopted the concept of Community-Driven Development (CDD) initiatives. By defining it as an approach that “gives control of decisions and resources to community groups” (Dongier et al., 2003, p.3), the Bank came up with a three-fold typology for community-driven development. This typology has combined both community participation and participatory governance initiatives. The first category of typology, namely “community control”, represents the notion of community participation” (Pozzoni & Kumar, 2005, p.1), that aims to enable communities in decision-making within the realms of a particular

development involvement. Communities take decisions in the identification of their needs, on planning, implementation, operation, and maintenance. The second typology in the case of CDD is equated with the concept of participatory governance, as it promotes “partnerships and collaborative decision-making between local government and communities” (Ibid., p.1). Lastly, the third one incorporates both community participation and participatory governance with the objective to promote “policy and institutional reform to build an enabling environment” (Ibid., p.2) for both.

In line with the World Bank’s typology community control in development, interventions have remained effective in Gilgit-Baltistan, where NGOs in particular AKRSP has effectively involved communities in the process of development projects from identification of the problem to the execution of projects by involving community-based organizations at the grassroots level. While partnership and cooperative decision-making between the local government and communities in the region are in the early phase. NGOs in this aspect are acting as facilitators to develop linkages between local government and community organizations. In this context Nelson (2002) asserts that, AKRSP need to be “less indispensable to Northern Areas and Chitral through a steady shift toward greater government, cooperate sector, and civil society partnerships focused on achieving greatly enhanced development effectiveness among all key institutions of the Northern Areas and Chitral” (Nelson, 2002, p.4). Thus the stress has made on developing linkages with other institutions in the region, particularly with the local government to transform policy, through participatory means. In the recent past, AKRSP has taken participatory governance initiatives under its Institutional Development for Poverty Reduction (IDPR) program. Under this initiative, it has established a Multi-Stakeholder Forum (MSF). This forum provides spaces to the standing committees of various government departments to sat with community organizations. This, in turn, ensures and “strengthens community participation in policy and development planning” (CIDA, AKFC, AKRSP, 2009, p.xii). However, community participation to reform institutions and policy at governmental level has not been achieved, that might need a sound foundation of participatory governance which itself is in the early phase.

Moreover, participation itself is not enough to ensure the influence of the participants in decision-making process. The notion of “neutral decision-making forums neutral, and as a level playing field” (Ibid., p.4) for those who participate has been criticized by scholars. Critics argue that it undermines the disparity in power and resource distribution amongst community members that obstructs the process of “collective decision-making which is inherently a social activity” (Leach et al., 1999; White, 1996). Kyamusugulwa (2013) argues that despite a potentially transformative role played by the participatory approach in development discourses “its main drawback rests in the imbalanced power relations between elites and non-elites” (Kyamusugulwa, 2013, p.1265).

In this context, the literature distinguishes between two distinct yet inter-connected aspects of inclusion in participatory spheres. this first dimension, is the “formal inclusion” (Pozzoni & Kumar, 2005, p.4), that “focuses the extent to which different community members are able to enter decision-making space, while the second one is ‘substantive inclusion’” (Pozzoni & Kumar, 2005, p.4), that encompasses the extent to which different participants are able to exert influence over decision-making, and the extent to which their voices are valued by other participants. In order to influence decision-making processes, community members need to be part of both dimensions. Because mere presence in participatory spaces does not enable

weaker social groups to assert influence in decision-making effectively rather “it makes participation legitimize in a way that only reflects the opinions of the powerful groups” (Johnson & Wilson, 2000, p.1898).

Elucidating the absence of the poor from participatory processes, Baland and Platteau (1999) highlighted that on the part poor there exist lack incentives to take part in collective undertakings, as these disturb their survival limitations. Poverty makes them vulnerable to a trade-off in favour of present income opportunities rather to opt for participation. Therefore, the poor are likely to abstain any type of collective activity at the expense of their present income opportunities, even if the collective activity increases permanent incomes in the long run. The same is lamented by Weinberger and Jutting (2001) in their quantitative analysis, that participation in development among local communities is more attractive for the middle class who are relatively better-off in terms of assets ownership. Further, literature explicates that the representatives of community-based organizations at grassroots level tend to be the one who are better-off in the community in terms of resources or education. Mostly “village chiefs and community leaders are often the ones who represented the community in participatory spaces created by community-based development intervention” (Linden, 1997; Desai, 1996). These representatives incline to be the “better-educated members of the community and relatively better-off households” (Desai, 1996, p.221). Moreover, communities generally elect those with political connection with power-holders, with the objective that “these are in the positions to attract benefits to the community” (Linden, 1997; Platteau & Gaspart, 2003). Such a selection of community leaders undermines the representation of marginalized groups within that community.

Contextualizing the limitations of the participatory approach in Gilgit, reveals that, AKRSP being part of Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), is viewed as semi-religious or semi-communal organization. Therefore, the participation of Ismaili community members in the development interventions undertaken by AKRSP are also driven by religious sentiments. As a result, the poor people out of religious affiliation forgo their present income and do not seek incentives for such participations. However, Nelson (2002) lamented that the future prospects of the community, area development where AKRSP operates are becoming further intricate and upholding inducements for participation will face challenges. Therefore, AKRSP requires more creative efforts to succeed in the programs involved the marginalized people of the region. Moreover, the substantive inclusion in the region of Gilgit-Baltistan represents the power imbalance and other draws backs of participatory approach highlighted in the literature. For instance, the representatives of community organizations are mostly educated and some politically active people. This concern demands a holistic insight into the social relations and structure of the rural areas where the development intervention takes place.

Apart from that, the effectiveness participative approach in the presence of government and donors is also questionable in the sense that how CSOs ensure that policy making is driven by the interest of community involved rather than that of government and donors. Edwards (1999) in this context laments that NGOs autonomy in the presence of donor agencies and government to pursue development at grass root level is subject to question, that to what extent the collective interests of local communities are inculcated in the formulation of policy at a higher level. Moreover, Giles & Kristian (2000) contended that “local participation can be used for different purposes by very different ideological stakeholders. Thus, there is a need for critical analyses of the political use of the local”, (Giles & Kristian, 2000, p.263).

In contrast to community participation, the citizen participation works beyond the circle of development projects. It focuses on reforms within institutions in order to make governance more participatory, by empowering citizens to effectively participate in those decisions that affect their lives. Participatory governance is advocated “as a mean to increase government accountability, deepening democracy and contributing to poverty reduction” (UNDP, 2002; Fung & Wright, 2003; DFID, 2000). Within the neoliberal framework, participatory governance with decentralization as a good governance reform has created new spheres for public engagement as citizens, rather than as mere beneficiaries of a development intervention. Where, civil society institutions apart from being “vehicles for participation in development programme and empowerment of target groups of poor people” (Giles & Kristian, 2000, p.248) are viewed as realms to “exert organised pressure on autocratic and unresponsive states and thereby support democratic stability and good governance” (Ibid., p.248).

Moreover, it is represented as an “inevitable human right for the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights” (DFID, 2000; Gaventa, 2002; UNDP, 2002). Gaventa, 2002, contends that the idea of development can be linked with the concept of rights where the rights to effective participation and social justice must be its intrinsic constituents. Quoting from DFID, 2000 report Gaventa, 2002 argues that, “this right [right to participate] will be real when citizens are involved in decisions and processes which affect their lives” (Gaventa, 2002, p.2). For participatory governance to reform institutions and policy, the participation needs to be inclusive, and should be pursued through institutional design that will enable to good governance. Gaventa asserts that “arguing for the reform of political institutions without attention to inclusion will only reinforce the status quo” (Ibid., p. 1) and “consultation without attention to power and politics will lead to voice without influence” (Ibid., p.1). This implies that participation followed by accountability leads to link the citizens with the state institutions and also paves the way for responsiveness of the state institutions as a vital part of good governance.

Further to that, the governance approach also emphasizes that non-state participants can play a role in demanding, monitoring and implementing rights themselves. Thus the concepts of citizenship, participation and accountability combined in a broadly intertwining “governance wheel” (Ibid., p.11) where citizenship entitles to hold others accountable. Hence accountability becomes a process to engage in participation.

Moreover, the institutional reforms that good governance agenda seeks are highly political in nature, however, the neoliberal discourse presents the concept of good governance as non-political. In reference to governance as depoliticising development, Hout (2009) asserts that governance in development in the developing world emerged as a “new stage in the long-term process of depoliticizing development” (Hout, 2009, p.29). the World Bank by defining governance as “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development” (World Bank, 1992, p.1) clearly asides the politics of development process and emphasize the managerial and technocratic aspect of governance. Thus the concept of governance along with civil society and participation as argued by Hout (2009) can be viewed as “an attempt to represent problems that are rooted in different power and class relations as purely technical matters that can be resolved outside the political arena” (Hout, 2009, p.29). In contrast to that, Abrahamsen (2000) contended that, “concentration on technical aspects should not, however, obscure the fact that governance agenda is highly political, as preferred modes of governance imply a preference for market-

led development, in which the role of state is delegitimised” (Abrahamsen, 2000, p.49). Thus, the World Bank’s functional understanding of governance reform as an instrument to facilitate market forces with a prime focus on building technical institutions has been criticized on the ground that, fundamentally the processes of this reform have political and economic character, as they affect the interests of socio-economic classes and their relations with each other. Therefore, the paradox of governance reform appears to be political because political-economic relations, prevalent imbalance in power, and socio-economic disparities are fundamental to understand the causes of bad governance. Whereas, the technical approaches may not be sufficient to address these causes of bad governance.

CIVIL SOCIETY IN GILGIT-BALTISTAN

This chapter reflects on the concept of civil society in Gilgit-Baltistan and the restructuring of the already existed civil society organizations with the intervention of the NGOs in the region. The first section is about chronological study of NGOs and their activities in the region. In doing so it briefly states the civil society institutions in the pre-NGOs intervention era, then it outlines different NGOs who made their ways to the region at different time. It also reflects on NGOs’ activities that include social, economic, cultural and environmental and institutional development at grassroots level by means of participatory approach and capacity building in order to link government to work with the community. In the third section an attempt is made to discuss civil society’s function within the existing governance structure of Gilgit-Baltistan. It reflects that, how civil society organizations operate in Gilgit-Baltistan region, where the region itself is in constitutional limbo since its independence.

A Chronological Study of NGOs and their Activities in Gilgit-Baltistan

Currently there are hundreds of NGOs including international NGOs operating in Gilgit-Baltistan. However, the concept of civil society institutions and community participation has been part of the society in Gilgit-Baltistan in the form of local institutional management systems since long ago. These institutions were established by the local communities to have links with the upper tiers of state administration i.e. Mirs and Rajas of the time. The socio-economic affairs are controlled by customary laws exercised through these institutions. These civil society institutions were promoting the concept of community participation in development to manage the use of resources in the region in accordance the needs of communities. Moreover, these institutions were functional till the time when external intervention is made in the region with the construction of KKH during 1970s and dissolution of the traditional institutions with the abolition of Rajgiri system of governance during late 1960s and early 70s. The intervention of NGOs in the region institutionalized the endogenous concept of local management system in form of VOs, WOs. Thus, the local institutional management of princely states served as precursor of civil society.

However, these social formations were not voluntarist or libertarian in nature, rather constraining and compulsory social associations which imposed hierarchical and binding authority on individuals. Zubaida argues that, “traditional social formations differed widely over time and in different parts of the Muslim world, but it would be fair to say that they were almost uniformly patriarchal and authoritarian, often coercive” (Zubaida, 2001, p.234).

Later AKDN intervened in the region to provide services in the education and health sectors, where it can be traced back to its activities in 1946, when the Aga Khan-III, started the Diamond Jubilee (D.J) schools programme in the region. Later on the AKDN spread its network in the Gilgit-Baltistan, by establishing the Aga Khan Education Service (AKES). In 1964 the Aga Khan Health service (AKHS) was established, likewise in 1970s the Aga Khan Housing Board (AKHB) came into being which is then followed by AKRSP. AKRSP involved the community in both service delivery and physical infrastructure development. Abdul Malik Argues that “AKRSP launched a community infrastructure development programme that aimed at harnessing local resources for economic and social development” (Abdul Malik, 2007, p.196). The community infrastructure and services delivery were integrated into a participatory approach to development, which on one hand fulfilled the services and physical infrastructure needs of the communities, and on the other hand nurtured democratization at grassroots level and invoked community participation to realize their own ways to uplift the living standard through awareness and empowerment. Moreover, AKRSP recently made shift in its programs to empower communities through lobbying and advocacy. Najam argues that, “influencing large scale policy change has always been a key component of the organization’s [AKRSP’s] mandate” (Najam, 2007, p.434). In this regard AKRSP has substantially performed both as policy reform advocate and as a service provider to the local government.

AKRSP is then followed by Aga Khan Cultural Service Programme (AKCSP) and the First Micro Finance Bank (FMFB), where AKCSP has been promoting the cultural dimension of environment, while FMFB is working on financial side to provide credit to encourage entrepreneurship in the region, thus facilitating the communities’ linkages with the market.

Apart from these organizations other international organizations like IUCN–The World Conservation Union¹ and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) came forward in response to the aim of the government to conserve the biodiversity of the region. These organizations used the social organization units established by AKRSP to promote their ideology at grassroots level. On the same footing two projects of AKHB; Building and Construction Improvement Programme (BACIP) and Water and Sanitation Extension Programme (WASEP) were launched in the mid-90s where they work at implementation level by linking conservation with improving the environment. Thus, NGOs have included into the ambit of their activities other sectors including micro-enterprise, eco-tourism, conservation of biodiversity and environment.

Since the 1980s there seems to be mushroom growth of NGOs in the region. According to one estimation “some 512 NGOs are functioning and registered under the Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Registration and Control) Ordinance of 1961” (IUCN, 2003:24). These organizations are working as civil society units to improve the social and economic condition of the communities in the region.

By and large NGOs’ activities have remained focused on social, economic, cultural and environmental aspects in the region. NGOs addressed these aspects through institutional development at grassroots level by means of participatory approach and capacity building. Furthermore, they also sensitize in government to work with the community based

¹ Though not specifically an NGO rather, it is a union of government as well as non-government organizations mostly works at policy level.

organizations through partnering government in development projects and providing capacity building facilities to the government officials so as to foster linkages between communities and the government.

Governance Structure in Gilgit-Baltistan: Civil Society and NGOs in Gilgit

Gilgit-Baltistan, formerly known as the Northern Areas, is a region of Jammu and Kashmir, a state which has been disputed between Pakistan and India since their independence in 1947. This historically distinct political entity, is situated at the point of intersection of China, Central and South Asia, and Afghanistan along with its border with the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir. The region has an area of 72,971 square kilometres with an estimated population of 2.0 million approximately². Gilgit-Baltistan has been in constitutional limbo since its accession to Pakistan on November 17, 1947 after having a self-rule for sixteen days in the aftermath of its independence. The region is administered by the federal government under different packages starting with Frontier Crime Regulation (FCR) to the recently announced ordinance of “Gilgit-Baltistan (Empowerment and Self-Governance) Order, 2009”. Under this ordinance the region is granted with partial autonomy by the government of Pakistan. This ordinance aims “to provide greater political empowerment and better governance to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan” (Government of Pakistan, 2009) under which necessary legislative, executive and judicial reforms for granting self-governance to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan were proposed. As a result of the ordinance the region was granted the provision to have a legislative assembly through election. On the other hand, the upper house of this assembly is formed as Gilgit-Baltistan Council (GBC) which is headed by the “Prime Minister of Pakistan as the chairman of the council” (Ibid., p.2). Further the council consists of Governor Gilgit-Baltistan who is nominated by the President of Pakistan on the advice of the Prime Minister of Pakistan and six members are chosen by the prime minister of Pakistan from among the federal ministers of Pakistan. The representation of local people in the council is made through membership of the Chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan and six elected members from GBLA “with the system of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote” (Ibid., p.13). However, the self-governance and empowerment ordinance fails to give due representation of the region in the national assembly and senate. The region therefore has a different political system without any representation at national level, where control is exercised by the federal government. The report of US Department of State has mentioned that, “the political systems of Gilgit-Baltistan... is described as being different from those of the rest of Pakistan and [it has] no representation in the national parliament” (USDOS, 8 April 2011, section 3). The Prime Minister of Pakistan, who serves as the chairman of the Gilgit-Baltistan Council, becomes then the de facto president of the region, since under Article 34 of the 2009 Order, the chairman is granted the “power to grant pardons, reprieves and respites and to remit, suspend or commute any sentence passed by any court, tribunal or other authority” (Government of Pakistan, 2009, p.15). Thus the federal government still has control over the region despite enacting the empowerment and self-governance ordinance. Moreover, under the ordinance, the chief judge and other judges in the region are appointed by the chairman of the of the council on the advice of the governor and the decisive authority in the hands of governor regarding appointments cannot be overruled by the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA). In addition to that, all judicial appointments in the region are contract-based under the discretionary renewal by the bureaucracy, leaving the judiciary largely submissive to the executive powers. Moreover,

² According to the last conducted census of 1998 the population of Gilgit-Baltistan was 0.87 million

many financial powers and important subjects remain with the GBC rather than the elected assembly. Nonetheless, the “GBLA has the authority to choose the chief minister and introduce legislation on 61 subjects” (ACCORD, 2012, p.8). Further, a report by Freedom House states that “majority of high-level positions in the local administration are reserved under the GBESGO for Pakistani bureaucrats, limiting local involvement in decision making” (FH, 18 August 2011).

Though the federal government is claiming to provide the ordinance to enable empowerment and self-governance in the region, however, firstly this ordinance has no constitutional status and failed to integrate the region as an autonomous part of Pakistan. Second the ordinance again reinforced the control of federal government over the region through Gilgit-Baltistan Council which is led by the prime minister of Pakistan and also by subjugating judiciary in the region to bureaucracy. Senge H. Sering quoted in Hong argues that, “Pakistani policymakers have kept the Constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan in a limbo, making the region an extraordinary example of political and judicial ambivalence” (Hong, 2012, p.2). Given the peculiar constitutional status and governance structure in Gilgit-Baltistan it is argued that the NGOs especially AKDN serves as a virtual replacement for the government in the region for service provision in socio-economic needs to the people given its semi-religious and semi communal nature. This also has resulted in developing conjectures by some of the intellectuals that these heavy developmental initiatives with significantly constructive results in economic well-being, education, health and gender equality have enabled the government of Pakistan to retain the “depoliticized status” of the region because of its juxtaposition with the Kashmir issue that is labelled as the “unfinished business of the Partition” (Bouzas, 2013, p.93). This would have been the perceptions of the people in early 2000 because of the successful venture of the development projects by the NGOs in the absence of government’s efforts in 1980s. However, the consistent efforts by AKRSP in bridging the gap between communities and government has opened the way forward for the communities to push the government to be responsive to the needs of people at grassroots level. Though the relationship between the government and community organizations are at the infant stage, yet the communities are optimistic regarding a more cooperative relation with government in fulfilling the services provisions to the communities once the devolution plan will have been enacted, so as to enable the District Councils (DCs) and Union Councils (UCs) to work in close coordination with the communities. The network of community organizations at grassroots level established by AKRSP now act as civil society organizations to mediate between the state and the people on one hand and between the people and market on the other hand. However, ambit of civil society organizations and NGOs are limited to development interventions. In this context, LSOs play a critical role in dealing with “the region’s in-between status, especially in the absence of any major constitutional changes in the near future” (Hong, 2012, p.15). Apart from these community based organizations there are also other local organizations including rights based organizations, religious organizations, youth organizations and political organizations that act as civil society organizations in the region. However, the activities of these organizations are subject to limitations either due to division of the region on regional, language and sectarian lines that narrow down their objectives to a specific group of people, or by imposition of restrictions by the government in the larger interest of the sovereignty of the state. Thus, civil society acts as an associational sphere for mutual economic interests of the people under donor funded NGOs. Moreover, the functions of civil society organizations are confined within the boundaries of development projects.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter reflects on the analysis of the data gathered during interviews at the field. It consists of three major components with sub-themes within each. The first component reflects the responses from NGO officials (in this case AKRSP) about their relationship with government. Within this context themes like working with government at arm's length, being supportive without compromising NGO's principles and not to be at confrontational level with the government remain the guiding philosophy of AKRSP. The second component is the responses from the government officials, in this case, officials of LG & RD department from Gilgit region. Interestingly two sets of themes are highlighted during the interviews which eventually lead to dividing the respondents into two categories. However, the sample size was small enough to generalize the responses as of the entire department. One of the themes reflects an antagonistic attitude of government officials towards NGOs. This group of respondents prefers the top-down approach in development. On the other hand, the second group of responses reflects that there is acknowledgment among the officials about NGOs' work at grassroots level, which they regard a step forward to improve good governance. However, both groups lamented the absence of policy provisions in the legal system which may bind the government to work with NGOs. Finally, the third section deals with the responses from representatives and members of LSOs, VOs, and WOs about the NGO-Government relationship. The responses turn out to be homogeneous in term of positivity about NGO-government relationship. The community members highlighted that such relations help in fostering linkages with the government to work at grass root level through community inclusiveness. This participatory approach by the government, in turn, fosters ownership of the projects among communities initiated by the government. Further to that, such partnership helps in the financial sustainability of the projects in the long run.

AKRSP's Philosophy of working with The Government

In the case of developing countries, there exists a general perception that the relationship between civil society, in particular NGOs, and governments seems to be one of rivalry and hostility. Sanyal argues that the emergence of slogans like "development from below, bottom-up development, grassroots development, development as if people mattered" (Sanyal, 1994, p. 35) in the development discourse as alternative counter models to the "top-down approach" (Ibid., p.35) has led to the rise of anti-government sentiment during 1980s. NGOs then acted as catalytic agents for nurturing development from below with organizational priorities and procedures diametrically opposite to those institutions who advocated top-down approach. Similarly, Batley finds out that, in developing countries relationship between government and non-state services providers is surrounded by mistrust. However, there exist a positive sense of acceptance towards both local and national government of Pakistan in AKRSP. Over time, the two institutions have maintained cordial relations and sometimes even close working relations. Najam in 2006 argued that, the "nature of the relationship between AKRSP and the government was positive" (Najam, 2006, p.429).

In this context the responses from AKRSP officials whom I interviewed highlight that there is no written policy at AKRSP's disposal that guides about its relation with the government. However, from the very inception, AKRSP has been cautious about its relation with the government. It has maintained a cooperative relation with a philosophy to work with government at "arm's length".

The response of one of the respondents who has been serving AKRSP for a decade is:

“AKRSP does not have any policy in black and white whether to work or not to work with the government. But AKRSP has been working with the government on a number of projects as a partner and in building government’s capacity. Our relation with the government so far has been cooperative in the sense that the two institutions have not confronted each other. Moreover, while working with the government, we have to be ‘cautious’ That is to say, not very close and not very far from the government”.

In the same context, Najam argues that “within the organizational philosophy of AKRSP it has been a dominant strain that getting too close to the government must be resisted” (Najam, 2006, p.429). A conscious policy within AKRSP is used to be supportive of government in terms of facilitating better community-government relations in the region where it operates. Moreover, AKRSP keeps a distance from the government in such supportive roles instead of compromising on its principles. Najam put it in this way “[AKRSP’s] mandate to influence government while jealously guarding its own participatory ethos and ensuring that it is itself not too open to government’s influence” (Najam, 2006, p.429).

Commenting on the supportive nature of AKRSP in its relation with the government, one of the AKRSP staffs who is associated with the DPG project reveals that;

“Government has an upper hand in the relation with AKRSP to the extent that whenever the government wants it cooperates with NGO and when it wants it can withdraw from any kind of partnership. For instance, the DPG projects required the LG & RD department of the government to sign MoU with AKRSP, however, the government did not agree to do so, despite it being an important component of the DPG project with the aim to strengthen participatory governance”.

Stating the reasons for the non-cooperative attitude of government in this particular partnership the staff member highlights two factors as;

“On part of government there use to be a frequent change in departmental secretaries as it happened with LG & RD department, secondly, there exist antagonism among some of the government officials towards AKRSP. Thus these factors foster a non-cooperative attitude on the part of the government occasionally”.

Given that, however, AKRSP had provision to take up the case with the Chief Minister in the region. On asking about this provision the response comes as;

“AKRSP is following a conscious policy to keep the government at arm’s length in order to avoid a direct confrontation with any government department. Sometimes AKRSP compromises in partnership to the extent which may not affect its long term objective as a policy entrepreneur. Also because bringing a department into partnership using Chief Minister’s office puts the department on offensive track which may ruin the future co-operation with AKRSP”.

The two themes in AKRSP-government relationship i.e. “keeping government at arm’s length” and “NGO playing a supportive role” serve the strategic goal of AKRSP. This

strategic goal according to Shoaib Sultan Khan the founding and former General Manager of AKRSP quoted in Najam, 2006 is that “the purpose was always to influence the government, and it was always stressed that [government] is to be influenced not to be opposed” (Najam, 2006, p.429). Moreover, quoting the responses from an interview with AKRSP Staffs Najam argues that “AKRSP’s institutional impulse is not to be confrontational. This avoidance is not from a simple desire to keep the government ‘happy’, but rather from a desire to keep the government ‘out of the way’ on the things that mattered most to the organization” (Najam, 2006, p.441). This implies that the AKRSP’s relationship with the government is based on its strategic interest that avoids the institution to opt for an adversary relationship. The strategic interest on the part of AKRSP is “to influence the government to bring about large-scale systemic change in the way development interventions are undertaken” (Najam, 2006, p.442).

Furthermore, the absence of some policy provisions in the local government legislation reinforces government’s upper hand in maintaining the partnership with NGOs in Gilgit-Baltistan. In contrast to that in the other provinces of the country, NGO-government partnerships work under Public Private Partnership Act (PPP-Act). In this regard, more recently a bill titled ‘Public Private Partnership Authority Act, 2016’ is presented to the national assembly of Pakistan. This bill aims to promote private participation in economic development and to be enacted in the entire country. The approval of this bill is still awaited. Therefore, the absence of policy provisions in Gilgit-Baltistan, government departments are not legally bound the to work with NGOs and their established community organizations. Moreover, occasionally government departments present the policy vacuum as an excuse not to get into partnership with civil society organizations. One of the respondents elucidates as;

“The LSOs as the cluster of village organizations established by AKRSP have no legal status as those of UCs established by the government, except they are registered under company’s ordinance 1985. Therefore, the government is not legal obliged to work with LSOs always, that leads to interest based partnership with NGO by the government.”

Maintaining upper hand in partnership with NGOs serves the strategic interest of the government to restrict NGOs to work within a setting which may not threaten the very existence of government, its legitimacy, and authority through politicization among communities. Bratton argues that the reaction of government towards voluntary action is determined “more by political rather than economic considerations” (Bratton, 1987, p. 1). This implies that government-NGO relationship is more responsive to the political environment of a country. Therefore, the NGO-government relationship is a political question that depends upon the legitimacy of various institutions to exercise power “to assert leadership, to organize people, and to allocate resources in the development enterprise” (Ibid., p.2). In the case of Gilgit-Baltistan, the Pakistani state has a strong grip in the region owing to the undefined constitutional status of the region. Therefore, NGOs are limited to undertake those development interventions that contribute to the economic well-being of citizens and they are confronted to work in mobilization citizens for political rights. Because engaging people for political mobilization will provide a space for the communities to challenge the constitutional status of the region. This, in turn, undermines authority and legitimacy of the government. This eventually directs to the point that; the content of NGO program is equally important in determining NGO-government relations. For instance, programs of civil and political liberties mostly lead the government-NGO collision. Thus the presence of NGOs is an assessment of government’s stance on a basic issue of national governance i.e. how to

assure balance between organizational autonomy and political control. However, in the case of AKRSP, most of its programs revolve around socio-economic aspects of the communities rather than civil and political liberties. As a part of AKDN, AKRSP promotes more inclusive and pluralistic dynamism in the region within development interventions.

Having said that, it leads to the aspect of government's acknowledgment by the NGOs in the region. On part of the AKRSP there is acceptance regarding government's status in the region as the core actor. This is to avoid the development of any conception where AKRSP is not to be viewed as an organization that works only to mobilize certain community given the existence of sensitive social and political situations in the region. One respondent, who is associated with AKRSP in the its partnerships phase with the government, responded as.

“AKRSP adheres to the view point that state is the permanent institution in the region in context of development and AKRSP plays the role of a facilitator. We facilitate to develop linkages between the government and community-based organizations. We believe that people have the potential and will to change themselves if they are provided with the organization, technical expertise, and financial input. In this regard, the government has played a critical role by providing practical and financial input wherever necessary. Such type of linkages with the government ensures financial sustainability of projects at the grassroots level as NGOs depend on foreign aids their projects are time bound. However, the government has a budget under Annual Development Plan (ADP) at its disposal to sustain projects where it deems necessary. AKRSP believes in participatory development that means the inclusion of government as the main stakeholder in the rural development of the region.”

This indicates that AKRSP is willing to work with the government but upholding its own participatory ethos. Within the existing governance structure of Gilgit-Baltistan working in partnership and influencing one another on different stages by sustaining a considerate distance shows acknowledging the legitimacy and authority of the government by AKRSP. This has helped both entities to coexist.

Further to that, it came to be known during the interview that there exists a healthy and cooperative relationship between AKRSP and LG & RD in another district namely Astore district where the DPG project is operative. One of the reasons for such collaboration was identified as the “presence of development minded people in the government”. The respondent put it as;

“The relationship between the AKRSP and government also depends on the attitude of government officials. An antagonistic behaviour of government officials become a hurdle in fostering a cordial relation and on the other hand, a cooperative attitude deepens the relationship. There are some officials in the government who realize that the development objectives of both AKRSP and government are the same therefore the objective can be well achieved through a joint venture by involving the community at grass root level and making the community a stakeholder in policy dialogues and decision making in the development process which affect their lives”.

In this context, Najam (2000) in his 'Four C model' argues that "the interactions between NGO and government are based on the ends (goals) pursued and the means (strategies) adopted by both. Seeking similar ends with similar means result in cooperation, while seeking similar ends but preferring dissimilar means results in complementarity sort of relations" (Najam, 2000, p.375). AKRSP since its inception has maintained complementary relation with the government owing to its strategy difference from what the government is pursuing. However, occasionally while working with the government such relations elevated to form of cooperative nature in project partnerships, and there has been co-option of AKRSP ideas by other rural support programs including by government. For instance, it was highlighted during the interviews that the government got the opportunity to revitalize its union council (UC) structure with help of already established LSOs equipped with human resource. Therefore, it can be inferred that generally, the relationship between AKRSP and government oscillates between complementary and cooperative.

Thus it is to conclude that, there exist a reasonable degree of trust between AKRSP and the local government, owing to AKRSP's good track record of work, and its credibility at international level. However, AKRSP-government relation is interest based on both parts. AKRSP maintained a cooperative relation with the government once it entered into the partnership. On the other hand, the government has the upper hand in maintaining or discontinuing partnership with AKRSP. So far the partnerships between the two institutions remained more or less cooperative and complementary with small level conflicts on work strategy or on the execution of a certain project, but these conflicts didn't result in rivalry.

Perceptions of Government Officials Regarding NGO-government Relationship

The responses from LG & RG officials regarding NGO-government relationship can be classified into two categories. However, some responses from both categories come out to be the same. The first group of responses is mostly from those officials who served more than three decades in the government. These officials view NGOs as communal organizations benefiting some specific sections of the society, and conspire against the autonomy of the local people. One of the senior staff at LG & RD expressed the view that;

"These NGOs are actors who benefit some specific group of people. They are a source of a job for some people. They are making the community and the society dependent on foreign aid, which is a threat to the freedom of the whole society."

These officials view NGOs as institutions parallel to government institutions. The antagonistic attitude towards NGOs is also due to the difference in the development approached pursued by these two institutions. The older officials are of the view that community development can be achieved with the top-down methodology. In this context, commenting on the CBOs and LSOs structure, one of the respondents said;

"The government used to carry out development projects even before NGOs came in this region. The government has established the community organizations in form of village council in 1952, later it transformed those organizations into basic democracy units during president Ayub Khan's regime, and now they exist in form of District Councils and Union Councils. We use to allocate funds to these lower tier organizations for development. We have our own mechanism where decisions related to

projects' identification, budget allocation, and implementation is done by concerned department's officials. So it is not something new that the NGOs have done in creating grassroots level organizations."

Given this concept of NGOs operating in the region the respondents pointed out that the government is trying to collaborate with NGOs. However, the government has to consider its objectives as well the consequences as a result of such cooperation. Because the government is also bound by some constraints. One official in LG & RD sheds light as;

"We have been cooperating with AKRSP and other NGOs and we are willing to cooperate in future as well. However, the government needs to pursue its own mandate and interest in such type of partnership. Apart from this, while entering into a partnership with NGOs the government needs to take into account of the political situation, financial constraints and bureaucratic considerations which may affect the government in power."

This suggests that relationship of the government with NGOs is mediated by political powers and government intentionally dominates the relation so as not to be influenced by the NGOs. It also suggests that on the part of government NGOs have not been fully recognized as units of civil society. Rather government's preference is to work with its established UCs, where the accountability factor remains solely in the hands of the government in contrast to a partnership with any NGO where both partners are accountable for each other. Further to that given the mindset of government officials about NGOs, it may be inferred that the government doesn't want to be influenced by the NGOs in policy related matters. In such a situation NGOs in particular AKRSP follow a conscious policy to maintain non-adversarial relations with the government.

The second category consists of the young government officials, who presented a different picture and perception of NGOs and government-NGOs relationship in the region. There is acknowledgment among this stratum of officials about NGOs' work at grassroots level, mobilization of communities for development, imparting democratic and participatory means. They view these approaches as means to achieve good governance in the region. Thus they are optimistic in working closely with the NGOs. One of the officials responded by saying;

"AKRSP has done a remarkable work by creating organizations at the village level, that act as platforms for community mobilization and AKRSP includes these organization in every project as stakeholders, which is the best way to foster democratic means at the lower tier. This will help in improving good governance in our region. NGOs and Government must assist communities technically and financially by providing resources. In this regard, the Multi-Stakeholder Forum has impressively linked the community with the government. So far we entered in partnership with AKRSP in a different project where it was feasible for the government to do so. Hopefully when devolution plan will be enacted government will work more closely with LSOs and UCs."

In the context of community participation in the activities which affect their lives, Muller Glodde argues that "poor people are able to make economically rational decisions in the context of their own resource and social environment; they may, however, lack innovative

technological know-how” (Muller-Glodde, 1991, p.7). On the same line, AKRSP has created Multi-Stakeholder Fora (MSFs) and Citizen Community Boards (CCBs) under its IDPR program. The IDPR report mentions that “to ensure and strengthen community participation in policy and development planning MSFs and CCBs” (CIDA, AKFC, AKRSP, 2009, p.xii) have been established. Moreover, the above response from the government official implies a positive insight on government’s part in working with CBOs in future discourse. AKRSP has successfully sensitized in government the need to work for development at grassroots level. However, both groups highlighted that the absence of a legal provision such as “Public-Private Partnership (PPP) act” is a hurdle in fostering a closer relationship with civil society organizations and NGOs. One of the officials said that;

“Within our governance structure, there is no policy provision whether to work with civil society organizations and NGOs in a partnership or not. The law is silent on this matter, whereas in the rest of the provinces in the country there is policy provision in form of PPP-Act, that provides a legal framework for the government to enter into a partnership with private organizations including NGOs. So the local government can’t take a risk in indulging with such contracts always. Despite that, when NGOs approach for partnership the government after scrutiny decides whether to sign the contract or not. We use to signed MoU with NGOs in the case of a partnership which has no legal status to abide by the contract.”

This implies that the absence of PPP-Act leads the government to act strategically in fostering a partnership with NGOs without being legally obliged. Thus the absence of PPP-Act is a loophole in fostering a sustained cooperative relationship between the two institutions. The government officials take the absence of PPP-Act as an excuse not to work closely with the NGOs.

Thus it is to conclude that, given the approval of devolution plan by the local government in due course, it is anticipated that the government and UCs will work more closely with community organizations. However, the absence of PPP-Act renders it difficult to bind the government to develop a sustained and cooperative relationship with NGOs in the long run. Rather such partnership will be government’s interest based that would lead the NGOs to take a compromising position or may withdraw from such partnership.

Community Perception about NGO-government Relationship (Responses from Representatives and Members of LSOs/VOs/WOs)

The community in Gilgit-Baltistan views the NGO-government relationship in terms of sustainability of development projects and the benefits that could be transferred to the communities at grassroots level. Also, there are consistent responses from the respondents that from the near past AKRSP-government interaction has increased, and that has positively impacted development at grassroots level. One of the themes the respondents highlight was that AKRSP through its partnership with the government has served as a facilitator in bridging the gap between communities and government. In this regard one of the LSO representatives involved in AKRSP and government’s partnership phase has put it as;

“AKRSP has created grassroots level organizations including, VO, WO, and LSOs as their clusters. Along with service delivery in collaboration with these organizations, AKRSP also worked in capacity building of these

community-based organizations. Now AKRSP is facilitating to develop government-communities' linkages by working with the government in partnership in different projects. Such relationship has brought awareness among the communities that not only NGOs work for community development, rather there are provisions in the government to work for development at grassroots level. AKRSP's efforts provided a platform for community organizations to develop linkages with the government. One of such forum AKRSP has established is the Multi-Stakeholder Forum, where government officials set for dialogues with the community organizations to provide funding for development projects".

Furthermore, the respondents associate sustainability of development projects with NGO-government partnership. One of the respondent a member of VO laments that;

"As projects of NGOs are fund based and funds are only allocated to complete the projects. After that, it becomes the responsibility of the community to sustain that project. We frequently face financial sustainability once NGO handovers the project to the community. By having linkage with the government helps in financial terms as well as inform of other resources to maintain the sustainability, because local government has fund provision for rural development at union councils level. This is only possible if the community organizations are linked with government and government is willing to support."

Apart from that, responses reveal that participatory approach of development has allowed the community to own those projects where the community is rigorously involved from identification of the problem to its execution as a stakeholder. NGOs, and NGOs-government partnership projects mostly work within the stipulated framework of participation and inclusiveness, while projects by government follow a top-down approach in identification of the problem and always executed by a third party namely contractors who participate in the bidding of government-financed projects. Such planning according to Muller-Glodde "leads to coercion, which in turn results either in local passivity or even active resistance to the development envisaged" (Muller-Glodde, 1991, p.7).

In this context the response is as;

"Whenever NGO on its own or NGO and government jointly work for community development, the projects are owned by communities. Because communities are being involved in such projects at different stages. Even communities themselves identify the need for a certain project. On the other hand, most of the government funded projects are identified by the government officials by their own and community only knows when the contractors start working. Such projects do not own by the community once completed nobody uses these with ownership".

Literature shows that the participatory approach in development makes NGOs accountable to those communities who are not in the position to make the government accountable. Such accountability develops ownership among stakeholders of what is being done in participation. Asian Development Bank's report on participatory development shows that "participating in formulating the fundamental goals as well as in planning and carrying out an activity

empowers stakeholders and fosters a sense of ownership” (Ondrik, 2005). Moreover, Sanyal argues that “NGOs involve the people in their decision-making process and encourage widespread participation by the poor in the design as well as the implementation of bottom-up development projects. This, in turn, makes the NGOs accountable to the people, who usually lack any control over their government” (Sanyal, 1994, p.38). All these qualities are contrary to those of “the rigid and gigantic bureaucracy which imposes solutions from the top-down and never learns from its colossal failures” (Sanyal, 1994, p.38). Also Moore et al identified that “ownership is high when the intended beneficiaries substantially influence the conception, design, implementation and operations and maintenance of a development project, the implementing agencies that influence the project represent the interests of ordinary citizens and there are transparency and mutual accountability among the various stakeholders” (Moore et al. 1996, p. 9). This implies that participation is vital in fostering ownership among people in development projects. Therefore, communities do not own those government projects that are being undertaken through bureaucratic means or on political preferences. It is also plausible that decisions about community development that were taken by bureaucratic apparatus or on the basis of political preferences in the absence of communities’ participation sometimes mismatch with the needs of the target groups. However, government-NGO partnership or by linking government and community-based organizations in development initiatives helps to mitigate these recurrent problems.

Further to that, communities as stakeholder in NGO-government partnership helps in maintaining quality of services and mutual accountability. A respondent sheds light on this aspect as;

“Most of the government projects are executed by contractors and these projects are devoid of quality because there is no accountability. However, when government enters into partnership with NGOs, quality is maintained because of accountability in the presence NGO and the community as stakeholders. It is difficult for common people to get a response from the government due to it highly bureaucratic setup. But, when AKRSP and government works on a project, the government use to response to needs of the community. I think it is because both AKRSP and community act as the stakeholder in the projects.”

It is to conclude that the community perceives the NGO-government relationship as a dynamic change in community development. It helps in fostering linkage with the government and sensitizes the government to work at grass root level through community inclusiveness. Further to that, such partnership helps in the financial sustainability of projects because of provision of permanent funds at government’s disposal for development under the head of Annual Development Plan. Thus, adoption of participatory approach by the government will foster ownership among communities of the projects initiated by the government at the grassroots level. So far AKRSP has been successful in establishing village organizations and has interlinked the village organizations under the umbrella of LSOs. It also acts as a facilitator in linking these community-based organizations with the government. Furthermore, AKRSP has fostered popular participation among communities as a democratic mean of making decisions in development matters. Given these achievements a question arises that what is the next step? it seems that AKRSP has drawn its boundaries where it only engages the community-based organizations in the donor funded projects and can only impart the democratic values and widespread participation within that circle. This

seems to be a dead end in itself. Because over three and half decades AKRSP has been unable to channelize the communities' empowerment for advocacy at the organizational level to involve local and national government at policy making forum. The World Bank report on the evaluation of AKRSP, mentions that "the awareness created on development issues within communities or CBOs has not been channelled for advocacy at the organizational level to engage government and other stakeholders at larger policy making forums" (World Bank 2002).

CONCLUSION

This study is an attempt to investigate the relationship between the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) and the government of Gilgit-Baltistan. In doing so the study has analysed the perspectives of representatives and members of Community Based Organisations (CBOs), AKRSP officials, and government officials who were engaged in a recent project on deepening participatory governance in the region. The project is undertaken by AKRSP in partnership with the local government. The findings were discussed under selected main components, and analysed in relation to the literature to give an overall account of the NGO-government relationship based on the responses from the selected respondents.

As a social enterprise of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), AKRSP remained successful in rural development in the regions of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral. Its rural development model of organizing communities for their economic empowerment and social development has been widely replicated within the country and in South Asia in a number of Rural Support Programs (RSPs). ARKSP has successfully incorporated the structural, contextual and strategic specifications in its development ventures. With its intervention in the region in the 1980s, when the local government and the governance structure was weak, AKRSP was initially viewed as an organization that operate in competition to the government in provision of basic services to the rural communities through organizing them by establishing village level institutions.

A homogeneous set of responses from AKRSP officials about the policies of AKRSP regarding its relationship with the government indicates that the government is acknowledged as a stakeholder in every development venture that AKRSP undertakes but maintaining a certain distance. It has been the organizational philosophy of the AKRSP to maintain and depict a certain level of respect towards the government. The government is viewed as one of key stakeholders in the development interventions of AKRSP, regardless of government's active engagement in it. Further, AKRSP acknowledges the government as a permanent structure of development for the region.

The findings show that in the early phase (1982-1990s) of the AKRSP, the government neither imposed restrictions nor actively opposed the operation of AKRSP in the region. Once established and accepted, AKRSP successfully demonstrated its achievement to the government and become a source of support for the government. This helped in attaining a certain level of trust, which is then followed by partnership phase. In the early 1990s, the two institutions worked jointly in a number of development projects. The findings indicate that such partnerships are driven by interests on both parts. The government demonstrated upper hand in such partnership relations to the extent whether to engage itself in the joint venture or to withdraw base on its interests. While AKRSP demonstrated a supportive role in

partnership phase to the extent that such relationship would not compel the organization to compromise on its principles. Moreover, regarding the partnership phase the responses indicate that the government intends to keep and cooperate AKRSP's intervention within development sphere at project implementation level. However, within the development circle whenever AKRSP intervene the government at the policy level, the government seems to be reluctant to continue the partnership with the NGO. A thread of responses reflects the presence of an antagonistic attitude among some of the government officials towards NGOs with their preference the top-down approach in development. However, one another set of response, on the other hand, indicate the acknowledgment among the government officials about NGOs' work at grassroots level, as a step forward to improve good governance in the region.

Furthermore, the findings also show that absence of legal provisions like Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Act in the region has provided a legal vacuum for the government not to legally oblige in any public-private partnership. The government occasionally uses this policy loop as an excuse not to enter a partnership with NGOs when a certain project does not fulfil government's interests usually driven by political preferences. Moreover, the findings specify that despite the existence of structural and policy hurdles in fostering cooperative relations with the government AKRSP has successfully sensitized in government the need to work for development at grassroots level. It has played the role of facilitator to develop linkages between the community organizations and the government in order to improve governance through democratic means within development interventions. In addition to that, the findings direct that over the years the partnerships between the two institutions remained more or less cooperative and complementary with small level conflicts on work strategy or on the execution of a certain project, but these conflicts didn't result in any rivalry.

Apart from that, the findings from the representatives and the members of community organizations indicate that the NGO-government relationship has brought dynamic changes in community development by fostering linkage between communities and the government. It has sensitized in the government to work at grass root level through community inclusiveness. Such partnership within development circle is viewed by the respondents as a way forward to attain the financial sustainability of projects, and developing ownership among communities of the government projects as well.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that in addition to service delivery, AKRSP has undertaken the role of facilitator in bridging the gap between the government and communities to foster sustainable development at the grassroots level, that aims to improve governance within development sector in presence of the government. Further to that, AKRSP also plays the role of policy advocate in assisting the government to improve the governance structure in the region given the peculiar nature of governance structure in contrast to the rest of the provinces in the country.

However, a holistic account of the findings shows that the ethos of popular participation, democratic decision making, community inclusiveness is so far being implemented and exercise within the ambit of development interventions. These principles are not yet realized to channelize the community' empowerment for advocacy at the organizational level to involve local and national government at policy making forum to bring substantive changes to improve the governance structure in the region at large.

This study has made an effort to understand the dynamics of the relationship between AKRSP and the government of Gilgit-Baltistan through the accounts developed from the perceptions of representatives and members of Community Based Organisations (CBOs), AKRSP officials, and government officials. To a certain extent this research categorizes the relationship between the government of Gilgit-Baltistan and AKRSP, as the one where both the institutions have not confronted each other in contrast to the prevailing general notion that civil society and the government relations are manifest by tensions. However, the findings of this study were examined from the data collected over a short period of time along with other hindrances and restrictions. By increasing time span to use multiple data collection tools along with broader base of respondents, this study can be further distilled and improved by investigating the political aspect of the government, the apolitical nature of NGOs, and the geo-strategic aspect of the region in a broader national framework.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADP	Annual Development Plan
AKCSP	Aga Khan Cultural Service Programme
AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
AKES	Aga Khan Education Service
AKHB	Aga Khan Housing Board
AKHS	Aga Khan Health Service
AKRSP	Aga Khan Rural Support Programme
BASCIP	Building and Construction Improvement Programme
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CCBs	Citizen Community Boards
CDD	Community-Driven Development
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
D. J. Schools	Diamond Jubilee Schools
DCs	District Councils
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
FCR	Frontier Crime Regulation
FMFB	First Micro Finance Bank
GBESGO	Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order
GBC	Gilgit-Baltistan Council
GBLA	Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly
IDPR	Institutional Development for Poverty Reduction
INGOs	Internal Non-Governmental Organizations
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KKH	Karakorum High Way
LG & RD	Local government and Rural Development
LSOs	Local Support Organizations
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSFs	Multi- Stakeholder Fora
NGOs	Non - Governmental Organizations
RSPs	Rural Support Programmes
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
UCs	Union Councils

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VOs	Village organizations
WASEP	Water and Sanitation Extension Programme
WOs	Women's Organizations
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

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