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Rural Development and its Impacts on Balanced Development in Afghanistan

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Abstract

Three decades of civil war had damaged the main infrastructures and put negative influence in terms of balanced development in Afghanistan. Thus, Afghanistan still is not fully familiar with the development process. Rural development as a key role on the balanced development of Afghanistan and necessarily the main issue that Afghan's government must focus on the sector. The article's aim is to theoretically recognize some specific challenges of rural development and recommend the viable solutions based on human and natural resources that can lead Afghanistan to a sustainable developed country. The article is an archive researched based that strongly focused on scientific views and approaches of scholars and their theories about balanced development includes, challenges and recommendations. Despite several challenges in the development of Afghanistan such as insecurity, unemployment, poverty and environmental challenges, there are outstanding opportunities in terms of undiscovered natural resources, mining opportunities. Also, water resources hold key to lead Afghanistan for sustainable development in the near future.

Key words: Development, Rural Development, Challenges, opportunities, Afghanistan.

Introduction

Individual development is not considerate as sustainable development in a country unless we focus on undiscovered natural sources and resources for all residences in order to start the

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process of development. Majority populations of Afghanistan are living in rural areas. Balanced development in Afghanistan is strongly tied with suitable rural development. Strengthening of rural development will make Afghanistan a sustainable developed country.

According world classifications, from development point of view, Afghanistan lies among the countries featuring in the lowest level of development. Thus, it raises critical concerns among developing policy makers and government stockholders. According to United Nations Report and Human development Report in 2018, Afghanistan in terms of Human development indicators such as life expecting, quality of educations, real and national incomes per capita income is ranked 168 out of 169 countries that speaks volume of the poor performance in terms of human development. In additions, human development has strongly connected with economy and social development(undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/AFG.pdf).

Commonly, these are the questions that may be raised about development process in a country: what is the situation of poverty, unemployment and inequality? and the causes? If we see that the indicators of human development are going to be better, we are in the process of developing. Otherwise, is not at primary stage of talking about the development, even though have growth in per capita income and that mechanism is applicable in the future initiatives too. Moreover, hardly can named a program as a “development program” without clear development goals in order to decrease poverty, unemployment and inequality (Azkia, 1991). World Bank recently announced that Afghanistan’s economic growth level is in critical situation and has the lowest growth among southeastern countries in Asia. Furthermore, the released report only showed two percent of economic growth in 2018 and that is the main causes of increasing poverty, unemployment and life welfare in Afghanistan. In additions, uncertain political situation, insecurity and ongoing drought are recognized factors of slow economic growth. <http://www.bbc.com/persian/business-49062114> (Accessed in 20.07.2019).

“National solidarity program” as an Afghan’s governmental program has been working, since last decade, for sustainable developments in rural areas in Afghanistan. The program has been implemented by the Ministry of Rural and Rehabilitation Development of Afghanistan and has achievements in the sector too. Along with the implementation of the said program, still people in the rural areas face many challenges. Hopefully, “Citizen’s Charter National Priority”

program will be one of useful program to reduce the challenges along with best natural resources management policy in order to solve the rural development challenges.

Concept of Development

Marc Edelman and Angelique Haugerud argues that: “What types of faith in progress motivate development theories and practices? The underlying historical teleologies include a presumed shift from kinship to contract, agriculture to industry, personalized to rational or bureaucratic rule, subsistence to capital accumulation and mass consumption, tradition to modernity, and poverty to wealth” (Marc Edelman and Angelique Haugerud,2005, p2).

The word of Development is usual raised after Second World War and the meaning of development is drove from wrapper which means: passing from a traditional society with own latency and traditional culture toward a modern society in order to renovate the society with solidarity. In the definition of development its must to be focused on the following aspects: first, development is a valued issue. Second, it has a complicated process with different aspects to study. Third, it is strongly related to the life welfare. Scholars have different view about development meaning and its definition; development is a process with different aspects, which bring changes in social life structurally, social ideas, economic growth, reducing of inequality and struggle with poverty roots, (Mikel Todaroo). In another meaning, development in a specific framework that must shows the huge changes of social institutions are responsible to the social needs of the communities toward better life in terms of quantity and quality rank. (Raheem, 2017).

Development is not only economic growth. It is a multilateral process with different aspects, which influence on socio-comics institutions entirely. Furthermore, development also increase the level of productivity and incomes. Consequently, bring changes in social and economic administrator’s infrastructures. Meanwhile, development focus on culture and traditions of the nations as well.

Azkiya cited from Profiled that says: “Development is the process of progress includes decreasing of poverty, unemployment and inequality toward better life” (Azkiya, 2011, 18). Development is the result of succeeded efforts includes solidarity, dynamism in order to use natural, and human resources through social institutions management (Raisdana, 2002).

According to citation of Motawasili, Amartya Sen has another opinion about development. He insists to investment on human potential and human resources as key model. From his point of view, “development is enhancing of capacity building and human rights welfare towards progress”. Unless the facts can be counted as main reason for regression and backwardness. Other aspects of development, is rights that human from birth to death in each step of life have the right, socially, economically and politically (2005, Motawasili).

Development is not a fully covered process. Underdeveloped countries rule play in the world economy growth in the recent 200 years back, tell us about the unstable development not general development due to their geographical locations. Thus, development is also efforts of the nations, which can be gain through decisions and knowledge (Raisdana, 2002). So, one of the main aspects of development, is its value, which in some case is used as a synonym of (improvement) (Azkia, 1991).

Simply, in all society and community, development process at least follows three following points: firstly, access to the first sources of life such as housing, food, health and clothes. Secondly, increasing the standards of life and access to natural resources for better life. Not only increasing in net profit and incomes but also in terms of providing better educations, increasing job opportunities, security and latency which assist communities to keep respect and integrity personally and generally. Thirdly, supports civil society and human rights such as: citizenship freedom of speech, equality against law, no distinctions and no one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms (Mutawasli,2005,14).

Development in general perspective have deficient aspects like division of labor, security, employments, educations, health etc...thus, not all positive changes will be development. Like evolutions that takes more time to be happened or growth that can be the best part for development process.

Rogers’s opinion about challenges on the rural development

According to Azkia cited from Rogers that present ten points as “Peasant Subcultures challenges”:

1. No mutual trust which suspicion and cunning are included. Of course, there are some exceptions.

2. No Innovations, commonly farmers follow the traditional farming rules and rarely is familiar with the new methods. Thus, against new products such as new farming products, health and food have lowest interest to accept the innovations. The other fact is farmers have fair to accept the invocations tools or ides due to level of risks. They think when someone never do gambling there is no fair to lose. Nor win. Thus, such ideas against innovations raise from the society and situations where they live.
3. Fatalism is another aspect that Rogers pointed out. He claimed that fatalism is one of the reasons, which make farmers to lose capabilities, self-decisions or potential of control to manage their life easily. In addition, he did quite experimental research about fatalism rule in farmer's society, says, "Destiny is the strongest power for the success or misery. Thus, he thinks, fatalism is another fact among farmers to stop them to accept innovations and changes in their life.
4. Low level of wish and desires: social desires like welfare in: Employment, Social states, Educations and life style in the future. Majority rural scholars think that in rural society the level of desires are in the lowest range. Louis quote form Azkia that "From one harvest to another one if they have food and clothes will be fine and enough for them." Rogers studies in the four districts of Colombia shows: villagers children's desires in order to gain educations and jobs opportunities are less than rural capitalist who live at the same place. Average of wish between capitals and rurals are incompatible in terms of educations. Capitals more wish to get education than rurals. Thus, that intensity shows fewer desires among rural poor's than capitals. The main goals of national and regional changes programs are to improve and fulfil rural individual actual needs in terms of level of living such as, food, clothes, health and housing in a period. Moreover, there is less researched evidence that shows the impacts of above indicators and variable in terms of "Standard of living" ideas among rurals. Standard of living is intensity of personal basic needs in the community. Thus, standard of living is the kind of wish or desires to be fitful. Otherwise, it brings poverty and paving the way toward revolution and unsustainable social changes.

Rural regularly compare their life style with people who life inside cities with much better conditions and understand their needs. So unfulfilled desires make them displeased.

5. Prefer to immediate interest rather than future benefits. Therefore, they postpone the immediate interest in order to increase benefits in the future. In some self-decision between immediate interest and future benefits with satisfied outcome, make person decide to choose the better one. Thus, this theory “postpone of immediate interest” is created as a model, which has joined some related indicators and comes from enculturation at the beginning of life.
6. Time managing: value of time and manage of time is different regarding cultures and societies. Rural less take care of managing the time than people who life in the cities or capitalists. Rural life does fixe by second, minutes or hours but it is fixed by sunrise, sunset or change of seasons.
7. Familyism: where family members have financial demands under with mutual solidarity.
8. Dependency on government: Most of the rural dwellers in Afghanistan belief that water supply and building transportation infrastructure are the functions of government and hence they do not take active part.
9. Ethnocentrism: Which refers to the ethnocentrism or the tendency of local people to perceive their social life superior.
10. Lack of solidarity: Studies conducted by Lerner in three communities of central Asia reveal that farmers have less degree of solidarity then city dwellers. The reason behind lack of solidarity among farmers is first, natural environment in which their personality develops where they have little roles as learner. Hence, this lack of solidarity acts as a ‘marginalizing force’ for farmers which ultimately remains untapped from cultural influences (Azkia, 1991). It indicates that among rurals, the challenges that faced by peasants are in many cases differs from other residents.

Challenges to Rural Development in Afghanistan

In the literature of rural development, which originates from should pay attention to two things: The first is the social and cultural ‘challenges’ that hampers rural development. Some sociologists and economists believe that farmers’ groups are highly resistant to change and they hold a conservative stance against these changes. These scholars’ beliefs that this resistance to

change is actually based in their collective psyche and consciousness. Second, is the opposite stance, which is based on the social and cultural factors that facilitate economic dynamism, or is functional in emergence of modern economy. Generally, questions that raise about the development of a country is what are those factors that work behind poverty, unemployment and inequalities. Commonly, these are the questions, which may raise about development process in a country: who is the situation of poverty, unemployment and inequality? In addition, the causes? If we see that the indicator's human development is going to be better, we are in the procedure of developing. Otherwise, is not at primary stage of talking about the development, even though have growth in per capital income and that mechanism is applicable in the future initiatives too. Moreover, hardly can named a program as a "development program" without clear development goals in order to decrease poverty, unemployment and inequality (Azkia, 1999).

Cont Galler Right studies in 1960s shows that imbalance between productivity and demography is the main of cause no development in Asia. In Africa Lack of education and management and in Latin America lack of communications skills between capitals and unskilled works are the reason of no development in these areas. However, the indicators are more descriptive rather explanatory. That shows social changes physiognomy aspect than improvement aspect.

Rural areas in Afghanistan face with many challenges even though received financial assistance by international donors in terms of developing initiatives in recent two decades. Thus, needs more research in order to find out the problems and best solutions. In next paragraphs, the most critical challenges are explained:

The Critical Challenges

Asia Foundation did a research under the name of (Population Survey) in 2017 in Afghanistan. Which 79.8% of targeted group were rural households. One of the question from the questioner is asked, as "what are your main problems in your region (Area)?" Majority of responders, 31% and 24.1% out 100 indicted insecurity and unemployment are the main challenges of their Ares. After that 29.9% lack of electricity, 17.6% lack of drinking water, 14.5% roads, 14.5% lack of education, 9.3% lack of health centers, 8.6% poverty, 6.5% high price of items in the markets, are recognized the other factors (Asia Foundation, 2107).

The main challenges against rural development in Afghanistan, in terms of geographical and political aspects are as following:

- A. Insecurity: Security is the most important factor in development process. Unfortunately, three decades of war in Afghanistan not only destroyed social and economic infrastructures but also stopped the development process. During the Taliban regime and after elections in Afghanistan also insecurity is the critical issue to the development process. Majority population of Afghanistan are live in rural areas and they much have been suffered by insecurity.
- B. Unemployment: another main challenges of the rural areas of Afghanistan is lack of job opportunities. Thus, level of poverty is being increased and made them to immigrate/emigrate. Furthermore, they suffer economically and physically when the leave their own land and pay huge amount for human traffickers in order to being transferred to targeted distance or cannot be able to reach. Meanwhile, due to lack of educations, they won't be able to get job or accommodations. Sometimes they are arrested and were returned to their homeland. (<https://www.writerclub.ir/> access on august, 2019)
- C. Poverty: is one of other indicators against rural development process in Afghanistan. Even though Afghan's Government have been received financial and technical assistance by international allies in order decrease poverty. Still half population of Afghanistan is under poverty line.
- D. Lack of Educations: is another factor, which has direct impact on rural development process in Afghanistan. Even though, Afghan's government made effort to reopen the primary and secondary schools by improving educational infrastructures in different rural region. Still level of uneducated person is being increased.
- E. Cultural Features: Domination of traditional cultures in the rural areas is a big challenge against development programs in Afghanistan.
- F. Geographical location: Afghanistan is a mountainous country and that shape of land create huge problem in terms of being connected with rural areas where no roads or easygoing access for development program have. Still in most rural Ares in Afghanistan have no transportations facilities and they use from animals as basic transportation system.

Solutions

Konrad Filip Kotak is one of the famous anthropologist believes, anthropologist who are working for rural development in terms of social and economic changes must work close with rurals. In additions, assess and evaluate their needs in order to bring changes to their life. Moreover, do not invest huge amount on making polices than fulfill their needs on the unnecessary regions. Development Anthologist must force on that program and polices which consider the best needs of rural. After that think about the best implantation polices and action plan to make the goals done (Kotak, 2007). In his opinion the plans and the policies that has been implemented throughout the world for to develop suburb areas has not been adjusted to the economic and cultural situation of the people in those areas. His findings show that in order to bring compatibility between the common psychology of the people and their cultural affairs is bound to have more spending. Plans that have the most developmental and social benefits must include:

1. It must be in congruence with cultural conditions;
2. It must be responsive to the locally recognized needs;
3. The should involve local men and women in designing and implementing the programs designed to effect change;
4. They must utilize traditional institutions;
5. And should be flexible; (Kotak, 2007).

Understanding and recognizing the attitude of peasants is vital in rural development and change. Rural development Programs if not based in local values, farmers' motives and attitude will not sustain for longer times. Rural dwellers differ in terms of accepting change and ultimately all these collectivities depend on individuals. The drivers of rural development should keep in mind the place, cultural features, and population and beside that should be care about their programs. It's so clear that settled of local areas show opposed reaction against new phenomenon and changes and the best solution for this challenge is that the result of development program must be effective and should be introduced clearly in order to be accepted by this part of the society.

In rural development it is essential to have organized and specific policy and strategy because without such strategy and policy spending money and resources will go astray. It is experienced that rural development is not possible when it is viewed as a project. We can only have working

rural development programs when all economic, social, political and cultural factors including infrastructure are taken into consideration.

Security is considered as the prerequisite for rural development in Afghanistan. Therefore, it the duty of government and security sector to provide security and facilitate rural development program which benefits public people.

Water Management

Afghanistan is one of those few countries which possess limited ground waters and rivers. The unproductive, waterless, and fertile lands and deserts need to be irrigated with the help of irrigation projects. In addition to irrigation projects for domestic and agriculture purposes, water management measures such as electricity dam building can also play pivotal role in rural development of Afghanistan.

Usage of untapped ground resources

Afghanistan's natural resources, especially mineral resources, based on professional and accurate estimations, encompass billions dollars' worth which remained untapped during past years. These resources as the primary resource can play important role in creating opportunities of development in Afghanistan. Extraction of mineral resources will provide job opportunities for numerous jobless individuals. Besides, Afghanistan will also benefit from the processing and export of these mineral resources as it increases the income of the country which in turn, can be spend in diverse sectors.

Job Creation and Eradication of Unemployment

As mentioned above, with the extraction, processing of mineral resources job opportunities will be provided for a lot of people which will lead to the reduction of unemployment rate in the country. Beside mineral extraction and exploitation, the creation of production industry will also help in reduction of unemployment rate. Government should give due importance and priority to the creation of job opportunities in Afghan society.

Education

Illiteracy is considered the primary challenge for rural development in Afghanistan. So, it is needed to take necessary steps to reduce illiteracy and low-literacy in Afghanistan. Despite

ethnic, linguistic and religious differences, education paves the way for mutual acceptance and inclusion. Since in less developed countries people are living with differences in material and non-material culture and on the other side social cohesion and unity is the prerequisite for rural development. Therefore, socialization of people in these countries through collective education and awareness is very much essential. According to many researchers of political science in political development if we consider the realization of democracy is not possible without public awareness. However, only awareness does not guarantee the realization of democracy (Raisdana, 2002). Awareness is very much important in social development, social welfare and security and creation of social cohesion among people. An example of such society is Cuba. People have education and awareness and they possess a progressive culture and they all struggle for ensuring social security, social justice, welfare (In cities and rural), improvement of environment, quality assurance and enhancement of life and so on (Ibid).

Cultural Values

Looking at the rural communities of Afghanistan possess unique cultural features and components which signifies that development practitioners should act and formulate policies in accordance to the cultural standards and values. With the help of understanding rural cultural values of rural community we can avoid the cultural confrontation and resistance. Development is not possible without cultural prerequisites. A society can only move towards development when it has a cohesive culture. What is meant by cultural cohesion? In other words, what are the driving cultural, mental and orientation factors that are necessary for the realization of development?

We can inference from the opinions of scholars as follow: First, thinking scientifically towards social issues should become common. A society can only develop when scientific outlooks overshadows the cultural beliefs. In other words, society in general and political and economic decision makers should accept that they need to look in positivist way towards social issues and thus create necessary institutions for specialized and professional involvement. In addition, social cohesion and unity is an important factor for economic development. Moreover, equality before the law, equality of citizenship rights, institutionalization of democracy, and public participation play vital role in determining the future of a society (Mutawasuli, 2005). Due to the geographical location of rural Afghanistan that is mostly mountainous regions and hilly areas

people have problems in transportation and communication which is a challenge for development. Rural dwellers are struggling with export of their agricultural products and import of their necessities which challenges developmental initiatives. In order to overcome this issues, the Afghan government and other concerned bodies should prioritize building infrastructure for transportation.

Agriculture is the main profession for many people especially rural people. Thus government can provide them fertilizers, improved seeds, and training in modern agricultural practices in addition to other developmental initiatives can play pivotal role in the rural development of the country.

It is worth mentioning, that with implementation of national solidarity program (NSP), had been beneficial for the people and it is also expected from Citizenship Charter to introduce a longer run plan besides implementing small scale quick relief programs. They are expected to take fundamental steps in accordance to the needs of rural people. Without developing rural communities, it is impossible to achieve development at all, because, the majority of people live in far flung areas. Sustainable development, in the author's view, is first possible with rural development and then urban development. So, we can only achieve sustainable development when we create a balance between rural and urban development.

Conclusion

Looking at all those challenges in the way of rural development in Afghanistan, we can conclude, that diverse factors including, insecurity, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, slow communication and transportation among others humpers rural development in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the continuous war for four decades caused immense destructions to the nations which needs serious attention.

The opportunities and possibilities that exist for development are promising and optimistic. We can utilize the opportunities and conditions in order to overcome the challenges in rural and urban development. We can change the current scenario which include economic, social, cultural and political factors which hinders development.

With the implementation of developmental projects in rural areas where majority of population live can facilitate sustainable development. From among the duties of policy makers and the Afghan government is to identify these challenges and find solutions to these problems which is

possible by initiating long run plans and projects. We are hoping for the days when Afghan people will live a prosperous and happy live.

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