

An Assessment of Economic Interventions of AKRSP on the Lives of Women in Chitral

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Abstract

The study investigates an assessment of economics intervention of AKRSP for women empowerment in Chitral Valley. The research design is a survey research using both qualitative and quantitative tools. Frequency and percentages are the main tools used in analyzing the collected data. Result of the study show that majority of respondents are of the view that AKRSP plays a vital role in uplifting the socio-economic conditions of women in Chitral valley. It initiated development programs to improve life standards, education, and saving facilities. It imparted trainings for the Women Organizations (WO's) established in the area. The results of Chi-square test indicate that AKRSP has increased the living standard of women in the study area.

Keywords: AKRSP, Economic Intervention, Women Economic Empowerment, Chi-Square, Pakistan

Introduction

Women play critical role for the well-being of their families and societies. No nation can rise to the height of its glory unless its women are side by side. However; the potential of women is not fully realized discriminatory social norms, incentive and legal institution because of discriminatory social norms, incentive and legal institution. Islam ensures equal rights to women but due to patriarchal cultural norms these right are not cared to the desired level. We also formulated a National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women. Due to these efforts the status of Women (NPDEW). Due to these efforts the status of women has slightly improved in recent decades yet we need to initiate, process and implement women specific policies programmed and project for their social, economics, legal, and

political empowerment and to organized events for mobilizing awareness and sensitizing society on the rights of Women.

In this regard, the emergence of NGOs the Non- Government Organization sector is an important experience from the prospective of development. By playing an important role in development this sector has earned its own distinctiveness all over the world. One of such NGOs is AKRSP, a project of the Aga Khan Foundation, is a pioneer of participatory development approaches in Pakistan. Established in 1982 as a non –for-profit company under the Companies Ordinance, AKRSP has been working with the rural communities in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral to build their institutional capacity to plan and manage their own development. AKRSP work includes fostering communities, own institution e.g. village and women organization and their umbrella Local Support Organization (LSOs), small-scale infrastructure development including energy projects, agriculture development, youth development, and cross-cutting initiatives aimed at reaching out to poor, women and other marginalized group. Among many notable achievements have been significant increases in income, the constructions of hundreds of bridge, irrigation channels and other small infrastructure projects, the planting of over 30 million trees and reclamation of over 90,000 hectares of degraded land, the mobilization of over 4,500 community organization and the creation of saving groups which have increased the economy of the area significantly (khan, 2006). Due to the outstanding contribution in rural development, AKRSP has received a number of award, including the 2005 Global Development Award for most innovative Development project. It also received an Ash den Award for Sustainable Energy, or “Green Oscar”, for its programme of mini-hydels or micro-hydroelectric plants in the Northern Areas and Chitral (Ummer&Khan, 2006).

Among the multifaceted initiatives for development, the most important initiatives of AKRSP in the context of Chitral is empowerment of women through building their confidence, helping them in different sector such as economy health, educational training them to enhance their income through various skill development initiatives and sensitizing the overall community towards gender equality. In this line many research studies such as Khan, (2006) show that the women development related intervention introduced by AKRSP have played a key role in women empowerment in the rural areas of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral.

In the recent past AKRSP has brought considerable change in its structure to sustain its initiatives in the long run by creating local institutional mechanisms, which remains one of the original goals of AKRSP. These institutions are called Local support organization LSOs. The following are the main objectives of the study:

- a. To study the role of AKRSP in the socio economic development in Chitral.
- b. To show economic intervention of AKRSP in the study area.
- c. To provide policy recommendation based on the analysis of this study

Literature Review

Goetz and S Gupta (1996) define female empowerment in terms of ability to manage the loan they get. They found that control was mostly with men, but the burden of repayment was borne by women. However women are responsible for repayment, this can result in household tension as women pressure the men for repayment and in case the outcome has been violence against women. The conclusion of the study is that instead of empowerment or a fundamental transformation in gender role, now have access to women’s labor and capital. If women draw a domestic savings for repayment, this might be the expenses’ of expenditure on better nutrition health education for their children.

Promoting women's participation and increasing their accessibility to empowerment therefore, is a critical part in the development process. AKRSP's main stress has been on the introduction of labor-saving technology and the promotion through training and input supply of improved poultry management as well as vegetable production for household consumption. A major achievement of the women's program has been to provide women for the first time - with access to agricultural production credit. AKRSP also provides opportunities to women to develop their professional and other necessary skills in order to enhance their participation in the community development process. World Bank Group (1990)

Tetley and Raza (1998) examined with growing out-migration for employment household increasingly becoming 'female managed. Focusing on opportunities and support for village-selected women leaders will support a new strategic direction for the women's program that should include identifying more economic opportunities.

Amine and Bayes (1998) split the concept of women's empowerment into the three components to each measured separately, in terms of support consultation index which seeks to represent the extent to which husband consults their wives in household affairs, individual autonomy indexes which represent women's self-reported self-sufficiency of physical movement outside the house and in matters of spending money and the authority index, which reports on actual decision-making power which is traditionally in the hand of the patriarch of the family.

Ummar and Zahid (2003) examined Status of Women's Health and Well-Being in Northern Pakistan. They said that Government and NGOs working for strengthening of the mountain areas in Pakistan and as a result of their efforts a large change and greatly need to be done to attain optimal level of health and wellbeing for women in the Northern areas. They also said that poverty, lack of awareness, low socio-economic status and cultural factors are the reasons for poor health and deal to improve the health status of women is a long term development of Pakistan.

Gul (2004) examined the impact of Aga Khan Rural Support Program's Gender Strategy on rural women in District Chitral. She notices in the whole world it is recognized that gender equity is not only important to human rights and to improve women's lives but also must for effective and sustainable human development. The full active participation of healthy and educated women is required to achieve development, access to facilities and opportunities and empowered decision making in their households, communities and business.

Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (2004) conducted Gender equality strategy and has acted as a vehicle for rural development in Northern Areas and Chitral (NAC) and working for last 21 years. It helps the community to regenerate their strength, facilitating combination of women in development initiatives, determining an educated and positive civil society in NAC and providing motivation other development activities to follow comprehensive development policies and realistic approaches.

Blumberg (2005) examined the impact of women economic empowerment on decision making, gender equality and control over income. He said that the raising proportion of women all around the world who are earning have at least some control over income than those who are not earning. Female economic empowerment is a successful key for promoting gender equality and as well as more equitable development. He also investigated those women in developing countries who earn income use it responsibly, especially if their earnings come from micro enterprise.

Pardhan (2005) examined Chitral Valley women's perceptions of schooling. She noticed that how women themselves think about schooling, their access to schooling and how they apply their schooling skills in their daily lives. Rock hill writes that it is "important to look at schooling, both in terms of its symbolic meaning and the material realities in women's lives.

Khan (2006) examined NGOs and Gender Development, the Case of AKRSP in District Chitral, NWFP, and Pakistan. He notices that in whole world gender equity is not only the basic to improve women's lives but also required for useful and sustainable development. For development it is essential the full and active participation of healthy and educated women and have to access to opportunities to make powerful them and actively participate in decision making in their households, communities and business. He said that the empowerment of women and improvement of their status are important for economic, social and political development and helps the women to meet their practical and planned needs.

Hunzai (2006) find out that AKRSP thought the most suitable to focus on income generation and social mobilization as the defining features of its gender programme. This strategy was pursued with the conviction that with economic empowerment and the right of association, women in the area can be assisted in improving their conditions. He said AKRSP had to engage women with necessary technical skills from the south. This option had its own challenges, such as linguistic barriers and cultural differences. The line with the main body of rural women still remained a major challenge for a long time, especially in remote valleys.

Ummar and Khan (2006) examined the gender-disaggregated impacts of rural electrification in Chitral, North Western Frontier Province, Pakistan. They said it's based on the micro-hydel programme of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme¹ (AKRSP) and explores how gender and electrification are linked and how electrification has led to the empowerment of women, through expanding their socioeconomic activities, directly and indirectly linked with their strategic and practical needs. The programme targets households in Chitral with no explicit focus on gender equality at the time of conceptualisation. They said the programme benefits men, women and children in the target population in various ways depending on their activities within the household.

Jiwani and Ahmad (2010) examined the study on saving practice VOs and WOs, The use of saving to promote empowerment in the AKRSP is given considerably more importance than the financial factors for saving. Indeed for women, savings provided the first opportunity to own a family gives more respect and consider their advice while making compromise decision an asset. They said women are more confident in taking their own decision and the male member in their n in the house hold. They feel more secure than before as they have their own sources of income from selling eggs, milk, chicken, handicraft and knitting. Some women said after the study on saving practice that they save by reducing their house hold expenses are able to pay school fees and other social need as they have surplus income.

Jameel (2011) has investigated the relationship between economic development and women's empowerment. He define women empowerment as improving the ability of women to access the constituents of development, in particular health, education, earning opportunities' right and political participation. At last his finding revealed that there is a bi directional relationship between economics development and women's empowerment.

Faizi (2012) examined that the Chitral women had played her role in better home management with social reference to sustainable utilization of resources. He said that the traditional role assigned to women in cooking, knitting, spinning, and embroidery. Poultry, livestock keeping her role has been extended to small scale business, services in government and non government department. He further said that women folk formed 49.4% of the total

population of Chitral as a per senses of 1998, and have a great potential in socio economics development and it disheartening to notice that women are increasing constantly increasing their sphere of influence.

Research Methodology

The study was conducted in District Chitral; where the AKRSP has been working since 1986. Tehsil Mastuj was selected for the study. Tehsil Mastuj is a large area consisting of many valleys ,Reshun, Booni, Parwak, Yarkhun, Laspure and Mastuj ect out of Yarkhun, Laspur,Mastuj,were selected for the study, because AKRSP has been working here for years has done different project like water supply, electricity, gender equity, social mobilizing etc. A mixture of qualitative and quantitative techniques is used for this study to capture all the possible aspects of the status of the lives of women development. By studying the work done by different researchers and by collecting data through questionnaires and personal interviews, and identified some variables to conduct my research are as follows: Point of views of peoples about the role of AKRSP. Data have been analyzed by applying descriptive tools and Chi-Square Method by showing different table and diagram in SPSS. The data was organized into tables and figures based on the questionnaires given to respondents. The result were then analyzed and converted into percentages and other charts. Qualitative method was applied in the analysis of the data. The result was subsequently computed into percentage. Diagrammatic representations of the statistical summaries of the result were presented in the form of bar diagram, graphs frequency tables. In obtaining primary data there are several approaches available to collect data. In order to collect reliable and valid information, 100 structured questionnaires will be used and some personal interviews will also be conducted.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: AKRSP helped a lot to increase my life style

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	19	18.8	19.0	19.0
Agree	38	37.6	38.0	57.0
Neutral	34	33.7	34.0	91.0
Disagree	8	7.9	8.0	99.0
Strongly disagree	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	100	99.0	100.0	

Source: Author’s own calculation (2013)

The table 1 shows the opinion of respondent’s about the question, that AKRSP helped a lot to increase my life style, 29% respondents are strongly agreed, 45% agreed, 24% respondent’s opinion is neutral and only 2% disagree, that AKRSP’s role to change life style of the people.

Table 2: My status of accommodation has increased due to availing the facilities of AKRSP

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	19	18.8	19.0	19.0
Agree	38	37.6	38.0	57.0
Neutral	34	33.7	34.0	91.0
Disagree	8	7.9	8.0	99.0
Strongly disagree	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	100	99.0	100.0	

Source: Author’s own calculation (2013)

The table 2 shows 19% strongly agreed, 38% agreed, 34% respondents’ opinion was neutral, 8% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed, that accommodation status increased by availing AKRSP’s facilities.

The table 4 shows the opinion of 100 respondents in table about the question that

Table 3: Decision Making Increased after availing AKRSP facility

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	23	22.8	23.0	23.0
Agree	25	24.8	25.0	48.0
Neutral	48	47.5	48.0	96.0
Disagree	4	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	100	99.0	100.0	

Source: Author’s own calculation (2013)

In table 3 shows the opinion of 100 respondents about the question that role in decision making and position in my family has increased after availing AKRSP facilities, from the study area 23% respondents strongly agree, 25% agree, 48% respondent’s are neutral and 8% were disagree with the question “role in decision making and position in my family has increased after availing AKRSP facility

AKRSP help to increase education level. The figure shows 100 of respondents, 23% are graduate, 17% are above graduate, 18% are secondary passed, 9% middle level, 19% primary and 14% respondents are illiterate.

Table 4: AKRSP helped to improve education at primary and higher level for family members.

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Illiterate	14	13.9	14.0	14.0
Primary	19	18.8	19.0	33.0
Middle	9	8.9	9.0	42.0
Secondary	18	17.8	18.0	60.0
Graduation	23	22.8	23.0	83.0
Above Graduation	17	16.8	17.0	100.0
Total	100	99.0	100.0	

Source: Author’s own calculation (2013)

Table 5: AKRSP helped me to start new business

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	13	12.9	13.0	13.0
Agree	13	12.9	13.0	26.0
Neutral	19	18.8	19.0	45.0
Disagree	44	43.6	44.0	89.0
Strongly disagree	11	10.9	11.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0		

Source: Author’s own calculation (2013)

The table 5 shows the opinion of the respondents about the question “AKRSP helped me to start new business. 26% respondents are strongly agree and agree.44% disagree responses are greater than agree responses.

Table 6:Chi-Square Test for AKRSP Increase Life Standard.

Ho1: AKRSP does not help me to increase my life style standard.

Ha1: AKRSP help me to increase my life standard.

Statistical Test	Increase Life Standard
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Chi-square calculated	37.840
Chi-square tabulated	7.82
Degree of freedom	3
Confidence interval	95%

Source: Author’s own calculation (2013)

Table 6 shows the value of Chi-square for AKRSP Increase life standard. The value calculated of Chi-square is 37.840 and the value of Chi-square tabulated is 7.82, which is less than Chi-square calculated value and Chi square tabulated value lies in the critical region, so we reject the null hypothesis and accepts the alternate hypothesis.

Table 7: Chi- square Test for AKRSP is an effective program for getting prosperity

Ho2: AKRSP is not an effective program for getting prosperity.

Ho2: AKRSP is an effective program for getting prosperity.

Stat istical Test	Effective Program for Getting Prosperity
Chi-square calculated	52.460
Chi-square tabulated	5.99
Degree of freedom	2
Confidence interval	95%

Source: Author’s own calculation (2013)

Table 7 show the value of Chi-square for the AKRSP is an effective program of getting prosperity. The value Calculated of Chi-square is 52.460 and the value of tabulated value is 5.99, which is less than Chi-square calculated value and Chi square tabulated value lies in the critical region, so we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis.

Table 8:Chi-square Test for AKRSP helps in saving

Ho3: AKRSP does not help in my saving.

H03: AKRSP help me in my saving.

Statistical Test	Help in Saving
Chi-square calculated	81.440
Chi-square tabulated	7.82
Degree of freedom	3
Confidence interval	95%

Source: Author’s own calculation (2013)

Table 8 shows the value of Chi-square for AKRSP help in saving. The value calculated of Chi-square is 81.440 and the value of Chi-square tabulated is 7.82, which is less

than Chi-square calculated value and Chi square tabulated value lies in the critical region, so we reject the null hypothesis and accepts the alternate hypothesis.

Conclusion

In this study we have analyzed the role of AKRSP for women empowerment, 100 respondents were selected through random sampling. Different question are asked from respondent regarding performance of organization, economics aspect, social aspect and decision making aspect. Respondent were asked for their inspection whether, agree, strongly agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Chi-square and descriptive statistical tools were used for presentation and interpretation of data.

From the statistical analysis of the data it is found that majority of the respondents are of the view that AKRSP has played a significant role in uplifting the socio economic condition of women in Chitral. AKRSP has direct involvement of community as a main power in different project and activities lead almost all projects to the success which plays an important role for the women empowerment, they can better understand the areas and can come with the solution and can analysis which project is better and beneficial to them. It helps women to increase not only there family income level but in overall economic development of area through introducing different trainings and activities to ensure the importance of women in society.

Recommendations

1. AKRSP should conduct awareness programme for women empowerment to change the orthodox achieved of people regard women empowerments in the area.
2. The study shows the women empowerment program have been short term and sustainable. Therefore it is suggested to initiate long term and sustainable the women empowerment program by AKRSP.
3. Women should be encouraged for higher education.
4. The role of women should not be defined only in terms of wife- mother housekeeper by the policy maker or the society. She would be encouraged within the Islamic framework, to get training in any field in which she interest and aptitude and can make a contribution toward the national development.

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