

BACKGROUND ON BALUCHISTAN

Introduction

This study analyses the process of rural development in Baluchistan in the context of the Pak-German Self-Help Project. The study was commissioned by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) with the purpose of examining the impact of rural development programmes on sustainable resource management. ICIMOD is particularly interested in exploring aspects of resource management systems and community organisation.

Most rural development programmes in the region are linked to the elected local government institutions. Emphasis is on community participation in identifying problems and proposing solutions to them. The objectives of these programmes are concerned with building and strengthening village institutions and popular participation at the grass roots' level so that, with external assistance, local resources can be better used and sustained. Communities are encouraged to identify, plan, and implement schemes to tackle their problems.

In order to facilitate this approach of development from below, appropriate institutions need to be mobilised and programmes established based upon sound environmental management and efficient use of local resources with the long term aim of improving the quality of life in rural areas. Accordingly, it is essential to examine the objectives of rural development projects, their implementation, intervention, and impacts at the village level; especially in respect of resource management systems.

These questions are of special importance to the Pak-German Self-Help Project (henceforth called the Project). The basic objective of the Project is to improve the socioeconomic conditions of the rural poor in selected union councils of Baluchistan by better use of local resources. The Project tries to develop self-help potentials in order to enable villagers to identify their problems and solve them through community action. The Project recognises that development which can be accomplished with the participation of the community, and its various social and economic interest groups, can be sustainable. To facilitate popular participation in the development process, the Project pursues the strategy of self-help to mobilise resources within the society, and organises village-level self-help groups as a foundation for self-sustained development activities leading to self-reliance.

In Baluchistan, prime importance is given to the fulfillment of basic needs such as food and shelter. Previous development programmes, implemented by the Government, attempted to improve the quality of life in rural areas, but they were unable to reach the rural poor in Baluchistan to any significant degree. Their effectiveness was hampered by centralisation, by tight bureaucratic controls, and by their inability to alter the hierarchical and authoritarian structure of rural society.

In view of all these past experiences, the Project tried to establish a broad-based self-help group in the villages, the Village Organisation (VO), as an institution providing an independent forum for exchanging ideas about village problems and development prospects. With the cooperation and support of the Project, it is expected that the VOs should be able to improve the management of local resources to meet their basic needs and establish a basis for self-reliance.

The Study Area

The Province of Baluchistan, in southwestern Pakistan, is the largest province in the country, with a total area of 347,190 km² (43.6 per cent of the total area). It is the least populated province, with 4.3 million inhabitants in 1981 (5.1 per cent of the national total). About 15 per cent of its population live in urban areas, mainly in Quetta city, and 85 per cent live in 6,111 villages, of which only 57 villages have a population of over 5,000. Most of the villages (84 per cent) have a population of less than 1,000. The overall density of the population is 12.5/km². A large number of extremely small villages are scattered throughout the vast desert and mountainous area (See Table 1). The difficulty of the terrain and the scattered settlement pattern make the development and maintenance of communication, infrastructure, and social services extremely difficult and expensive.

Baluchistan, is bordered by the Province of Sindh in the east, the Punjab in the northeast, the North West Frontier Province and Afghanistan in the north, Iran in the west, and the Persian Gulf in the south. There are considerable variations in topography, soil, and climate among different regions of the province. A large proportion of the area consists of barren and craggy mountains of up to 3,500m, contrasted with deserts and plains that lie under 100m. There are also wide variations in climatic conditions, precipitation, and temperature throughout the different areas. The plains and deserts of Baluchistan are the hottest areas of Pakistan with midsummer mean maximum temperatures above 40°C, while the high altitude areas are temperate in summer and severely cold in winter with sub-zero temperatures. Rainfall varies widely from year to year and area to area but the average annual rainfall is in the range of 1200-2000 mm.

Table 1: Basic Statistics of Baluchistan

Total Area	34.71	million hectare
Total Forest Area	1.08	million hectare
Total Cultivated Area	1.34	million hectare
Total Population	4.33	million (1981)
Average Annual Growth Rate	7.1	per cent (1981)
Literacy Rate	10.3	per cent (1981)
Rural Population	84.6	per cent (1981)
Total Number of Villages	6,111	
Average Population per Village	598	persons
School Enrollment Rate ^a (Both sexes)	3.8	per cent
Female Enrollment Rate ^a	0.8	per cent

Note:

a. Percentage of students in the 5 - 24 years age group.

Different climatic conditions in different parts of Baluchistan allow for diverse cropping patterns. A large number of vegetables, fruits, and spices, of both tropical and temperate zones, are grown in different regions. Although increasing gradually, the area under cultivation is extremely small. Out of a total of 34.7 million hectares of land, 1.34 million hectares (3.3 million acres) are cultivated. Of this, only 0.32 million hectares (0.8 million acres) are irrigated. Settled agriculture is limited. Most of the rural people are engaged in raising sheep and goats. About 70 per cent of the rural population are pastoralists and live a semi-nomadic life.

Baluchistan has experienced rapid changes in the past two decades. Agricultural development, due to increased irrigation and other components of the green revolution, is taking place throughout the Province. Between 1974-75 and 1984-85, the total cultivated area increased from 337,674 to 605,167 hectares, the total number of tubewells increased from 4335 to 8068, the total number of tractors increased from 696 to 3141, and the total credit disbursed for agriculture increased from Rs 15.72 million to Rs 134 million. Investment in agriculture by government and international agencies, as well as the private sector, has produced a rapid increase in productivity and brought broad social and economic changes. Some benefits of the green revolution have also accrued to small farmers. Tractors are hired and tubewell water is bought by them. Thus, the impact of modern technology is fairly widespread. This distribution has some impact on income distribution in rural areas. The agrarian structure has changed and common property rights have given way to the private ownership of land and pastureland. Markets are penetrating the subsistence economy and agricultural production is now more oriented to market signals.

The land tenure system in Baluchistan varies from area to area and from tribe to tribe. According to revenue records, most of Baluchistan remains unsurveyed and unsettled. Data from the Agricultural Census of 1980 record that 33 per cent of landowners possess under five acres each and this accounts for only three per cent of the total area. Similarly, another 33 per cent of landowners own between five and 12.5 acres, and this accounts for 14 per cent of the total area. In sharp contrast to this, 55 per cent of the total area is owned by only nine per cent of the landlords, in holdings of over 50 acres (see Table 2). A vast majority of the large landholdings are cultivated by tenants. Different classifications of tenant, viz., *tabay marzi* (tenant at will), *maoroosi* (occupancy tenant), and *lath bana* (land developer tenants; compensated for the labour if ejected) are applied to various classes of tenants. In practice, security of tenure is in the hands of the landlord. The tenancy system, organisation of production, and crop sharing arrangements vary from area to area, depending upon the availability of irrigation water and the labour needed for different types of crops. Tenants are mostly landless labourers or landowners with very small landholdings (Government of Baluchistan 1986, Government of Pakistan 1983, and UNICEF 1980).

The life of a tenant is characterised by poverty and very hard work under extremely harsh climatic conditions. According to the sources cited above, 40 per cent of the tenant households and 41 per cent of the owner-cum-tenant households are in debt. Financial institutions and banks are beyond their reach. They are to some extent unaware of, and unable to secure, loans from credit institutions because they cannot offer any collateral acceptable to the bank. Their credit needs are fulfilled by the Hindu *baniya*, moneylender-cum-shopkeeper; who often lends on personal security or on the credit-worthiness of the customer and his own capability to recover the loan. The *baniya* charges ten per cent interest per month on loans that are mostly secured to purchase seeds at the time of sowing. The moneylender recovers his loan at harvest time when he arrives with his empty bags and clears the debt as well as the farmer's produce. Very little is left after repayment of the loan, and the farmer is forced to borrow again for his consumption. He rarely becomes free from grinding debt.

An average household owns several goats or sheep and about a dozen or so chickens. Only a small number of households own cattle. The per capita income of the rural household was estimated to be \$72 per annum in 1986 (equal to Rs 1,300), whereas the income of town dwellers is almost double this amount (Government of Baluchistan 1986). Estimates of household income

Table 2: Distribution of Land Holdings

Size of Holdings (Acres)	Holdings		Area in Acres	
	No.	Per Cent	Total	Per Cent
< 1.0	5,962	3	2,237	Neg ^a
1.0 - 2.5	30,851	17	47,886	1
2.5 - 5.0	23,892	13	84,325	2
5.0 - 7.5	23,956	13	1,355,614	4
7.5 - 12.5	36,755	20	366,551	10
12.5 - 25.0	29,263	16	525,527	14
25.0 - 50.0	16,830	9	555,239	14
50.0 - 150.0	12,670	7	931,386	24
> 150.0	3,439	2	1,183,814	31
Total	183,618	100	3,832,529	100

Note:

a. "Neg" = Negligible

Source : Government of Pakistan (1983, 394)

in rural areas are very difficult to obtain due to: (1) plurality of small sources and (2) inability of villagers to count and assess all their minor sources of income. To overcome these limitations, Sherani and Iqbal prepared estimates of household expenditure based on the entire consumption pattern of an average tenant household throughout the year. According to these estimates, per capita expenditure in Jalal Khan Union Council, in Kachhi district was Rs 2,776 or \$ 154 per annum (Sherani and Iqbal 1989, 12).

Sociocultural Features

Ethnically, the Province is the most heterogeneous in Pakistan. There are three major groups, the *Baluchis* (36 per cent), the *Brohis* (21 per cent), and the *Pathans* (25 per cent). Politicians and intellectuals of both the *Baluch* and *Brohi* groups claim a common origin and ethnicity for both groups and often subsume *Brohis* in the *Baluch*. This is largely due to political exigencies, as *Brohis* are linguistically a separate group. In fact, they are the only Dravidian language community in Pakistan. The remaining 18 per cent include different ethnic groups: *Hindu*, *Punjabi*, *Muhajir*, *Parsi*, *Hazara*, and many other small and diverse groups. In the past decade, the *Hazaras*, from both Iran and Afghanistan, and some Afghan refugees have managed to settle permanently with the help of tribal friends and relatives.

In rural Baluchistan, the two major ethnic groups tend to have geographically defined boundaries. They interact mostly in the provincial capital, Quetta, and in some other small towns. Several languages and many dialects are spoken in Baluchistan, and a large number of men are polyglot. *Pushto* and different dialects of *Baluchi*, *Brohi*, *Saraiki*, and *Sindhi* are spoken in different rural areas where only a minority can communicate in *Urdu*; the national language of Pakistan. In addition to the languages mentioned above, *Urdu*, *Punjabi*, and *Farsi* are the first languages of some groups in Quetta and some of the other towns.

The social organisation of Baluchistan is tribal and the tribe is basically a political unit. Most tribes in Baluchistan inhabit a well-defined geographical territory. Tribal leaders lay claim to all resources in the area occupied by their tribes. The once decaying tribal system was strengthened by the colonial power in the late nineteenth century with the introduction of indirect rule. Under indirect rule, tribal chiefs were made responsible for the maintenance of law and order and were invested with judicial powers, provided with a tribal levy force, and allowed to maintain penal institutions. With state-sponsored judicial authority for tribal chiefs, tribesmen were converted into their subjects. The power of the State was reinforced by the customs and conventions of the tribe, as well as by the kinship organisation. This ensured the loyal support of tribal people towards their chiefs.

The legal foundation of this tribal system was abolished by the Government of Pakistan in 1976. In practice, the tribal system still persists through kinship organisation. Because of the tribal system, land remained unsurveyed and unsettled in most parts of Baluchistan. Successive land reforms have not altered the ownership structure in any fundamental manner. Development programmes, initiated by various agencies of the Government, have created competition for resources among different groups. To some extent, this has led to the resurrection of traditional bonds of solidarity and strengthened the tribal social organisation.

Urbanisation, due to migration of the rural population since the early 1970's, led to the de-tribalisation of immigrants. On the other hand, in urban areas, competition for admission to educational institutions and jobs led to the creation of relatively broad-based ethnic group organisations. In many cases, the literate tribal people have established formal organisations in towns to deal with the problems faced by members of particular tribes. Tribal chiefs have emerged as leaders of these organisations because of their ability to influence the political system. As a result the power of tribal chiefs is weakened in some areas but strengthened in other respects.

Quetta, the provincial capital and the only large town, is dominated by diverse groups of migrants from different parts of Pakistan and from Iran and Afghanistan. The 560 km (350 mile) long southern coast-line of Baluchistan, from Gwader to Karachi, has several large-scale fishing and ship-breaking industries run exclusively by the capitalists of Karachi. The Province is endowed with mineral resources: coal, gas, barites, chromite, and iron ore. Mineral deposits of copper and other metals are reported but their potential, quantity, and quality have not been firmly assessed. Mining is carried out in both the private and public sectors and mine owners come from different ethnic groups. Local people rarely work in the mines. For example, in the coal-mines most of the workers are recruited from Swat and Kashmir (Ahmed 1975, Government of Baluchistan 1986).

Sex segregation is practised from adolescence. Social contact of male and female is not permitted by custom. Despite this, females are engaged in all sorts of agricultural and nomadic pastoral activities. It is generally the responsibility of women to fetch water from distant places, look after the animals and participate fully in harvesting crops. Women have a very limited role in decision making and in the management of resources. Land and property rights are strictly vested in

men. In some areas, women produce embroidered garments and hats which are exchanged by men in the local market for household necessities.

Usually, girls are married at puberty. Marriage customs and practices vary from area to area and from tribe to tribe. Marriages are either by bride exchange or bride price, variously known as *lab* or *valver*. Malnutrition, high morbidity rates, and a very high rate of infant mortality (ranging from 130-240 per thousand) have been reported by different sources. Traditional practices concerning pregnancy and child bearing are also hazardous and cause major illnesses, still births, and abortions. About 41 per cent of births are either self-administered or attended on by family members, and 50 per cent of births are attended on by a traditional midwife or *dai*.

In Pakistan, 30 per cent of all reported illnesses and 40 per cent of all deaths are caused by the use of contaminated water (Government of Pakistan 1983, 395-397). Scarcity of safe drinking water is a problem for a vast majority of the rural population in Baluchistan. In Pakistan, 22 per cent of the population have access to clean potable water but in Baluchistan only 10 per cent have piped water. In many areas, rain or flood water is stored in open-air ponds, and this water is consumed throughout the year by both men and beasts. Ponds are neither protected by a boundary wall nor is the water cleaned with chemicals or by other methods.

Development Assistance Programmes

The nomadic-pastoralist and limited agrarian economy of Baluchistan held little economic attraction for the colonial power. The British used Baluchistan to define and defend the western frontiers of their Indian Empire against the expansionist threat of other imperialist powers. The present western frontiers of Pakistan were created by the British in the late nineteenth century with the establishment of the Goldsmid Line, dividing Pakistani and Iranian Baluchistan, and the Durand Line separating Afghanistan and Pakistan. The two largest ethnic groups of Baluchistan, the *Baluchis* and the *Pathans*, are divided among these neighbouring countries. The *Baluchis* are divided among Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan; and the *Pathans* are divided among northern Baluchistan, the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), and Afghanistan. These divisions have created irredentist nationalist movements, however mercurial, all along these frontiers. Any major political change anywhere along these frontiers is bound to affect adjacent areas on the other side of the border which are to some extent culturally and ethnically homogeneous.

The political instability in Afghanistan, since 1978, and the Islamic revolution in Iran, in early 1979, had brought some instability to Baluchistan. A large number of Afghan refugees came to Baluchistan and were accommodated in refugee camps. Some disruption in the Iranian *Sistan-i-Baluchistan*, in 1979-80, also stirred emotions, though to a limited extent. Baluchistan, having experienced various levels of instability in the past, was once again threatened with another period of instability (Harrison 1981, Lifschultz 1983, and Baluch 1983). With the Russian involvement in Afghanistan, Pakistan became a front-line State. In these circumstances, most of the friendly western Governments offered economic assistance to cope with the situation.

The entire region, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran, experienced political crises of different intensities in the late 1970's. Baluchistan, having just recovered from political turmoil, gained importance overnight due to international geo-political concerns. Stability in Baluchistan was no longer the concern of only the Government of Pakistan. In this situation, many Governments and international agencies offered economic assistance for the development of Baluchistan.

Since the early 1980s, 26 international and bilateral development agencies have sponsored various projects for development in Baluchistan. Many types of development programmes, from provision of a natural gas pipeline to Quetta city to rural development and provision of basic

needs in small hamlets, were initiated. The sponsors included organisations within the UN system, development agencies of western Governments, and development funds from some of the Persian Gulf States. Of these, some of the significant projects are the UNICEF-sponsored, Baluchistan Integrated Area Development Programme (BIAD); the USAID-sponsored, Baluchistan Area Development (BALAD) programme; and irrigation and agricultural development programmes sponsored by UNDP, the World Bank, and the Kuwait Fund.

The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany offered economic assistance for several development activities in Baluchistan. These included funding for part of the Baluchistan Minor Irrigation and Agricultural Development (BMIAD), establishment of Technical Training Centres, and establishment of the Self-Help Fund for Rural Development in Baluchistan.

As all these development agencies offered economic assistance at the same time, the provincial government was unable to coordinate the different agencies and their programmes. The need for coordination is becoming more urgent but the issue has not as yet been resolved. The agencies involved in design and implementation of development programmes have also failed to liaise and coordinate among themselves. As a result, many of these programmes overlap considerably in their objectives and areas of operation. For example, the BMIAD, BALAD, BIAD, and the Pak-German Self Help Project have certain areas of common concern but their activities are not coordinated. Information does not flow from one to the other at any level either.

The Pak-German Self-Help Project has made efforts to bridge this information gap. In early 1989, the Project Coordinator wrote to all project heads in Baluchistan informing them about the activities of the Project in nine union councils of the Project Area and requesting similar information about their Projects. However, no responses have been received.