



Foreign Aid, International Agendas and Community Development in Pakistan: A Qualitative Exploration

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article history: Submitted 13.04.2025 Accepted 22.05.2025 Published 30.06.2025 Volume No. 12 Issue No. 1 ISSN (Online) 2414-8512 ISSN (Print) 2311-293X DOI: Keywords: Community Development, Foreign Aid, Conditionality, Technical Assistance, Holistic	<i>Community development is one of the core concepts and primary methods of Social Work which is being practiced in Pakistan through various governmental and non-governmental organizations. But in nature the concept is vague and influenced by multiple factors including human elements, economic constraints and socio-political circumstances. Among which, foreign aid and international agendas constitute one of the most dominant factors within the local context of Pakistan. That is why, the study aimed at analyzing their impact on the concept of community development and employed ethnographic research design for the purpose. The qualitative data was collected through purposive sampling technique and thematic analysis was carried out which demonstrated a profound influence of foreign aid on country's policies via conditionality and technical assistance and an imported type of development being carried out in the country. Therefore, the need was emphasized to adopt a holistic approach of stakeholders' engagement to strengthen local structures and to coordinate development efforts with local aspirations.</i> 

Introduction

Community development is one of the key concepts and basic methods of Social Work practice which, in general terms, refers to the approach of bringing about changes in the whole community, involves all the people of area in development activities and provides them the opportunities to improve their socio-economic circumstances by using existing resources in the best possible way (Amakye, 2017). While more specifically the term employs a sense of common identity, capacity and purpose. It encompasses unpaid active citizenship with community members organizing themselves and taking on leadership roles and lays a great emphasis on the values of empowerment, equality, justice, participation and representation (Pawar, 2016). This means that the concept of community development is primarily concerned with decision-making processes affecting people, community-based agencies and services and requires a 'bottom-up' approach implying enhancement of people's capabilities to determine their own goals, to pursue issues of importance to them and to make decisions affecting their lives (Chukwu, 2019).

However, in its nature the concept is confusing and vague as it is defined by a number of conceptual and practical characterizations and is described by a larger and growing presence of the communities engaged in community development efforts (Cascante & Brennan, 2012). Whereas what precisely is community development? Why is engaging in it important? Where does it stand in relation to other practical as well as academic endeavors? All these questions have been rarely asked and discussed. Instead as pointed out by Biddle (1966, as cited in Battacharya 2009) the concept is influenced by a number of factors and all

the approaches which claim to be community development are considered as the legitimate contributions to the field.

As according to historical evidences, the concept has its origin in both the traditional approaches of development i.e. top-down as well as bottom-up. Wherein the top-down approach was primarily the concern of ruling elites to assimilate subordinate groups into their dominant ideology and to secure their own interests. Whereas the bottom-up approach was viewed as reflecting the pressure from below or as collective community action to ascertain changes in policy and practice and to assure improvement in people's own life circumstances. Owing to the fact that the top-down approach had its roots in the early history of British settlement movement of the Victorian period (i.e. late 19th to early 20th century) when it was associated with the churches, universities and other institutes of that time period, which nevertheless were concerned with promoting social well-being of all their neighborhoods, but even then caused an increased social unrest. Because, in reality, those settlements were an example of compassionate paternalism of socially concerned philanthropists who took a lead and dominated all the programs of community development.

But the consequences of that top-down approach were not just limited to the old times settlements instead its effects could be seen in the present times too where a number of international funding organizations and institutions have replaced the churches and centers of the past and are influencing the socio-economic as well as the political set-up of less developed countries. An example is that the social welfare and social policy of many third world countries like Pakistan is an inheritance from colonial times wherein the colonial influence has remained intact under the impact of the United Nations (Meade et al., 2016).

Moreover, because foreign funding has become an integral component of the development plans of many of the developing nations, therefore, the foreign aid and international agendas are being used as an important tool to set the terms and conditions of bilateral and multilateral relations among various nations. Where the more developed governments channelize aid in the form of financial assistance and technology transfer to the less developed countries (Afaq et al., 2019). But the underlined fact is that the financial assistance which is being provided to the less developed countries is always attached with certain conditions and has some agendas behind. Whereas the technical capacity building is not just about the skills and expertise transfer of the donors to the aid-recipient nations. But has more to do with ensuring better organizational mechanisms of collaboration among donors and the platforms they have established for the purpose of maximizing their interaction with the political elites of the less developed countries (Khan et al., 2024).

The consequence of which is that the developing countries which are though politically liberated but economically reliant on international financial organizations have become the passive receivers of policies from developed countries. Whereas the developed countries through various international funding agencies such as International Monetary Fund, World Bank, USAID, DFID, JAICA, etc. tend to control the economic and political processes of the aid receiving nations (Jabeen et al., 2016).

That is why, the study aimed at analyzing the impact of foreign aid and international agendas on the concept of community development in Pakistan. As Pakistan is one of the top ten recipients of official development assistance (ODA) and has received almost \$184 billion of Foreign Economic Assistance (FEA) from different international donors in the form of loans and grants since 1950s. Whereas the effects of this aid in the form of country's development are still uncertain and there is a need to coordinate foreign agendas with the grass root realities of local communities (Thapa, 2020).

Literature Review

According to Carlon (2020) who carried out a qualitative study on contesting community development in Australia, the concept of community development means different things to different people and has been theorized and practiced variedly in various contexts. This conceptual openness though gives space to different communities as well as to their knowledge, values and interests but due to the lack of consensus on its nature, the concept is being applied incoherently and has become a "buzzword" which is rich in practice but ambiguous in its meanings.

Such as Bhattacharya (2009) in his seminal work on theorizing community development defined the concept as 'the pursuit of solidarity and agency'. Pradeep & Sathyamurthi (2017) in their study on exploring the meanings of community work from a theoretical perspective proclaimed that the term has been perceived as a way of thinking, an attitude of mind, a dialogue, a process or an approach to create changes or promote development in the communities. Sheikheldin and Devlin (2015) in their qualitative work on community development as double movement viewed the concept through the theoretical work of Karl Polany (an Austro-Hungarian economic anthropologist and politician) and described it as an endeavor to de-commodify industrial elements and to re-embed economy in the society. While Schuttle (2018) looked at the concept

through the lens of basic needs theory and proclaimed that this theoretical framework helps not only in prioritizing the basic or “real” needs of a community but also in equating them with the art of timing (i.e. doing the right thing at the right time). Not just this, the researcher also introduced the idea of indigenous development, because according to him, the idea of indigenous development covers all the above-mentioned necessities essential for the fruitful community development projects and contends that it would not be real and sustainable community development at all, if it is not the indigenous community development.

However, as pointed out by Montefusco (2018) who attempted to illustrate the impact of various socio-economic, cultural and structural circumstances on the practice of community development in Australia. A change has occurred in the philosophy of community development due to which the obligation of social issues has got transferred from governmental institutions to the commercial market powers. Wherein, the latter is regrettably more concerned with the major tenets of social welfare i.e. equality and participation and is experiencing the pressure for performance and business-like conduct. Mainly, due to a shift in the ideology that initiated in 1980s primarily in the Western nations of the world and is known as neo-liberalism. Because along with introducing a number of institutional changes, this ideology also caused a steady rise of privatization and deregulation of the corporate, financial and labor market. Therefore, though positive yet it is not a normal partnership between the developed and underdeveloped nations of the world. As it heralds some achievements from the aid receiving communities and violates the ethical criteria of partnership among the countries. Due to which reason, the researcher contended, that all those concerned with the efforts regarding community well-being, should have a strong sense of purpose, a solid attachment to the principles of social justice and a true commitment to observe ethics in order to make the slogans of community development a reality.

But as illustrated by Khan (2016) who analyzed aid policy network and public policy process in Pakistan, the modern day decision-making processes have become highly complicated. Because each and every initiative in turn depends on a range of other network actors and their resources in order to attain meaningful outcomes. In addition to this, as mentioned by Khan et al. (2017), the landscape of foreign aid has also got changed and now it involves new actors such as different bilateral, multilateral and private donors whose conflicting priorities and intersecting activities along with the choice of aid modalities and interventions have made the whole aid delivery system very complex and difficult to manage.

According to Saghir (2023) who examined socio-political impact of International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Pakistan, the major cause of this complexity is that the donors have an agenda-based and disbursement-oriented approach for planning development solutions which are not always sensitive to the local socio-economic and political realities of the third world countries. Besides this the political representatives of these countries are also not much capable and nor do they have an inclusive actionable development policy framework. Hence, all this provides opportunities for donors to dominate the policy debate and pursue the issues of importance to them in the aid receiving countries.

As the findings of his study demonstrated that economic policy of Pakistan is largely shaped by the IMF which always provides loans on the condition to introduce some structural reforms in the country. Such reforms, however, have been unvaryingly unpopular among the masses as they do not just impact the economic policies but have also various socio-political consequences to be inflicted upon the country like high rates of inflation, unemployment, poverty and reduced spending on public welfare. Not just this, due to heavy borrowing the country also faces the issues of imbalance and dependency which, internally, devoid the country's ability to break free from foreign economic aid and, politically, does not let the public sentiments to be heard at international level. Resultantly, the people especially those belonging to the working class in Pakistan are becoming highly vocal against foreign funding and view it as an ‘imperialistic takeover’ of their country that is just burdening their lives with no viable means being available to improve their living standards.

So as mentioned by Tariq (2019) in her study on aid, governance and development that mainly it is the level and availability of funding resources which dictate the issues to be placed on top of national agendas and the types of processes to be adopted to address the issues in less developed countries like Pakistan. Which means that being the major contributor to international funding organizations, it is predominantly the West-centric dictates who dominate the policy process of Pakistan and decide about the type of developmental activities to be carried out in the country. But the problem is that a mismatch exists between what the domestic stakeholders considered important and what is actually happening in their country. That is why, as emphasized by a number of researchers including Isidiho (2016), Nguyen et al. (2018), Quimbo et al. (2019) and Dahal & White (2021) that there is a need to discourage this trend of top-down imposition and to adopt a holistic approach of community development that can carry every one along.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework of the study was based on the general systems theory (GST) developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1928 (Sieniutycz, 2020). Because central to GST is the idea of ‘system’ which was defined by Bertalanffy as ‘a collection of various interdependent constituent parts that formulate a complex whole’ and the main concern of the theory is to study interactions and interrelationships among all those parts as well as their organization, functioning and outcomes which reflect the system’s ability to adapt to the changes in its surroundings (Cordon, 2013).

Community development, as we all know, is a complex phenomenon regarding which it has been noticed that although the developmental activities are carried out within different socio-economic, political and environmental contexts yet all the individual parts act together to form a bigger system and involve various inter-connected elements including formal and informal institutions, people and their behaviors (Yousef, 2010).

Therefore, the GST was helpful not only in studying all the stakeholders but also their motivations and interests as well as their inter-relationships and the process of introducing changes in the community (Wells et al, 2021). For the reason that the GST provides an analytical framework to understand all the factors involved in the phenomenon of community development like dynamics of inter-group relationships, power & influence and the changes involved in planning developmental activities in a holistic and comprehensive manner (Abang & Aminu, 2015).

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

1. To analyze the role of foreign donors in policy formulation regarding community development.
2. To explore the nature of community development programs being run by international donor agencies.
3. To examine the nature of influence of foreign aid and international agendas on the concept of community development.

Materials and Methods

The study was qualitative in nature and carried out within district Lahore which is one of the main metropolitan cities of Pakistan and manifests highly noticeable state intervention and non-governmental organizations’ working in development sector along with a number of educational institutions offering community development as a major course of Social Work. The methodology was based on ethnographic research design wherein purposive sampling techniques was employed to approach and collect data from the best-fit study participants including 03 political representatives (MPAs as well as directors of local government), 02 representatives of international donor organizations, 5 practitioners working in community development projects and 10 non-governmental organizations, 03 academicians of the HEC recognized public sector universities as well as 10 community representatives. For the reason that the sample size of many of the stakeholders’ categories was not much large and the researcher requires detailed information from each particular subset of the population of interest (Adedoyin, 2020). The tool of data collection was a semi structured interview guide and in-depth interviews were carried out through face to face interaction at the workplaces of the participants. The verbatim method was used to transcribe the data which was then assigned codes and categorized into different themes for carrying out thematic analysis.

Analysis & Discussion

Findings of thematic analysis encompass the following themes:

Theme1: Role of Foreign Donors in Policy-making regarding Community Development

When the researcher inquired about the role of foreign donors in Pakistan, the representatives of international donor organizations themselves admitted that they are a part of many of the country’s policies and programs wherein they mainly provide technical assistance, but, sometimes there is also an element of imposition especially when the finances get involved (Do1, interview 07 July 2024 & Do2, interview 23 July 2024). According to one of those representatives the reason for this obligation is that the funds they provide are always for some purpose and have to be utilized in their organization’s specified areas only (Do1, interview 07 July 2024). While according to the representative of another international organization this is so because every organization has its own agenda and vision. So when we work in an organization, this not only defines our activities but also the organizational culture which means that we remain focused on our vision and prioritize all the activities around our major goals and objectives’ (Do2, interview 23 July 2024).

These comments evidently indicate that the foreign funders are a powerful stakeholder of the country’s policy making process. Because Pakistan being a developing nation is not in a position to grow on its own and needs foreign aid to finance its investment in the development sector and to pay for its imports

(Khan, 2016). As exclaimed by one of the community representatives also: ‘Our governments lack resources. They need foreign assistance to meet country’s expenses wherein the international donor agencies impose strict conditions on the country and our well-being gets affected’ (CR5, interview 29 June 2024). But, as mentioned by Karl (2018), the foreign assistance is not without conditions and in order to ensure the continuity of the aid and to preserve its international standing, governments in Pakistan have to comply with all the conditions set by their international donors which act as the major factor to alter the nature and concept of community development within the country.

As pointed out by Ramiarison (2010) that since the success of Marshall Plan (1950s) as its aid policies had been a major instrument to improve developing countries’ capacities. This idea that the developed nations need to help the less developed countries is being reflected in many other international initiatives including the Resolution on Common Aid Effort by DAC countries and they all are using it in order to rationalize the large influxes of aid and justify the pertinence of scaling-up efforts to achieve international development goals specially in the less developed countries of the world. But the fact is that all those efforts are being made at the cost of the autonomy of recipient nations.

For the fact, as pointed out by Thapa (2020) that the less developed countries like Pakistan are still in the state of neocolonialism-a new face of colonialism which has been made possible only by the foreign assistance. As the foreign assistance is not just the provision of funds/loans rather it is provided either as a gesture of diplomatic approval, or to strengthen a military partner, to acknowledge a government for the behavior desired by their donor, to spread out donor’s cultural influence, to make all the infrastructure available needed by the donor to extract resources from the recipient country or to obtain some other kinds of commercial benefits from the recipient nations. Which means that foreign aid is always linked with some agenda and the donors provide this assistance in exchange of the developing countries’ economic and political independence wherein they set various policy standards which let the formers exercise their control over the economic and political systems of those poor countries and make things much more difficult for them.

As it was not just the representatives of international donor organizations who asserted their role and influence in shaping community development, the domestic stakeholders including ministers, directors, academicians and NGOs’ representatives also acknowledged this international influence. As according to them, although they have their own priorities but even then when they come in partnership with the international organizations, they have to align their things with the goals of international agencies and then work hard to achieve those goals (M1, interview 28 August 2024 & Di2, interview 25 June 2024). Otherwise, as asserted by one of the representatives of international donor organizations: ‘There could be circumstances which they would have to face’ (Do2 interview 23 July 2024). Essentially for the reason that the ‘aid they provide is not free or a gift. It always has some purpose behind which has to be fulfilled at every cost’ (Do2, interview 23 July 2024).

One of the directors of social welfare department enumerated this reality as at present, nevertheless, there is a trend of consultative sessions but sometimes the decisions are also made at the upper level and we all have to do the compliance because they are the authorities who set the agendas and it is our duty to obey the orders’ (Di1, interview 31 May 2024).

While according to an NGO representative, most of the time, there is no such thing which could affect their working. But when they look at the international scenario, they have to make sure that they could meet international standards and their criteria of working. They have to see that their objectives and corresponding activities are in alignment with them or not (N8, interview 21 May 2024).

Owing to the reason, as mentioned by, Rehmatullah (2002, as cited in Ranjha, 2013) that the launch of community development programs in Pakistan and all other British colonies is not only to solve their local issues but also to safeguard other much larger political interests (e.g. to protect the capitalistic economic system), which if are not complied with would disturb the continuity of the aid to those countries.

Therefore, it could be asserted that Pakistan is faced with a twofold dilemma. On one hand, being one of the developing nations of the world it faces a number of socio-economic and political issues that require community development initiatives at local level. On the other hand, it depends largely on foreign aid which has altered the meanings and concept of community development within local context. Because instead of originating from our grass-root realities many of the community development programs being run in Pakistan are the initiatives of the international donor organizations which have their broader goals in front of them and make all the possible efforts to secure them successfully.

Theme 2: Nature of Programs being run in Pakistan

According to the representatives of international donor organizations most of the activities which were being carried out by their organizations in Pakistan included: investments in the private sector to

support businesses and offer more job opportunities to citizens along with working in strategic areas like energy efficiency and economy with a focus on speeding up the rate of economic growth and also on its impacts on the environment. Besides this, although the donors were also focusing on social aspects of development, like women empowerment, rural areas' development and crisis management. But as informed by them, they were not involved in the activities which may be referred as direct welfare services including establishment of schools or hospitals or launching any welfare campaigns in local communities. Such as one of those representatives of international donor organizations stated that they were working to provide safe drinking water, vaccines, life-saving treatments and education to a large population of Pakistan along with aiming to promote child protection, youth development and skill enhancement in the country. But they were planning all these activities in collaboration with government or non-governmental organizations and do not have any direct contact with local community people (Do1, interview 12 July 2024).

This shows that nevertheless a number of developmental activities are being carried out in the country. But as asserted by Ahmed & Malik (2023) that the donors are generally driven by their own geostrategic and political agendas and are more concerned with disbursing funds and the safe return of their money. They are not much aware of the ground realities of the recipient countries and do not work at the grassroots level. As a result of which there exists a gap between the nature of support needed and what they do offer to the recipient countries.

As it was observed by the researcher during interviews that one study participant representing international donor organization was the local national of Pakistan and due to his familiarity with the local conditions, he was assisting his organization to address the needs of the most vulnerable categories of the community. Whereas the other officer though he claimed that he had a rich experience of working in the third world countries and tackling their problems, yet he was not very much acquainted with the country's socio-cultural and political conditions and most of the developmental programs being run by their organization were of broader nature focused on accelerating economic growth, creating income generating opportunities or building infrastructure in the country and had no direct contact with community people nor much concern with building people's capabilities or modifying their behavior.

According to Ali & Qureshi (2024) the reason for the milieu portrayed above is that mainly an agenda-based distribution-oriented approach is employed for addressing the issues of developing countries, which does not always suit their actual socio-economic and political realities. Rather what happens is that due to the lack of a comprehensive development policy framework and the limited capabilities of the state, donors tend to dominate the policy-making and impose their own priorities in the country.

As it was reported by many of the community representatives that mainly there are the international agencies whose instructions are being followed in the country and that the government does not have any stance in front of them. Such as one of those representatives asserted that they had come to know that the government was going to levy fixed tax on retailers and small business holders simply because IMF has asked them to do so. But the government would not show any hesitation to fulfill their instructions. Simply because the leaders' concern is to fill their own projects and they have no concern with people's well-being (CR7, interview 14 July 2024).

Though the policy makers (including minister of local government and directors of social welfare department) and NGOs' representatives exclaimed that they have their own concerns, negotiate all their logical parameters with external donors and then go for implementation. But even then the main ideas being implemented in the country were of the international donor agencies. Because it was confirmed by many of them that whenever those agencies approach them, they always come with their already set agendas and the governments are bound to accomplish those goals (M1, interview 28 August 2024; Di2, interview 25 June 2024 & N8, interview 21 May 2024). As according to many of the community representatives, on one hand, not many development programs were being implemented in their areas and, on the other hand, if some developmental activities were being carried out, most of them were related to infrastructure development of their areas and were usually being carried out at a certain time (i.e. during elections) or when there was no need of them. In this way, the resources go waste and nothing better could be achieved (CR3, interview 01 June 2024; CR4, interview 22 June 2024 & P6, interview 14 July 2024 & P8, interview 16 June 2024).

Although the policy makers claimed that they were working hard to fill the gaps and address people's need especially by engaging NGOs for the purpose. But, even in that case, it was noticed that many of those programs were not actually community driven rather had either been planned keeping in view the goals and objectives of the NGOs or were the results of some external-internal pressures. As asserted by the NGOs' representatives as well that they were not conducting any need based assessment to know about the needs and problems of communities and were just working in their own specialized fields to achieve the

already set goals of their organizations (N2, interview 11 May 2024; N4, interview 13 May 2024; N6, interview 16 May 2024 & N10, interview 25 May 2024). Due to this reason, at many places their programs did not prove to be much effective in addressing communities' needs and the community people were either ignorant of or dis-satisfied with their services. As it was shared by most of the community representatives that they did not know about any such organization working in their area and if they face any issue, they try to resolve it on self-help basis or approach the government departments for the purpose (CR2, interview 31 May 2024; CR4, interview 22 June 2024; CR7, interview 11 July 2024 & CR10, interview 25 July 2024).

Afaq et al. (2019) had explained this reality as in spite of their commitment to serve the communities, NGOs do not just ignore the larger contest in which they operate but also fail to identify the extent to which the communities they serve are part of the whole systems. They just focus on their organizational goals and are strongly influenced by different internal-external factors which in turn impact the nature and design of their programs to be implemented in the communities. While according to Bashir (2017) many of the organizations in Pakistan were found to be depending on foreign aid also as there was no proper local system to support the projects funds due to which the effectiveness of their programs got affected and the widening gaps were being observed between the service delivery systems and the recipients' satisfaction level.

Therefore, as proclaimed by Tariq (2019) foreign aid and international goals have not just altered the nature of development to be carried out for the country but had also not been able to induce any significant type of improvement in people's life.

Theme 3: Impact of Foreign Aid and International Agendas on the Concept of Community Development

Whether community development and international agendas influence or shape the concept of community development in Pakistan, this question was responded by a community representative as government's initiatives vary from time to time primarily depending upon the donors' instructions. Because Pakistan is not just short of funds but also lacks expertise and there are a number of international donor organizations which when provide assistance, either themselves decide that how and where their assistance is to be utilized or ask the government to first specify each and every thing and then release the funds (CR9, interview 20 July 2024).

The responses of social welfare officers and all other stakeholders confirmed the same facts as according to them the activities being carried out in the field were not just short-term but essentially the result of some external-internal agendas or political pressures. For instance, it was shared by one of the social welfare officers: 'Even in case of awareness raising campaigns, in spite of sensitizing general public, sometimes the real intention is to build evidence for justifying the spending of foreign funds in a particular aspect' (SWO3, interview 09 May 2024).

While according to one of the directors of the department of social welfare, in Pakistan, programs are usually planned in view of two major factors which include governmental priorities, on the one hand, (as every political party comes with its own particular agenda and many of the things are planned according to that) and the international developmental agencies, on the other hand, which mainly strive to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs) and set the targets for the countries like ours (Di2, interview 25 June 2024.)

This gives rise to a concept of community development which comes from the top, not to meet community needs, but to fulfill international agendas. As exclaimed by Khan et al. (2024) who examined the impact of foreign aid on rural development in Pakistan that there are always certain vices attached with the phenomenon of foreign aid including excessive dependence and conditionality which may put the sustainability of development projects at risk. Because the measures like liberalizing markets or cutting of subsidies on basic items instead of promoting the well-being has worsened the poverty and inequality among rural population. Not just this, the foreign aid also deters local governments' and communities' tendency to seek new ideas or creative solutions as well as the local sources of funding. Owing to the fact that foreign funding is so readily available that in some cases the anticipation of aid has become 'waiting for the grant', which means that the stakeholders involved will not take any initiative on their own unless they are not supported by foreign donors at some point. Thus, there emerges a vicious circle of domestic resource mobilization being deferred time and again, dependency syndrome being developed more and more and community development becoming a handmaiden of international funders, not a facilitation tool for vulnerable communities to build their capacity and exercise their agency.

Malik (2007) who analyzed the aid effectiveness and the role of donor intervention in the education sector of Pakistan, also established this fact by stating that the implementation of international best practices in the developing countries was not the only outcome. Rather the financial assistance was found to be

actually affiliated with the broader political and economic agendas. Wherein different multilateral and bilateral institutions affect policy changes by tying up financial assistance packages with the progress to be made on global development goals (i.e. SDGs) and with the introduction of social sector reform policies in the aid recipient nations. Such as his study findings revealed that most of the policy documents of Pakistan including Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), Medium Term Development Frameworks (MTDFs), Annual Operating Plans (AOPs) and Country Assessment Documents (CAD) instead of country's actual aspirations were mainly the reflections of the donor community's priorities and this was the main reason that the desired targets could not be achieved successfully and community development became just a buzz word with no meaning for the local communities.

Not just this, but as pointed out by Khan & Raza (2021), who conducted a study on cultural imperialism and foreign aid in Pakistan, the donors' conditionality is a result of the idea of neo-colonialism, they impose their own culture, values, norms and priorities on the culture and priorities of recipient countries and cause a loss of the recipient countries' identity and political independence. Therefore, the idea of foreign aid is not so simple rather it may give rise to conflicts between what the international donors want and what the local people desire especially with regard to the socio-cultural policies. As a consequence of which not only the goals of development would be compromised but social enmity may also be noticed to be developed at a great extent which would mean that community development-traditionally a cohesive force, turns into a cause of disintegration and chaos in the country.

In addition, above discussed multiple views and multifarious developmental activities are observed in the field which have made the concept of community development not only vague but also very much complicated to be achieved in its true sense. Because as explained in terms of the general systems theory also that community development is a vast and holistic phenomenon wherein all the categories of stakeholders do not just comprise its constituent sub systems, but are strongly interrelated to each other in such a way that inter-relationships and interactions among various segments of the larger system, not only influence the organization of each of these segments but also the organization, growth and adaptation of the system on the whole. As pointed out by Bashir (2017), who conducted an analytical study on community development programs for socio-economic development of Pakistan, that though a number of community development programs had been launched in Pakistan but their contribution towards promoting communities' well-being was not much inspiring. Due to the fact that either those programs were started without planning or were not according to the people's needs and because many of those programs were executed by making use of the top-down approach wherein instead of giving preference to the needs of community people, the political leaders were interfering and exercising their powers to secure their personal goals and interests.

Therefore, it could be said that the external factors do not just influence the output and functioning of the constituent parts but also the concept of community development on the whole. As in this case, though it is the government which mainly approaches to obtain foreign assistance but the negative impacts of the conditions attached with that assistance have been communicated by almost all the categories of the stakeholders.

Conclusion

Hence, it can be concluded that in Pakistan the concept of community development is highly influenced by foreign aid and international agendas. As all the above discussion has demonstrated that being resource deficient, the governments in the country always look to international donor agencies, which do not just provide the aid but also introduce their own agendas in the form of expertise development or conditions attached with the funds. Both of which act as the powerful tool to control country's policies and programs as through these the foreign donors keep the things in their hands and do not let the governments think out of the box. Moreover, though foreign aid has played its role in improving some macro-economic indicators of the country yet it has remained ineffective in addressing community needs. Because instead of keeping in view the country's ground realities, its nature, amount as well as the areas of spending are determined by the donors themselves. In this way, on one hand, the country's autonomy is being compromised and, on the other hand, foreign ideas and programs of development are being imposed in the country. The result of which is that, in the communal society of Pakistan, community development has become a futile exercise as in its current conceptualization and practice both, it is excluding community needs, people's voices and grass-root realities.

Recommendations

Based on study findings, it is recommended that, first of all, the Pakistan should reduce its dependence on foreign aid and resort to ways which may generate revenue within the country so as to be independent in its decision making processes. Then, as suggested by most of the study participants there is a need to discourage the top-down imposition of foreign agendas and adopt a holistic approach of

stakeholders' engagement. So that, all the stakeholders may become aware of each other's role and constraints and thus keeping in consideration all the circumstances, could think of better ideas for their communities' development. Further, accountability must be ensured at all levels of policy making and planning in order to ensure responsible use of resources and achievement of the real goals of community development. Last but not least, community members should be at the forefront of their development initiatives from policy decisions to execution and evaluation, so they could build their capacity to help themselves, exercise their agency for their growth and development and develop ownership of the initiatives to make them sustainable.

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