



## NGO Fieldworkers in Pakistan

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**Abstract**— Although NGOs have played substantial role in uplift of society in Pakistan like many other countries in the developing world, their fieldworkers, who are the real actors of change, remain undermined. Job insecurity, poor salary structure, unhealthy working environment and even harassment - especially in case of women – are some of the key problems they face.

**Keywords**— NGOs, fieldworkers, development.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

NGO fieldworkers are the ones who carry out field work. This study considers middle level managers and the personnel of NGOs other than INGOs working in field; and personnel of INGOs working in field as fieldworkers. In the absence of an efficient state and intelligent market, importance of NGOs and their fieldworkers is obvious. The works conducted in developing countries show that the situation of the NGO fieldworkers is not good, especially the women. This study aims at viewing the situation of the fieldworkers broadly on the globe and precisely in Pakistan.

#### *Methodology*

This study is primarily a secondary research incorporating some glimpses of personal experience in Pakistan. The available print and electronic literature made the body of this study. Conclusions are made in the light of all this and some suggestions are made.

#### *People in NGOs*

Ideas are changing about people from 'personnel' to 'human resources' due to the issues of people and power, and increasing importance of culture and diversity. Leadership is an important aspect where changing views of leadership move from individual qualities to 'contingency' theories. According to Korten [1], life cycles of organizations show changing roles of leaders. Studies show importance of charismatic leaders to NGOs – works are there on 'intelligence'; whereas Wood [2] worked on contextual factors. Problems of succession and delegation are quite prevalent for which recommended is ideal of participatory process, not 'heroic individual'. Fowler [3] says, "NGOs have a feminine development approach and masculine organizational culture" (p. 79). To him, responsibility for change management must be allocated and indicators of

progress agreed upon. Building gender policies within NGOs are recommendable. Osborne [4] recommends equal opportunities/affirmative action – liberal versus radical perspectives. Rao and Kelleher [5] worked on BRAC's Gender Quality Action-Learning (GQAL) program where they found tensions between 'lending money' and 'empowering women'.

#### *NGO Staff*

NGO management broadly comprises of two tiers - managers and fieldworkers. NGO managers are the ones who carry out managerial activities. This study considers top level personnel of NGOs other than INGOs; and top and middle level personnel of INGOs as managers. NGO fieldworkers are the ones who carry out field work. This study considers middle level managers and the personnel of NGOs other than INGOs working in field; and personnel of INGOs working in field as fieldworkers. There are different types of incentives to NGO staff. Managerial reward to staff for experimentation is an internal factor that encourages innovation. It has both advantages and disadvantages. Beliefs (e. g. conservation, peace and development) are more important incentives than material reward. There are areas of conflict between expatriate and local staff; it is a must to handle them. We believe fieldworkers of NGOs as undervalued rather underused resource. However, in exceptional cases where the top management is sincere and wants to 'develop' the country, NGO fieldworkers are valued and well-used resource; here we refer the case of UPAP in Pakistan. Criticisms on pay levels, and staff movements are general NGO staffing issues. Emphasis is on staff 'livelihood strategies'; also on use of expatriate staff. NGOs are criticized to be structureless and that they put stress on their staff. This is worth to mention here that the 'People in Aid' code is a timely step in the right direction to safeguard rights of the NGO staff.

### 2. NGOs AND THEIR FIELDWORKERS IN PAKISTAN

Present situation in Pakistan shows a scenario where one group seems to be strengthening the hands of the military whereas another seems to be rebellious to it. NGOs are active in Pakistan especially 1980s onwards because

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none else could prove to be useful for the poor. NGOs initiated their operations at quite small scale and the present situation of their enormous number appeared later; especially with disasters including 2005 earthquake. Today civil society is active in diversified ways where religious group is also prominent along with secular. Although it is not possible to see NGOs as autonomous still we may go for some indicators those help us understand autonomy of NGOs in certain aspects being third sector. Negative connotations are also there in Pakistan regarding work of NGOs but it is quite evident that on the whole NGOs have played their role in the 'development' of Pakistan through their fieldworkers. Inefficiency is complained about the efforts made. We need to realize that the major reason for inefficiency of the efforts as most of the experts diagnose is that the individuals and small groups try to pave way but a collective effort on national level as well as a strong push through the commons collectively as a nation is not made bringing major change. Ki-Zerbo [6] highlights potential of individuals considering progress ('development') as fulfilling one's potential as a human being in order to be a broadcaster and receiver of values. NGOs play significant role in 'developing' countries. They have a widespread network in many cases and they have got links to masses - since they understand problems as well as have got moderate solutions so they can very effectively be into the 'development' practice and perform well [7].

#### ***NGO fieldworkers in Pakistan***

As fieldworkers are the movers and shakers of NGOs so it is worth to conduct research on them. We believe they are underused and undervalued resource [8], [9]; Goetz [10] also terms them so through her intensive research. If their potential is utilized properly, better results are ensured. We agree with Foley [11] who suggests critical or analytical thinking as lying at the heart of any transformative process; and we appreciate him as he further adds that it needs to be allied to something more fundamental and intuitive - to us this is what NGO fieldworkers need to be trained on for better performance. Fieldworkers can really make the efforts worth.

#### ***Why NGO fieldworkers are important?***

Fieldworkers should be the movers and shakers of NGOs since they actually implement the policies; fieldworkers should be the best people to contribute towards realistic solutions since they are the implementers so they know the problems in the best manner [8]. Seeing NGOs from the bottom up we suggest that fieldworkers should be empowered to make NGOs more effective and more useful to the poor. They are good sources of information on what actually takes place behind the scenes. For instance, one fieldworker exclaims about credit used for dowry as another form of dowry in rural Bangladesh. If fieldworkers are taken into confidence, NGO activities prove more productive - on the part of NGOs and the community. A woman borrower had the problem of procuring repayment installments from her husband who misused the first loan. Next time she took the concerned

fieldworker into confidence that the money should not go into the hands of her husband rather on the day of loan disbursement she took fieldworker to the market along with her husband and purchased cow that she would keep close to her house so that she could have control if her husband tried to take away the cow [12]. We experienced similar incidents in Pakistan where taking fieldworker into confidence was worth to benefit both the community and NGO. However, in such cases the most important aspect is the sincerity of fieldworker otherwise harm can double up - a NGO reports how they evade probable harm. Mommers and Wessel [13] discuss the process of transforming partnership from a conceptual framework into a practical, operational framework for field-level interaction approaching from the perspective of the core values of the partnership concept and the ability of fieldworkers to behave in ways consistent with these core values. Although their work is regarding northern Uganda but the significance of their approach is equally true to address the situation in Pakistan that faces socio-political conflicts. (i) how does change happen? and (ii) what can we do to make it happen in the way we would like it to? Are amongst the prominent questions of NGO fieldworkers [14]. Foley [11] says that:

“The quality of NGO work is hugely dependent on the quality of critical thinking and analysis of poverty among all levels of staff. In particular, the quality of the work in the field - at partner and community levels - depends on an understanding of development processes and on strong facilitation skills, both of which rely on strong levels of critical thinking. While these are innately present in almost everyone, rote learning in education systems and patriarchal and top-down power structures often impede their development” (p. 774).

We believe that if fieldworkers realize their worth, they can do a lot. They also need to equip themselves with the skills those will help them to become more useful for the community they serve - Goetz [10] (p. 30) phrases Montgomery [15] as "...field workers must learn to exhibit a sort of 'local heroism', to act as champions in the interest of the poor". Providing monetary benefits and support is also needed for NGO fieldworkers but another very important need of them is the technical support that includes access to information.

#### ***Misperceptions about and over expectations of fieldworkers***

NGO managers expect their fieldworkers to do extraordinary activities [8]. The activities were over-expectation. Admitted that the managers might be right in reporting about themselves have done such activities when they worked as fieldworkers but as a matter of fact, all fieldworkers cannot do such special jobs those are beyond their usual capacity.

#### ***Effectiveness of fieldworkers in activities of NGOs***

We discuss these problems because due to these problems their usefulness is adversely affected. Why we fail in the policies if any, those generate problems? NGO fieldworkers can really make a project success if they are

motivated well and their potential is utilized properly. If they are in a better position, 'development' is quite likely. For instance; Goetz and Gupta observe as well as come to know interviewing fieldworkers that increasing pressure on them prompting to assess creditworthiness of women borrowers make them screen the likely productivity of husbands of borrower women in Bangladesh. They further add fieldworkers assumed that the loan amount would be used by some family members other than borrower woman. We personally observe that even the drivers who take workers to field get strong know-how of the community, let alone fieldworkers. Our experience in Pakistan is that fieldworkers meet men family members before forming groups of women borrowers persuading them to let their wives join the group; Goetz and Gupta say the same regarding Bangladesh.

#### ***Description of NGO fieldworkers in Pakistan***

Before going into the details of fieldworkers' description in Pakistan, it seems quite appropriate to read the following understanding pre-British colonial south Asian society – Pakistan is part of it:

“A self-sufficient, village-based agriculture carried on with a 'primitive plough' and bullock power, and handicrafts made by means of simple instruments, was a basic feature of pre-British colonial south Asian society. A village was almost self-sufficient regarding the raw materials needed for its artisan industry. Another characteristic of the village community was that a rigid caste-structure determined the occupation of its members. Since castes were based on the principle of heredity, occupations also became hereditary” [16] (p. 177) in [8].

Astonishingly Naschold [17] remarks even about higher education as not being able to change income inequality in rural Pakistan although it is generally considered to be driving change. However, mentioning a prominent name in success stories - Urban Poverty Alleviation Program that initiated their operations in June 1996 in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad [18], we believe NGO fieldworkers can be good actors.

#### ***Fieldworkers of urban poverty alleviation program***

UPAP deputed a local woman fieldworker with around ten years of schooling, one non-local man fieldworker and one non-local intermediate twelve years education (or preferably a graduate with fourteen years education) branch manager at its field offices. Local woman fieldworker's knowledge about the community helps identifying target group properly, non-local man fieldworker deals with men of the clients in addition to doing assignments those might include going outside the settlement; non-local branch manager selects good borrowers resisting local pressures. Such a system further enriched with honest professional practices controls financial corruption incidences (those should be acceptable in a 'developing' country that has a high corruption rate overall). A very dedicated management worked at the grassroots initiating UPAP that has been

through the ground realities understands their fieldworkers' situation. We support the following comments of the pioneer of 'development' in Pakistan and Bangladesh Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan after his visit to UPAP in December 1998 [18] (p. 31):

“UPAP is a model, which is likely to establish. It is viable and sustainable. This is a creative work and not replication of the Grameen Bank. You are rather close to OPP. UPAP will grow as it is addressing the dire need of the poor. No business will be run without credit. People are being crushed by the capital and they will be redeemed only if they acquire it. You are the only hope to provide this facility to the poor. There are three key points that ensured the success of this model:

1. low-cost mohalla (settlement) offices
2. low-cost local female staff
3. expansion within the supervisory capacity”

#### ***Fieldworkers in Pakistan and Bangladesh: Compared***

Remarkable works are done on NGO fieldworkers regarding Bangladesh (works of Ahmad and those of Goetz being the most prominent). These works in Bangladesh show almost similar results as we find in Pakistan; with certain exceptions those might include the following:

- To us since NGOs mushrooming in Pakistani society is not as dominant as reported about Bangladesh so the number of fieldworkers in Pakistan is estimated not as high as might be in Bangladesh.
- A woman using bicycle or even motorcycle is absolutely out of question in Pakistani society. It impedes mobility of women fieldworkers resulting in less effectiveness of their endeavor or even facing regrets from NGO management regarding those jobs that demand use of bicycles or motorcycles.
- There are a substantial number of jobs in market in Pakistan due to which youth does not have as high tendency to get a government job as might be in the case of Bangladesh, in the absence of which they have to go to NGOs those monopolize them. In Pakistan fieldworkers are not in that much bad situation, so far.
- Sisters contributing money for sending their brothers abroad is not popular in Pakistan in contrast to what is reported about Bangladesh. So, women fieldworkers are working for themselves in Pakistan and not to support their brothers.

#### ***Case Studies***

Regarding position of NGO fieldworkers in Pakistan, almost a million NGO workers (including volunteers) are mostly an undervalued asset. They include high and medium education profile belonging to both men and women of different ages (pre-dominantly young ones). In the absence of efficient state and market, NGO fieldworkers are the only hope for the poor of Pakistan to

get onto the road towards 'development'. Microcredit is a popular field of interest where most of fieldworkers are engaged. Regarding incentives offered to fieldworkers to join there is found a mix of the feelings that they are going to do something for betterment of their country-fellows (especially in the events of disasters) and the salaries (those are low, yet attract the unemployed youth). There are different views about fieldworkers in different parts of Pakistan depending upon the nature of work they carry out and perception of the people about that particular activity – broadly speaking, field workers who work for sensitive issues like family planning are not seen positively almost throughout the country whereas women fieldworkers are not encouraged in northern Pakistan.

In the light of the study conducted so far, using scarcely available secondary data and information, fieldworkers are not happy with their salary structure; unhealthy environment at work is another major problem for most (especially women). Insecure jobs are also a threat to fieldworkers in Pakistan that has resulted in even physical illness in some cases. Let us see the following case studies those may help us to get an insight to what is actually happening with them.

**1:** *Sobia, twenty-five, had fourteen years education and was an area manager (lower level management position) in the microcredit program of NGO A working in district 3. She earned rupees three thousand and five hundred (US\$70 in 2000) per month as her salary. She reported about a congenial environment in NGO where she was well-heard and it encouraged her to work better. Despite her official working hours of 8:30 A. M. to 4:30 P. M. she always started her work at least an hour earlier and worked till two hours later than the timings. When the work demanded she would work even longer than that, including sometimes working in the weekends. She reported only the element of low salary as a negative aspect for which she said that her seniors listened well to it but clarified that they wanted to keep overheads low in contrast to typical notorious NGOs (her seniors also accepted their salaries lower than equivalent positions in similar NGOs, she admitted). Rest of the things were just positive those included strong encouragement both from NGO and the clients, regard from the clients, transparent system, caring environment, good atmosphere at work, provision of relaxing and enjoyment and an overall congenial environment due to which she wanted to continue with this NGO.*

**2:** *Nazia, thirty, had fourteen years education and was a coordinator with NGO B that worked on adult literacy in the district 1. She earned rupees five thousand and five hundred (US\$95 in 2004) as her monthly salary and was supposed to start and look after adult literacy centers in the peri-urban areas. She enjoyed the supportive attitude from her seniors and even the employer. She mentioned secure and healthy environment in NGO both at the office and the field. She was happy with the provision of all necessities for field work those were possible within*

*the limited resources of district level NGO. She was worried only about the lower salary structure of NGO that was not enough to meet her family needs nor were there any promotion prospects due to which she was afraid she might have to quit; still she admitted that such environment she might not find elsewhere. Despite a congenial environment, involvement of fieldworkers in planning was nil.*

**3:** *Tahir, thirty-four, had twelve years education and worked for microcredit provision in the rural area of district 2 with NGO C. He had previously been working in different capacities both in corporate and NGO sectors. He complained about humiliating attitude of his seniors who preferred women fieldworkers and overburdened men. He also complained that donors gave huge funds to NGO but most of it was wasted one way or the other; and there were no promotion prospects even if one worked hard. He earned rupees seven thousand (US\$110 in 2005) per month as his salary. Corrupt ownership/management never asked fieldworkers to suggest something how to plan for their activities.*

**4:** *Noreen, twenty-nine, had fourteen years education and worked as social mobilizer in district 4 with NGO D where she was supposed to carry out reproductive health services in the rural areas. She was earning rupees nine thousand (US\$150 in 2005) per month but complained of problems including harassment both from NGO staff and the community. Since she had to run her family expenditure (she was a divorced with two girls, five and three) so she had to bear with it otherwise she did not like the experience – to her, the job provided her just enough money to meet her family needs otherwise she was tense throughout her work. NGO never offered fieldworkers to participate in the planning process.*

The key feature appearing in the afore-mentioned case studies is that fieldworkers are not happy with the salary structure. Hindrance in the way of promotions is another big issue. Unhealthy working environment is also seen a common problem. Women fieldworkers have even complained about harassment.

#### **Benefits enjoyed and problems faced by fieldworkers**

In the discussion on fieldworkers the most prominent is as to what problems do they face due to which their efficiency is adversely affected. As a matter of fact, if they are provided benefits they can do a lot more for the uplift of community in a society like Pakistan where political instability has hindered the proper running of state and market - those two if ran properly even then their limited resources do not allow their outreach to access the poorest of the poor and the marginalized. We may say here that the secretive approach of NGOs to conceal realities about most of the aspects regarding their working has kept their problems unrevealed and the poor fellows – fieldworkers - are thus forced to keep working with their miseries unintervened or quit in worst situations. In Pakistan NGO fieldworkers are facing so many problems due to which their capabilities are not

utilized properly resulting in a far lesser pace of 'development'. Contrary to the advice of Suzuki [19] and Fowler [3] fieldworkers are rarely consulted during the policy-making. Hereafter are highlighted some acute problems.

Managers sometimes advise the fieldworkers to go for easy procedures; for instance, Goetz and Gupta give the reasons for disbursing loans to women borrowers since women have better intention to repay as it is their limitation to retain community contacts in contrast to men who may develop contacts elsewhere quickly, women are easy to trace being their lesser likelihood to move evading contact with field workers, and women may be persuaded to repay with little pressure in contrast to men. Managers have their own mind sets due to which they undervalue the rational suggestions even; we cite Goetz and Gupta here who mention a prospective borrower woman whom fieldworker proposed for a loan disbursement but management refused saying as to how would she run her business when she had neither husband nor a son. To Goetz [10] mass clientele programs deserve limits on the personal discretion of fieldworkers to ensure the delivery of standardized services package. But in 'development' spirit - blended with variety in local conditions to respond flexibly - field workers are actually in the best possible position to interpret changes in their clients' needs as well as responding appropriately. She interprets Grindle and Hilderbrand [20], Jain [21], Tendler [22], and Tendler and Freedheim [23] as follows:

"Recent literature on institutional capacity-building in development is witnessing a revival of interest in the conditions for creating a commitment to public service, the creation of trust between fieldworkers, management, and clients, and the creative use, consequently, of local-level discretion" (pp. 21-22).

She further interprets Arce and Long [24], Long [25], Long and Ploeg [26], Schaffer [27] and Wood [28] as:

"There is another, less prescriptive and more critical tradition of analyzing the interactions between service bureaucracies and their clients which investigates how these interactions – mainly struggles over authority and resources – create meanings or challenge or reproduce dominant social relationships" (p. 22).

We strongly agree to what she suggests after referring these works that welcoming program clients' participation to establish decisive interpretation of their needs, this approach searches for expanding the space to allow constructive use of fieldworkers' discretion. However, giving respect to the fear (to some) of probable losses to different stakeholders if fieldworkers' discretions are incorporated so abundantly, we add that a mid-level check can be appropriate that will ensure the benefit and avoid losses if any (those will be due to their lesser broad horizon, not due to their insincerity).

### **Gender specific problems**

"The study of gender and development is an area of inquiry fraught with tension between 'theoretical' and

'practical' concerns" [29] (p. 900). We appreciate that Goetz found different perspectives and behaviors of women and men fieldworkers addressing credit needs of women program clients in Bangladesh. This difference results in different problems for both men and women fieldworkers. Let us now try to see the problems for women and men.

Women fieldworker have got their special place since they can help 'development' efforts to reach women who make up more than half of the society (including children under their custody and supervision). Although many donors now emphasize on more participation of women in NGOs where they are really needed to bring about change in the society, still most NGOs do not seem to be conscious about the importance of this aspect. Highlighting the potential of women's empowerment Paterson [30] offers strategies to empower women based on experiences in the conservative and religious tribal environment of Balochistan province in Pakistan. It is heartening that a cadre of women activists was built in addition to minimizing resistance among families and communities as well as encouraging participants to build their communities' strengths as recommended by mainstreaming gender and development (MGD). However, it is also important that aptitude should be weighed more than socio-economic status when we invite women fieldworkers, this is a view of Paterson and similar to Clark and Michuki [31] regarding Jordan we find highly educated women working as fieldworkers in Pakistan (we must realize low literacy rate in Pakistan) - sometimes to look for a career and in most cases NGO goals attracted them. Goetz found (and we agree to her findings):

"Like many people studying development, I saw non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as arenas of freedom in which new approaches to development, new ideas; new patterns of organizing staff and work were being experimented with. Non-governmental organisations have been places where people with a strong commitment to equality, to alternative paths to development, have been free to work. However, my interactions with feminists from these organisations revealed that they can be just as male-biased as large state or multilateral bureaucracies" (p. 13).

Women fieldworkers are not seen positively in most parts of Pakistan, where women are not supposed to work outside their homes. Those working for women's empowerment are suspected of making women disobedient to their men (father, husband and other kin). Goetz has very rightly points out that:

"Women working for women in development have to make a special kind of difference in their work – they often have to challenge their own internalised sense of inferiority while also challenging the gender-related subordination of their women clients" (p. 14).

We found in Pakistan some women fieldworkers interested to engage in women specific gender issues beyond their assigned work; those issues included domestic violence, reproductive health, children's well-being, and property-ownership rights (Goetz reported

similar findings regarding Bangladesh). Goetz suspects that gender biases in the organizational cultures and structures limit women's capacity to use their discretion in field or to impact intra-organizational decision-making. It is not different in Pakistan either – a culture similar to Bangladesh.

This is pity that although voices are raised for women empowerment but the strategies adopted are not actually empowering women. So, Garikipati [32] emphasizes on challenging patriarchal hold on productive assets in order to empower women. She arrived at it examining loan-use data and borrower-testimonies in rural India. Our experience in Pakistan is similar that women empowerment efforts need refining. This is equally true for women as beneficiaries of projects and women as fieldworkers. We strongly support Joireman [33] who argues defining as well as protecting property rights of women explicitly and not merely considering them as household members only - they are active participants in the economy.

There are certain problems specific for men fieldworkers. In most areas of Pakistan women clients do not welcome men. This is the most prominent professional problem for men. Goetz and Gupta report about their research regarding Bangladesh that mothers-in-law attend scheduled meetings of the borrower groups in lieu of their young daughters-in-law (the actual borrowers) where fieldworker in question is man. We witness similar cases in Pakistan; however this tendency is lesser in case of urban areas. We would also like to add that some NGOs make special arrangements for such instances including not to send men to such groups so that the group activity might perform as designed. Similarly, many NGOs are reluctant to recruit men fieldworkers due to preferences of donors those encourage to recruit women even if a project demands more men for its proper implementation. Most interestingly, men in the community criticize men fieldworkers working for women empowerment. This demands them to have faith in the truth of their approach – apt men fieldworkers go for authentic knowledge of Islam where equal rights are given to women and they are valued well to shoulder overall 'development'.

In a developing society like Pakistan the wisest approach is to understand the importance of gender balance since most effective actors in 'development' are women – both as fieldworkers as well as clients. Understanding women is a must. Let us try to understand women as a woman [34] (p.120) expresses in the following words:

“Finding an appropriate balance between our experience of our unique selves, our common experience as women, and our common experience as human beings and negotiating this balance through the pursuit of various development goals are the challenges that face us in development communication”.

Giving due weightage to strength and weaknesses of both INGOs and local NGOs is sensible. MCC staff enjoyed the best package for women fieldworkers in Bangladesh; international management and missionary

values are major reason for such better benefits; large national NGO offer good package for men fieldworkers [8]. Salaries offered by local NGOs to their fieldworkers in Bangladesh are less than one third that of international and large national NGOs; our experience about Pakistan is similar. Saying about local NGOs that these offer very few formal and informal benefits for their fieldworkers we generalize appalling disparity in Bangladesh; it is not different in the case of Pakistan.

Donors substantially influence the activities of NGOs. Fieldworkers suffer ultimately in the absence of an understanding as to how to cope with such undue influence. 'People in Aid' code – that is in fact the first attempt in result of a long struggle by NGO fieldworkers - is a step in the right direction to safeguard their benefits. However, very sadly most NGOs have not signed it yet; only two hundred and eighty-nine NGO were the signatories to the 'People in Aid' code till 2005 [35]. Major reason for this poor feedback from NGOs might be the fact that it is available in English and French languages only due to which most NGO people who do not understand any of these languages are not even aware of it. In a society like Pakistan where women prefer to engage in traditional occupations those are consistent with their domestic roles and can be performed in the home [36], enforcing such a code will help women fieldworkers do better.

Some people might have confusion as if fieldworkers misuse NGO resources; but reality is different. In such instances actually managers and owners are culprit, not fieldworkers – “some senior officials of certain NGOs have used loopholes to become affluent” [8] (p. 13). This is equally true in case of fieldworkers in Pakistan where if certain instances ever happened were only exceptions and even many of such exceptional cases were just intervened and money so embezzled was recovered fully or partially [18]. Bano [37] finds “a strong correlation between aid and rise in material aspirations among NGO leaders and lower organizational performance” (p. 2297). Her finding clarifies that culprit are NGO leaders, not fieldworkers; that is our point here.

Prime movers influence community decisions in CDD (community-driven development) operations – these are those having local social capital; this is a pity that households with their members proactive in communal activities present their preferences in the community proposals [38]. This is on the basis of work in Philippines but the situation is not different in Pakistan – another developing country like the one cited about (Philippines).

Just to elaborate how benefits are reaped by all when workers' rights are pursued (although it may not appear to have a direct link to our topic here), we find Ahmed and Peerlings [39] arriving at results that an increased minimum wage for workers negatively impacts economy, let alone workers. Whereas, improving working conditions at workplace and services to workers increases incomes of workers in addition to welfare; owners also enjoy higher incomes and improve.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

Main point to consider in the situation of Pakistan is how great a role the NGO fieldworkers have played in creating awareness, which in most cases is the main concern of their work. Obviously, their contribution has not been very disappointing although there is still room for improvement. This study has been based solely on secondary data and some past case studies carried out by us; this dearth of literature does not support presentation of much statistical information. Nonetheless, the following conclusions can be drawn regarding NGO fieldworkers in Pakistan, which subjectively address the specific objectives:

- Fieldworkers are actually the frontline staff of NGOs. They are an undervalued and rather underused resource. There are different views about fieldworkers in Pakistan depending upon their activities and gender.
- Their major incentives are to work for their countrymen and to earn a salary.
- Most belong to the group of youth with high- and medium-education profiles.
- They are good sources of information on what actually takes place behind the scenes. Fieldworkers are the only hope for the poor.
- Although voices are raised for women's empowerment, the strategies adopted are not actually empowering them.
- Highly educated women are working as fieldworkers - sometimes to look for a career and in most cases NGO goals attract them. Some women fieldworkers are interested in engaging in women-specific gender issues beyond their assigned work; those issues include domestic violence, reproductive health, children's well-being, and property-ownership rights.
- Microcredit is a popular field of interest where most fieldworkers are engaged.

As far as problems faced by fieldworkers are concerned we see that:

- Job insecurity is the most prominent. Harassment is another major problem faced by women. Inconvenient working environment is also a major problem in many cases. Salary and benefits are non-satisfactory in most cases. Misperceptions about and over expectations of them are also big problems.
- Secretive approach of NGOs to conceal realities keeps problems of their fieldworkers mostly unrevealed – forcing them to live with miseries or quit.
- Non-practical implementation of limits on personal discretion of fieldworkers hinders the benefits from reaching the poor. Managers sometimes advise them to follow easy procedures, which are impractical and result in benefits not

reaching the target group. Fieldworkers are rarely consulted during policy-making.

- Gender biases limit women fieldworkers from benefiting the target group. Women fieldworkers are not seen positively in most parts of Pakistan, where women are not supposed to work outside their homes. Those working for women's empowerment are suspected of making women disobedient to their men (father, husband and other kin). They get lower salaries and fewer benefits than men.
- Women clients do not welcome men fieldworkers in most areas of Pakistan. Many NGOs are reluctant to recruit men fieldworkers due to preferences of donors that emphasize recruiting women (even if a project demands more men for its proper implementation). Men in the community criticize those who work for women's empowerment.

These problems and some others such as local languages vary in acuteness from area to area and from situation to situation. Concluding the discussion, we may synthesize that NGO fieldworkers, those are undervalued and under-utilized now, may do better if they are facilitated more in terms of salary and benefits, job security, encouragement and an overall security especially to the women fieldworkers without which the benefit cannot reach all strata at the grassroots.

### 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is evident that NGO fieldworkers are the frontline staff in the execution of the development work in countries like Pakistan. Their importance has tremendously increased with the recent devastating floods. Since fieldworkers are expected to work more for uplift of the poor so we recommend the following to improve the situation:

- Fieldworkers should be empowered to make their efforts in NGOs more effective and more useful to the poor. Providing monetary benefits and support is needed for fieldworkers. Another very important need is the technical support that includes access to information.
- Critical or analytical thinking allied to something more fundamental and intuitive is what they need to be trained on for better performance. In establishing decisive interpretation of the needs of clients, the approach of incorporating fieldworkers' discretion should be adopted as it makes room for constructive use of their discretion. A mid-level check, however, can be appropriate to ensure benefit avoiding probable losses.
- Misperceptions about fieldworkers should be rectified. Over expectations should not be made from them. Social capital should be used since social cohesion, creativity and resilience all can do a lot.



- 'People in Aid' code should be translated in other languages so that fieldworkers may at least understand what is there in a document that exists for their betterment. There should be made some procedure to implement documents those favor them.
- Women's empowerment efforts should be refined in Pakistan.
- Appreciating NGOs those made special arrangements for gender specific issues we recommend replicating elsewhere. Appreciating also that apt men fieldworkers go for authentic knowledge of Islam where equal rights are given to women and they are valued well to shoulder overall 'development', we suggest all to follow it.

Participation, governance and stakeholders as well as social sustainability – though touched slightly – could make the study more interesting if done more, we admit.

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