

論 文

# Community-Driven Development and Women's Empowerment in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan: A Case Study on Community Empowerment Programme for Women (CEPW) in Balkh Province, Afghanistan

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## I. Introduction

This study explores how Community-Driven Development (CDD) approach adopted in the reconstruction programs has impacted on women's empowerment through the case study of "Community Empowerment Programme for Women (CEPW)" in Afghanistan.

The CEPW was conducted under the Enhancing Women's Economic Empowerment Project (EWEEP) by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Afghanistan Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) for three years beginning in 2005. According to Agreed Conclusion 1997/2 by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), gender mainstreaming is defined as a globally accepted approach which aims to achieve gender equality through integrating both women and men's concerns and experiences into design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programs. In this point of view, the CEPW introduced a new CDD approach for women's empowerment in post-conflict societies. The CEPW approach was unique because it employed not only CDD but also a gender-mainstreaming approach. Moreover, it promised women's participation in community development activities, and approaches women as a group.

After the mid-1980s, the concept of women's empowerment emerged from grass-root women in developing countries in order to take initiatives for their own development. Women at the grass-root level began to gather together to try and gain independence and improve their socio-cultural, economic and political status by themselves. However, when it comes to the post-conflict setting, it is argued that women's empowerment is considered one of the

enormous challenges in the reconstruction and development process. Since UN Security Resolution 1325 was adopted in October 2000, stating the importance of the inclusion of women and mainstreaming gender into all aspects of post-conflict resolution and peace operation, UN agencies as well as donors tried to empower women by promoting their participation in peace-building activities.

However, it is observed that women do not have enough space for participating in the early stage of the reconstruction process, even though women have been the largest group who are affected by conflict and war. Porter (2007) claimed that even though women's participation in peace-building activities has been encouraged by many organizations such as the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), women remain seriously under-represented in these activities. Porter (2007:2) mentioned that women's "under-representation exacerbates gendered inequality in peace processes and undervalues the unique contribution that women in conflict societies and transitional societies bring to peace building."

In the case of Afghanistan, through the reconstruction activities of the country, there were a lot of efforts made for improving women's status. For example, President Hamid Karzai signed the declaration, "Essential Rights of Afghan Women" in January 2002. It guarantees women's rights such as equality between women and men, equal protection under the law, education in all disciplines, freedom of movement, and freedom of speech and political participation (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2008). However, the government's efforts were confirmed only at the formal level: there were enactment of constitutions and legislation which guarantee equal rights and achieving a gender balance in judicial and governance institutions (Top-down) in 2002. For instance, under the Article 22 of the Constitution, Afghan women have gained rights and equality with men; however, women especially at the grassroots level continue to face certain difficulties in regard to their economic, social, cultural as well as political life (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2004). This is because women are usually disregarded in mainstream development.

A bottom-up approach for women's empowerment in community development has been considered one of the effective means to encourage women's participation by the international community (World Bank 2006). Therefore, the community development approach has actually been employed

to reconstruct war-torn communities like Afghanistan from the early stage of the reconstruction process.

One of the national priority programs for rural development, the National Solidarity Program (NSP), which employed a Community-Driven Development (CDD) approach introduced by the World Bank, has been implemented all over Afghanistan in order to promote stability in rural areas. This implementation has been made by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) with the support from the World Bank and other donors since 2003. According to MRRD, the NSP aims to develop the ability of Afghan communities to identify, plan, manage and monitor their own development projects, and empower communities to make decisions and manage resources during all stages of the project cycle (MRRD 2009:1). Therefore, MRRD has tried to implement the program for the entire rural population with an emphasis on the inclusion of women, allowing heightened perception of community governance.

Under the NSP program, the Community Development Council (CDC) produces community development plans (CDPs) which prioritized the needs of the communities and decide on medium-term investment plans. A community is defined based on existing government records of registration of 25 to 2,000 families. Under the program, communities are provided with block grants, in which they decide the use of such funds through participatory decision making process. One block grant will be allocated to each community at a rate of US\$200 per family with an upper limit of US\$60,000 per community (MRRD 2004).

As a result, over 21,706 CDCs have been established throughout all 34 provinces, and over 46,171 community projects have been completed (MRRD, 2009). As women's participation is considered one of the priority areas under the NSP, MRRD tries to promote gender equality in the NSP by establishing female CDCs in order to reflect women's voices in the development plan.

Some studies about the NSP as well as CDD approach in post-conflict countries have been conducted and revealed the effectiveness of the community development approach in post-conflict countries. Nixon (2008:11) considers the NSP to be one of the most wide-ranging development initiatives in Afghanistan since 2001, and it is regarded by many as one of the most successful in terms of sub-national governance. Moreover, Nixon (2008:41) also states that the

creation of CDCs under the NSP have introduced a dramatic change in the development resources available to many communities in the country. The NSP promotes a historical change of the interrelations between the central government and local communities, particularly with regard to the role of women in local decision making (Boesen, 2004:4).

Even though the above mentioned scholars agreed with the effectiveness of CDD approach in post-conflict settings, they argued that women's participation in these activities were limited. The World Bank (2006:49) evaluated the NSP that the program has made serious inroads toward gender inclusion, as it has offered women opportunities to be involved in the local development councils and to take equal part in village-level activities. However, through the framework of NSP, participation of women in decision making process is limited. For example, The World Bank (2006:35) criticized that the operational procedures for including women in a community council did not ensure that women achieved equal decision-making. It can be said that the NSP did not employed gender mainstreaming approach into their activities. Existing cultural barriers may prevent women from participating in the decision making. Nixon (2008:41) claimed that there are barriers to genuine participation of women in both development functions and governance functions of the CDCs. Boesen (2004:8) considered that despite alternative arrangements to provide an avenue for women to influence decision-making, this may in practice be problematic in the context of specific relations between male and female community members. Kakar (2005:2) also mentioned that women and female CDCs lack legitimacy, meaningful participation and access to pertinent information in relation to male CDCs and the NSPs process in the community.

Therefore, it is necessary to develop a more appropriate approach for women's participation in decision making. Abirafeh (2009:9) claimed that "aid interventions have actually made life more difficult for women, and that such difficulties might have been avoided if a more nuanced and sensitive approach had been taken." It could be said that women's participation in community development activities is one of the most crucial issues for community reconstruction and peace-building in rural areas of Afghanistan.

Above-mentioned scholars show the following two points. First, Community-Driven Development (CDD) is identified as an effective approach

for the reconstruction of war-torn community in the context of community governance. Second, even though some special arrangements have been made to promote women's participation in the activities, women have been unable to obtain meaningful participation. However, these studies could not reveal how the programs conducted by Community-Driven Development approach has impacted women's participation in community reconstruction programs, or how to enhance women's participation in the programs. Moreover, the CDD approach has not been analyzed through the gender perspectives.

Therefore, this paper evaluates how the CEPW has impacted women's empowerment in the post-conflict Afghanistan. The Community Empowerment Programme for Women (CEPW) was chosen as an example because it is distinct from other empowerment programs for women as well as from the community development activities conducted by the NSP. First, CEPW took both community-driven and gender mainstreaming approaches as compared with the NSP which employed only a community-driven development approach. Second, CEPW considered women's participation as a process for empowerment while the NSP considered it as an output. In other words, CEPW considered community-driven development activities as a tool for women's empowerment, and therefore focused on Female Community Development Council (FCDC), which was established under the NSP, and put the council as active agents for community development activities. Third, CEPW regards women collectively and the community as a whole because many activities such as skills development, income generation and literacy programs only benefit individuals rather than the whole community and only address short-term problems which cannot promote women's empowerment or a sustainable livelihood.

The author was involved in the CEPW project in Afghanistan as a community development and gender expert as a part of JICA's team from 2004 to 2008. Thus, the evaluation of the CEPW is to be made based on the author's participatory observation along with the data collected in Mazar-i-Sharif, and four villages in Balkh province where CEPW was done. The author develops her own empowerment framework by adopting some concepts of previous scholar, Kabeer (1999), with particular focus on women's access to resources, their role as agents and their achievements.

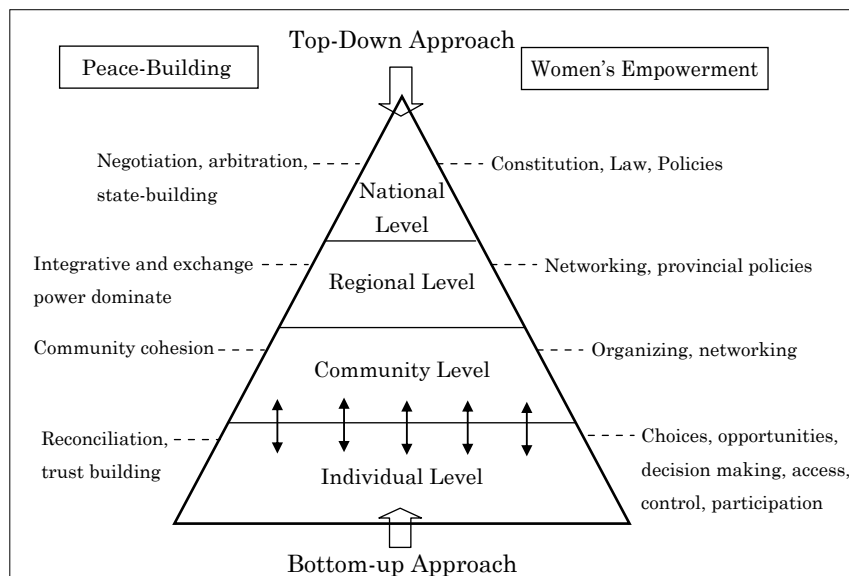
## II. Women's Empowerment and Community-Driven Development : Analytical Framework

### 1. The Level of Analysis

There are several levels to measure women's empowerment and peace-building. As shown in the Figure 1, generally, these are divided into four levels, namely national level, regional level, community level, and individual level. In a post-conflict setting, two kinds of approaches, top-down and bottom-up, are categorized for international assistance for reconstructing war-torn countries. For instance, peace negotiation is carried out for establishing a stable country at the national level. At the same time, gender equality is promoted by revising the constitution and law to improve women's status. However, the author considers that this kind of top-down approach alone cannot empower women at the grass-root level. In other words, the bottom-up approach is also necessary to promote women's empowerment and a stable society.

Therefore, this study focuses on women's empowerment at a grass-root level such as the individual and community level empowerment as shown in Figure 1. Individual empowerment involves making choices, opportunities,

**Figure 1. Level of Empowerment and Peace-Building**



[Source: Author, 2012]

decision making, participation, access and control. Group organization is considered as one of the factors for community level empowerment. Peace-building at the community and individual levels is also considered along with empowerment in order to see the relationship. The author considers that there is a relationship between women’s empowerment and community peace-building, in particular, community cohesion at the community level.

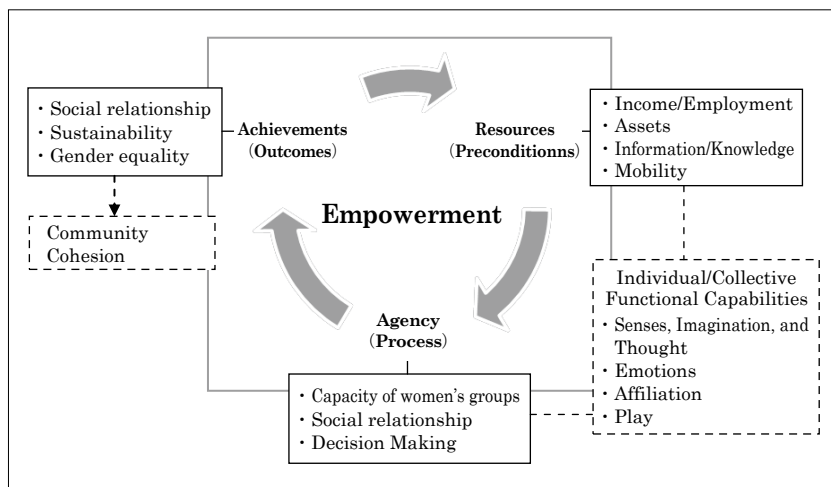
**2. Empowerment Framework**

As to the analytical framework, the author referred to previous works. For instance, many frameworks for conceptualizing women’s empowerment have been developed by scholars and international organizations such as Narayan (2005), Nussbaum (2000) and Kabeer (1999).

Narayan developed a framework for evaluating empowerment and its condition to development effectiveness; however, it focuses more on national level reform to remove constraints and barriers that limit poor people’s social choices. In other words, it focuses on structural adjustment rather than focusing on women’s empowerment at a grass-root level.

In contrast to Narayan, Nussabam’s framework focuses more on individual level empowerment by developing the idea of “human capability approach”. She also developed the list of “the central human functional capability” as political purpose. However, what is important underlying her idea is that

**Figure 2.: The Author’s Overall Framework for Empowerment**



[Source: Author. 2012]

people have freedom and the capability to lead the kind of lives they want to lead. In other words, her list identifies fundamental capabilities of each person to expand their choices for their lives.

Kabeer's (1999:437) framework of women's empowerment consists of resources, agency and achievement that covers the process of women's empowerment. Kabeer (1999) defines resources as the enabling factors that allow women to exercise agency or choice. Agency is defined as the ability to define one's goals and act upon them, and achievements are the outcomes of choices (Kabeer, 1999). However, her framework does not cover the specific details in each category. In order to compensate for these missing points, the author borrowed ideas from Nussbaum and Kabeer, and combined both frameworks to analyze the case of Afghanistan. Figure 2. shows the comprehensive framework for this study.

### **3. Conceptualizing Community Driven-Development**

In the case of Afghanistan, since more than 80 % of people live in rural areas, rural community development is considered one of the focal points for the reconstruction of the country by the government in order to establish a stable society. Therefore, the government, with the support from international donors, has started a community development program from the early stage of the reconstruction process. This study focuses on the Community Empowerment Programme for Women (CEPW) being one of the activities of bilateral cooperation between Afghanistan and the Japanese government somewhat similar to the National Solidarity Program (NSP) which is one of the biggest national priority programs for Afghanistan government.

According to the World Bank, the CDD approach in conflict countries is useful and effective because it 1) supports micro-level recovery, 2) increases efficiency, 3) builds social cohesion, 4) increases accountability and sustainability, and 5) improves empowerment (The World Bank 2006). Many scholars such as Binswarnger, Reget and Spector (2009), Nixon (2008), and Boesen (2004) agreed with its effectiveness. The author explores what factors affect reconstruction of the community through CDD activities, in this case the CEPW. As such, the author focused on what the World Bank referred to as "building social cohesion" in its list. This is because social cohesion requires interrelationships among people, for which it is necessary to include both



women and men. The main difference between the CEPW and the NSP is whether or not it employed a gender mainstreaming approach for its activities.

The author identified three important components which are the result of women's active participation in community development activities such as social relationships, sustainability, and gender equity. Moreover, the author considers these components to be what Kabeer called "achievement", because it is achieved through empowerment of resources and agency.

### III. Overview of Community Empowerment Programme for Women (CEPW)

#### 1. Background of the CEPW

Afghan society, after twenty three years of war, was ruined. Under these circumstances, people, especially women, lived in harsh conditions, and the promotion of women's advancement was particularly deprived. In order to reconstruct Afghanistan institutionally, the Bonn Agreement was made in December 2001. This agreement "served as a framework for the establishment of sustainable and democratic governance in Afghanistan", and "recognized that the participation of women and attention to their rights and status are both a requirement and a vision of the national peace and reconstruction process" (Ministry of Women's Affairs year:n/a).

Based on this agreement, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) was established in 2001 as a policy-making agency to promote gender mainstreaming. Its mandate is policy coordination and advocacy to ensure that women are free from all forms of violence and discrimination, and women's legal, economic, social, political and civic rights are respected, promoted, and fulfilled in Afghanistan. At the provincial level, the Department of Women's Affairs (DOWA) has followed the mandate and vision of MOWA. DOWA is the "Field Operations Unit" in the organizational structure of MOWA. DOWA is expected to mainstream gender strategies into their policies and direct their services towards the needs of women. DOWA also builds partnerships with donor communities, such as NGOs and international organizations operating at the provincial level to address the concerns of women.

In order to meet the mandate of MOWA, the Afghan government requested the Japanese government to promote women's advancement. Based on this

request, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) supported capacity building for policy planning to MOWA from February 2005 for three years. It did this by conducting the “Enhancing Women Economic Empowerment Project (The Project)”. The objective of The Project is to support MOWA to identify its own role and responsibilities in supporting women’s economic empowerment. It does this through the implementation of small scale income generation activities called “Community Empowerment Programmes for Women (CEPW)”, and capacity development of MOWA staff.

The CEPW was one of the main activities of The Project, which provided support to small-scale projects with special focus on enhancing women’s economic empowerment. The CEPW activities were conducted in three provinces: Balkh, Bamiyan, and Kandahar. The three main objectives of the activities were as follows:

- To improve the livelihood of women and the community by providing the opportunity for women to engage in activities that will lead to women’s economic empowerment;
- To enhance the capability of MOWA/DOWA in understanding the socio-economic situations of women, and developing gender-responsive policies based upon the information collected; and,
- Based on positive and negative lessons learned through CEPW, MOWA/DOWA will promote gender mainstreaming at the national and provincial levels.

Besides the capacity development of MOWA staff, a community-driven development approach, in the CEPW, was employed for two main reasons. First, even though MOWA/DOWA are expected to play important roles in promoting women’s status in the reconstruction and development process in Afghanistan, its staff did not know the real situation of women, especially in the rural areas. DOWA was to play a critical role in reaching women in the provinces and of supporting the government, NGOs, and civil society to make them understand women and gender issues (MOWA/DOWA and JICA 2005). Therefore, it was expected that DOWA would get a glimpse of the real situation through monitoring CEPW activities in rural areas. Second, it is necessary to promote gender mainstreaming not only at the policy and formal levels (from

top-down), but also at the grass-root level (from bottom-up), which women in grass-root level feel “peace dividend”. The majority of women in the districts have been left out from the mainstream of the development field. Women at the grass-roots level need to be empowered to raise their voices to be heard by society. To this end, the CEPW was created for women in such communities to improve their livelihood and to lead them to become empowered.

This study analyzed women's empowerment at the grass-root level, but the author focused only on the second reason of the CEPW implementation in order to see how grassroots women were empowered through participating in community development activities. The case of Balkh province is focused in this paper because the author was directly involved in the project in this province as a gender and community development advisor. Moreover, Balkh province is the only place among three which consisted of many different kinds of ethnicities such as Tajik, Hazara, Arab and Turkmen.

## **2. Implementation of the CEPW**

A total of five CEPW activities were implemented in Balkh province in the first year, (2005): one jam-making project, two animal husbandry projects, and two radio programs for distributing information on women's economic empowerment. The jam making project gave training to vulnerable women and promoted their access to market. Two sheep rearing projects provided opportunities not only for village women to participate in economic activities but also for the Female Community Development Council (FCDC) to take initiative and manage the small-scale project by themselves. FCDC is a representative of women's group in a village who were selected by votes from all the village members including both men and women. One radio program provided information and raised awareness on women's participation in economic activities. The other radio program was utilized on the special occasion of the International Women's Day in order to provide information on women's rights and roles, and their value in communities.

Another six CEPW activities were selected in the second year (2006): two sheep rearing projects, two cow farming projects and two radio programs. As a result, a total of four projects were implemented with FCDCs. Two sheep projects were carried on from the previous year, and two cow farming projects were conducted by the new FCDCs. These projects provided more opportunities

for village women to consider how they could increase their income or assets by using sheep and cows as seed money. As for the CEPW for the media, the Implementing Partner (IP) provided information and produced the first newspaper about women and economic empowerment. IPs introduced model cases of economically successful women through the radio program and newspaper to give new ideas on women's economic activities.

As a result of the implementation of those CEPW projects by IPs, about 2000 vulnerable women such as widows, jobless, disabled women and women with disabled family members were selected as direct beneficiaries and more than 150,000 people had benefited indirectly from The Project within two years.

During the implementation of the CEPW in Balkh province through working with local NGOs, media, and FCDCs, it became obvious that working with FCDCs could produce the most effective and sustainable results for women's empowerment as well as community development in the post-conflict society. It is because the author directly witnessed more positive changes. Therefore, the author focuses on the activities of FCDCs among the total of eleven sub-projects in order to find out how the CEPW has empowered rural women in the post-conflict society.

### **3. Analysis of the CEPW in Four Villages**

The Community-Driven Development approach was directly applied to four villages under the CEPW. There were both FCDCs and Male Community Development Councils (MCDCs) established under the National Solidarity Program in the villages. These four villages were situated in the suburban areas of Mazar-e-Sharif, namely Dihidadi district in the west and Nahiri-Shahi district in the east. The Project was not able to access far away districts for security reasons. However, these two districts represented all ethnicities with different backgrounds; therefore, the results of the CEPW in these areas would be applicable to similar villages within the province as well as those in other districts.

#### **Activities of Village U**

U village is situated in Dihidadi district, which is 20 km west from Mazar-e-Sharif, the center of the province. The population is approximately 1,800

people (887 women and 923 men) in 311 households. The main ethnicity is Uzbek followed by Arab and then others. Most of the villagers are either farmers or workers at a fertilizer factory which was built by the Soviet Union long time ago. Some women make handicrafts and embroidery, but most are unemployed.

According to the proposal by U village's FCDC, most of the women in villages in Balkh province are illiterate and unemployed. However, they have livestock management skills. Therefore, an animal husbandry project was conducted by FCDC in two phases for two years. The purpose of the activity was to improve the livelihood of more than 110 families, and build their capacities.

Since the women already had livestock management skills, the activities were concerned with how they could increase their assets through utilizing primary investment: in this case, sheep. For instance, the price of one sheep is approximately 3000 Afghani (US\$60). The beneficiary women raised these sheep for 3 months, and sold them at the bazaar for the price of 5000 Afghani (US\$100), with which they were able to buy two small sheep. Again, they could raise these two sheep for another three months, and sell them at the bazaar. Then, the women would have enough money to purchase three pregnant sheep, which would bear three lambs later on. By doing so, the women were able not only to improve their economic situation but also learn how to increase their assets.

In the second phase of the sub-project, another 100 female sheep were bought to 100 new families of the village. In order to share the profits of the sub-project with all the families, the FCDC employed a new approach. Moreover, the work load was divided with the men in the village. As before, the sheep were raised by women beneficiaries for three months after distribution. However, these sheep were recollected by the FCDC and allowed to graze in the field with two male sheep which would get them pregnant. This was done because women were basically raising sheep within their house compounds due to their restricted mobility. It was difficult for women to take the sheep to the field. Therefore, the village men took on this duty in order to raise the sheep in a better way. When all the sheep were pregnant, they were sent back to the original women beneficiaries until they bore lambs. When these lambs grew up, they were distributed to new beneficiaries. This cycle would continue

until all the families in the village had a primary investment (a sheep). As a result of the two phases of the sub-projects, 210 poor women were given the opportunity to work and earn money.

### **Activities of Village S**

S village is situated in Nahir-Shahi district, which is 20 km away from Mazar-e-Sharif, the center of the province. The road is not paved, and there is no public transportation. Therefore, it is difficult for villagers to access the city center. The village population is estimated at 931 (456 women and 475 men), consisting of 240 families, the majority of which are of the Hazara ethnicity. Only 18 people are literate in the village. Most of the people are farmers, but joblessness among the villagers is one of the most serious problems in the village. The FCDC was established in December 2004 under the National Solidarity Program.

An animal husbandry project was also conducted in this village in two phases, but the approach was different from that of U village. According to the proposal of the FCDC in S village, animal husbandry was considered women's job and it was a common income generating activity in the village. However, women had lost animals after the protracted conflict and drought. Therefore, the FCDC wanted to revitalize livestock activities in the village, and improve women's economic condition.

In the project, 100 sheep were distributed to 50 women beneficiaries, so that each beneficiary had two sheep. The cost of each sheep was estimated approximately at 3,000 Afghani (US\$60) as a primary investment. After the women took care of their sheep for three months, the FCDC collected and sold them at the bazaar from 4,500 to 5,000 Afghani (US\$90 to US\$100). With the total gained from selling the sheep, the FCDC bought pregnant sheep for 50 new beneficiaries. The remaining sheep and lambs were divided amongst the first beneficiaries. By doing so, the activity would be expanded and all the women in the village would benefit from the project.

In the second phase of the sub-project, 50 new sheep were bought to add to the 65 female sheep from the first phase. The total of 115 sheep were raised by the beneficiaries for three months, and then collected by the FCDC in order to get them pregnant. The process was supported by rich sheep owners of the village who had male sheep. It took a month, after which the sheep were

distributed back to the original beneficiaries. As a result, each beneficiary would have two sheep, a lamb and a mother. After four months when the lambs had been raised enough, they were distributed to new beneficiaries. In doing so, the animal husbandry activities were revitalized in the village. The sub-project also provided literacy courses for both men and women in order to improve their basic skills.

### **Activities of Village K**

K village is also situated in Dihidadi district, which is 20 km west of Mazar-e-Sharif. The population is approximately 1,697 people (872 women and 825 men) in 303 households. The main ethnicities are Tajik and Arab. Only 73 out of 1697 women and men in the village are literate. Most of the villagers are farmers growing, for example, wheat, vegetables and water melon. Animal husbandry activities are also a common source of income. Therefore, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) supported the village in improving the quality and quantity of animal husbandry products. However, since the FAO only provided training for livestock management, a dairy farming sub-project was requested in the village.

The purpose of the sub-project was to provide opportunities for women to engage in economic activities and improve their economic situation through revitalizing cow farming activities in the village. In the sub-project, 25 cows were purchased for the primary investment. Each cow was distributed to women's groups of five, totaling 25 groups with 125 beneficiaries. Each member of the group shared responsibility for taking care of the cow and the profits came from selling milk at the bazaar. In each group, the member in charge of collecting milk for the day took the milk to the collecting point, where the FCDC handled it every morning. The collected milk was sold at the bazaar with support from men in the village and FAO for the FCDC. The money from milk was also given back to the FCDC, and distributed to each group. Both responsibility and profits were divided amongst each group. Ten percent of the profits were kept in order to feed the cows. When a cow gave birth to a calf, each member of a group would get one in turn, and all members would get one within five years. The sub-project was very unique because the village people shared cows among their members.

### **Activities of Village P**

P village is situated in Dehidadi district, which is 13 km away from Mazar-e-Sharif, the center of the province. The village population is estimated to be 2,450 (1,191 men and 1,259 women) consisting of 440 families. The majority of villagers are of Tajik and Arab ethnicity. About 220 people are literate in the village. The FCDC and the MCDC were established in 2005. Most of the people are farmers, growing in particular wheat, watermelon and vegetables. Animal husbandry is another source of income in the village and also supported by the FAO's livestock management training program. The purpose of the sub-project was the same as the village K. However, a different approach was employed in this village.

Here, a dairy farming cooperative and a village farm were established. Twenty cows were purchased as assets for the village farm. The sub-project covered 100 vulnerable women in the village, who were divided into ten groups. Each group took turns according to the schedule to raise, feed, clean the cows, and collect milk for the farm. The dairy farming cooperative, which consisted of members of the FCDC in collaboration with the MCDC was in charge of managing the activities of the farm in terms of selling milk, and collecting and distributing the profits among the beneficiaries. The milk was sold to the open market and the FAO supported a milk center called Balkh Livestock Development Association (BLDA) in Mazar-e-Sharif. The BLDA was equipped with a machine for refining milk and had its own market; therefore, the profits of the milk farm were ensured through an agreement with the BLDA. Moreover, the village contributed land for the village farm, and physical labor and materials, which were necessary for construction. It was a big challenge and the first time to establish village cooperative with a village-owned milk farm.

## **IV. Impact of CEPW on Women, Men and Community**

Women's full participation in community development activities is one of the main challenges for Afghan women because of historical and cultural restrictions women are faced with. However, the Community Empowerment Programme for Women (CEPW) can be considered as the program that goes beyond the conventional approach of gender mainstreaming to expand "chances" and "choices" for women to participate in community development



activities as active agents for their community's development.

As explained in the previous section, the author referred to previous works to conceptualize and construct the framework for this study as shown in Figure 2. In the case of the CEPW in Afghanistan, the author defined resources as including income/employment, assets, information/knowledge, and mobility. Agency was composed of the capacity of community-based organizations, especially Female Community Development Council (FCDC), social relationship and decision making. Achievements stood for social relationships, sustainability, and gender equality, which the author considers to contribute to promoting community cohesion.

By drawing on the findings from individual interviews, focus group discussions of the impact survey, and the author's experiences from the implementation of the CEPW, the author explored the impacts of the CEPW on women, men and community by analyzing women's participation in community development activities. The findings revealed the positive changes on women, men and community through the implantation of the CEPW.

First, as for changes in "resources" which is based on Kabeer's (1999) notion of precondition for empowerment which allow women to exercise choices, the author found changes in four categories such as income/employment, assets, information/knowledge, and mobility through women's participation in community development activities. For instance, all direct women beneficiaries and 97 percent of indirect men beneficiaries answered that their income has increased. Moreover, through the interviews, the author found that in four villages "income" consisted of multiple faces such as cash income, products for own use, and products for exchange. This means that women not only increased their "cash income" but also that they were able to save some household expenditure by utilizing their products such as milk from cows and sheep, and animal dung for fuel for their own use, or exchanging these products with other necessary things such as eggs and vegetables.

Moreover, women were able to gain assets which were not common in the Afghanistan culture. The study revealed that animals such as sheep and cows distributed to women through the CEPW became their property. In other words, it can be said that men's mindset also changed to allow women to obtain their own assets. Women also increased the number of livestock by utilizing distributed livestock as initial investment. It was found that information and

knowledge were other important preconditions for women's empowerment. Information and knowledge do not only include new skills for income generation activities. For instance, the analysis showed that women gained other positive results such as coping strategies to solve problems based on experiences and in sharing their information with others outside their compound. As such, the study also indicated the expansion of women's mobility: their activities go beyond their compound such as within the village, Mazar-e-Sharif city, the bazaar and neighboring villages. Even though women still need permission from their male family members to go out from the compound, they expanded their chances and choices for their mobility through participating in the CEPW activities. Moreover, more men started to allow women to go out after the CEPW.

Second, regarding the changes in "agency", which Kabeer (1999) mentioned as ability to define one's goal and act upon them, the author identified some changes in the categories of social relationships, the capacity of community-based organizations, and decision making. For instance, the study showed that several kinds of social relationships, which were destroyed because of war and conflicts, were reestablished and enhanced by the CEPW. These relationships were identified as among women, between women and FCDC, between women and men, and village and governmental organizations. In order to evaluate these social relationships, the author made use of Nussbaum's (2000:78) functional capability of senses, imagination, and thought, which she mentioned as being able to use imagination and thoughts in connection with experiencing and producing self-expressive work and events of one's own choice. For instance, women started to exchange their thoughts and started to trust each other. Moreover, the author considered "play" to be one of the most important human functional capabilities. This is because women were able to gather together to discuss some of their problems, and they started to enjoy their gathering, which led them to have picnics and other social meetings where they could enjoy talking and laughing together.

The capacity of community-based organization was also studied, especially the capacity of FCDCs in this case. In general, community-based organizations play major roles in community-driven development activities such as the CEPW and the NSP. FCDCs were established for the purpose of leading development activities under the NSP which was led by the government of

Afghanistan. However, the study revealed the fact that FCDCs were not involved in the activities under the NSP. On the contrary, the CEPW was able to make FCDCs play the key role for community development activities which lead to positive changes in their capacity for conducting the activities for their communities. The author considered that these changes were related to what Nussbaum (2000:79) called functional capability of "affiliation", which she defined as "being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction, to be able to imagine the situation of another and to have compassion for that situation, to have the capability for both justice and friendship". Along with these changes, the study also has shown changes in decision making at the individual as well as the community level. Women have awakened to the reality that they can also participate in the decision making process, while men in the villages also started to admit women's participation in the decision making process both at an individual and community level.

Based on the findings of changes in resources and agency, the author further explored and identified how women's active participation in community development has impacted on community cohesion, by finding the differences in approach between the CEPW and the NSP. The author considered the answer for this was achievements which resulted from changes in resources and Kabeer's (1999) notion of agency. It was found that the main difference between the CEPW and the NSP was that the CEPW employed not only community-driven development approach but also gender mainstreaming approach. By doing so, the CEPW was able to cover and lead all the people, both women and men, into community development activities. The author considered that the achievements in this case was community cohesion, which was what the World Bank defined as one of the effects of employing community-driven development approach in the post-conflict setting. This is because building community cohesion requires an interrelationship among people which is generally considered to include both women and men. In these viewpoints, the author identified three main factors; social relationship, sustainability, and gender equality as the components of community cohesion.

For instance, the CEPW was able to contribute in reestablishing social relationships. The inclusion of both women and men for implementation of the activities in the villages developed mutual understanding and cooperative

structures between the sexes. Moreover, the study has shown that the inclusion of governmental agencies such as the Department of Women's Affairs promoted villagers trust in the government so as to develop a peaceful harmony as a safety net for the village people. Sustainability of activities also contributed to building community cohesion. Through the process of implementing the CEPW, the village people realized that they were the ones who worked for their community development. The study also found people's attitudes changed in that they started to think about what they can do and want to do for their communities instead of waiting for someone to help them. Moreover, gender equality, which was considered one of the most important key components for building social cohesion, was promoted in the villages. The CEPW which employed gender mainstreaming approach enabled women to participate in community development activities which were missing in the case of the NSP. In other words, the CEPW promoted gender equality at the household and community level through encouraging women as active agents for community development activities.

In conclusion, the findings of the study show that the CEPW has empowered women, men and the community. The unique aspect of CEPW, namely, the community-driven approach and gender mainstreaming approach promoted women's meaningful participation in community development activities. It was not observed in the existing program of the NSP. Moreover, the study has shown that women's meaningful participation in community development led to community cohesion by establishing social relationships, sustainability and gender equality in the targeted four villages. The author considered rebuilding community cohesion is one of the important factors that can contribute to the reconstruction of war-torn communities. From this perspective, the CEPW can be a highly effective approach in rebuilding social capital and creating harmony among people in the areas.

## V. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore how Community-Driven Development (CDD) approach adopted in the reconstruction programs has impacted on women's empowerment through the case study of "Community Empowerment Programme for Women (CEPW)" in Balkh province, Afghanistan

The findings throughout the study have shown that the CEPW was one of the effective approaches in promoting gender mainstreaming in community development. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005 mentioned five important components of ownership, alignment, harmonization, results and mutual accountability in development activities. It called for donors and partner countries to follow the declaration in order to increase the effectiveness of aids “in reducing poverty and inequality, increasing growth, building capacity and accelerating the achievement of the MDGs”.

The author considered that the community-driven development approach, the CEPW in particular, was the one in which the guiding principles in the Declaration have been implemented at grass-root level. For instance, the CEPW promoted ownership of community in activities. Regarding the alignment, the Declaration mentioned that “donors use strengthened country system”. In the case of the CEPW, it focused on existing women's group, the FCDCs, to develop their capacities to involve in community development activities. Harmonization was strengthened within communities and areas, and with related governmental agencies.

Moreover, OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) further developed the Declaration to include gender perspectives, and published “DAC Guiding Principles for Aid Effectiveness, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment” in 2008. It mentioned that the aim of the Paris Declaration would not be achieved without progress of gender equality and women's empowerment. In other words, it promoted gender mainstreaming into development activities. However, it did not mention how to include gender mainstreaming perspective into the practice. In this point of view, the author considers that the CEPW can be said to be one of the most successful projects which put the Declaration and the guideline into practice. Moreover, the author is able to provide important elements for which attention should be paid in order to promote gender mainstreaming into practice. The elements are as follows;

First, women should be recognized as active agents. For instance, there were many activities implemented in Balkh province in order to empower women. Under these projects, women only became the beneficiaries who were the passive actors to obtain support from the outside. Moreover, the author observed that community development activities under the NSP was carried

out by men without women's representation even though some portion of the budget was promised to be used for women's activities. The CEPW provided those women, who were left out of community development activities, chances for taking initiatives for their development. In other words, women became main actors for participating in these activities. As a result, women in the targeted areas were empowered and developed self-confidence through participating in the process of implementation of the activities. At the same time, it also affected men's attitudes about women's role in community development. It can be said that the CEPW brought about a major change that both men and women started to work together for their community.

Second, gender sensitive approaches should be considered. In the process of implementation of CEPW, two gender sensitive approaches were identified. For instance, when the CEPW was introduced in rural areas, the Project contacted and explained the purpose of the CEPW to key persons such as elders and the Male Community Development Council (MCDC) before talking to women. In other words, it needs to respect norms and culture of communities in order to avoid unnecessary conflict not only with people in the villages but also with donors. Once the Project obtained understanding and support from those key persons, the activities went smoothly to the end. Moreover, the places where strict cultural restrictions on women exist, recruitment of women staff and trainers are necessary. Generally, women are not able to communicate with men unknown to them, and men do not allow women to communicate with these men under the cultural norms. Therefore, establishing a comfortable situation for both women and men by hiring women staff is important.

Third, women's capacity development should be considered as a first priority. All the activities implemented under the CEPW were requested by women based on the needs of women in the areas. Women in the targeted areas discussed what they wanted to do by themselves, and developed the activity plan by themselves. Although it takes some time for illiterate women to follow the process, it definitely developed their capacities. Therefore, it is necessary to focus more on capacity development of women from a long term perspective rather than focusing on short term output. This would promote women's notion of "sustainability" and "self-help". The people started to think how they can continue the activities after the end of the project. Moreover, the people began to consider not only their own profits but also the collective profit of all the

communities.

In conclusion, the lesson learned from the CEPW, as a cutting-edge gender mainstreaming project on the household and community levels should be noted. The CEPW has exemplified how donors can promote gender mainstreaming into practice, especially in the context of post-conflict settings. The author has provided three main approaches which the CEPW paid attention to, such as women as active agents, gender sensitive approach in certain contexts, and focus on women's capacity development. Even though this is a case study in a specific context, the case of Balkh province in Afghanistan, the author considers it is likely applicable for other post-conflict countries in the world.

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**Abstract**

## Community-Driven Development and Women's Empowerment in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan: A case study on Community Empowerment Programme for Women (CEPW) in Balkh Province, Afghanistan

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This study explores the relationship between the so-called “community-driven development (CDD)” approach and women's empowerment through the case study of JICA's (Japan International Cooperation Agency) “Community Empowerment Programme for Women (CEPW)” in Afghanistan. This program was designed to enhance women's economic empowerment with the cooperation of Afghanistan's Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA), in 2005-2008.

After the mid-1980s, the concept of women's empowerment emerged from grass-root women in developing countries in order to take initiatives for their own development. Women at the grass-root level began to gather together to try and gain independence and improve their socio-cultural, economic and political status by themselves. However, when it comes to the post-conflict setting, it is argued that women's empowerment is considered one of the enormous challenges in the reconstruction and development process.

The CDD approach was developed by the World Bank in the late 1990s, at the grass-root level in post-conflict settings today, and has been applied in Afghanistan. One of the national priority programs for rural development, the National Solidarity Program (NSP), which employed a Community-Driven Development (CDD) approach introduced by the World Bank, has been implemented all over Afghanistan in order to promote stability in rural areas. Some studies about the NSP as well as CDD approach in post-conflict countries have been conducted and revealed the effectiveness of the community development approach in post-conflict countries. However, even though some special arrangements have been made to promote women's participation in the activities, women have been unable to obtain meaningful participation.

The CEPW developed by JICA was a modified approach of the CDD, and has paid more attention to the participation of women in the community level

development projects. In other words, the CEPW approach was unique because it employed not only CDD but also a gender-mainstreaming approach.

This study evaluates how the CEPW has impacted women's empowerment in the post-conflict Afghanistan. The author was involved in the CEPW project in Afghanistan as a community development and gender expert as a part of JICA's team from 2004 to 2008. Thus, the evaluation of the CEPW is to be made based on the author's participatory observation along with the data collected in Mazar-i-Sharif, and four villages in Balkh province where CEPW was done. The author develops her own empowerment framework by adopting some concepts of previous scholar, Kabeer (1999), with particular focus on women's access to resources, their role as agents and their achievements.

The findings throughout the study show that the CEPW was one of the effective approaches to promote gender mainstreaming in community development that can be considered as the implementation of "DAC Guiding Principles for Aid Effectiveness, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" in 2008.

