

Shahrukh Rafi Khan. *Government, Communities, and Non-Governmental Organisations in Social Sector Delivery: Collective Action in Rural Drinking Water Supply.* Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 1999. 144 pages. Hardbound. Price not given.

Shahrukh Rafi Khan's book comprises three chapters and 15 appendices—eight appendices attached with Chapter Two and the remaining with Chapter Three. The book contains around twelve tables. The case studies included by the author facilitate further insights into the sustainability of the schemes.

Chapter One gives an overview of the philosophy, important concepts, and salient features of participatory development (PD). Khan explains the various approaches and methodologies developed and/or followed by different Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). He is of the opinion that the Agha Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) followed an integrated development approach which paved the way to sustainability. The author also explains the alternate strategy to development that is practised by the Sungi Foundation. He also illustrates the lessons/experiences of various institutions/organisations in the field of PD. The author believes that the strength of PD is that it is complementary to both the state and the market.

Chapter Two is about rural water supply and collective action. The author shares the findings of his study regarding the viability and sustainability of rural water supply schemes handed over to the community in the Punjab Province of Pakistan. The chapter is supported by eight appendices.

Chapter Three is about the sustainability of rural water supply schemes in Pakistan. In this chapter, the author elaborates on the sustainability of rural water supply schemes undertaken in various parts of the country. The author reveals that the difference between the National Rural Support Programme (NRSP)-managed projects and those run by the Local Government and Rural Development Department (LGRDD) and Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) is in the approach to social mobilisation. The NRSP's approach yielded grassroots-level participation while the latter entered the field through local notables and yielded relatively lower-scaled participation of the poor in decision-making. The author has rightly pointed out that the factors which determine the degree of sustainability include, among others, latent demand and social mobilisation. The author believes that the data generated through the individual household interviews is more reliable than that generated through focus group community questionnaires. The practitioners of participatory action research may not agree with it as they believe that the participatory approach yields far better results than conventional approaches. The author is of the view that latent demand for any service may flourish or die depending upon the quality of social mobilisation.

The author has narrated the lessons learnt from his research study which provides useful guidelines for the policy-makers as well as development practitioners. One important aspect of the book is that it covers the gender issues comprehensively, with special reference to the water supply and sanitation schemes. The author believes that the government employees still enjoy credibility among the people. Therefore, he recommends a more vigorous role in their social mobilisation in addition to their technical input.

The author has given a thought-provoking evaluation of the rural water supply and sanitation projects undertaken by the NRSP, the PHED, and the LGRDD. He has pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of all three NGOs and departments. It is a fact that in the case of the NRSP, the interest of the community organisation (CO) may not necessarily represent the interests of the community at large. The need identification process, regular meetings, savings schemes, high community participation in the project, training, smaller cost, demand-driven approaches, etc., are the salient features of the NRSP's approach. The findings further reveal that the NRSP's schemes were found to be more sustainable than the others. The main factors responsible for the failures, or the lack of sustainability in these projects, include the dominance of the society notables, poor record-keeping, lack of grassroots community participation, lack of training, defective social mobilisation, etc. The main argument of the author, that demand is a questionable selection criterion for poor communities, certainly carries worth.

The author has highlighted correctly that the difference in the working of the NRSP and the government departments is in their approach to work. The former follows a scientific methodology, builds up the capacity of the community, and places the community as a whole in front while the latter focuses only on leadership of the community. There exists a need to explore whether the introduction of the NRSP approach in the departments would be socially, economically, and technically feasible and viable. Similarly, the author is correct in his perception that the NRSP's performance was found to be superior to that of the line departments. However, it would have been more meaningful if the author had also compared the management costs which are being incurred on both sides.

Khan explains the different possible natures of the relationships between the state and the NGOs and also the different viewpoints of the NGOs. He highlights the difference between the market-oriented and participatory development. He is of the view that the market responds too slowly to rescue the marginalised people. The author has rightly pointed out that urban communities have public provision of water on subsidy basis. It opens an important area for further study—a need exists to examine whether such discrimination is socially and economically justifiable.

The unique feature of the study is that the researchers have not relied only on one approach; rather a mix of individual and community-based research methods have been followed in gathering information. Moreover, they have not confined the

study to mere quantitative data; rather qualitative dimensions have been incorporated into the study, and this has made the study more meaningful. Otherwise, the findings could have been different, and the hidden factors and dimensions could not have been revealed.

Possibly, the title of the book would have been more appropriate if it was “Government, Communities, and NGOs in Social Services Delivery”. ‘Services’ in this context gives a clearer meaning than ‘Sector’. A few typing mistakes are there. The author has mistakenly taken the PHED to mean the Physical Health Engineering Department, on page 15. In fact, it stands for the Public Health Engineering Department. Similarly, on page 18 (second paragraph, second line), the word ‘them’ has been written instead of “then”, and on page 19 it says “term of reference” for “terms of reference”. On page 46, the same word has been spelt out differently—at one place it is ‘ensure’, while at the other place it is ‘insure’. On page 57, probably the author intended to write ‘personnel’ instead of ‘personal’. On page 66, Daewoo has been spelt as ‘Dawoo’. On page 65, the following sentence has not been arranged or written properly, and therefore it carries vague meanings: “There was and active an efficient water committee...”.

Overall, the book is a very useful document and contains much information and practical guidelines for researchers, trainers, policy-makers, public project implementers, project monitoring teams and evaluation officials, and development practitioners. It is a valuable addition to the literature on the subject with special reference to Pakistan.

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