Community Driven Development in Bangladesh: Factors Behind the Reality

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Community Driven Development in Bangladesh: Factors Behind the Reality

LA COMMUNAUTE MENANT LE DEVELOPPEMENT AU BANGLADESH: LES FACTEURS DERRIERE LA REALITE

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Abstract

Community driven development (CDD) is a widely used word in development discussions in the third world countries. Community participation in development planning, implementation and also in the benefit sharing is like foundation stone for CDD. This paper is an attempt to address those factors in the context of Bangladesh. Here in this paper secondary source of information from recent publications, journals, books, research reports and articles of newspapers and internet have taken into consideration. There are also some case studies (primary data) used to reflect on real life experiences at community level. Bangladesh with an ever increasing population has always depended on different actors like NGOs, Community Based Organization (CBOs) to work alongside with the government. It has been proved in many cases that community involved in planning and implementation process made significant changes in community development. There are also several factors both at the demand and supply side that contributes to CDD.

Key words: Community driven development; Contextual factors; Demand side factors; Supply side factors; NGOs; Community based organization

Résumé

La Communauté dirigeant le Développement (CDD) est un mot largement utilisé dans les discussions sur le développement dans les pays du tiers monde. La participation communautaire à la planification du développement, la mise en œuvre et aussi dans le partage conviennent à la première pierre pour la CDD. Ce document est une tentative pour répondre à ces facteurs dans le contexte du Bangladesh. Ici, dans cette source d'alimentation papier secondaire des informations tirées de publications récentes, revues, livres, rapports de recherche et d'articles de journaux et d'Internet ont pris en considération. Il ya aussi quelques études de cas (données primaires) utilisé pour réfléchir sur des expériences réelles au niveau communautaire. Bangladesh avec une population sans cesse croissante a toujours dépendu des différents acteurs comme les ONG, l'Organisation communautaire (CBO), de travailler aux côtés du gouvernement. Il a été prouvé dans de nombreux cas que la communauté impliqués dans la planification et le processus de mise en œuvre apporté des changements importants dans le développement communautaire. Il ya également plusieurs facteurs à la fois au côté de la demande et l'offre qui contribue au CDD.

Mots clés: La Communauté menant le développement; Les facteurs contextuels; Les facteurs de la demande; Les facteurs d'offre; Les ONG; L'organisation à base communautaire

INTRODUCTION

Living in the era of Globalization, community forces are still perceived as the most supportive or strengthened factors to mobilize internal and external resources and initiating development process for ensuring the quality of life for those who live in rural setting through a bottom up approach (Squazzoni, 2009). There is a broad agreement that community organizations (formal or

informal) play important role in mastering and fostering local development initiatives by bringing market or business, civic organizations and local agencies into concrete collaborations (DeWeese-Boyd 2006; Shaw and Martin 2000; Turner 2009). Community Driven Development (hereinafter, CDD) initiatives are important for community development as these initiatives produce highly specialized public goods like improved human and social capital in the community (Henton, et.al, 2004; cited in Squazzoni, 2009). Also CDD is popular for empowerment of the poor and other marginalized groups. It is responsiveness to beneficiary demand, it brings autonomy of local institutions, and it ensures greater downward accountability, and enhancement of local capacities (Lahiri-Dutt and Samanta 2002; Mansuri and Rao 2004). However, the poor are often described as an object of poverty reduction efforts. In contrast CDD treats poor people and their institutions as assets and partners in the development process. Experience shows that using clear rules of the game, access to information, and appropriate support poor men and women can effectively organize their activities that meet their immediate priorities.

Keeping CDD at the center of development management, actors of development took a number of initiatives since the end of World War II in South Asia when the first colonies gained independence and, only a few among all the initiatives were successful , as evident from recent social research, "Countries and their development partners have been trying to involve communities and local governments in their own development since the end of World War II when the first colonies gained independence in South Asia. Pioneers in both India and Bangladesh (then a part of Pakistan) developed a clear vision of how it would be done: Local development should be planned and managed by local citizens, their communities, and their local governments within a clearly defined decentralized framework that devolves real power and resources to local governments and communities. Capacity support would be provided by technical institutions and sectors, and non-governmental institutions. This vision set up a tension between central power and empowerment of communities and local governments. This has rarely been resolved and is still being grappled with in many countries'' (Mkhize, et.al 2009: 1).

Till now community driven development is an issue of discussion in development debate in Bangladesh. Different studies (ADB, 2006; Datta 2007; Mathor, 1997) reveal successful or failure of community driven initiatives in Bangladesh. Yet very few attempts have been taken to address the issues of actors and factors involved in community participation in Bangladesh. The article will try to give a picture of different elements, factors and actors in CDD in Bangladesh. The first section in this article tries to see the roles of different actors and factors

through secondary literature, second section introduces few case studies (collected through content review and in-depth interview) of CBOs or NGOs also considered as a key actor of community driven development and the paper ends up with a conclusion. While preparing this article various kinds of secondary literature have been analyzed and reviewed which include recent publications, journals, books, research reports and articles of newspapers and internet.

1. ACTOR AND FACTORS IN COMMUNITIY DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT: THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

In any society formal and informal organizations play important role as actors, context, input and instrument in success or failure of development activities (Karnjanaprakorn 1965). In CDD, the community people are in both supply and demand side- commonly perceived as actors. The core ingredients of community development hardware and software components come from a society. In this connection contextual factors, like-social norms, values and characteristics as instrument (Williams 2004). From this discussion it can be argued that in CDD, community itself plays an important role in providing input, implementing process and using outputs. Government as well different established institutions play vital role by formulating different policies. Apart from these actors outside from a specific community also play important roles as catalyst. Being a catalyst these actors also have significant role in CDD.

In this paper, to analyze nature of CDD approach special emphasis has been given on the supply side, contextual and demand side factors to make the discussion more precise (Figure 1).
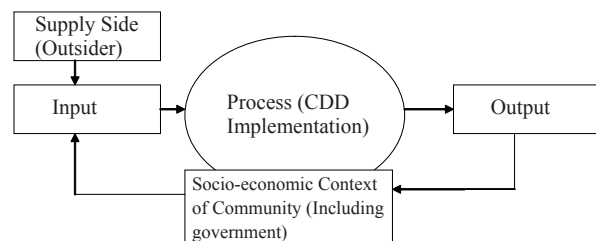

Figure 1
Role of Organizations/ Institutions in CDD

2. CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Context is a very significant factor in implementing different kinds of development activities. (Meekers and Stephen, 2005) and in context community driven development gets special attention as community development does not exist in a vacuum, it is influenced by ground reality (Munford and Walsh-Tapiata 2006). The following description will take this discussion to the

contextual factors which are associated with common social attitude, religious values, social structure and both individualism collectivism for demonstrating community nature in Bangladesh.

2.1 Social Attitude

From the very beginning of the civilization in Indian subcontinent, it has been observed as a trend that people has always been co-operative to organize and mobilize the community and to achieve their objectivities. Community people always stand firm when it comes to address local problem like water crisis, food crisis and coping disasters (Dutta 1991). It can be clearly said be that South Asia has a strong historical base of community driven development. Furthermore, the propinquity of the society is based upon the interaction between the members of the society. Due to long time interaction, more or less similar social values, assumptions, believes, norms and common behaviors can be found in Bangladesh. Till now people living in the villages have maintained and managed their religious institutions (mosque, temple and pagoda etc.), rural hat or *bazaar* (rural community market place), religious festival (*Eid gah*- where people come for prayer during Eid , *Puja Mondop*- a place where people of Hindu Community come to celebrate Puja), social festival (village fair, marriage ceremony etc.) by using social trust which depicts that people have a common attitude to the community driven development. Also, same professional group (*Jele* community -fisher man community, *kumar*- who maintain their livelihood by producing different goods from mud, barber community etc), ethnic and indigenous groups maintain their life style with collective community driven effort (Ali 2005).

2.2 Religious Values

Religious traditions and faith-based organizations promote social capita[2] through connecting people together in a common belief as well as supporting initiatives that generate development (Candland, 2000). Though there is good relationship between religion and development, the religion and spirituality are represented conspicuously in development literature and in the policies and programs of development organizations (Ver Beek, 2002; cited in Tomalin 2006). Religion shapes the social and economic behavior of in South Asia and according to Adam (2001: 154)'s statement, "South Asian society has roots extending back some 6000 years and for at least the last 2000 years has conspicuously exhibited its characteristics features such as caste, the joint family and the village community."

Hereby, in Bangladesh, the inhabitants are naturally devoted to religion is a key factor for harmony and integrity. Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, always encourage the collective effort. In Bangladesh, Islam and Hinduism are main religions and core values of these religions have profound impact on community driven development.

For instance, the traditional Indian expression of duty (*dharma*) sees all humans as equals and believes that everyone regardless of faith, beliefs should stay together and work for each other. In particular, people have their 'own duty' (*svadharma*) according to their sex (*stridharma* is a 'woman's *dharma*'-here women are known as a distinct community) or caste (*jatidharma*- whole cast is perceived as a community) (Tomalin, 2006). All these elements represent community integration and their responsibilities towards a society.

The religious values of Islam guide a Muslim to be in a good relationship with his relatives as well as their neighbors no matter what faith he belongs to but not favoring anyone unjustly. According to Hadiths "neighbor" is not just the one who stays next door but includes forty houses from all directions – that means the whole neighborhoods also go with the core principle of community participation and engagement (Jamal, 2005 ; Maynard 2007).

2.3 Social Structure

Local power structure i.e social structure normally known as the configuration of the local elite, their networks and resources and links with both formal (such as local government structures) and informal institutions (such as indigenous dispute settlement mechanisms and traditions of patron clientelism) (Hossain, 2006). There is clear division of class i.e the superior (elite class) and sub-ordinate class (poor people) in the culture that exists in Bangladesh. This is a common trend in the society that a mass people will get benefit from a person having power and resources thus giving the opportunity to be governed by this powerful class in the society. Longing back from the past to till today, the power and status are coupled with responsibility and thereby the less powerful society has always been deprived of it. At the same time the powerful group has the fear of loosing their supremacy in the society. Sometimes this also leads to conflict between social groups which ultimately affect the development activities. In Bangladesh, many initiatives of community driven development have been failed due to resistance of the local elite as they see the poor people as clients. Apart from that because of good internal linkage these people also get benefited from community driven initiatives taken in the past.

In Concern[3]'s rural development projects, the micro finance group members encountered clashes with some religious leaders, who were particularly involved in

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[2]Here social norm, network and trust are mentioned as social capital

money-lending activities. These leaders labelled group members 'idolaters' and asked villagers to boycott them in all social activities including 'Janaja' (a prayer for the salvation of a departed soul before the burial of the body). A minority also burnt Concern's school and chopped down roadside trees planted by group members. The reasons of this clash were two fold: (a) the business of providing loans with high interest rates was shrinking with the introduction of the group's revolving loan fund, and (b) they started feeling a loss of power as a result of the increased awareness and economic empowerment of the poor (Datta 2007).

2.4 Individualisn Vs Collectivism

The tradition that is followed in Asia emphasizes on collective duty and responsibility rather than individual rights (Tomalin 2006). Bangladesh is a country where the social tie is prominent and people usually think out of immediate family. They think about their relatives, *gushti* (lineage) and *samaj* (small localized community groups). When anything that goes against social norms and values, interest of *gushti* (lineage) and *samaj* (small localized community groups) the community resists. It can be argued that lineage ties and community driven development at rural level are closely related (Rahman, 1994; Karamsjo and Wood 1992; Krauo et.al 2008)

3. DEMAND SIDE FACTORS

Theoretically, in community driven development, initiatives should come from the community. But in reality this is a rare practice and all the initiatives come from development actors who are basically outsider not active members of local communities. Therefore, demand[4] side is a crucial factor in community based development. Though contextual factors reflect some characteristics of demand side, there are also some distinct features of demand side.

3.1 Sense Of Ownership

In Bangladesh, there are issue based programs like-health, education, micro credit etc. of various NGOs who work through community based organization (hereinafter, CBO). Hence it is important that the community people should have knowledge about the significance of such issues. Otherwise, it is extremely difficult to run a community centric programs smoothly. A study on ASHE project of Water Aid, Bangladesh shows that CBOs in rural areas are more sustainable than urban slum based CBOs. Rural CBOs are more effective as the rural community feels that they are the permanent dwellers and a sense of ownership on facilities available at community level always drives them to get the best out of this. On the other hand urban communities of slum area of Bangladesh

are temporary dwellers, they have probability to migrant in another place and for this reason CBOs of urban areas are less effective (Eminence, 2007). Therefore it can be argued that no community driven initiative becomes successful as long as the community owns it and realizing the importance of such development in their lives.

3.2 Perception About Supply Side

The common people have the perception that NGOs have lots of foreign money which should be coming to them in cash or kind. With this frame of mind in every stage of participation they expect financial benefit, especially short time benefit. They also think that NGOs earn money by capitalizing our vulnerability, but they do nothing for us (Eminence 2009). It is mentionable that relief and rehabilitation has been a dominant approach in Bangladesh and most of NGOs extensively depend on funds for their survival as well. As a matter of fact rather concentrating on efforts to make a community sustainable or enhancing inner capacity (attitudinal change) importance has always given on to the expansion of a particular project.

4. SUPPLY SIDE FACTORS

The role of NGOs to ensure community participation in Bangladesh is like a catalyst. NGOs have been working on community mobilization and their capacity enhancement for many years. In Bangladesh, to ensure the community participation and to develop the capacity of community people basically, NGOs are working as catalyst. Still there are factors that make the entire process of community participation looks difficult. These include:

4.1 The Paternalistic Role of Development Professionals

This is a usual practice in Bangladesh that most the development projects are planned by outsiders mostly known as 'development experts'. They stay within a community for few days and end up with designing something which the community doesn't own. The projects are basically planned upon their observation and how this small group of people sees a context in their eyes. This also reflected on various approaches that came into practice when these experts transferred their ideas and knowledge into development interventions. There is also a perception among the donors that brand 'development experts' always know the best and the community knows less. It is therefore difficult for the development planners to view community needs and opportunities through 'the eyes of end-beneficiaries'. For example, Health and Population Sector Program (HPSP) [1996/97-2003] has failed to achieve the targeted result because end beneficiaries and service providers did not own this

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[3]An international non-government organization

[4]Community people who are service recipient are called as demand side

program (Osman, 2005).

4.2 Pre-Defined Planning and Ornamental Participation

In some instances, community participation is not a genuine attempt to empower communities to choose development options freely, but is rather an attempt to sell preconceived proposals (White, 1996). In Bangladesh, national and international NGOs submit project proposals as per their knowledge of development keeping the guidelines of the donors in mind. Hence maximum projects or programs are donor driven rather than community driven. It is evident in most of the development projects and their implementation, for example in Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), government and management agencies implemented the programs by pre-planned terms, references and proposal rather than to address the actual need (Eminence, 2009). A participation process often begins after a project is designed. The process is not an attempt to determine outcomes and priorities but to accepting an existing package. Therefore community participation can be legitimized by unpacking the program designed for them and taking their consensus on that. Community participation in that case is an attempt to convince beneficiaries what is best for them.

4.3 Selective Participation

In the development management very often more selected groups are allowed to be partners in development without serious and ongoing attempts to identify influential decision makers. Since many community organizations are not democratically elected, the involvement of local leaders often represents the voice of a group of self-appointed people, and may not accurately reflect the views and perspectives of the broader community (Botes and Rensburg 2000). In Bangladesh most of the NGOs have focus mainly on women and poor people ignoring the ground reality. For Example, Concern Worldwide-Bangladesh, an international NGO failed to achieve their target in a project due to selective participant (women and poor) and later on have to involvement everyone getting to document lessons learnt in the project. Datta (2007) express in his article, "To work directly with the poor in a traditional society can be challenging; however, good rapport with local religious leaders, developed during the service delivery projects, enabled Concern to do so".

4.4 Hard-Issue Bias

It is witnessed while implementing many of development projects that the so-called 'hard' issues (technological, financial, physical and material) are given more importance than the 'soft' issues (such as community involvement, decision making procedures, the establishment of efficient social compacts, organizational development capacity building and empowerment). This is generally assumed that the social and cultural features (the so called 'soft issues') are temporary, intangible and unnecessary time-consuming in comparison to more easily managed 'hard issues' (Botes and Rensburg 2000). In Bangladesh maximum community driven development initiatives give more focus on tangible improvement of the project rather than the attitudinal changes.

4.5 End-Beneficiary Communities

Development is always the result of decisions which require choices about whose needs are to enjoy priority (Botes and Rensburg 2000). Major portion of resources of the development project goes to the pocket of so called development activists. Many questions are being raised about the governance and transparency of NGOs and misuse of NGOs implemented projects (Pathan, 2006; The Daily Star, 29-06-2008).

4.6 Excessive Pressures For Immediater Results

Excessive pressures for immediate results, accruing from the products and services delivered, often undermine attention to institution-building and make it difficult not to address poverty and poverty reduction from a relief and welfare approach. Most of the NGOs operating in Bangladesh have the tendency to concentrate on immediate result rather focusing on institution building. Therefore the workers who are involved at community mobilization only focus on the immediate result set by their.

5. EXAMPLES OF CDD IN BANGLADESH

There are lots of successful community driven development initiates in Bangladesh. Though there is debate on success of community driven development, there are evidences shown exceptional results promoting community based initiatives as successful development approach.

5.1 Social Forestry

Over two decades into operation social forestry is one of the widely reached programs in Bangladesh. In spite of having clear right and responsibility in policy paper regarding social forestry, the common people especially landless, women and disadvantaged do not own the program in true sense as they don't have meaningful access to various stages in planning and implementation stage (Muhammed, et.al 2005). Decision making by rule oriented bureaucrats, patron-client relationship among the stakeholders, lack of access to information, ineffective role of NGOs, lack of trust on institutions like Union Parishad and bureaucracy are dominant factors acting as obstacles to ensure people's participation in the social forestry project. Lack of people's participation in the evaluation process of social forestry project in Bangladesh can not be considered as a community based program in true sense (Chowdhury 2004).

5.2 Community Based Health Care Management

Realizing the vulnerability of the poor households BRAC, a home-grown Bangladeshi NGO (for more information, please visit http://www.brac.net) integrated Essential Health Care (EHC) services with its micro-credit and education program. Since it's inception in 1972, BRAC has been the major providers of community based health services in Bangladesh. The front-line worker of BRAC's health program is the Shasthya Sebika, SS (meaning a woman who provides basic healthcare services in the community) who forms the core of its community health service. The SS is selected by BRAC authority from the same community and she gets proper basic trainings for providing health service (Ahmed, 2008). Community based health intervention of BRAC is popular due to door to door services, female health service providers, cost effective services and close intervention in the community with lower formal educated but trained women. This health service is one of the success examples and also, recognized by national and international community (Barnes, et. al 2001; Nanda, 1999 & Pitt, et. at 2003). The common people don't have any major decision making opportunity in the program without getting services at low costs.

5.3 Micro-Finace Group

Over two decades, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have been acted as a major contributor in promoting microfinance and taking it to a new level. They form solidarity credit groups with poor community members and each very group consists of 5 to 10 members basically take liability of the credit. Social capital (i.e trust), network among the rural women and inter personal relationship among the members are the major factors that contribute to the success of such program (Zeller, et. al 2001). All micro finance programs are not equally successful. Sometimes activities of micro-credit program faces criticism due to the high power distance within the management level of micro-finance institutes and its impact on credit recipients, pressure for immediate result and patron client result relationship between field level staffs and group members. However, group based micro-finance program is a centrally planned program where group members have little say in the time of decision making of micro-credit (Rana, 2008).

Though there are lots of actors involved in Community Driven Development still NGOs are considered as the front liners in promoting communities centric initiatives. The NGOs and Community Based Organizations in Bangladesh have been successfully taking this ahead. While working at the community with common people, CBOs experience success and lessons being learnt which is inspiring to many who follow the same approach addressing community need.

5.4 Lati Basi Sangothon

The *Lati Basi Sangothon* (Bamboo Whistle Organization) which official name is Extortionist Resistance Action Committee is established in 1999. It was a self-motivated initiative by traders of Natore (A district of Bangladesh), who thought that they had common goal to achieve that could be achieved jointly. Though it started with a specific objective of safeguarding the interests of small business owners and traders, not it is more like an organization of people addressing the interest of the people. Started with 500 members the *Lati Basi Sangothon* is (Bamboo Whistle Organization) which official name is Extortionist Resistance Action Committee is established in 1999. It was a self-motivated initiative by traders of Natore (A district of Bangladesh), who thought that they had common goal to achieve that could be achieved jointly. Though it started with a specific objective of safeguarding the interests of small business owners and traders, not it is more like an organization of people addressing the interest of the people. Started with 500 members the Lati Basi Sangothon is now a well accepted name in the district with over a 50000 active members in the organization. It has 40 units that are managed by the representatives of central committee of the organization. Also, the governing process including financial management is very much participatory with active involvement of community people. Thus it can be said that this organization is formed and managed by the community and benefits are also shared within the community (Source: Interview and document review).

5.5 Paddy Bank

With a close guidance of a local NGO which is popularly known as Udayankur Seaba Sangtha (USS), Nilphamary, a group of people of Laxmychapa Union of Nilpahamay districts took initiatives to establish a *'Dhan Bank'* (Paddy Bank) in 2004 focusing particularly on *'monga'* affected area. The paddy bank is managed by central committee with a sub-committee in every village. In both of central committee and subcommittee major portion of members are females, but male members hold decision making positions. Committee members of this bank collect paddy in the time of harvest from farmers who are members of this bank. After inception a total of 3770 people receive paddy as loan in lean or monga season. The Paddy Banks stands as an alternative force to relief and money lending practices which were very popular in the Monga affected areas of the northern part of Bangladesh (Source : Interview and document review).

Following table (Table 1) would like to summaries the dominant features:

Table 1
Types and Nature of Organizations that Supported Successful Cases of CDD

Type of Organization	Dominant Features
Social Forestry	Top-down planning, patron client relationship, low peoples participation
Community Based Health Management	Paid service providers from the same community, top down planning and very little option of community participation
Micro-finance	Social capital, network and inter personal relationship among group members
Lati Basi Sangothon	Need based, trust and community ties
Paddy Bank	Need based, trust and community ties

CONCLUSION

Community actors play a vital role in encouraging community development. Both formal and informal organizations have significant parts in bringing out people centric development initiatives through empowerment of marginalized community. Experience and above discussion also shows that NGOs and CBOs have a meaningful involvement in make people participate in development process and own the program that is planned for them. As it is witnessed in many cases that community people has the capacity to improve their conditions by using their knowledge and indigenous skills. In the discussion it is quite clear to us that some actors in Community Driven Development have very positive role to play and also there actors with relatively lesser involvement and sometimes do have adverse effects on the community.

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