

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FAILURE IN DEVELOPMENT: CAUSES AND SYMPTOMS

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the world, policy makers and development practitioners have asserted a fundamental role for institutions in development (for example North: 1990). There is a renewed interest in recent years in discussing the role of institutions in promoting development (World Bank: 1993, 1997; Stiglitz 1998). In this get-tough-on poverty era there is an emphasis on improving people who are devastated. Pakistan has pursued a policy of decentralization and established local government institutions in localities, which have a definite role to play in the development. A range of functions has been assigned to these councils, and certain provisions of revenue have been specified in the Acts and Ordinances that established local government institutions. Unfortunately, local councils' performance is extremely negligible and replete with failure (Khan and Davies: 1999). A frequent criticism of local councils in Pakistan is the non-performance of their assigned functions, and the lack of financial resources is considered to be its principal reasons. The list of reasons remains to be long and accumulated, from the dilemmas of resources to issues of corruption, incompetence and inefficiency, democratic deficit and central and provincial government's interference (ibid.).

This study examines the factors that have retarded the development performance of councils from the standpoint of staff and councilors through an extensive survey in the northwestern province of Pakistan. The causes revealed by the councilors include lack of resources -- financial as well as human -- malpractice, corruption, lack of supervision, and non-commitment and interference of higher governments which have made local government unsuccessful in development.

METHODOLOGY

The main objective of the study is to enhance understanding of the causes responsible for the low level of involvement of local governments in rural development activities. The constraints are not always evident to the