

**LOCAL AND SUB-NATIONAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE CONTRIBUTION IN IMPROVING ACCESS TO
PUBLIC SERVICES IN AFGHANISTAN**

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*Submitted to
Central European University
School of Public Policy*

in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Arts in Public Policy

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Budapest, Hungary

2016

Author's declaration

I, the undersignedRukiya Abdul Aziz..... hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material, which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language.

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Abstract:

Afghanistan has experienced a rapid state collapse because of unstable governance structure at central and its linkages with the majority of the population living in the rural areas of the country. National Solidarity Programme (NSP) was the first national programme implemented in rural communities in developing local governance structure where the central government can communicate with the local people living in rural communities. The programme has been able to achieve the development of local communities that resulted in creating a benchmark for the central government in building a sub-national governance structure in order to provide the basic services to the local communities. However, NSP managed to establish a local governance structure but the central government is still continuously facing challenges in building a sub-national governance structure that could results in providing basic services especially health services in rural communities.

Key Words: local governance structure, National Solidarity Programme, centralized government structure, equal rights among all citizens, democratic election, international aid and external funding, Basic Public Health Services and Public and Private health services

Introduction:

Afghanistan's current existing governance structure that has been adopted in 2004 is recognized as a centralized state structure established by a democratic government. It is being predicted as opposing with the coexisting traditional, fragmented and decentralized society that is playing a key role in the conflict along with the current theme of modern society implement at central level. The concept of modern society is a new model established with the new governance structure under the existing democratic government, due to which the central government is not able to implement it at subnational or provincial level. Therefore, in order to understand the national governance structure there is need to first understand the political dynamics that exists at country level (Evans et al 2004). The decades of conflict that existed at country level has created a state, where most of its areas outside of its capital city are authoritatively controlled by the regional and local commanders enforcing their legitimacy with the power they have acquired with their financial and military resources along with their historical loyalties (Evans et al 2004,4).

The new central governance structure has been rebuilt from its foundation in 2004, because the state structure was totally collapsed during the last three decades of continuous war due to which the local people still consider the public sector as an "institutional blank state" (Evan et al 2004,1). The new democratic state of Afghanistan has established an administration that is strong at central level and is able to provide a "coherent management" in addition to an accountability framework but has not able to "reassert" the governance structure at subnational level (Evans et al 2004). The mismanagement among the levels of governance structure has created frustration among local people over how very little has been done by the "international community" in the current governance structure to support the government in

asserting its influence at subnational and very remote level. However, subnational and local levels are very important because most of the population in Afghanistan are living in rural areas and have to coordinate with the weak governance structure at subnational level for having access to basic services at their community level.

Governance structure plays an important role in order to assure that a state is functioning appropriately (Grindle 2002). Weak governance structure results the state in failing to deliver the basic services that are promised to the local citizens due to which the state is considered as a fragile state (Lister, 2007). Therefore, in order to build a state, there is first need to develop a good governance structure at local level. Good governance structure improves the public services, which support in building a stable state. The Afghan government along with the International community worked in building the local governance structure for state building rather than improving public services, because they claimed that local government supports in a state level government building and improves the socio and economic development of the local people. After a period of 12 years, the country is still struggling in building a stable governance structure at local and subnational level, therefore the research will attempt to answer the question, why the local governance approach did not work in Afghanistan. Because after the completion of the phase one national programme in 2003-2007, the country still does not have a stable governance structure that can improve the public services, (Shurkin, 2011) even after the completion of the two phases of the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) implemented for local governance development in 2007-2012.

The newly elected Afghan government in 2002 aimed to rebuild the governance structure from local level, which results in establishing a stable state at national level. The government authorities in coordination with International Communities developed a national programme

in 2003 titled National Solidarity Programme. The project was designed to build the local governance structure through improving the ability of the local people in planning, managing and monitoring the development projects in their own communities. Based on NSP strategic documents, the thematic areas of the programme were aimed to develop local governance system that results in human security, rural reconstruction and poverty alleviation. The project implementation was designed in three phases 1) Establishment of local governance structure at community level and capacity development 2) Community Grants for Economic and Social Development and 3) Project Implementation support for sustainable development.

The NSP programme has been considered as the country's most successful project in the implementation of community driven development policy at country level and is regarded as the initial step in development of local governance structure (Kakar 2005). It has a larger scale of "rural reconstruction and development Programme" with two main objectives for creating a foundation for "strengthening community level governance and capacity development at community level sub-projects consisting of "reconstruction and development" that improves the approach of rural communities for social and productive services and infrastructure (Kakar 2005).

The main research question is, why the local governance approach didn't work in Afghanistan under the new democratic government in 2003-2007.

My thesis will be reviewing the new governance structure introduced at the first phase of the NSP Programme implemented during the period of 2003-2007. The thesis will apply the new governance theory, which claims that good governance will improve state building, provide access to public services that strengthen public relations with sub-national government structure. The research question will be responded by using an exploratory approach through

using the qualitative method of documentary analysis. At the initial stage, I will be conducting desk research on the existing scholarly documents that analyze local governance and its relation to state building. Secondly, reviewing the research or evaluation conducted during the NSP programme for the implementation of good governance structure.

The research objective is to conduct a comparative analysis between the two policies implemented through the development of the new local governance structure in Afghanistan. The first policy addresses the citizen rights, which is seen as a successful policy that has allowed each citizen to elect their representative, women have the right to vote and also elect their representative and lastly has created working relation among civil society and government actors. The second policy addresses the public health services, which is still considered as a challenge in terms of providing basic health services at country level, the transition process of facilitating partner in functioning of health clinics at community level and challenges for sustaining the health sector because the public health services are still highly depending on external funding which could be reduced by the international donors based on policy changes at their level.

The comparative analysis will contribute to the existing literature on NSP Programme and impact assessment of the NSP programme by examining, whether the local governance structure is a tool of state building or a tool on providing access to basic services. The existing literature and assessment on the review of NSP and its policy implementation is done based on good practices. The comparative analysis will demonstrate that the new governance approach has been considered as more collaborate approach rather than hierarchical in previous governance structure and improving access to basic services such as health and education.

My thesis consists of four chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter begins with introducing the history of Afghan governance structure through describing the geographical and cultural links of the country that has resulted in having a multiple ethnical groups in the country and fighting for the legitimacy or state power. It continues with explaining the importance of developing a good governance structure at local level, which reduces the ethnical complexity at state level. The second chapter introduces the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) phase one implemented under the new democratic government during the period of 2003-2007 in order to develop a local governance structure, which can provide opportunity for the central government to work with the local communities living in rural communities. Chapter three explores the success of the NSP programme which has provided equal citizen rights, that has resulted in building a working relationship among the central government and local communities even where there is very limited government presence in rural villages. It was the initial step in introducing the democratic election process to the local people after three decades of war which has provided equal citizen rights and everyone can have the right to elect their representative through secret ballot which has also allowed women to participate in leadership role even in the most conservative communities where women are not allowed to participate in any sort of social development. Chapter four discovers the challenges faced in providing health services to the local communities. The collapse health system which brought in to a conclusion of taking a rational decision of allowing the National and International NGOs in providing basic public health services but without any proper NGO law from the government side due to which the international community cannot transfer the public health services to the government authorities. The limited government capacity in communication and monitoring of health sector has threaten the sustainability of the health sector because of the presence of several actors in public and private sector for their own financial benefits.

CHAPTER 1 – Understanding the Governance Structure

Chapter One mostly focus on literature review of existing scholars, which starts by looking in to the history of the governance structure of Afghanistan, explaining the geographical, political and social context of the country and explaining how it is recognized as a failed state. The second part addresses about the relation of local governance and development which embraces that local governance is the main agenda and also seen as the only way to reduce the fragmenting role of the central government at local level and can also reduce the ethnical conflict existing in developing countries and lastly defining the local governance structure and its theory of implementation.

1.1 History of Governance Structure in Afghanistan

Afghanistan, a landlocked country located at the “heart of Asia” (Barfield 2010), has linkages in cultural and geographical context with the Indian subcontinent, southeast and central Asia, due to which the country consists of multi ethnical groups. Historically, the country has been seen as an entrance for the invaders who wanted to overflow out of Iran and enter into Asia and India. Therefore, the country has experienced being part of different empires governed by external actors. The emergence of the country started in the nineteenth century when the rivalry of power began among “British India” and “czarist Russia” which reached up to the certainty of two wars among the British and Russians (Barfield 2010). However, Afghanistan remained peaceful during the first and second World War, but the situation changed when the state was transformed into a “cockpit” of the Cold War and struggle between the United States and Russia, tensions reached their limit motivating the Soviet Union to invade Afghanistan in 1979 and occupy the country for ten years (Barfield “Introduction” 2010, 2-3). The successor who hold the power after the soviet withdrawal resulted in a “civil war” that

“erupted” in 1990 (Barfield “Introduction” 2010, 2-3) and resulted in recognizing Afghanistan as a “failed state” that has been ignored globally.

Historically, the political structure of Afghanistan was rarely open to competition because the local state actors considered it as the easiest way to maintain or stabilize their legitimacy and authority, because the state power considered a small group as their opposition and can led to state power. Therefore, the country has been missing a stable political structure because power holding and the power threatened groups have been fighting for the overall state power which has totally disrupted the whole Afghan society. Before the invasion of the Soviets in Afghanistan, the country had gradually started improving its social and economic situation. But the emergence of improvement did not continue because the country got trapped in two different ideologies. The first ideology was implemented with the belief of building a communist regime that brought a revolution in the country and Afghanistan came under the Soviet occupation. But the communist regime was also not accepted therefore after the ten years of invasion, the Russians decided to withdraw from the country. The situation even got worst because after their departure, the country entered in to a civil war which totally destroyed the state structure and gave rise to the “Taliban” and their Islamist regime at country level (Barfield “Introduction” 2010,13).

The rapid state collapse since twentieth century has been happening because of its origins in the “persistence” of violence at the top level of the system (Barfield “Chapter Four” 2010, 164). The old system has brought back the “bloody tanistry system” that gives the right to rule to one single authority thus eliminates all other rivalry groups and the winning group will lead the state for next 100 years (Barfield 2010). As a result, Afghanistan has experienced a series of war since early 20th century in the “name of ideologies” that are shared by individual or

few Afghans. The unstable system had destructed the state system that brought Afghan people living under oppression in the “radical socialist regime” and “reactionary Islamist” but neither of the groups and regime respected the wishes and need of the Afghan People (Barfield 2010).

The current territory or state formation consists of 34 provinces, two of them that were established in the new democratic government administration, creating total 364 rural districts, which are divided in urban and rural areas. The current governance structure is divided at provincial, district, municipal and village level that also included the Community Development Councils (CDC) elected by the local people and responsible for their village development and also some of the administrative activities or responsibilities provided by the sub-national government authorities. However, the main authority on how to function and the budget approval for providing the basic services still exist with the central government that makes the ministries to work in vertical direction making it comparatively weak and their external linkages, but the system still exist and has been expanded to the provincial sub-national governance system. The provincial governance system are intervening in the line ministry activities at community level through several channels that were legislated in the governance structure and some were not.

1.2 Relations of Local Governance and Development

In reference to Brinkerhoff (2005), reconstruction of post conflict states has got the central role in current international assistance and relations’ agenda, therefore all bilateral and multilateral donor agencies have been working on addressing socio and economic development through long-standing humanitarian and emergency response. Decentralization has been at the “center” of policy implementation in developing and emerging economies around the world. Bardhan (2002, 185) emphasizes, “The World Bank has embraced it as one

of the major governance reforms on its agenda”. The development of local governance structure is seen as a way of reducing the role of the state by “fragmenting” its central authorities at sub-national and local level and introducing more layers of “intergovernmental checks and balances” in order to make the government more responsible and efficient (Bardhan 2002).

The state failure is caused due to the presence of war and conflict at state level, due to which there is need of providing more attention also in response of the “war on terrorism” (Brinkerhoff 2005) because it can cause implications for the local people living in the failed and fragile state and also for the rest of the world. The failed states could be a place for the insurgent groups to conduct their operations and also risk the lives of the local people, because failed states are also identified as a “sleeping giant” (Brinkerhoff 2005) that need certain concentration for global security. During the conflict and civil war in failed states, it have highlighted the importance of developing governance structure which results in building peace, state reconstruction and also avoiding conflict among the internal ethnic and tribal groups existing at state level.

The decentralization and development of local governance structure, especially in ethnical conflict states with political tensions can ensure that the internal tensions are defused at the political level. Besides that, it can also attract different or wider range of supporters such as in “free-market economics”, where one of the main aim is to reduce the power of “overextended or predatory state” and increasing the benefits at local and sub-national level (Bardhan 2002). A well transparent decentralized state can even convince the economist and international organisations to work with the state authorities at local level because it even helps in reducing

the transaction costs and can solve policy failures that may have been seen as market failure by private investors (Bardhan 2002).

The existence of Good Governance in all levels of state structure is considered as a core element in the development strategy. It explains how power is exercised at a state level for the management of its economic and social resources available for state development at local and sub-national level. Therefore, international organisation and bilateral donors are putting more efforts in strengthening the governance structure as a main objective and condition for providing assistance in order to sustain aid effectiveness. Furthermore, the existence of Good Governance also promotes democracy in developing and emerging economic because it shifts “the notion of governance” to “good governance”. It introduces a normative element that addresses the quality of governance as it imposes further requirements in order to complete the process of decision-making required for formulating public policies and implementation at very local level (Santiso 2001, 1-22).

1.3 Local Governance Theory and Definition

The World Bank has been working continuously since early 20th century on strengthening governance in developing countries in order to strengthen the funding aid and its effectiveness. The National Solidarity Programme is also one of the projects funded through World Bank in Afghanistan for local governance development. Local governance and development has got the center stage of debate under development aid between the International Finance Institutions and other funding institutions that were having doubts about the need of continuous financial support in developing countries. Therefore, strengthening local governance plays an important role due to which it is important to strengthen the local governance structure at state level.

The concept of “governance” was introduced in the development agenda because it is considered as reflecting the effectiveness of aid with an aim to reduce poverty and reduce human suffering. Secondly, it also urges the state authorities to reduce its dependency on aid budgets and increase “scrutiny” by civil society due to which the Bank has been able to have a wider consideration on the “pervasive effects” of “mismanagement and endemic corruption” (Santiso 2001, 4).

The World Bank defines “governance, encompasses the form of political regime; the process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development; and the capacity of governments to design, formulate and implement policies and discharge functions” (Santiso 2001, 5). Though, the bank also recognizes the importance of governance and interprets that the political dimension of the government is not important for their dimension because they focus more on the economic dimension for Good Governance that builds a transparent process of the development and its management, which is as a main thrust among the local people. The government also relates with the activities that have been implemented through the public sector, its administrative and financial management and “modernization of public administration” and to privatize the state owned enterprises (Santiso 2001).

Chapter 2 - Research Design and Methodology

Chapter two introduce the research design and methodology through explaining that why Afghanistan was taken as a case study to present governance structure in post conflict state. Secondly the chapter explores the reason of the timeline selection and lastly the research methodology and the existing materials used for thesis writing.

2.1. Why Afghanistan is an interesting case

Afghanistan is considered as the heart of Central Asia and has history of being occupied by different regimes until they can have an independent Afghan state in 1919-29 (Barfield 2010, 12). However, since then the country could not have a longer period of stable government because of its extremely complex situation of providing legitimacy to the central group at the sub-national and local level because of the presence of strong cultural beliefs, which was creating certain challenges and constraints for the central government to develop a strategy for their success. The country has experienced a continuous three decades of war after the soviet union withdraw from the country which gave power to the Taliban groups and enforcing their regime in most of the country side but could not receive legitimacy in most parts of the country and also at international level. After the withdrawal of the Taliban regime in 2002, Afghan citizens were introduced to a new democratic government with support of international community.

During the war, the country has lost its previous existing state structure, due to which it was decided to empower the local communities through local governance development that will contribute in developing a sub-national governance structure. The new democratic governance structure will provide basic public services to the local communities. Although Afghanistan was identified as not very new in reforming their governance structure but still the process of developing a public administration took longer than expected. The reform was

implemented in strong coordination of new Afghan government and international community but missed that before the starting of restructuring they need to have a good understanding of the previous context that exists with its multiple ethnical and geographical division and the very long practice of autocratic leadership practice during the long continued conflict (Nijat 2014).

2.2. The assessed period 2003-2007

Afghanistan got the western attention after 2001 when the country was identified as the “world’s worst humanitarian emergency (Rubin 2002) and the state is facing crisis of collapsed governance structure. It was estimated that more than a million people have died during the war where the population was estimated to be only 26 million and Afghanistan was considered as the highest country in the world with most disable and polio affected population. The country was measured and ranked at the bottom in all required human welfare for the local citizens and due to which illegal type of activities has become the only source of income for the local people for their survival.

In 2004, the Afghan government and the international community were able to have a clear understanding of the situation at the community level and its challenges, which will make it difficult for the new transitional government in establishing a sustainable governance structure (Nixon 2008). The timeline after this has been very important because it has brought an extraordinary change and development in the subnational governance structure, as the local government was able to have access to the local communities through the CDC, electing provincial councils and establishment of provincial development committees that will support in the “Public Administrative Reporting” (Nixon 2008, 10).

2.3. Why comparing the `citizens right' and the `health care programs'

The Western legal institution supporting the Afghan government after post 2001 identified limited capacity in the “legal reform” (Nijat 2014) due to which the international community took the rational decision of providing basic services through International and National Non-governmental organisation. The Citizen rights programme for the development of local governance structure and the health care programme for providing basic public services both were implemented through international and national NGOs but the citizen rights programme is considered as a successful programme where as the health services are still struggling in providing standard health services at country level. My thesis will be reviewing the challenges and methodology implemented by the non-governmental organisation but did not provided the same result.

2.4. Research Methodology

The research methodology for conducting thesis research is based on qualitative research methods through conducting documentary analysis through desk review on the existing research literature existing on the history of Afghanistan, existing previous governance structure and practices. The research studies also includes the evaluation report of the National Solidarity Programme conducted by the Afghanistan Independent Research and Evaluation Unit which reports the international community and Afghan government on the policy practices and recommendation for promoting research and learning. Independent evaluation conducted by World Bank Representative based in Afghanistan and also external researchers.

Chapter 3 – National Solidarity Programme (NSP) – Afghanistan

Chapter Three explores the development of the local governance structure of Afghanistan by introducing the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), a nation wide programme that has been implemented with the aim of empowering the local people and communities to organize themselves to respond to the needs of their communities. In the second part, it discusses the local governance structure being developed by local communities through NSP and its transparent mechanism that avoids the cultural village structure existing prior to NSP. The third part, talks about the working relationship of local and sub-national governance structure, its positive steps towards community development and reducing the authority of local commanders. The new local governance structure has managed to introduce the new government and its new democratic convention adopted by new transitional government. However, the limitation of access to central government limits the legitimacy of state at local level. Lastly, the chapter analyses the problem of the governance structure, which exists because of the different understanding or mechanism of state building among the state funding organisations that limits the capacity development of the governance structure at sub-national level.

3.1 Introduction to the programme

The National Solidarity Programme recognized locally as “Hambastagi-yi mill” (Karimi 2006,1) is a nation wide programme implemented by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) with implementation and technical assistance from other international and local organisations in Afghanistan. The programme was started on April 2003, initially started in three districts per province of all 34 provinces and later on expanded to the estimated 20,000 villages within the period of four years as planned and funded by the World Bank and other international donors (Karimi 2006). The main aim of the programmed was to

make it “people centered” (Karimi 2006, 2) by empowering the local people and their communities to organize themselves to be able to respond to the most immediate or urgent needs of their community development.

The operational manual of the NSP consists of four main elements that are 1) Assisting the local communities through local facilitation in order to establish an inclusive community institutions through “open elections, reach consensus on priorities that corresponds to sub-project activities” (Boesen 2004,7) develop proposals that regulates with the NSP appraisal criteria and implement the approved sub-projects 2) Developing a system that implements the direct block grants transfer to support the rehabilitation and implementation of development activities as planned and through the elected members of CDCs 3) Capacity building and development of the CDC members to enhance their competence of both male and female members in “financial management, procurement, technical skills and transparency” and 4) link the local institutions and their activities with the government administration and the aid agencies who are available for providing the services and resources (Boesen 2004, 8).

The NSP community empowerment managed to build villages that compromise 50 families, where each household was provided with a 200 US dollars as a grant for their development thus the programme was able to provide each community with a total grant of 60,000 US dollars (Karimi 2006). Each village established its own Community Development Councils (CDC), who were selected based on open election and elected based on secret ballot. The programme has provided the authority to the CDCs on how to spend the grants on the development of their communities. The aim was to develop and empower the community representatives for the management of their community grants in order to create formal or official linkages between the local communities and government authorities by improving the

communication at district and provincial level administration. As a result, it reduces the “perceptual distance” (Karimi 2006, 3) between the central government located in Kabul and the provinces located in the regions through interpreting the government presence at district and community level.

3.2 Local Governance Development by NSP

The community development councils (CDC) have designed a local mechanism for the development of their communities through proper planning and avoiding the previous cultural village structure, which was not even a permanent structure because they usually use to come together to solve a problem or conflict existing among the community members. The new committees established through NSP are considered more transparent and open for everyone as the council members could be approached for individual meetings where the local people could share their opinions and also discuss their concerns on the decision taken for the community development. Lastly, the local people are also provided with update information on the grant management and its distribution through the NSP programme.

The elected members and the local people are aware that the CDC position or being member of CDC is not a fixed position. The group and their members are provided with a profile of their responsibility as being member in the CDC group that consists of terms and condition and length of their position. The members need to have a certain type of specialization to be part of the committee. Young candidates with special skills are highly encouraged, especially those who have been able to get formal education, particularly ones that are able to interact with aid agencies and government authorities that will benefit the community development activities. The young people involvement in community development reduces the traditional

norms where the leaders were only the outspoken people and could only be the decision makers (Karimi 2006).

The local people have accepted the CDC's new structure because the group has managed to keep their promises made in the new structure. They had a new process of decision making for community development and also have strong understanding of the community concerns that made them able to provide orientation on the community urgent needs to the government authorities and the aid agencies. Moreover, their official status with the government authorities and interaction with donor agencies has been much appreciated because now the community has their own representatives that are elected by themselves and has created a formal incorporation at village, that has developed into a district structure which is the local governance structure and provincial administration as the sub-national governance structure. The local governance development is considered as an opportunity for the central government to interact with the provinces and increase their presence at very local level.

3.3 Relations of Local and Sub-National Governance Structure

The introduction of new villages structure and their CDC's are seen as a positive step for the development of the communities through departure of the "rural attitudes" (Karimi 2006, 3) which existed in the early times when the government structure was only developed by a single ethnical group or tribe holding the power at community and government level. The new CDC's structure introduced through NSP has brought a trust among the local people and the new governance structure. The positive impact over the local people has increased the demand of government presence at subnational and village level because it is the only way to reduce the authority or control of local commanders that is still exercised in some part of the country.

The community development at village level is seen as the initial step for introducing the democratic convention adopted by transitional government. The introduction of the emergence of new democratic government motivated the community members to participate even with the presence of opposition groups at the village level were not able to demotivate the local people in order to manipulate the process (Boesen 2004). The local commanders soon realized that the NSP programme had managed to unite the local people because the process of distributing the grants at community level was clear to the local people who attracted the local people and every one participated equally for electing their CDC members. The local people also participated and fully cooperative with CDC members in grant designing and also implementation of the grant activities to assure the outcome is achieved accordingly.

3.4 Legitimacy of local governance structure at sub-national level

State building is considered as a big business because it is seen as the basic initial step in order to provide new life to a fragile or failed state. Although the process of state building is implemented at central level and due to which it could not be implemented by the developing state at sub-national and local level, because of their limited capacity. Therefore, there is also need to focus on building a local governance structure in developing countries because most of the citizens living in such countries are primarily interacting with the sub-national government officials for having access to basic public services and dealing with the local police to solve their local disputes. Secondly, the economic activities are also conducted, such as payment of their taxes and registration of their property but without any proper monitoring or implementation of the state law and policies, which also creates a place of corruption in the governance structure.

3.5 Problems arise in Governance Structure

Governance structure is considered as an outcome of state building process because state is considered as the vehicle that can fulfill the social contract. But the state building is left without consideration at sub-national and local level due to which a state is considered a failure when they are not able to provide the basic public good and services, even though for state building it is being considered as the main element. Secondly, providing capacity to a state in providing the services is reflected in legitimizing the state but if they are not able to serve their citizens then it is recognized as a failed, fragile or a collapsed state (Lister 2007).

The problem in understanding the governance structure of Afghanistan arises when the multilateral donor agencies claim that state building agenda can only be met when it is addressed at central level. In order to resolve the problem of matching the expenditure with its available revenues with longer term perspective along with the universal agenda of providing access to services. They also assume that state legitimacy at central level will “automatically follow in service delivery, entirely ignoring complex issues such as political participation and representation” (Lister 2007, 2,3). The current governance structure has mainly focused on centralizing their structure with their presence and having their offices in the capital city, Kabul and functioning activities more at central level that are supposed to be implemented at the provincial level. Secondly they have very limited transparency and communication with the provincial authorities in regard of budget and their functionality that has given space of intervention from the governors of creating personal incentives at local level.

The strong presence of the government at central level and high influence of provincial governors in provincial departments has created strains and challenges at the sub-national

level. It has developed the unequal distribution of resources that has created an intense problem that impacts the local governance structure established in more democratic and transparent way. The access to public services such as health and education services differs widely at country level among the provinces, which could not be accounted because of local conditions that vary the provinces to be accessible for the central government. Lastly the instability or functionality of the sub-national governance system has also created some major difficulties for the central government to function at rural and remote areas. Through the NSP programme, the local CDCs group establishment was implemented through election process but the elections of Municipal council and provincial government positions still remains to be conducted. The municipality plays an important role at provincial level in delivering public services, which also presents a local government accountable to the local people especially in those areas where the local people mostly criticize the government.

The Afghan state building and sub-national governance structure development is also affected due to its economic and social situation that characterizes them as Low Income country under stress. The country has been experiencing a severe weakness in the public sector human resources that hinders the proper functioning of the system, shortage in required equipment's that could support the infrastructure such as communication and electricity supply system, which are considered important in state infrastructure development. Lastly, the existing political power and environment has created such a parameter that does not allow in taking certain actions in order to address the problems. The current constitutional law refers to preserving the policy and authority at central level, due to which it is clarified that the current political system establishment is "committed to the current, de jure, centralized intergovernmental structure and has no appetite for substantial political devolution at sub-national levels" (World Bank 2007,7). The sub-national system is developed to improve the

functionality of the current system rather than restructuring or developing it. The sub-national works closely with the central government with limited level of authority working very closely with the local governance structure developed at community level.

Chapter 4 - The Success under NSP- Local Citizen Participations through NSP

Chapter Four presents the success and achievements of the NSP programme. The programme has created a new approach in building relationship between the central government and local communities living in rural communities with limited government presence. It has been the first step in introducing the democratic state that provides equal rights to citizens by presenting open electoral process rather than electing the community head based on previous cultural practices. Secondly, the chapter explores the development of villages and districts with conducting secret ballot election process, allowing women to participate in the national programme and have role in decision-making even in most cultural conservative areas and introducing the learning and sharing practice at community level which previously use to exist at authoritarian and cultural moralistic way.

4.1 Introduction of the election poll

NSP has created a historical change of building an interrelationship between the central government and the local communities because previously there was no practice of having a formalized procedure to involve community in political decision or development planning, at local or national level. The Afghan government and its authorities planned to present policies in building a democratic state in 1960 but the process was implemented at the central level, due to which the process was considered as democracy from the above without involving the local communities (Barfield 2010). The new community development has not only built community capacity but has also provided the role of women in local decision-making position especially in very conservative areas of the country. The programme has been able to provide an inclusive learning opportunity for the local people that also introduce them to democracy that contributes in local community development. As a result this approach has

established a democratic and community representative through Community Development Committees (CDC) at village level.

The CDC groups were selected with an elective process “through universal suffrage” (Boesen 2004) where one adult or one person can vote only for one person, with gender and social equality among all community people along with the addition of civic participation at district and provincial level. However, the civic rights of equal participation were even provided with the first constitution adopted in 1964 (Boesen 2004,2) but due to the cultural practices especially in rural areas, women were not provided equal rights and were not seen in decision-making positions. The NSP concept of community development and providing equal opportunity to all citizens at community level was seen as a challenging job, because it was opposite to the traditional practices, values and norms. Therefore, the promotion of social and economic development in the democratic local governance structure was also seen as difficult because of limited women participation, but however, the programme managed to teach the local community members on how to build democracy in Afghanistan.

Election of CDC groups managed to create an interrelation among the government and local communities because the local communities were not involved in any public issues and did not had any interaction with the district and provincial governmental authorities. The local people usually had the perspective that the government is a “one-way system” (Boesen 2004) where the local communities were only involved in activities prepared by the government such as, several edicts and decrees, extraction of taxation, labor work for public activities and being recruited for the national army. These communications also used to happen among the government and one community headman, the “malik” (Boesen 2004), who was the leader with his own right or a front man of the community. He would have the privilege to access

local and central government representatives and would use these resources to provide direct benefit to him and his followers. The followers will be usually men and traditionally the women didn't have any political presence at local level (Boesen 2004).

However, the free and fair election concept adopted from the western democratic sense has been introduced to the country for the first time in its 1964 constitution (Boesen 2004, 5). Though the elections were done based on individual personalities rather than introducing political parties because they were never introduced or implemented but the political parties act was introduced and subsequent to the constitution (Boesen 2004). As a result, even though having the right to vote and participate in election, the practice was implemented at very limited level in the rural parts of the countries, because the law and its constitution was never formally introduced to the local people living in the rural areas and were considered that it could destruct the traditional practices in the rural communities. The autocrats' or community elders leading the villages did not even provided access to formal education due to which there is a high number of illiterate population in the rural areas than compared to the literate population in the power centered area, Kabul.

The central government in Kabul and the population in rural areas had no working relations and which continued until the Communist and the coup d'état of the Afghan government in 1978 (Boesen, 2004, 5) that abolished the free election, the right to vote and introduced the Communist one party state which later on developed into an open and violent conflict between the government and local people living in the provinces. The civil war of not accepting the soviet occupation changed into a civil war among the rival Mujahideen and the Talibans, who later own ruled most of the country since 1995 and 2001 but could not do any

progressive activity in improving the relations of the central government or power holder with the people living in the rural parts of the country (Rubin 2002 and Boesen 2004).

4.2 Gender equality through encouraging women leadership

Women participation under the NSP programme is considered as a high priority, in order to assure that there is gender, social, economical and ethnical equity in the decision-making that will assure access to social benefits. However, including women in local decision-making was a challenging job because the election process was providing the transparency of electing their representative but not permitting the women to participate in the election process especially in the most conservative communities. The NSP could not exclude those communities who were not cooperative in equal participation of men and women in local community development because it could possibly provide ammunition to the Islamic opposition groups against the central democratic government (Echavez 2012). However, it was expected that the facilitating partners of the national programme would devote serious efforts to involve the women in electoral process and participate equally in deciding on community development and the utilization of the community grants.

The requirement of the programme for setting up a “shura” (Echavez 2012), a CDC for women and for men, sent a strong signal to the local people that the programme is for all local citizens and will also listen to the women and ensure that they are also able to participate equally that led the NSP programme to be more open to consulting and also accepting women’s involvement in the project designing and implementation. The women communities established through the programme have provided a platform for the women to participate in the development activities at their community level and has also provided an opportunity for

the local women to interact with other women of their communities, exchange knowledge and also able to express themselves and their feelings freely. Lastly, it has also led to improve the women leadership at community level as the women CDC groups has provided a platform for the women and considered as the good start for having women leadership in the community.

The NSP has considered the participation of women as a process rather than being imposed over the community and had expected that it will create an impact at the “root level” (Boesen 2004,12) of the conservative societies where they will able to experience the benefits of involving women in the community development through the sub-projects that will address the community needs. Although the situation of women in the country varies according to the their ethnical group and social and cultural practices which is an essential feature for women participation, such as the extended family “lineage and sub-lineage” (Boesen 2004,12) that plays the central role in the social order of the Afghan tradition, therefore the patrilineal family play important role in the social and personal identity for its members. These structures of marriage and alliances are the main element of the social structure and alliance especially among the tribal groups, which even consists in the distribution of the property and the patrimony among the extended household members.

Women are not allowed or provided with the opportunity to inherit or own a property apart from their personal belongings. The inheritance law based on the Shari’a describes that women receive the half the share of the property and the brother gets the full, but it is usually not practiced due to which women usually have to do harsh labor work for their household economy. The women especially in rural communities are contributing a lot to the economical and social development of their family and communities but still women are under the control of the men through the control of the property, marriage relation and children.

However, before the implementation of NSP programme at community level, women has managed to influence the men's decisions through informal resources and mean that has brought changes in the domestic relations that once again vary based on the social context in different parts of the country. Although it didn't managed to reach up to the level of political participation and in formal decision making because it was strictly restricted and considered as male affairs only. Therefore, in reference to the women situation at political and decision making level there is need to focus on promoting women to participate in decision making at social, economical and political development of the country.

Women are the most vulnerable group in the post conflict Afghan society especially widows and female headed households, involved in all terms of traditional labor in domestic activities, pasture, agricultural and in modern economy in education, health and other public sectors. Women are necessary in the participation of human resources that could also contribute in development and reconstruction activities and need to be accompanied in by providing rights to participate in planning and in decision making especially concerning such aspects that affects their lives.

4.3 Building Relationship among Community Facilitators and Central Government

Civil society groups were the facilitating partners (FP) at community level and have been considered as playing the key role in the successful implementation of the NSP programme at community level. The FPs were considered much important in involving the rural women in the programme but it was also a challenging job for them as well because they also had urban background and especially the international organisations that were not aware of the cultural sensitivity in the rural communities. However, they have been able to overcome the challenge

and able to involve women in community affairs by engaging their female staff as the community facilitators. They were able to have easy access to the local women, conduct research on the vulnerability of women at community level and also able to respect the cultural norms of not allowing the men to communicate with the women. The female community facilitators were also able to achieve trust of the women and involve them in the community activities even in the most conservative areas with respect to their cultural beliefs.

The civil society groups and community facilitators were able to convince the local people to participate in project activities which were very new concepts such as government assistance through conventional aid, equal participation among all community members in community decision-making including women, that introduces democratic process at community level for community development. They have also conducted number of capacity development trainings to provide a broad range of knowledge and skills to the local people and CDC groups which was also one of the main message in NSP and the step by step process of community mobilization to adopt a participatory process and leave behind the authoritarian attitude in relation with the community members. Lastly, they have managed to create an learning culture and also passing the learning with other community members, which previously did not existed because the cultural norms and attitude towards learning has always been very didactic and authoritarian (Boesen 2004, 17).

Chapter 5 - The Challenges under NSP, Delivery of Health Care services in Afghanistan

Chapter Four discuss about the challenges being faced in delivering the health services for the local people. The chapter starts with discussing the overall health structure of the country that leads to take the rational decision of involving National and International NGOs in providing public health services at country level. The second part of the chapter talks about the challenges being faced by the government in transiting the public service from NGOs to government authorities because of there limited capacity and lack of communication skills. Lastly talking about the challenges being faced by the public authorities in sustaining the health services because of the presence of several private and public actors functioning for their economical benefits.

5.1 Health Services in Afghanistan

In 2001, Afghanistan was recognized a post conflict state with immediate need of health services because the existing health condition was not acceptable because of its chaotic situation at country level (Waldman, Strong and Wali 2006). The capacity at private and public sector was very limited that the international community could not expect a future of developing the health sector due to which the public health services were implemented through national and international non-governmental organisations appointed by the main donors funding the health sector in Afghanistan. The involvement of NGOs allowed the whole country to have access to basic health services but the quality and delivery was different from each other and the government also did not had any policy framework that could be applied to the non-governmental organisation in providing basic health services. The existing health services were implemented more at project basis at district level with limited coordination among the service providers.

Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and major donors in Afghanistan developed a Basic Package for Health Services (BPHS) that aimed in developing a technical form and foundation for the Ministry that will also provide a guideline and framework for the infrastructure of the Ministry in the reconstruction, rehabilitation and staffing for health services. During the period when the donor agencies will be working with the ministry in their capacity development, the NGOs will be implementing the BPHS at community level, but the MoPH had concerns of hiring the NGOs to provide the public services but still the agreement between the MoPH and NGOs were agreed and implemented accordingly. The evaluation of the programme considers the health sector has progressed than compared to the starting process but it is also important to mention that the health sector in Afghanistan is still highly depending on foreign assistance that could be reduced by the donor agencies during the timeline.

The health sector in Afghanistan has been started from an unrepaired situation where the life expectancy rate is 46 years with infant mortality rate of 165 in 1000 live births/year and maternal mortality rates with 1700 in 100,000 births/year (Waldman and Hanif 2002). Therefore, the international community along with the governmental authorities had to assure careful planning and involve expertise for the management of public health system and also being able to identify the health problems and able to address and monitor the common problems. However, the international community adopted the “urban-centered territory approach” (Waldman and Hanif 2002, 10) for the re-development of the health sector. The first document that was drafted for the re-designing was the *Aide-Memoire of the Joint Donor Mission (JDM) to Afghanistan*, which talks about the Nutrition situation of the local people and the required health facilities, that gives a influential orientation on

the required health facilities. It strongly urges that there is need to look over the redistribution of the health services in order to assure equitable access even in the most rural communities where there is very limited government presence or access. Secondly the document also discuss about the development of a standard basic health package delivery as a primary health care available in all public health clinics at country level, lastly it also specify an indicators for the measurement of the health sector and its achievement.

Basic Public Health Services (BPHS) was the recommendation of the JDM and also recommended further steps for the MoPH and the local partners because identifying and defining the essential health services was an essential step for the government at the beginning of the programme. Since the BPHS package was only going to provide response to the “epidemiological imperatives” (Waldman and Hanif 2002) only addressing those problems that have been identified by the JDM during the assessment or identified through consensus opinions in order to respond to the higher number of mortality and morbidity rate at country level. At the beginning of the programme, more attention was provided to mortality and morbidity rate but during the BPHS implementation the concentration was moved to other health issues that occurred during the BPHS implementation.

5.2 Transition of the Health Services Facilitating Partners

The basic health services are provided through NGOs existing and functioning in Afghanistan. The NGOs were working independently without any policy on how to function in order to provide basic health services. The NGOs has been working directly with the donor agencies supporting the health sector in Afghanistan. Since 2002, MoPH

has been functioning on a shorter-term policy, due to which they have been limiting with the recruitment of health specialist that could work together with the NGOs in their capacity development and the monitoring of the services provided in public health clinics (Bower 2002). Secondly the government does not have accurate information of the facilities available in different clinics especially in rural areas because of limited coordination mechanism among the ministry and NGOs.

The public health system has experienced certain challenges in developing a functional medical system because of its limited capacity at government level. At the beginning of rebuilding the health system, the government started providing health care through involving the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) along with the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP) for the maintenance of the health care, which is a tertiary care, implemented by the international organisations. In reference to Acerra et al (2009) 89 percent of the primary health care was provided through NGOs contracted by international organisations and MoPH of Afghanistan or through grant agreements. However, much of the financial support was put in the establishing the health care hospitals but without developing a coordination system on the progress of the infrastructure at community level. Therefore, out of the 89 percent, 70 percent of the health programmes were provided by international aid organisations, but could not reach to the required quality and capacity of health services because of its limited health care workforce (Acerra et al 2009).

BPHS programme started its implementation in 2002 with an aim that the document will be used as a guidance on the health services that need to be provided by the Afghan government to its citizens. The programme was identified that it will give a great impact

on the health situation and also reduce the health problems because it will limit the infrastructure. The programme was considered to be cost effective, which will provide equal health access at urban and rural areas. However, the programme mainly focused in “maternal and newborn health, child health and immunizations, nutrition, communicable diseases, mental health, disability, and pharmaceutical supply” (Acera et al 2009, 3). But since the health system in the country has not been functioning therefore it was a challenging job for all of the actors involved in the programme to estimate the cost for providing the services, therefore WHO provided an estimation but later on the estimation was not able to provide health services to the total population. Emergency medicine and emergency care in the country are still not considered as important but if it is considered as urgent requirement, will most likely improve the health facilities and its outcomes. The Emergency Department (ED) exists for the International Military in Bagram Hospital and other military hospitals run by the military officials and only limited public hospitals and clinics has ED with limited emergency medicine and practitioners with very or no training on emergency care.

In reference to Bower (2002, 6) countries that are emerging from a longer period of conflict usually face challenges in substantial health and in developing their health system. When crisis are lifted the health system needs more attention because it has been unattended for very longer period which increases the burden of meeting the basic health requirements because of its destroyed assets, state financial shortages, failure of the supply and surveillance lines, limited investment in the country, no cost recovery and limited skilled health workers to provide the health response. In Afghanistan, the health services are mostly having the shortage of nurses and midwives that has limited the health services and are likely to be highly fragmented due to which the international organisations intervene in providing health response to the local communities in post

conflict or fragile states. The challenges of establishing health care system still continues as it needs significant improvement in order to meet the basic and higher level of health requirements but the focus still continues on primary care which is the first line of health defense and also produce large dividends.

The government is need of creating a mechanism in order to ensure that the policy planned at central level is able to dispatch to the sub-national and local level for assurance of equal implementation at national level. It can also benefit the government in being aware of the critical health issues that need to be block at the policy level that can be also used as a guidance for the donor agencies funding the health sector, as the country still continue to depend on international funding. Afghanistan continue to be recognized as a post conflict and fragile state which is still facing challenges with weak political and social environment, uncertain legitimacy for providing legal status to some of their actors because of their poor capacity to function at the existing governance structure that also results in collapsing the economic situation of the country and weakens the public services and also brakes the civil society.

5.3-Challenges in sustaining Public health services in Afghanistan

The basic public health services or the package is the only main source of providing health services in Afghanistan, implemented by third parties that could creates the possibility of delivering different type of services, than compared to different partners in the programme. The basic services suffer when it is assumed that the services are easy to forecast for the implementation of the preventive care because it is considered to be easy in implementation and measurement of its quick impact for reporting to donor agencies. However, it is challenging for the implementing partners to monitor the health services

because of the existence of private and public actors providing the similar services. The government-employed workers working under the public health sector could also practice in the private sector and the public hospitals would also operate their wards privately and have an extra income from the benefits, as when the doctors admit private patients, the fees is paid directly to the doctors. Therefore, it is difficult to have a distinction among the profit and not for profit organisation providing public services because they might be keen to work on maximizing their budget (Palmer 2006). International organisations providing health services could also be different to be reviewed because they have also spin-off among themselves in the organisation.

The Afghan government is continuously focusing on improving the public health services, where as it is being estimated that 50 – 60 percent of health services are provided by private sector (Palmer 2006, 6). Poor families usually refer to private health services because they consider them as the principle source of care at their community level or consider going to less expensive private pharmacies or general stores considered as unlicensed stores functioning at community level. The local people trust the private clinics and doctors for health care because they are providing the type of care as preferred and their behavior towards the patients are also being identified as more polite than compared to the employees in public clinics. The private health clinic workers are considered to be more qualified, provide better examination and the medicines are also more effective than in public pharmacies. The private health clinics and pharmacies are working with flexible working hours and also easy accessible with less distance than compared to the public clinics and pharmacies available at district level, which is more time consuming and with limited transportation facilities in rural communities.

The limited presence of government in rural communities has created higher economical incentives for private health services even with the practice of providing poor treatment because of lack of training for its staff members. The MoPH do not have data on the number of private clinic and practitioners in rural communities or remote provinces, as there is very limited government presence due to which they are not reporting to the government authorities and continue their work with the exception of the local people. The Afghan government had only focused on non-governmental organisations in service delivery however there has been different ways in engaging with the local people to expand the service delivery, through franchising, social marketing, registration and training of private physician, using of voucher and strengthening the rules and regulation at community level.

The government is continuously facing many barriers for having access to the rural communities in order to provide sustainable health services due to insecurity that still exists in different parts of the country. Lack of infrastructure because of absence of proper road, source of transportation that limits the access of the government to provide proper health and the local people also cannot have communication with the public authorities because there is no electricity and communication in order to report of limited or weak health services available in there communities. Lastly, the instable economic situation of the country has highly depended the health services on external findings, but the government authorities could not highly rely on external funding because of the donor policy shifts, possibility of ending the support without any advance warning or reducing the funding because of its unpredicted availability.

Conclusion

Afghanistan geographical location in Central Asia has always made it an important place for power holding for its neighboring countries therefore the country has been part of different empires and regimes due to which it has been missing a stable political structure. The country has experienced a rapid state collapse since the twentieth century, because of the violence that existed in the top level of the system. Decentralization of the governance structure is considered as an important step especially for resolving the ethnical conflict and the internal tension that are also experienced at political level.

National Solidarity Programme has introduced the concept of good governance for the state development, as it explains the distribution of power at sub and local level and also the management of social and economical resources available at country level. The Community Development Councils established through NSP has created a local mechanism for the development of its communities through proper planning in a democratic process and avoiding the previous cultural practices that existed at community level. It has introduced a new process to the country on decision-making and to meet the community needs such as basic health services. The Afghan government developed a basic health package for health services (BPHS) aiming in developing a technical form for MoPH to provide a guideline and framework for the infrastructure and reconstruction of the health services. Since the launch of NSP, the Afghan government along with the donor agencies and implementing partners has been able to provide the basic health services for the local people but the ministry is still not ready to take the overall lead of the public services because of their limited technical, personal and funding

capacity, due to which they are still depending on external funding, which will be reducing with the timeline or policy change in the funding organisations. One of the reason that the government is still not ready to provide health services because during the initial planning process they did not involved the local governance structure due to which the government do not have local people support in the transition period. The NSP programme has managed to establish a local governance structure but the government is still not involving them in certain policy level decision due to which the government is still struggling in providing public services and the development of sub-national governance structure.

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