

## **Conflict, Development and Community Participation in Education: Pakistan and Yemen**

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### **Introduction**

In 'development', community participation has increasingly come to be seen as a way to encourage community interest, involvement, ownership and ultimately, sustainability of projects. In the education field, governments and major funding agencies include 'community participation' in project documentation as a matter of course. Participatory approaches are advocated and adopted to ensure that the provision of infrastructure, services and training, transform social groups and in turn, lead to 'development'. At the same time, while 'participation' has been examined and critiqued for what it actually means in development contexts, participation takes on a new character and is of critical importance in areas which are conflict prone.

This paper examines two development scenarios (Pakistan and Yemen) where community participation in education is advocated. Their tribal, power relationships and conflict scenarios have things in common, and government policies for community participation in education are similar. Yet while the link between participation and sustainability of programs cannot be denied, there are other issues to be considered. In such socio-political environments, there are other factors which have a bearing on conflict: the understanding of community participation; the degree of 'participation' which is possible; the 'voice/spokesman' on behalf of the 'community'; social hierarchies, traditional elites, and various power relationships. One question to consider is whether 'participation' is, in effect, a means of central government resisting, weakening and destabilizing control by traditional leaders, thus 'transforming' traditional relations which could backfire and further intensify conflict. A brief background sets the scene with 'participation' in a development context, then Pakistan's and Yemen's education policies, and finally, the nature of conflict in each.

## Participation and development

The body of development theory is wide and diverse. Political and economic positions bring different perspectives. While an economic base is common, environmental and social activists write more from social perspectives about the targets of development planning. What is consistent in the theories of modernization promulgated by the Rostow school (critiqued at length by development theorists for decades) and more recently 'globalisation', is that development continues to be described as dealing with human transformation of culture and rapid mobilization of society. The notion of social transformation is emphasized by writers such as Stiglitz<sup>1</sup> who in talking of the 'comprehensive development paradigm' describe development as 'a transformation of society, a movement from traditional relations, traditional ways of thinking, traditional ways of dealing with health and education, traditional methods of production, to more *modern* ways.' He emphasizes the change of mindset which is at the centre of development, and as 'a characteristic of traditional societies is the acceptance of the world as it is; the modern perspective recognizes change.' What is important to note here is that the theme of social transformation has been interwoven through development writing for the last fifty years or more, and to ask the question, whether this can be achieved in situations of ongoing conflict.

This brings us to the second concept which forms the background to this paper – can participation in development activities bring about real change. Without preempting the discussion below, participation can be viewed from two different perspectives, i.e., participation of people in development activities (donor driven) to ensure sustainability and which will change people's lives; or participation of people bringing about a change of mindset so that they themselves will demand and drive development. One is about people being involved in activities planned from outside, the other is about people choosing, planning and deciding what development activities (if any) they want or do not want and what they will support and in what context. Thus one can ask what participation means in development activities, where process and not just outcomes, become most important.

Related to this is the question of who actually participates in development activities. Discussions about the participation of a local geographic community tend to assume that everybody is equal, all working for the common good, and that no class or other conflict exists. In discussing community participation, what is frequently overlooked is that the spokespersons

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<sup>1</sup> Stiglitz, J.E., 'Participation and Development: Perspectives from the Comprehensive Development Paradigm', *Review of Development Economics*, 6, 2 (2002), pp. 163–182.

for the community are often a small (male) elite, and secondly, that the basis of community may not be geographic but rather based on clan and lineage, defying a strict 'community/locale' approach to educational planning

While the approach of involving communities in development activities is common in project documentation in all sectors, this paper limits its consideration to community participation in education. As the following section shows, the Governments of Pakistan and Yemen have incorporated community participation into their educational policies. How it works out 'on the ground' is another matter.

### Community participation in education policy in Pakistan and Yemen

Any recommendation encouraging community participation in development planning, needs flexible approaches adapted to the local situation, more so when conflict is an issue. Before discussing conflict scenarios and community participation initiatives, a brief overview of educational policies in Pakistan and Yemen is presented here.

#### Pakistan

References to the involvement of teachers in administrative decision-making bodies and to the 'local community' in development and maintenance of educational facilities are scattered throughout Pakistan's education policies and numerous Five Year Plans. General participation of teachers, students, parents' representatives and the community at large in educational matters is frequently referred to in other development documentation pertaining to education.<sup>2</sup> At provincial level, the Ministry of Education (MoE), National Education Management Information System (NEMIS) aims to improve participation in basic education<sup>3</sup> by collecting and providing data at district level.

World Bank documentation talks of experiments in community participation improving the quality of education because parents contribute more, and teachers become accountable to parents for observable results: 'When parents trust local teachers in local schools... they are more willing to contribute

<sup>2</sup> Shah, D., *Decentralisation in the Education System of Pakistan: Policies and Strategies*. Islamabad: Academy of Education Planning & Management, MoE, Government of Pakistan, 2003

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Education, *NEMIS*. Islamabad: MoE, Government of Pakistan, 2001

money, buildings, time and effort to the school.<sup>4</sup> In the *Second Girls Primary School Sector Project*, the Asian Development Bank promoted a participatory approach where separate committees of men and women were set up in order to encourage communities 'to send their daughters to school on a regular basis, providing security for female teachers, and identifying local candidates to fill vacant teaching positions.'<sup>5</sup>

Increasing emphasis on community participation reflects the decentralization policy in Pakistan. The 1998-2001 National Education Policy proposed that selected functions of management and elementary education be decentralized towards the district, school and community to help communities and local bodies organise their efforts more effectively. This will be achieved by 'active participation and contribution of local communities in educational management via the District Education Authorities, School Management Committees and Village Education Committees.'<sup>6</sup>

Since much of the local level planning at district level comes under the Department of Planning, the same emphasis (at least in documentation) on community participation can be seen in proposals for involvement of communities in planning, management, and monitoring and evaluation of service delivery at the grass roots level through Village Education Councils and Citizen Community Boards while the role of School Management Committees includes monitoring teacher absenteeism, providing information about students and disbursing funds for repair and consumable items.

In summary, in policy documents, community participation in Pakistan includes such things as involvement in selection of school sites, monitoring school construction, involvement in allocation of funds for repairs and consumables, monitoring teacher attendance, and providing student-information. How this will be done is not specific in policy documents and is determined at various levels: provincial, district, union/village. At the local level, school committees for men/women are seen as important in achieving real representation of the community. What is missing from policy documents (designed at national level) is mention of traditional leaders, though they may be important members of Village and Union or Local Councils.

<sup>4</sup> World Bank, *Improving Basic Education in Pakistan: Community Participation, System Accountability, and Efficiency*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1996

<sup>5</sup> Asian Development Bank, *Second Girls Primary School Sector Project*. Manila: Asian Development Bank, 1996

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Education, *National Education Policy 1998-2001*. Islamabad: MoE, Government of Pakistan, 2001

## Yemen

Yemen too, follows a decentralisation strategy enshrined in the 2000 Local Administration Law. Boase<sup>7</sup> explains that the challenge for the Government and Yemeni people is to transform a centralized, top-down, command and control style of government into a decentralized, participatory, bottom-up, service-oriented style of government implied by the new Law. Decentralisation, linked to good governance includes as one of its key objectives 'popular participation in the country's governance.' This means a complete paradigm change. While decentralization seems to have much to offer Yemen, there is another side to it which is important in the discussion of conflict. Decentralization changes traditional roles and relationships, which means it is important that institutions and management at all levels understand and accept the changes implied, otherwise, conflict could be an unwelcome outcome.

Paralleling this, the *National Strategy for Development of Basic Education*<sup>8</sup> (BEDS) sees community participation as part of the axis of an education reform strategy. Development of BEDS is acknowledged as successful because its participatory methodology included stakeholders from the provincial level, producing ownership, legitimacy and broad acceptance in the civil society, and laying the basis for smooth implementation. Participatory initiatives are encouraged so that NGOs, women's associations, teachers unions, local communities, parents councils, and representatives of Local Councils are included at all stages of local level implementation.

BEDS refers to the establishment of Fathers' and Mothers' Councils, the establishment of Community Participation Units at the MoE head office and in Education Offices in Governorates, and training programs in social work/community development for selected educators and parents. As Braun<sup>9</sup> explains, despite the involvement of educational planners in the development of the national policy in the past, 'the traditional top-down education policy in Yemen was nothing more than case-to-case and short-term crisis management. Remote from the real world of the pupils, teachers and parents... [it led to] more problems than it solved. This included uncoordinated school-building, curricula determined by outsiders, de-motivated teachers, poorly paid administrators and a growing number of illiterates, mainly girls.'

<sup>7</sup> Boase, B., *The Path Toward Local Administration For the Republic of Yemen*. Sana'a: UNDP and Government of Yemen, 2001

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Education, Yemen, *National Strategy for Development of Basic Education in the Republic of Yemen 2003-2015*. Sana'a: Republic of Yemen, MoE, n.d., pp. 83-84

<sup>9</sup> Braun, G., "Participation as a Process: A Successful Story of the Education System in Yemen", *Magazine for Development and Cooperation*, 5 (2003), pp. 188-191

A Ministerial Decree promulgated in 2002 outlined in detail the regulations for establishing Fathers' and Mothers' Councils<sup>10</sup> to enable community participation in local education. The objectives of such participation includes selection of sites for schools, provision of classrooms, maintenance of buildings, furniture and equipment, as well as broader functions related to the day-to-day running of schools. Personal interviews with Mothers' Council members in Yareem District (Ibb Governorate) highlighted their successful interaction with the local women's association:

We didn't have a Mothers' Council and people would not accept the idea, so the social workers started with activities such as literacy classes, handicrafts and sewing for women. Eventually women saw what was offered and came. The activities were important for starting the Mothers' Council... Teachers started to talk with mothers to tell them how important Mothers' Councils are... that mothers are closer to school than fathers. They encouraged them to come, especially those women who came to the school a lot... We talk with people on social occasions and have contacted the health officer to come... We have a health room and a woman responsible for health. She got a group of students to contact other students on all things related to health... Mothers try to visit students who finish school but don't go on to improve their skills. They need not just stay at home... The main reasons families don't send girls to school are economic but Mothers' Councils really help poor people. They tell people to enroll daughters and cover costs informally.

In summary, community participation in education includes the involvement of the community in selecting school sites and monitoring and building school buildings, and establishing Mothers' and Fathers' Councils whose duties are to monitor teacher attendance, care for school facilities and assist needy children. The role and duties of new social workers described elsewhere are linked with community participation in areas of enrolment, attendance and drop-out. With parents' councils they are seen as important in achieving real representation of communities and improving school life.

As with the Pakistan policy, what is missing from policy documentation in Yemen is discussion of the role of traditional leaders. Certainly no mention is made of conflict issues in either country. Examination of conflict in the NWFP and Marib Governorate sets the scene for the final sections of this paper, and considers difficulties encountered, lessons learnt, and strategies which may be viable.

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<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Education, Yemen, *Ministerial Decree No 103, 2002 Regarding Implementation of the Regulation for Fathers' - Mothers' Councils*. Sana'a: MoE, Minister's Office, 2002

## Conflict issues and relationships in tribal areas of Pakistan and Yemen

The North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan and Marib Governorate in Yemen are key areas for development activities. They are strategic areas, 'underdeveloped', and affected by various dimensions of conflict. Both NWFP and Marib are areas where participation in education and other development sectors is now encouraged. Both regions, particularly NWFP, have had large numbers of the male population working outside the region, many in the Gulf States. In Yemen, this situation changed drastically after the first Gulf War when many contracts were suspended because of Yemen's opposition to US intervention in the Iraq-Kuwait affair. For both however, the employment market is gradually drying up as oil reserves become depleted and Gulf countries increasingly use their own population to do work done by regional workers. Thus, poverty in the region has exacerbated.

Pakistan and Yemen are no strangers to political and often violent change. Both countries have areas which traditionally had, and continue to have, strong tribal rule, especially in Marib and 'frontier' regions like NWFP. To some extent this has ensured a degree of feudal protection to people within tribal clans (or *qabili* in Yemen), though it can also be seen as an important element in the conflict question. At the same time, people are generally poor (though theoretically, in Marib, oil drilling could improve things), and have less access to resources and infrastructure such as schools and clinics, roads, electricity and water than other parts of the country. Because they are tribal areas, both have some degree of semi-autonomous rule, (actually if not officially), and resist or cooperate with central government 'machinery' sporadically, bringing a whole new meaning to policies promoting decentralisation.

As discussed more in the following section, these tribal areas have a special culture of justice, and retribution or revenge killing and feuding can last for generations – something which negatively affects development activities. To do real justice to the complex conflict environment in these areas, is beyond the scope of this paper but an overview of the key issues is presented to set community participation in context.

### Pakistan: The North West Frontier Province

Although NWFP has full legal and political status as part of Pakistan, it is administered as two units – the Settled Areas (capital Peshawar), and Federally Administered Tribal Agencies (FATA) where tribal law is of paramount importance. The latter operates independently and outside the legal jurisdiction of the provincial and national government (though recent

movement of Pakistan's army into FATA in search of al-Qaida has set a new precedent). The tribal belt of NWFP forms a porous border with Afghanistan. The inhabitants are predominantly Pukhtun, sharing a common language and culture with much of eastern Afghanistan. Thus, the Pukhtun population on both sides of the border, need to be seen as an entity rather than as two nationalities separated by different governments and laws.

A Pukhtun, whether he is living in the Pukhtun areas or not, speaking Pukhto or not, is one who can trace his lineage through his father's line to one of the Pukhtun tribes and in turn to an original ancestor. A tribesman, however, is one who in addition, maintains contact with kin in the tribal Agency, speaks Pukhto, lives *Pukhtunwali* (the Pukhtun way) and adheres to a form of political organization and common religion.<sup>11</sup> In Settled Areas, land remains mainly in the hands of Pukhtun landholders (*khans*). Small, local chiefs (*maliks*) in FATA function somewhat more like sheikhs in Yemen.

### *Local conflicts*

Conflicts in the Frontier have traditionally centred around issues of land ownership and 'honour' (especially of their women). For decades, much conflict which has occurred in the Frontier was a matter of communities supporting their chief against another tribe and its leader who had taken or was about to take something belonging to them. In such situations a tribal *jirga* or assembly of elders is called to mediate or decide specific issues when parties are in conflict or where there are official disputes in the Agencies. While Gardezi<sup>12</sup> speaks of tribal *jirga* colonized to become an instrument of powerful tribal leaders, Ahmed<sup>13</sup> (a former Political Agent) describes it as crucial in ordering society and preventing it collapsing into anarchy. Like Yemen, feuds and revenge killing between clans and individual families can be kept alive for decades. As with Yemen, kidnap has intermittently been used (often effectively) in parts of the Frontier to draw attention to demands, especially political issues.

<sup>11</sup> Ahmed, A. S., *Pukhtun Economy and Society: Traditional Structure and Economic Development in a Tribal Society*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980

<sup>12</sup> Gardezi, H. N., 'Feudal and Capitalist Relations in Pakistan', in H. Gardezi and J. Rashid (eds), *Pakistan, the Roots of Dictatorship: The Political Economy of a Praetorian State*. London: Zed Press, 1983, pp. 353-366

<sup>13</sup> Ahmed, A. S., *Pukhtun Economy and Society: Traditional Structure and Economic Development in a Tribal Society*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980, p. 90

### *Conflict between central government and tribal agencies*

Conflict between the central government and tribal areas in particular, is periodically heightened by various types of political interference, whether by Political Agents or by favouritism to particular *maliks* with provision of facilities such as schools, roads, or clinics. When some *maliks* and their people receive a greater share of resources than others, the conflict scenario becomes even more sensitive.

For decades, the cause (or excuse) for volatile conflict between the government and areas within the tribal belt has also centred around opium poppy growing, where periodic government-grower clashes result in deaths and bulldozing of homes or 'heroin factories'. Armed conflict between Frontier Pukhtuns and government troops have more than once led to a back-off from the government side.

There have been examples of total communities in the Frontier fighting against what they saw as exploitation and domination. In the 1980s the whole of the Frontier population seemed to rally around the Mardan and Nowshera District people when the government (and thus Punjab interests) reported that building the Kalabagh Dam for hydroelectricity would go ahead, flooding villages, dispossessing villagers, and robbing people of the most fertile land in the province. Opposition halted plans.

### *Conflict from outside*

Another dimension of conflict with central government has seen growing momentum over the past few decades, where men from NWFP (particularly tribal areas) have been involved in the political situation in Afghanistan, fighting with their 'brother' *mujahideen* against Russian and Russian-backed government forces. Older calls for a common homeland of Afghan and Pakistani Pukhtuns in *Pukhtunistan*<sup>14</sup> [intermittently raised in local media and on the internet] have made way for other types of relationships. Links with Taliban or support of al-Qaida have been publicised, particularly by the western media, reinforcing a view that Osama bin Laden has been given refuge in the Frontier region.

In May 2003, there was a radical shift in this largely autonomous area when, for the first time, the Pakistan army deployed thousands of troops in the tribal agencies (presumably) to clear out remnants of Taliban using the

<sup>14</sup> Jones, A. M. E., *Educational Planning in a Frontier Zone: Dependence, Domination and Legitimacy*. Aldershot: Avebury, 1993, p. 49

2,000 km Pak-Afghan border as an escape route. In June 2005 Afghanistan media<sup>15</sup> reported:

Another wave of distrust, blame and counter blame started between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Afghan and coalition forces spokesmen from one side and Pakistani officials from the other blamed each other for cross border infiltration of violent militants... Pakistani authorities themselves disclosed that South Waziristan was converted into a strong base of the Taliban and Al Qaida... In fact, Pakistan and Afghanistan do not have any actual border and it is open for anybody at any time. The movement of militants across the borders is as simple as any ordinary man. Even it is witnessed that hundreds of heavily armed militants cross the border to and from.

This leads to a new consideration of conflict in NWFP, an area where traditionally, strangers were assured of hospitality (*melmastia*) and refuge, at least in the household or on tribal land - a point of Pukhtun honour (*izzat*).

### Yemen: Marib Governorate

Tribes in Marib pre-date the arrival of Islam but over several decades now, Marib society has changed from nomadic to settled communities, with most people making a living from livestock farming, agriculture and trade. As in NWFP, some illegal trade or smuggling occurs in regions with looser borders. Marib's position, relatively close to Saudi Arabia, has created strong links with tribal leaders and the Saudi authority and its financial and political support.

Tribes are political and social units, sometimes consisting of only a few families. While the relationship between them is usually peaceful, disputes or conflicts are usually over resources such as water and land. The many levels of conflict operating in Marib are complex, interlinked and multi-layered, and rooted in political, social and economic issues, internal and local, as well as external, regional and international.<sup>16</sup>

#### *Local conflicts*

In many respects, the conflict scene in Yemen, particularly in Marib governorate, is similar to NWFP. Reasons for tribal clashes include marital rows between tribes, and material disputes, especially over land and water. Tribal clashes (*thar*) also involve vendetta and blood-revenge, and (as in NWFP) can last

<sup>15</sup> Daily Outlook Afghanistan, *Terrorists: Their origin and control*, 23 June 2005, p. 2

<sup>16</sup> Darweish, M. and Hofheinz, A., *Analysis of Peace and Conflict Potential in Yemen*. Birmingham: Responding To Conflict, 2002, p. 13

for years, destabilising whole areas, though usually limited to time and place. Other factors may include status, honour and obligations due to tribal values, e.g., the protection of people seeking refuge in the tribe. In fact, economics play a major role in tribal conflicts.

Disputes within tribes, between tribes, and between tribes and the central government have long been a common feature in Marib as well as in other tribal areas in Yemen.<sup>17</sup> Weapon ownership in Marib is the highest in Yemen<sup>18</sup> with Marib men averaging three weapons each. In principle, however, tribal conflicts are resolved by mediation, with compensation determined by tribal customary law (*urf*).

### *Conflict between central government and tribes*

Throughout Yemen, tribal conflicts often serve as proxies for disputes over distribution of scarce resources, for as the International Crisis Group Report explains a principal source of tension in tribal areas is the perception of huge disparities in income, and unequal distribution of resources and benefits emanating from development projects.<sup>19</sup> In Marib, a constantly expressed source of frustration is the lack of basic infrastructure and that local people do not receive a fair share of the income generated from oil extraction from their land. Hence the ongoing destruction of oil pipelines in the governorate. In 1999 for instance, the oil pipeline in Marib was blown up 39 times (though only reported 4 times in the national media).

At the same time, while Marib tribal people complain that the government tends to favour tribes who are in its 'good graces' (as do some Pukhtun clans in NWFP), many central government figures react with negative perceptions of the social hierarchy and traditional structures in Marib.<sup>20</sup> As in NWFP, demands Marib tribes have for services and resources from the central government have required reciprocal cooperation.

A further politicization of tribal conflict was best illustrated around the time of the 1993 and 1997 parliamentary elections, and the 2001 local

<sup>17</sup> See International Crisis Group, *Yemen: Coping with Terrorism and Violence in a Fragile State: Middle East Report No. 8*. Amman/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2003, p. 13; Al-Zaidi, H., 'Political Dimension of Tribal Revenge', *Yemen Times*, 10 September 2000, p. 1

<sup>18</sup> Miller, D., *Demand, Stockpiles and Social Control: Small Arms in Yemen*. Geneva: Small Arms Survey, Graduate Institute of International Studies, 2003

<sup>19</sup> International Crisis Group, *Yemen: Coping with Terrorism and Violence in a Fragile State: Middle East Report No.8*. Amman/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2003, p. 15

<sup>20</sup> Darweish, M. and Hofheinz, A., *Analysis of Peace and Conflict Potential in Yemen*. Birmingham: Responding To Conflict, 2002, p. 19

elections. In Marib local councils and heads of councils expressed concern about the government trying to block the functioning of elected councils, thus preventing them from acting as agents of development and change in their community, which 'without a doubt will escalate the conflict and feeling of frustration and anger towards the government.'<sup>21</sup>

### *Conflict from outside*

It is hard to know where to draw the line between local tribal grievances about unequal distribution of benefits and resources and demands for employment, and 'external' involvement. For example, the 2001 kidnap of a foreign diplomat (taken to Sirwah in Marib) was ostensibly for financial reasons, though at least one of those responsible was a member of the Islamic Jihad Movement [which declared it had no part in the kidnapping] and was subsequently accused of being a member of al-Qaida.

What has been documented elsewhere more extensively, is that when suspected al-Qaida members took refuge in the governorates of Marib, al-Jawf and Shabwa, the government, prompted by U.S. demands to act against al-Qaida, dispatched the military to arrest them.<sup>22</sup> In the huge conflict which involved government forces and aeroplanes on one side, and Abida (in Marib) tribesmen on the other, 24 soldiers, tribesmen and women were killed in one day (and 23 soldiers taken hostage with their equipment confiscated). Tribal sheikhs arranged the ceasefire with the military command in Marib, and although arrested soldiers were handed over, the government increased its military presence in Marib and Shabwa governorates. Through this brief overview one sees that conflict dimensions have clearly taken on an international perspective allowing the CIA, in November 2002, to carry out an attack in Marib from an unmanned plane which killed six suspected members of al-Qaida network. Clearly, NWFP and Marib are fragile areas when it comes to conflict.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> International Crisis Group, *Yemen: Coping with Terrorism and Violence in a Fragile State: Middle East Report No.8*. Amman/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2003, p. 20

## **Community participation in education in tribal areas in Pakistan and Yemen**

So, how does community participation in education function in hierarchically organised, societies and conflict situations where tribal networks and power are more important than impositions of a central government? This is part of a bigger study but for present purposes, a snapshot is presented to show what happens within the area of community involvement in education in NWFP and Marib.

Some political dimensions of community participation are considered, with lessons learnt from NWFP presented as a possible yardstick for Marib governorate. Who the key players in the community are, will be largely determined by tribal values and affiliations rather than demographic boundaries. This has important implications because if tribal territories are not geographically aligned with government district borders, and if several tribal groups compete for resources within a given region, community involvement in development activities is likely to be affected? So questions rarely asked but key to real participation are: who is the community, who speaks on its behalf, and which leader is acceptable to government officials, and, where is the voice of women in this?

### **Yemen**

#### *The community and education*

As outlined earlier, community participation in education policy is new for Yemen, and as Marib has not yet formed Mothers' and Fathers' Councils in its schools, nor established Community Participation Units or appointed 'social workers' at provincial or district, or school level, community involvement in the government education structure could be said to be non-existent. Local Councils officially established in 2001 are not fully operational, and their role in regard to education is unclear. In any case, local sheikhs are often members of Local Councils so the distinction between traditional power elites and government bureaucracy is often weak at local levels.

Parents' councils are seen as integral to the process of school-site election, construction, school maintenance and improvement, though where schools have been established by the MoE in Marib, generally the local community has not been crucial to decision-making. However, there have been some attempts by other agencies such as the Social Fund for Development, to respond to local communities' requests for schools by involving men and women in meetings to decide where construction should occur. In Marib,

shortage of schools has not been the only problem though, for often schools have been built and remain empty – one indication of local communities not being involved in site selection. Certainly site selection is important, highlighted by responses in a fieldwork meeting where two members of the Provincial Education Office (PEO) said that communities could not be involved in school mapping because the PEO had its own criteria. Clearly there was a different understanding of school mapping and no understanding of the purpose or role of the local community in selecting ‘their’ site for ‘their’ school. This suggests there is a long way to go before education officials and communities understand and develop a sense of ownership for their schools.

Field work in Marib saw schools built for little more than a few families, where petty conflicts prevented families sending their children to schools in villages outside the safety of their own lands. What this has meant is over-supply of school buildings in some areas, and underutilization of schools in others. One male teacher explained that he had a (multigrade) school population of ten in 2003 because a small number of local families (a ‘community’) had built their own school and insisted on the local district education office allocating a teaching position. He spoke of cases where *bedouin* families had a government teacher whom they saw as ‘theirs’, who, under threat to his life, had to remain with them when they moved location. Even if these are selected cases (though they were far from uncommon in Marib), it becomes clear that ‘community’ and their needs/wants means many different things, which can create problems in a nomadic and/or tribal situation.

It is clear to donors and the MoE that before more buildings are constructed, Mothers’ and Fathers’ Councils should be established so that they can be involved at all stages including site selection, ongoing maintenance, and broad support of the school. Certainly the new guidelines for parents councils sees their role as far more than financial but there is a great distance to travel before that becomes reality in Marib. While involvement of communities in day-to-day school life is yet to be examined in Marib though theoretically, as in Pakistan, parents are encouraged to monitor and support teachers and teaching-learning in schools. Establishing and mobilising Mothers’ Councils is most likely to help ensure girls’ participation in education.

Though the new National Strategy for Development of Basic Education (BEDS) has formally recognized community participation in education, it was not entirely new for communities to build their own school. In Marib this included building and extending *adobe* and stone classrooms, though often using make-shift huts with little more than branches of trees as frames and tin or plastic sheeting as cover. However, ongoing maintenance was not readily evident in field work. In many government built girls’ schools visited, toilets were unusable, and in one case, locked permanently by the male school manager, though the teachers did not know why. In another, teachers reported

the antithesis of community participation where, as well as broken and blocked toilets, 'a rich man nearby takes the water from our school and says he uses it for his (private) hospital – he says so but we don't believe it. He sells us a tank of water which lasts one day for YR 200.'

In Marib most schools were generally under-utilized for other community purposes. Many parents asked for separate schools for girls, while at the same time schools were empty all afternoon. Women talked of problems they had finding facilities for adult literacy classes in Marib *medina*, while the primary school nearby stood unused for half the day. On the whole, schools could be described as islands in the local environment, sometimes a distance from the village, sometimes in the heart of the village but not seen as a centre to be utilised by the community. There seemed to be little concern with the school environment. The idea of community 'ownership' of schools is something which seems to have been lost with MoE built schools.

#### *Who speaks for the community?*

This brings us to another question, 'who is the community'? In Marib traditional networks are still largely in place. Sheikhs are of paramount importance in this feudal society. A system of patronage continues, with the local sheikh 'caring' for and protecting his people. This includes getting them schools (generally for boys) and pressuring the government for teachers (male). Girls' education has not figured prominently in this. In some cases, the government has tried to work with some sheikhs but the situation is that in many areas in this governorate, sheikhs are the ultimate authority, whether as part of the government machinery i.e., with Local Councils, or by 'influencing' council members and government officers at different levels. Their influence is strong. For example, when this writer and her local female companion visited one district in Marib (renowned for its use of kidnap to gain attention to needs), it was arranged with full agreement and assurance of protection by the most influential and powerful sheikh of the region. Though not evident, it was later disclosed that men watched from hilltops to make sure that nothing happened while traveling overland across the district. On another occasion, the researcher was notified that one sheikh was 'unhappy' and insisted that his area must be visited so he could explain their situation. The sheikh's presence at all meetings showed his determination. His word was the community's word. He cared for them and would make sure that this happened in his area.

For planners in such situations, it becomes important to consider priorities – construct and appoint for one, or construct and appoint for all more or less at the same time to avoid reaction and conflict from those who see their

needs/wants ignored. As one might put it, the sheikh's power operates right up to the school boundary-wall, only inside is the government in charge. Even then, this could be challenged because what happens in tribal areas even affects students and teacher attendance.

A UNDP report<sup>23</sup> notes well that 'tribal behaviour can be a force either for or against decentralization. The challenge for government then becomes one of maximizing the contribution of tribes while minimizing the dysfunctional side of tribal behaviour. Tribal leaders must be made to understand their role in building the Yemeni state.' This is more difficult than it sounds. Managing expectations in Marib essentially means dealing with sheikhs because in the end, they operate in a patronage situation. Their word is final in their area. They protect and provide and in return, people owe their allegiance. Therefore when speaking of 'community' in this scenario, one might see the ultimate voice of the community as that of the sheikh. People can develop unrealistic expectations of what decentralization and participation can deliver and then turn against it when confronted with its long term nature. Decentralization changes traditional roles and relationships, so it is important that institutions, managers and leaders at different levels understand and accept the changes implied otherwise, conflict may ensue, jeopardizing further planning.

The situation in Marib is not simple. Awareness-raising regarding roles and responsibilities will be an essential part of community participation. There will need to be relevant training for staff involved with Mothers' and Fathers' Councils, and though Local Council roles are still unclear, their members should be included in training/awareness-raising activities as much as possible, so their capacity is built for involvement in all new education projects and infrastructure. If Community Participation Units are established in all governorates with coordinators at district level, they could work more closely with school social workers and women's groups at village level.

If traditional leaders see that their power is diminished through decentralization plans, one could question whether community participation will be possible. Each situation will have to be treated differently. No single model can exist for all areas. This seems particularly true in Marib, yet it is not an insurmountable hurdle. The question is: what will this community participation mean and who will be involved? Can the 'small' voices and the voices of women be heard? Several Marib women educators in interviews doubted that Mothers' Councils could work there. The decentralisation policy and community participation in education is new. Further research needs to focus

<sup>23</sup> Boase, B., *The Path Toward Local Administration for the Republic of Yemen*. Sana'a: UNDP and Government of Yemen, 2001, p. 5

specifically on the role of sheiks in this strategy. Local elites can be a force *for* or a force *against* community participation. If they see themselves included rather than ostracised or bypassed in government planning, then they can be part of and encourage community participation. In NWFP (discussed below), this has a negative side, as tribal leaders are either pro-government, or maintain their independence. This needs to be considered carefully in the Marib environment, complex and all as it is.

## **Pakistan**

### *The community and education*

In Pakistan, documentation about decentralization and community participation in education reads not unlike that of Yemen. School Management Committees 'provide general support for maintenance of school facilities, monitoring of teachers and checking absenteeism' and Citizen Community Board representatives should mobilize resources to improve schools or 'voice community concerns to local government.'<sup>24</sup> However, though Pakistan has officially incorporated community participation into education for decades, power relationships still play an important role but are largely unacknowledged in official government development strategies. Certainly conflict issues in Pakistan rarely warrant mention in planning documents. The following section therefore, describes more informal decision-making procedures in NWFP.

In NWFP, perceptions differ as to who has actual authority for educational planning. Councillors say that they take the initiative. Education Officers argue differently, and often voice dissatisfaction with any involvement of local council members in educational matters, particularly in relation to resources, appointments and transfer of teachers and decisions about the establishment of schools.

Other areas in which the community 'participates' in education include the upkeep of schools, discipline matters, teacher appointment and absenteeism, lack of water and heating. Certainly contradictions between decentralisation policies, even when they affected education and implementation of programs could be seen in NWFP. Though senior education officials are aware of community criticisms of local government involvement in educational matters and of political motivation behind decision-making, radical change seems unlikely in this tight social/tribal network.

<sup>24</sup> Shah, D., *Decentralisation in the Education System of Pakistan: Policies and Strategies*. Islamabad: Academy of Education Planning and Management, MoE, Government of Pakistan, 2003

*Who speaks for the community?*

In both the Settled Areas and the Tribal Areas of NWFP, informal meetings of men are held daily in the village *hujra* - the male meeting house (traditionally the travellers' rest house) central to the male *Pukhtun* community life. Information and ideas circulate informally as men relax together. If formal meetings are called, the time is set and villagers are invited to their own *hujra* or local government office as appropriate. Here proposals may be made regarding establishment of schools or other educational matters. Results are then taken up at the district level where the District Education Officer (DEO) and district council formalise matters. This is not formally described in government documentation about educational planning. *Jirga* councils can meet to decide on matters where conflict is involved, though it is not usual that this concerns education, other than where a dispute over land is the issue.

As noted earlier in regard to Yemen, in NWFP it is recognised that involvement of *maliks* and *khans* in decision-making is used by the government to gain support. Support by tribal leaders in turn, strengthens government positions, and at the same time can entrench the interests of traditional power-holders. For instance, in FATA, the role of Political Agents (government appointed politico-legal administrators, often men with military backgrounds) was highlighted. Planning officers from the provincial Planning Cell emphasized the role of Political Agents in the decision-making process, calling them 'the big guns', saying that as far as they were concerned, Political Agents were the ruling, controlling factors in tribal agencies, though none of this figures in government documentation about educational planning. As one senior official described it, Political Agents approve facilities for *maliks* and so control an Agency. In NWFP interviews, first with a Tribal Agency education inspector and later with a Political Agent, the situation was clearly portrayed:

There may be more than one school in an area or village. They consider if the local 'malik' is pro or anti the government. They think whether he can influence the people or not and then decide whether he should have a school before some others...The 'maliks' approach the political agent... [and] if a man is useful to us, we will keep him happy and keep him on side. The way to do this may be to give him a school if he has asked for it, in preference to someone else. These people do the work for us so we favour them to keep them happy... maliks are part of the government machinery. They control the tribes and keep in the right way and on the path we want. We work hand in hand.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Jones, A. M. E., *Community, Control and Change: Asia-Pacific Experiences in Community Development and Adult Education*. Aldershot: Avebury, 1995, p. 67

Criticism of the power-hold of *maliks* and Political Agents in Tribal Areas was much the same as that leveled against *khans* (landowners) in Settled Areas. *Khans* tended to be local councilors and *khanism* (control by feudal landowners) was said to be returning. In reply, Union Councillors (at the lowest level of government administration) presented themselves as genuinely concerned with the problems of villagers but powerless to change the state of poverty and 'corruption'.

From one perspective it would appear that the establishment of schools in Tribal Areas at least, was tantamount to increasing the power of *maliks*. In the Frontier, schools were also seen to be (in fact though not officially) the property of the *maliks* (a concern expressed in Marib) and the establishment of schools at the demand of certain local leaders. This coupled with the status of being considered a 'government *malik*' (since not all were) was a considerable benefit.

While it could be argued that these people are representatives of the local community, by offering land and their support to the government, *maliks* and *khans* actually gain prestige and indirectly, financial benefits (e.g., commissions from contractors building schools). This can then further entrench positions of control and power. In NWFP, when education officials spoke of going to the people, and carrying out the desires of the people, it became increasingly obvious that this meant going to *maliks* and *khans*, Political Agents, and sometimes, local government members 'linked' to government bureaucracy. Whatever the will of the people, it was clear that power-holders were likely to gain most, and participation tied to the whole system of patriarchy.

In tribal areas of neighbouring Balochistan, the situation is more or less the same. Two cases presented here highlight the role of local leaders in supporting or opposing community participation in education.<sup>26</sup> *Jaffarabad District* is a feudal and an ethnically and tribally heterogeneous area where politics is linked so closely with elites and landowners (*zamindari*) that political parties are virtually irrelevant. While the male landowners are educated, their labourers are not.

In one Village Education Committee (VEC), a woman teacher updates VEC on student attendance so that VEC members visit parents, encouraging them to send children to school. She teaches VEC members to write their own names, so they can check attendance registers. The DEO has set up its

<sup>26</sup> Hatfield, R., *Management Reform in a Centralized Environment: Primary Education in Balochistan, Pakistan*. London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2001, p. 150 ff.

own teacher-mentoring program with volunteer help, and women Education Officers coordinate with local NGOs to promote girls' education:

The NGOs come and see the whole process through... there is a survey of the whole village in which they see what is the number of girls and whether a school can be opened. They come and tell me there are 50 girls there who want to go to schools. Then we take the teacher's test [local woman] and if she passes we say OK, otherwise we give her a chance for one or two months.

Mothers said that their role in the committee was keeping children healthy and accompanying them to school, though the Pukhtun women complained that they had done their part by sending children to school and that the rest was up to the government and teachers. On the other hand, Parent Teacher School Management Committees (PTSMC) in Jaffarabad carried out activities such as installing pumps for drinking water, building shelters and barrier walls, whitewashing, and paving mud rooves. However, although these local committees did 'outside work' for the school, they had little power in the actual management or 'ownership' of their school.

*Barkan District* is also a tribal territory with some Pukhtun heritage. The political organization of the tribal system is built on hereditary authority and personal bonds of allegiance. Most people are involved in agriculture and animal husbandry but land holdings are few because of the law of inheritance – thus land is less profitable for cultivation. Male monopoly of power is common and local chiefs/tribal authorities form *jirgas* to resolve certain conflicts. The incidence of child labour is high, especially because of few educational opportunities. In one PTSMC report, it was noted that Barkan people were more interested in getting schools built for 'personal reasons'<sup>27</sup>, and a female education officer reported that tribal heads (*waderas*) took the keys of the school, and her only access to 'government property' was through tribal leaders. Furthermore, it was reported that teachers' associations were rejecting the establishment of PTSMCs, with the Teachers' Union threatening education officers to stop this development, and distributing circulars to teachers not to co-operate with PTSMC facilitators. One Teacher's Union representative explained:

The government teachers also opposed these PTSMCs. In our opinion it was a waste of time and money... there is no need to set up an extra body... there is local politics prevailing in the area, if someone has personal differences with the teacher he will complain against the teacher. The committee members were only on paper, actually they did not work.

Committees were rendered helpless, and there was no sign of progress. Lack of financial support was cited as a key factor, because pressure was placed

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213

on the government to channel funds through provincial education officers and head-teachers, not through PTSMCs. *Waderas* complained to education officers that money would not be used for the benefit of schools, and without funding and instructions about how to handle the management of schools, members were helpless. District Education Officers (DEOs) were not interested in developing PTSMCs for fear of local political repercussions. In this environment, *waderas* and the teachers' union (not 'community') clearly controlled educational developments.

What we can conclude from this is that while pro-government *maliks* and *khans* in NWFP and *sardars/waderas* in Balochistan manage to get schools and facilities for their local communities, it does not necessarily follow that all parts of the community, especially the poorest and women, participate or have their educational needs addressed, especially in areas where education for girls and women is disregarded. On the other hand, one could argue that there is little interest from some *maliks* to accept government infrastructure if it means losing autonomy or control, especially since the central government continues to be viewed with suspicion, not least over its official pro-US or anti-Taliban policy. In all, community participation needs to be re-examined in terms of decentralization and conflict.

## Conclusion

Community participation in education cannot solve the conflicts afflicting NWFP and Marib. The situation in both areas is complex and born outside the sphere of education. To some extent, communities and their leaders in both regions discussed in this paper, have problems with the central government. Provincial administration is often viewed as the lackey of the national government. Though district administrators are much closer to local communities and their needs, they are often tied into the complex web of family, tribal and patronage relationships (and conflict) which compromise their ability in making independent, objective and fair decisions.

In NWFP, authority in decision-making rests with government officials wielding some degree of political power. Local decisions affect electoral results. Decisions mean the use of facilities and other 'fringe benefits' if councillors decide in favour of the local elites. Councillors are assured of power and promotion if their areas are perceived as calm, subdued and complying with the central government. Conflict (or lack of it) affects people politically as well as socially and economically. *Maliks* and *khans* in NWFP and sheikhs in Marib who support government machinery and structures, may

be assured of government support, in terms of facilities (though it is not clear that this operates in Marib the same way that it does in NWFP).

In the case of NWFP and Balochistan it could be argued that participation in educational decision-making actually strengthened the power-hold of the status quo elites, both indigenous and government. Involvement or 'participation' of local political representatives or local power elites does not actually increase the participation or awareness of local people in educational decision-making. One might even argue that 'ordinary people' have little voice or chance to be really involved and are prohibited from alternative or participatory behaviour.

In all of this, several questions remain. One might question whether a policy of participation is a structural innovation to ensure government control and penetration into strategic areas such as those described in this paper. This poses real challenges for planners at all levels – both for Marib Governorate in Yemen as well as Pakistan's NWFP. Dickson<sup>28</sup> has written that 'participation can be used to contain the inherent conflicts between those in authority and those subject to dominance.' Confronted with conflict on many different levels in these tribal areas, planners might ask 'who participates, to what end, and for whose benefit?' The authority of central governments (seen to represent foreign interests) is confronted by the power of indigenous, local leaders - patrons and protectors in classic feudal relationships.

Finally, one could ask what type of community participation is possible in areas with complex conflict situations such as these, assuming that community participation demands some form of 'democracy'. Can community participation be developed so that it becomes a catalyst for peace? Where do traditional leaders with powerful positions stand in all of this? The challenge for planners is how to influence attitudes and bring 'paradigm change' rather than attempting force and imposition of strategies from the outside which dooms innovations to failure – and the question is – when?

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<sup>28</sup> Dickson, J. W., 'Participation as a Means of Organizational Control', *Journal of Management Studies*, 18, 2 (1981), pp. 159–76