

## ***Citizen Community Boards: A Case of Mal-Practice in Devolution Plan***

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### **Abstract**

*Pakistan is a third world country labelled as developing nation with low scores on Human Development Index. Since its independence, many attempts were made to make rural areas visible in the national development process. Heavy programs were launched in different spans of time but could not achieve the desired goals. The recently launched Local Government System was envisaged to empower the local communities to play an effective role in the development cycle. The current paper documents the mal-practices within the participatory development process in the country. The objectives of the paper include; studying the role of Citizen Community Boards as a vehicle to involve rural community in the development process; hurdles in the productive functioning of these bodies; study of the oversimplified claims of new system for devolving the decision making and governance issues to the grass roots. The study was conducted in selected areas of the District Sheikhpura of the Punjab province.*

**Key Words:** Citizen Community Boards, Decentralization, Devolution, Local Governments, Power holders.

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## **Introduction**

The new Local Government System implemented with a view to empower women in the communities addition to the poor so as to achieve sustainability of the economic development initiatives. Above all it aims at building viable institutions for ensuring efficient and effective local levels delivery of services. The essentials of this Devolution/Local Government Plan were based on the following five fundamentals:

1. Devolution of political power.
2. Decentralization of administrative authority.
3. De-concentration of management functions.
4. Diffusion of the power-authority nexus.
5. Distribution of resources to the district level.

The implementation of the Plan under the New Local Government Ordinance does not however, provide a sufficient base to pass any judgment on the performance of the District Government Institutions in relation to some common characteristics of good governance, i.e.,

1. Transparency of the decision making process;
2. Accountability of the decision makers by the stakeholders;
3. Efficiency of the governance institutions;
4. Responsiveness to peoples' needs;
5. Governance institutions as facilitators and enablers rather than controllers;
6. Performance of functions according to the established laws and rules.

The new local Government System was introduced to ensure genuine democracy at grass root level, transferring power to people representatives at all levels along with responsibility and administrative authority coupled with check and balance in order to curb misuse of powers or authority. In order to ensure devolution plan implementation in letter and spirit steps would be taken to ensure continuity of the local government system, through the timely holding of local government elections, the removal of inconsistencies in the laws and rules made under the Local Government Ordinance 2001 besides improving vertical and horizontal linkages and putting into place strict accountability and transparency mechanisms as needed to ensure good governance.

### **Historical Background of Similar Approaches in Pakistan**

The principle aim of rural development in Pakistan therefore remain to improve the quality of life of the rural people by improving the rural economy and living condition in the villages by improving the rural infrastructure, providing social amenities, undertaking productive projects to satisfy local community needs besides, creating gainful employment opportunities.

Similar to District Government System in Local Government Ordinance 2001, Pakistan in past has already experimented many developmental efforts under different strategies.<sup>1</sup> The strategies and approaches adopted and advocated so far can be grouped under the following major categories.

#### **Growth Strategy (1950-70)**

It focused on “growth” criteria to achieve the rapid economic development with an assumption that the benefits of development would trickle down to the poor and disadvantaged groups.<sup>2</sup> This approach was reflected in People Works Program, Tameer-e-Watan Program and the Prime Minister’s five point developmental agendas from time to time.

#### **Welfare Strategy (1971-78)**

The basic needs approach was adopted afterwards for the socio-economic uplift of the society and for the alleviation of rural poverty under the welfare state concept. The basic assumption being that the poor do not have the capability to stand on their feet so the government should help them in providing necessities of life as food, shelter, clothing, medical and education facilities etc.<sup>3</sup> Under such approach, Tawana Pakistan, SAP-I and SAP-II were in

#### **Integrated Rural Development Approaches (1971-78)**

The lessons learnt from the failures of the past development strategies led to a better understanding of the nature and complexity of rural society. The causes of rural poverty were

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1 Government of Pakistan, *Overview of Rural Development Programs in Pakistan* (Islamabad: Printing Corporation of Pakistan, 2005, a).

2 Government of Pakistan, *Overview of Rural Development Programs in Pakistan*, (Islamabad: Printing Corporation of Pakistan, 2005, b).

3 *Ibid.*

considered multiple and interdependent so an integrated or holistic approach involving all the relevant sectors was adopted for achieving the objectives of rural development.<sup>4</sup> Such approaches were vivid V-AID program and Khushal Pakistan program, etc.

In spite of all efforts in the past, the objective of participatory rural development could not be achieved in the manner they were planned and envisaged. The current in practice District Government System in practice has seen similar kind of results.

### **Socio-Cultural Life in Pakistan**

Life in rural Pakistan is fragmented and revolving around many complex social and cultural elements. The rural life is a composite chain of cultural complexities in Pakistan<sup>5</sup> says Burky, that “*Land lords in the pre-Ayub era were able to control at least twenty Punjab villages*” is a reference to the exceptional case, rather than the rule few villages were (or are) owned by a single family. In the typical case of about 12, 000 Acres, these are usually a few land lords (some of whom may own more land in the adjoining “*Mauza*” (villages) plus a large number of peasant proprietors as well as members of other classes. Given such a composition of the rural population, it would be simplistic to explain political power in the rural society merely be references to the exceptional political power in the vast majority of villages political power in such mixed villages is typically organized by the “*Kath*” or the “*Dharra*” (Factions). The *Dharra leader*, who is typically a big land owner who organizes support by a variety of means like relying on a core of supporters namely who would be economic dependents, their as share croppers, who have little option but to follow their master and also close relatives, who might also be the big landlords. The factions leaders enter into alliance with fellow land lords, who also bring add their economic dependents into the faction with their power contained in this core. The faction leaders set out to recruit a following among other sections of the rural community principally from the ranks of

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4 *Ibid.*

5 See, S. J. Burky, *The Development of Pakistan's Agriculture: An International Disciplinary Explanation in Rural Development in Bangladesh and Pakistan* (Honolulu, University Press of Hawaii, 1976).

independent small peasant proprietors. The latter are individually weak but often organized under the authority of their “*Biraderi Punchayat*” (Lineage Council).

The picture also becomes more complicated the following efforts made by the changing governments during their respective tenures and by influential persons in office or their rural supporters whom Alavi<sup>6</sup> calls “*Rassagirs*”. They hijack the programme for their own ends. Working on these lines Chonchol<sup>7</sup> focused on the role of pressure groups and influential people in adopting innovative techniques especially in the course of developmental projects. He says that “pressure groups or influentials get their share on a priority basis because they can afford to take risks and exploit others, because they know that while doing this no body would stop them and their links to the government and the bureaucracy would protect them”. Roth in agreement with Chonchol<sup>8</sup> also says that “people who are neither big land lords nor politically influential, can easily be suppressed by influential people due to the lack of class solidarity among the poor”.<sup>9</sup>

Humza Alavi<sup>10</sup> points out that under British rule, the articulation of power between the village and the council regime was achieved by the appointment of locally powerful men to the hereditary office of a *Lambardar* (revenue collector). Similarly, appointments were made to higher offices such as “*Zaildar*”. The *Lambardar* held a crucial position in the system. Formally his function was collect land revenue for which he was allowed to retain a commission called *Pachotra* (Land tax), but that was the least important of this function. He was not servant of the state rather he was the holder of a quasi-political office. He represented the village before the administration and the administration before village. To be effective, it was essential that he should be power

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6 H. Alavi, *The Rural Elite and Agricultural Development* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1976), pp.343-47.

7 See, Chonchol and J. Nash, eds. *Popular Participation in Social Changed Cooperatives, Collectives, Nationalization Industry* (Paris: Mouton Publishers, 1976).

8 See, Chonchol. and Nash, *Popular Participation in Social Changed Cooperative*.

9 See, Chonchol. and Nash, *Popular Participation in Social Changed Cooperative*.

10 See Alavi, *The Rural Elite and Agricultural Development*.

holder in the village. The appointment was therefore always from leading land lord family of the village of the head of a “*Biraderi*” (Linkage) of peasant proprietors where such a “*Biraderi*” was large. By virtue of his rule as a mediator, between the people of the village and the administration, the “*Lambardar*” was in a position to bestow favours and patronage. This further reinforced his power because the power at village was assimilated in this way into the political systems of the colonial regime. Through the administration, the “*Lamberdari*” [revenue collection] system consolidated the power of the administration against political challenge, especially the way which it was posed by the national level politicians. Political parties attracted local faction leaders who established ties with aspiring leaders and with politicians installed in the office, a new channel of articulation of power between the local and the national levels was established.

In present case, the concept of Citizen Community Boards (CCBs) as defined by the Local Government System<sup>11</sup> was that in every local area (defined as Union, Tehsil/Taluqa (sub district), Town, District and City District) a group of non-elected citizens could, for the sake of energizing the community for development and improving the service delivery set up a Citizen Community Board (CCB). The CCBs were to contribute in project design, implementation, management and monitoring at the grass root level with the object of improving the services. Unlike NGOs, which were registered under various Acts/Laws, Citizens Community Boards were to be registered with the Community Development Office (CDO) of the respective district. Projects of the CCBs would be given top priority.<sup>12</sup>

The law enabled citizens to participate within the decentralized framework thus making all areas of development activities that affect the lives of citizen accessible to them so that the citizens truly become masters of their own destiny. CCBs were to mobilize communities and also raise funds to solve local

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11 See, *Government of Pakistan, Local Government Ordinance.*

12 See, *National Reconstruction Bureau, Guidelines for Citizen Community Boards,* (Islamabad: NRB, 2005).

problems.<sup>13</sup> The CCBs through voluntary, proactive and self help initiatives were supposed to take up the following;

1. Improvement of service delivery by a public facility;
2. Development and management of a new public facility;
3. Welfare of the handicapped, destitute, widows and families in extreme poverty;
4. Establishment of farming, marketing and consumers' cooperatives and
5. Identification of development and municipal needs and mobilization of resources.

The new local government introduced<sup>14</sup> the formation of stakeholders associations (voluntary associations such as Parent Teacher Associations, Patient Hospital Associations, School Management Associations, Farm Water Associations or Citizen Police Associations etc.) for involvement of the community in the improvement and maintenance of specific facilities; and for reinforcing the capacity of a specific Monitoring Committee at the behest of the concerned council.

The Citizen Community Boards were mandatory to be non-profit organizations and their income and assets were to be used solely for the attainment of their objectives. No portion of the income was allowed to be paid by way of salary, dividend, profit or bonus to any of the members or contributors. The CCBs were proclaimed to have a general body of its members who should have elected a chairman, executive committee and a secretary of the Board for carrying out their functions. The term of office of the Chairman, members of the executive committee and secretary of the Citizen Community Board was for a period of one year extendable through an election for a similar term or terms by the general body. The chairman and secretary were responsible for safe custody and management of property and assets of the CCB.

The role of CCBs in development activities was to be played through the submission of their proposals on a standardized application form. The CCBs were asked to develop proposals, which should be in line with the functions and objectives defined

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13 *Ibid.*

14 *Ibid.*

in the Local Government Ordinance. The maximum share of the Local Government could not exceed 80 percent. The community share in cash was not be less than 20 percent. The development Budget was provided for activities through the CCBs mechanism.

Bohle and Fünfgeld<sup>15</sup> are of the view that in political ecology, violence is usually associated with conflicts over the control of natural resources. Up till now, political ecology has lacked a sound conceptual approach for analyzing how violence that has its origin in political conflict induces environmental and social change.

Fisher<sup>16</sup> has quoted the case of diamond and gold mining in Tanzania, the concept of social exclusion is used to explore the consequences of marginalization on people's access to mineral resources and ability to make a living from artisanal mining. Because existing inequalities and forms of discrimination are ignored by the Tanzanian state, the institutionalization of mineral titles conceals social and power relations that perpetuate highly unequal access to resources.

Razavi<sup>17</sup> says that despite the 'pro- poor' and occasionally 'pro-women' rhetoric, the design of social policies remains largely blind to these gender structures. Addressing them would require a major rethinking of dominant approaches, placing redistribution more firmly at the heart of policy design, valuing and supporting unpaid care, and providing incentives for it to be shared more equally between women and men, and between families/households and society more broadly.

## **Materials and Methods of Research**

### **Locale:**

The current study was conducted in the Union Council of Sacha Soda in the Tehsil of Sheikhpura district of the Punjab province. The life of this Union Council is characterized by big

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15 Hans-Georg Bohle and H. Fünfgeld, "The Political Ecology of Violence in Eastern Sri Lanka", *Development and Change*, Vol. 38, No. 4, (Autumn 2007), pp. 665-87.

16 E. Fisher, "Occupying the Margins: Labour Integration and Social Exclusion in Artisanal Mining in Tanzania", *Development and Change*, Vol. 38, No. 4, (Winter 2007), pp.735-60.

17 Razavi Shakra, "The Return to Social Policy and the Persistent Neglect of Unpaid Care", *Development and Change*, Vol. 38, No.3, (Autumn 2007), pp.377-400.



political players who acted as middlemen in the local power structure.

It is important to understand the relevance of pointing out the local power structure within the village and its to the provincial and national level assemblies and the politics under the devolution plan and with provincial and national level assemblies. Important power and pressure groups of the village were the following groups: (a) Rana; (b) Gujar; (c) Virak; (d) Dogar; (e) Rai. These groups were all politically strong in the area and shaped the cultural life with its defined rules. Their being crucial for the success of different political parties and the success of their candidates, made these local groups successful in manipulating the parties act in their own respective favour.

**Location:**

Sheikhupura District lies roughly between North latitudes 31.0 degree and 32.5 degree and East longitudes 73.5 and 74.42 degree. Its shape is roughly that of trapezoid with a triangular off-shoot to the west from the Southwest corner. The village Sacha Soda is situated 18 km from Sheikhupura city towards North West.

**Methods:**

Data collection was done through the exploratory method while using common techniques of participant observation, in-depth interviews, and open interogation key informants. The sample of the study is drawn in two major phases and was interacted for the data. Different anthropological methods were applied for information gathering. The data collection process was covered in three main steps that included firstly, administration of socio-economic survey forms, secondly, interviews, guides and thirdly in-depth interviews.

**Results**

**1. The Role of CCBs as a Vehicle to Involve the Rural Community in the Locally Managed Development Process**

As explained above, the CCBs were the bodies that were said to be managing and giving priority to the local developmental needs while consulting the local. In fact, this task could not be achieved because of the following reasons:

- a) No capacity building of the local people was executed to run the administrative and financial matters of CCBs.
- b) The process of the CCBs running successfully was complicated and excess of formalities diminished the villager's interest.
- c) The examples of CCBs that were headed by the local power holders who further used CCBs to increase their influence even further and bestow benefits upon to their factional associates.
- d) Only those CCBs that were successful in getting developmental grants headed and supported by the group in office at the district level were successful in getting grants.

## **2. Hurdles involved in desired way of functioning of the CCBs**

The local power structure was crucial in manipulating the CCBs to serve their vested interests. The village life was already characterized by the evidence of conflict due to which most of the people could not benefit themselves from these bodies. The power groups managed to include their associates in most of the CCBs and thus making them run to serve their vested interests.

### **Role of "Deraydar" [Power holder]**

There are some *Deraydar* in this village. The data shows, how middle class people (illiterate or educated) preferred to have links with the *Deraydar* because they thought that the letter might give them employment. However, the *Deraydar* did not do so. As the most, they provided them with 4th class jobs. Common people who had no approach to the *Deraydar*, could not even obtain such a benefit. In fact, any development of the ordinary peasants was and is against the short-term interests of their landlords. Keeping the former poor and dependent will retain the old power structure which implies that common people let the *Deradar* solve their internal feuds and disputes. The decisions will then be biased in favour of those families who can assemble more votes.

### **“Biradari” (linkage)**

The *biradari* system has strong roots in the Punjabi society. The *biradari* possessing a numerical majority will play a dominant role in all these aspects like religious, social, economic and political. Any *biradari* is led by an influential individual, selected or elected by some of the elders of the *biradari*. Regarding the voting in elections to the Local Government, Provincial Assembly or National Assembly, they favour candidates of their respective *biradari* respective of the political party and the proposed policies. Moreover, the educational level and the visions of the candidates in question will not be considered.

### **Interference in the matters of Local Governments**

In theory, the new Local Government System promised to provide the decision making powers to the local level. This promise could not be fulfilled since Provincial Chief Minister retained the powers to suspend the resolutions of District, Tehsil and Union Council, if any contradictions to the law or the interests of the people were reported. This power was mainly used for benefit of the provincial government's candidates.

### **Limited Financial Decentralization**

While the scope of local governments in terms of the services they are responsible for and how they allocate district level expenditures across services increased substantially post-devolution, the extent of financial decentralization was limited both because (i) districts governments continue to have the same revenue collection volume, since (no new taxes have been devolved to the district and tehsil levels) and they still rely primarily on provincial and ultimately on federal funds, through the provincial finance commission awards (although the latter has been made rule-based) and (ii) a significant majority of district expenditures are “establishment charges” which, while incurred by the district, cannot be altered by the district; these expenditures include salaries of administrative personnel who continue to be provincial employees and as such the district cannot fire them or adjust their income.

### **3. Oversimplified Claims of the new System for Devolving the Decision Making and Governance Issues to the Grass Roots**

As a crucial factor the devolution plan lacked a crucial factor concrete step to inform the public about the concept and the benefits of the new system. The power holders of the village also interacted with the new plan in a conventional way using it as a means to strengthen their hold over area and lives of people. The most commonly observed problems of District Government System are following:

*Firstly*, the new system is also a part of a centrally controlled and supervised national administration patterned after the colonial administration.

*Secondly*, most of the reforms proposed in the existing devolution plan do not challenge the colonial pattern of administration which is based on central control and the disturbed functioning of the feudal forces undisturbed. Furthermore, the existing district government plan is also the brain child of Musharaf's reign and people have reasons to believe that it would be vanished with a change in the central government's leadership.

*Thirdly*, there is no public participation or public accountability at any level of local administration as is existing today. The District Coordination Officer (DCO, formerly Deputy Commissioner, and the provincial offices are, as in the former colonial system, only answerable to their direct superiors not the public whom they serve.

*Fourthly*, by making the district the basic unit of administration, the present structure betrays the same colonial pattern of isolating itself from the overwhelming majority of the population.

*Fifthly*, the functional authority remains in the hands of DCO who is representing the province and central government. The favorite "Nazims" [Head of District, Sub district or Union Council] of the government, however, though enjoy power and authority though the districts with *Nazims* from opposition parties are questioning the justice of federal and provincial government justice. In this entire scene, the general public is not involved

*Sixthly*, though the macro level issues discussed above are also important they should not be prioritized at the cost of micro level issues that if addressed can really make a difference in the lives of the citizens.

*Seventhly*, complex and colonial procedures are still retained by the District and Tehsil administration without taking into account the needs of the local population or its capacity to use them. It is a general trend in fund allocation that each tier tries to come to the front whereas when it comes to solving problems no body is really interested to take up the matter.

*Eighthly*, the opposition by the existing privileged bureaucracy has been instrumental in subverting programs which tend to reduce central bureaucratic control and promote any the real decentralization.

*Ninthly*, it is obvious that no local government system till to date is elected in a fair electoral process accordingly, the unfair means of getting elected debar the functionaries from the public in the development process.

### **Discussion**

The village Sacha Soda is famous for the presence of five pressure groups having interests in politics from local to national level. Their interest in local level politics meant to increase their respective influence and numerical strength. By doing so they would increase their bargaining status within the community and with the politicians at district, province and national level. These pressure groups provided the assurance of votes during the elections through the mobilization of their group associates. The politicians in acknowledgement of the favours received from these groups provided them the backings from police and other law enforcing agencies.

The new Local Government System promised to empower people at the local level through CCBs. This innovation was also manipulated by these influential people into their favour and thus used for increasing their influence in the area to win more bargaining status with the politicians. These groups only allowed those CCBs to function in which their associates were present. This intervention gave them more influence not only in the village

life but also in the whole area. The findings of the study reinforce Burky's analysis.

that the local power structure is inevitable in rural life because individuals and political parties with ambitions in district, provincial or national politics seek alliances with the local faction leaders that secure for them support at the grass root level.<sup>18</sup>

It is further verified by Alavi who says

Politically influential land lords manipulate the project into their favor, due to the power structure in Pakistan, which allows them to exploit, and they get share of small potential beneficiaries.<sup>19</sup>

The depicted village Sacha Soda indicated that no relevant developmental work was carried out in the last local government setups. People were of the view that no body after an election, often under many excuses, nobody fulfills the promises made during the election. The community viewed that it was always the influential land owners who demanded the support from the villagers as recognition of their services during regular times. The villagers usually cast their votes according to the wishes of *deraydar* and were made to understand that they could easily approach the latter with their problems and who would use their influence in fixing their issues. The *deraydars* acted as middlemen between the candidate during the elections and the voter community to serve their vested interests. This refers to the findings of Burky<sup>20</sup> who has rightly highlighted the role of influential people normally big land owners managing the resources into their favour.

The result of the conflicting situation in Sacha Soda prevented relevant developmental work done by the CCBs with exceptions for those which had the support from these influential people. The matters of CCBs were badly disturbed because the members had to seek permission from the *Nazim* (Head) of the Union Council who not only influenced most of the developmental budgets in favour of his group but also restricted other influential groups to benefit from initiating developmental schemes. Moreover, the process of registering a CCB was as lengthy and complicated as other

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18 See Burky, *The Development of Pakistan's Agriculture*.

19 See Alavi, *The Rural Elite and Agricultural Development*.

20 See Burky, *The Development of Pakistan's Agriculture*.

government business. There were only five percent examples where the CCBs which were backed by the influential people were given developmental funds regarding their submitted projects. It was found that in the newly launched system, CCBs were not among priorities of the any district government.

The seats for the female representation in the new systems amounted to thirty three percent of the total seats. The purpose of revising these was to empower women at the local level by participating in the local decision making process. It is observed that the representative usually remained absent from the sessions as their role was only to help winning the elections for the women seats. Later on these women usually refrain from coming to the session unless there is something very important and crucial going on in the session like a no confidence vote or budgetary discussion.

Another hurdle observed in the district assembly session was that it introduced various committees whose functions were to make sure the smooth sailing of different chapters under the district assembly's jurisdiction. These committees included:

- a) Elect committees of the Zila Council (District Council) for monitoring the performance of the District Government;
- b) Ensure that Monitoring Committees of the Zila Council perform their functions in a non-intrusive manner without interfering in the day to day working of the relevant offices of the District Government and do not assume a command and control role;
- c) Review the Monitoring Committees' quarterly reports on the performance of the District Government;
- d) Elect an Ethics Committee (Code of Conduct Committee) which shall be responsible for enforcing the code of ethics for regulating the conduct of the members of the Zila Council;
- e) Elect an Insaf Committee (Justice Committee) which shall facilitate access of the people to the Member Inspection Team of the High Court for redressing their grievances;
- f) Elect a Sports and Culture Committee which shall promote sports and cultural events in the district and youth participation in healthy pursuits;

- g) Elect the members of the Zila Council for representation in the District Public Safety Commission;
- h) Elect a Zila Accounts Committee;
- i) Constitute Farm Produce Market Committee under the relevant law.

The idea of all proposed committees was to make sure that the business of the district government is progressing in the desired way and direction. The situation on the ground was desperate however, as the majority of the committees after being formulated have not met once whereas the Zila Monitoring Committees (ZMCs) have not been finalized. If one looks at the functions of ZMCs, it is understood as the functions are very important and perform as the back bone in the new devolution setup. The vested interests of the groups occupying the seats in the district assembly clash with the committees' functions therefore the groups usually take so long to form a committee or make sure that the required quorum for the meeting is incomplete so that no progress can be made. I tried my utmost to see the names of the Farm Produce Market Committee but it was found that it is confidential due to which the names of the members can not be revealed which clearly spoke of the mal- functioning in the district assembly's business. I talked to the people from the local government department who were also emphasizing that the developmental work is not done according to the requirements as laid down in the law. In such a pressure scenario one has to keep silent to save the bread and butter of his kids.

The people of Sacha Soda were of the view that this new system is not serving the cause for which it was proclaimed rather provided the ruling party another platform to increase the pressure and influence in the country. The views on the local government system comply with the comments made by the International Crisis Group stating that

Devolution is not about local democracy but about perpetuating General Musharraf in presidential office.<sup>21</sup>

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21 Devolution in Pakistan: Reform or Regression, ICG Asia Report N°77, (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2004), <http://www.crisisweb.org.html>; Internet accessed 20 August, 2006.



A similar observation was made by Human Rights Commission of Pakistan that

In its assessment of the local polls, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan concluded that “the government tried to manipulate the elections to local government institution, in some areas to an unprecedented degree to ensure that these institutions are controlled by the parties and factions constituting the establishment or aligned with it.”<sup>22</sup>

There was a belief that before the Local Government System came into effect that local population should start managing its major decisions at the grass root level but this could not happen. The views on devolution could be summarized in the statement that devolution had not empowered people. It had rather helped to legitimize the military rule and under this cover the already powerful groups’ manage to get more power and bring about more bargaining status to the local power holders. UNO in this regard gave food for the thought on the government by stating

Social development is best pursued if Governments actively promote empowerment and participation in a democratic and pluralistic system respectful of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.<sup>23</sup>

The findings of the study lead to the conclusion that devolution did not bring real empowerment to the people at the grass roots rather only those who were already enjoying power in the society were benefited. In this regard the work of Martinussen also depicts that

The Pakistani bourgeoisie favored a regime form that concentrated as much power and decision making as possible in the executive branches of the state, the main reason being that this class was weak in political terms for at least three decades after independence (Martinussen).<sup>24</sup>

Devolution could have been the trouble shooter of the people but at the policy level the cultural scenario of the rural areas was not given due importance. Despite the fact, that the devolution plan suggested the establishment of Monitoring Committees at District,

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22 HRCP, *Chaotic and Rigged Polls Ominous Signs* (Karachi: HRCP, Press Release, 26 August 2005).

23 *United Nations Organization, Agenda for Development*, (New York: Department of Public Information, 1997), pp. 37-38.

24 See, J. D. Martinussen, *Society, State and Market; A Guide to Competing Theories of Development* (Denmark: Mellefolkeligt Samvirke-Danish Association for International Cooperation, Norgergade, 1997).

Tehsil and Union Council level, only few district governments were successful to organize these committees with exceptions of their actual contribution. This weakness has also been defined by Seddon who comments that

All too often development projects designed and implemented by international aid agencies lack that crucial appreciation and understanding of the dynamics of local economy and society that derives from what I call 'anthropological approach'. Such an approach involves a detailed analysis of the complexities of local level structures and their operation based on an adequate body of empirical material collected with due consideration for these complexities.<sup>25</sup>

Doorman<sup>26</sup> has in fact more extensively discussed this shortcoming in his work by highlighting the importance of the Diffusion of Innovation Research, Farming System Research and the Anthropological Approach. He has also referred to the necessity of employing three of the mentioned approaches in order to launch any innovation to facilitate the decision making process of farmers easier. The issue also relates to the cultural scene of the village in which the majority of the people came from an agricultural back ground and participating in the CCBs mostly meant to them the installation of a tube well, buying a communal tractor or a thresher or constructing a road to link their farms to the markets. While seeing the power holder competing over the funds the common public decided to remain apart in order to avoid any possible damage to their life or property.

### **Conclusion**

The devolution plan in Pakistan was welcomed by the people in the first instance after the realization that it might be mitigating the problems and helping them in overcoming the issues involved in the development sector. The launching of the devolution plan in 2001 and the second elections later in 2005 could not reveal its promised fruits. The devolution system failed to empower local rural communities getting organized to handle there developmental

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25 D. Seddon, "Anthropology and Appraisal: The Preparation of two IFAD Pastoral Development Projects in Niger and Mali," in Johan Pottier, ed., *Practicing Anthropology: Social Science Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p.71.

26 F. Doorman, "A Framework for the Rapid Appraisal of Factors that Influence the Adoption and Impact of New Agricultural Technology", *Human Organization*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (autumn: 1991), pp. 235-44.

needs because of no proper capacity building of the rural people and because it involved so many complications. A few of the people who were supported by the local power groups managed their CCBs by successfully initiating developmental schemes which only benefited the power groups and the associates. The role of power groups changed the shape of the devolution at the grass root level while keeping the decision making power mostly in their hands. The caste based political life also restricted the devolution to get its true form. Moreover, the devolution was a real decentralization because there was a fight over the resources among the district and provincial departments. The Local Government System allowed the provincial governments to suspend the resolutions of the districts government. This exceptional power was really used in the districts where the opposition parties of the government won the district and lower level governments. Devolution plan failed to actually decentralize the financial matter to the level of district and below. Most of the check and balance mechanisms were not allowed to take effect by the District, Tehsil and Union Council setups. Women representative were not effectively participating in the new system due to which the spirit of bringing women in the decision making bodies at the grass roots failed. People were of the view that devolution merely served the purposes of perpetuating the reign of sitting government which manipulated the powers of command and control only to empower its members and their associates.