

Peasants and Workers Groups

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SOUTH ASIA PARTNERSHIP-PAKISTAN

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Glossary of Acronyms

CCB	Citizen Community Board
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DC	District Council
DDO	Deputy District Officer
DFG	District Focal Group
DPO	District Partner Organization
DRC	District Resource Centre
EDO	Executive District Officer
ERs	Elected Representatives
GLA	Government Line Agency
GoP	Government of Pakistan
HRD	Human Resource Development
IEC	Information Education Communication
KMM	Kissan Mazdoor Marakiz
KWB	Kissan and Workers Baethak
LGRD	Local Government and Rural Development
LGS	Local Government System
LRBT	Layton Rahmatullah Benevolent Trust
MC	Monitoring Committees
MIS	Management Information Systems
NAG	National Advisory Group
NCHD	National Commission for Human Development
NRB	National Reconstruction Bureau
PAG	Provincial Advisory Group
PWGs	Peasants and Workers Groups
SAP-PK	South Asia Partnership-Pakistan
SDGP	Strengthening Democratic Governance in Pakistan
SO	Support Organization
SSCs	Sectoral Community Councils
TMA	Tehsil Municipal Administration
TMO	Tehsil Municipal Officer
ToT	Training of Trainers
UC	Union Council
WTO	World Trade Organization

Preface

Peasants and rural workers in Pakistan are, socially, economically and politically, the most deprived class. Huge majority of the rural population based on the poor farmers and workers are directly or indirectly related to agriculture. They do not have easy access to education and health facilities. They don't have compatible infrastructure and responsive agricultural services. They are illiterate or barely literate, with completely no knowledge of their fundamental rights as guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan and international conventions. They don't have access to information assuring them of their being as 'equal human beings' and their rights as citizens of a state who pay tax so that its governments and departments should collectively provide them all what is missing in their lives. Their 'deprivation' is based on the absence of such opportunities which ensure their 'control on their own lives' in day-to-day decision making and governance. The women and religious minorities from this class are of course at the lowest ebb. Their rights are violated on account of being both poor and different in terms of gender or religious identity.

The peasants and rural workers are highly disorganized. They have been voiceless through out the history of Pakistan. The state and its policies are largely responsible for this situation. Pakistan has been facing long periods of dictatorial regimes during which fundamental rights of citizens of Pakistan remained suspended. These hurdles did never let peasants and rural workers unite or organize.

Strengthening Democratic Governance in Pakistan (SDGP) is one such program which might be termed as a drop in the ocean in this regard. It is a rigorous program being carried, with peasants, workers, including women and religious minorities, elected representatives, government departments, civil society organizations and networks. Through SDGP, SAP-PK is trying to organize the peasants and rural workers so that they may raise their voice.

This is an annual report on the performance of rural peasants and workers groups (PWGs).It highlights the first year's activities of these groups. It also reflects the struggles and their collective actions in form of case studies which show that they are getting organized.

Mohammad Tahseen
Executive Director

SUMMARY

The year 2006 proved to be very crucial for Strengthening Democratic Governance in Pakistan (SDGP) Program, run by the South Asia Partnership Pakistan (SAP-PK) with the help of its partner organizations in forty districts of the country.

There have been three major interventions that enrich democratic governance at the grassroots levels. Firstly, formation of 120 Peasants and Workers Groups (PWGs) with a total membership of approximately 3500, out of which 40% are women, is a flagship achievement of the program. Not only that. These groups have started delivering their required tasks and activities within 40 districts of Pakistan, 10 each from the four provinces.

Secondly, engaging 60 Union Councils (UCs) have been another landmark accomplishment of the reported period. In the same vein, thirdly, rural poor have shown their presence at the district level through activities of well-managed District Focal Groups (DFGs) within 20 districts.

At the programme level, major components are now in place and operating to implement and support activities of the PWGs, UCs and the DFGs with a view to mobilize a movement of rural poor within the framework of devolved democratic structures of the country. This also implies capacity building and human resource development; so that the pro-poor groups at grassroots level can capitalize upon the best of devolved structures and actually be able to use the system in their favour and create practical avenues of state accountability and responsiveness because of their organized action.

Verifiable indicators and standards have been integrated into all aspects of the activities during the reporting year. Its progress is substantially complete and leading towards intended results.

Because of the work done at three levels of PWG, UC and district, South Asia Partnership Pakistan (SAP-PK) is also quickly positioning itself as an independent focal point for civic education support.

Nevertheless, scale and volume of the project demanded perpetual documentation of the work at grassroots level; the present report is part of such an endeavour.

This annual report provides detailed information about the progress, on-going activities and outputs emanating from the organized rural poor, from January 2006 to December 2006, as well as documentation on what we have best practiced and what we have learnt throughout the year. It is hoped this value-added progress report would also be suggestive to better performance in future.

During this year the organized movement of rural poor, after swiftly passing through its formative phase, entered the age of maturity by widening its scope and involving more people in its pro-poor activities. Started from July 2005 the program by the mid of 2006 reached to 120 union councils of 40 districts of Pakistan. The notable achievement, as mentioned above, was the formation of 120 peasants and rural workers groups which indicated completion of the first significant threshold of this movement. At the same time Local Government systems were studied and discussed among the stake holders at village, UC and district levels, in detail.

The rural poor started their movement under the SDGP with the aim to contribute to an enabling environment for democratic governance and citizens' participation, especially the vulnerable, in political decision-making and other processes, strengthened its roots in all the four provinces of the country during the reporting period.

Around 40 of these 120 PWGs were to take status of Citizens' community Boards (CCBs). With this development, it is envisaged that the PWGs would be formally linked with and benefiting from the devolved systems and technical and financial resources would be available to them from different tiers of LG systems and other Government Line Agencies (GLAs).

PWGs have also been capitalizing upon exposure trips to different government training and research institutions, which helped them, improve their relationship with the faculties and enhanced their knowledge base.

The target of linkages building among elected representatives (including Nazims and Naib-Nazims), government line agencies and LG officials were met in some districts of the SDGP. Establishment of these linkages among key stakeholders went well towards well coordinated planning and actions at different political and administrative levels. In some cases, these coordinated efforts were the basis of bringing much needed benefits to the local poor population. Joint planning meetings have been started in some focused union councils for the purpose of synergies and sharing of information and resources. Such meetings have proved helpful in decreasing the gap among planners and local population. These meetings also provided new avenues of opportunities to women especially peasants and rural workers to participate in planning technical assistance in line with the needs of ERs for their effective role in elected houses.

DRCs proved source of data and knowledge base information and technical assistance to PWGs, elected representatives, CCBs and government officials in 40 districts. These have also played vital role in exchanging and sharing information on agriculture, rules and regulations of local government system, livelihood, gender and development, human rights etc, among stakeholders of the program.

PWGs were also successful in setting up two pilot Kissan Workers Baethaks. Along with other projected benefits these Baethaks will serve as a platform for conflict resolution, interfaith dialogue and promotion of culture at the grassroots level.

Strengthening of PWGs and their local networks for advocating local issues facing farmers also remained a prominent feature during the last six months. In some cases these advocacy campaigns particularly on canals water, and land rights were instrumental local in resolving some of the important issues of farmers through collective actions.

At the UC level, Elected Councilors (ERs) also got sensitized to their role and responsibilities in local government system. In each intervention it was tried at most to make them familiar with the LG structures, systems and rules of the business in order to make their presence productive in elected houses.

Activities undertaken during reporting period has provided basis to farmers and elected representatives especially peasants, workers and minorities to understand the need and

importance of group building. This sense of realization has initiated a strong possibility of emerging councilors' alliances to strive for their rights collectively.

Research support for rural poor has been initiated in some crucial areas like district profiles. Under this, thematic papers have been developed on issues like agriculture and food security, livelihood rights, land reforms, gender and development, marketing of agriculture products and farmers cooperatives societies.

This annual report builds upon the efforts, best practices and lessons learnt during the reporting period. Now that the foundation for a movement of rural poor has been instituted and activities have been started on accelerated pace, we have no hesitation in saying that despite heavy volume and scale the PWGs, UCs and DFGs have made appreciable achievements.

We believe that the report will not only document the progress but will also guide performance by highlighting lessons learnt to mitigate challenges faced by the poor and marginalized people who live in the focused 40 districts and are in dire need to realize the potential of democratic governance in Pakistan.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Democratic Governance

Democratic Governance is a state of living in democratic culture. It would primarily imply the Rule of Law – the principle that rule of law is supreme and dictates political actions of leaders and citizens rather than whims of individuals and subjectivism would prevail in determining the political discourse of a country. The government should rule according to the law, at any cost, presupposing equality. None is above the law - rich or poor, ethnic, gender or religious minority - all are entitled to equal protection before law.

Britain’s Department for International Development (DFID) has come up with a framework for democratic governance through its white paper, *Making Governance Work for the Poor*, in 2006. According to this, the governance can be understood as three elements:

- 1) State Capability
- 2) State Responsiveness
- 3) State Accountability

These three aspects are further explained in the table given below:

Understanding Democratic Governance		
Capability means having the ability to perform certain functions...	Responsiveness means taking account of citizens’ aspirations and needs...	Accountability means being answerable for what is done...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing political stability and security. ▪ Setting good rules and regulations. ▪ Creating the conditions for investment and trade, and promoting growth in jobs and incomes. ▪ Managing public finances and putting government policies into practice effectively. ▪ Making sure government departments and services meet people’s needs. ▪ Keeping borders secure and helping people move safely and legally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing ways for people to say what they think and need. ▪ Implementing policies that meet the needs of the poor. ▪ Using public finances to benefit the poor – for example to encourage growth and provide services. ▪ Providing public goods and services in ways that reduce discrimination and allow all citizens – including women, disabled people and ethnic minorities – to benefit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Offering citizens opportunities to check the laws and decisions made by government, parliaments or assemblies. ▪ Encouraging a free media and freedom of faith and association. ▪ Respecting human rights and making sure the ‘rule of law’, is upheld, for example by an independent judiciary. ▪ Providing regular opportunities to change leaders in peaceful ways.
Source: Department For International Development (DFID), <i>Making Governance Work for the Poor</i> , 2005		

The idea of *Democratic Governance* also suggests that democracy is not automatically achieved with the introduction of a multi-party system in a country. It seeks perpetual construction of a political system where justice and fairness prevail and people have the capacity to uphold the ideals of liberty, economic and social justice prevail, respect for human rights and responsibilities, national integrity and solidarity, equality, tolerance and harmony.

All in all, Democratic Governance demands participation of people in the process of governance to enable citizens for attaining state capability, responsiveness and accountability.

1.2. Decentralization as a Strategy of Democratic Governance

Currently, there is a strong argument emerging that decentralization can be the best strategy to obtain quality of democracy. It is also thought to be an effective tool for accountability of democratic institutions, even access to citizens' rights, citizen engagement in the political process, and the inclusion of historically excluded groups – women, ethnic minorities and poor especially those living in remote areas.

There are three main reasons which qualify decentralized structures to be the best area of democratic public action and participation.

Firstly, the local governments are “close to homes” and can be more accountable to citizens because of their geographical access. Citizens are better able to monitor these institutions rather than distant provincial and national governments. Here the government actions and outcomes can be easily observed, analyzed, monitored and influenced. People can actually see what they are getting on the grounds.

Secondly, citizens can be more motivated to act for their rights within the decentralized systems because local and municipal issues are generally related with their daily lives i.e. public schools, roads, hospitals, social welfare, and trash collection, etc. This is especially more relevant to poor communities which tend to look towards public services in the absence of adequate resources to buy private services.

Thirdly, the decentralized government systems may allow for greater inclusiveness of different sectors of society. In a local setting, people tend to participate from diverse groups. In that way, poor might efficiently voice their concern collectively because they have a voting and group leverage at the local and municipal levels.

1.3. Decentralization in Pakistan

After independence, Pakistan inherited the weakened local government institutions. She had no progressive system of local self-government.

During the British colonial administration, the 1935 Government of India Act allowed provincial autonomy and permitted provinces to frame legislation on local government systems. After Pakistan's freedom, the Basic Democracies System under General Ayub Khan in 1959 introduced a four-tier government. The basic democracies program was meant to involve villagers in development programs through direct elections to union councils and indirect elections to bodies serving large administrative units to supplement the rural development strategy of the state. Researchers say that the program did not fully realize its objective. However, it cultivated “awareness of development and need for change at the grassroots level. It also helped in improving infrastructure and in providing other basic facilities.¹

¹ Reforma, Mila and De Guzman, Raul (eds.), 1993. "Decentralization Towards Democratization and

Reforma and De Guzman noted the following developments in the decentralization process of Pakistan:

- The Basic Democracies system continued until 1971 and was abolished in 1972 by the PPP Regime. Some adhoc arrangements were made to fill the vacuum that existed at the lower level of government.
- In 1972, as directed by the Federal Government, the Provincial governments in their respective jurisdiction promulgated the People's Government Ordinance. Union Councils in the rural areas were abolished.
- The 1973 Constitution led to the emergence of the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP), which laid emphasis on the promotion of local self-government as a vehicle of economic development.
- In 1979 a process of devolution was opened to Pakistan. It resulted to the following reforms:
 - Elections to the local councils in the rural and urban areas were held for the first time. All local councils had elected chairmen.
 - The provinces and the federally administered areas were allowed to frame their own local government laws. As a result, the provinces have promulgated various laws.
 - Local government laws relating to the rural and urban areas were unified to avoid duplication.
 - Local councils could approve their budgets and taxation proposals.

The latest decentralization policy in Pakistan was announced on October 17, 1999. This was then claimed that devolution of power and responsibility would strengthen the role of local bodies by giving them adequate powers to generate resources and allocate the resources for local needs.

The plan to establish democracy at the grassroots level throughout the country was announced on March 23, 2001. According to the National Reconstruction Bureau, The Local Government Plan “integrates the rural with the urban local governments on the one hand, and the bureaucracy with the local governments on the other, into one coherent structure in which the district administration and police are answerable to the elected chief executive of the district. Citizen monitoring by elected representatives, the civil society's involvement with development, and a system of effective check and balances, completes the hard core of the political structure and system of the Local Government.”²

The decentralized systems are now operative for the last six years with introduction of new local institutions and structures for local governance and enhanced opportunities for citizens to participate in the affairs of government at the grassroots level. In any case, there has been a massive development; administrative and fiscal systems been overhauled, and more than 2 hundred thousand local government politicians have been elected twice to more than 6,458 union, tehsil and district councils.

Development", EROPA, Japan

² http://www.nrb.gov.pk/publications/LG_Final_Plan_2000.pdf

One of the most notable points of departure from previous local government schemes in Pakistan has been placing the elected representatives at the apex of the district administration. The post of the all-powerful Deputy Commissioner (DC) was abolished and replaced with a District Coordination Officer (DCO). Another distinguishing feature of the new decentralized systems is that it addresses the rural-urban divide by placing both rural and urban union councils under the tehsil government. The decentralization also now creates opportunities for citizens to make important decisions dealing with not only local government functions but also the Annual Development Programs as well as poverty reduction programs. The community empowerment is another area where the system has long-term stakes in the form of Citizens Community Boards (CCBs). Monitoring of service delivery by local representative would also give impetus to the empowerment drive.

1.4. Gaps of Democratic Governance

Despite structural changes being introduced by the Local Government Plan 2000 - the input functions of democracy, public participation and public involvement in the decision making structures are major challenges for the decentralized system.

The decentralized system is now in its second tenure. However, assessment studies suggest that either public participation is absent or in many cases unclear about their democratic role, especially at the union and tehsil levels. This leads us to the UN Statement delivered by the UN Resident Coordinator in Pakistan at the Pakistan Development Forum in March 2001, which so ironically states: "In Pakistan, the real challenge lies in the implementation of plans and policies as well as winning the confidence of a skeptical public."³

Systemic changes do not automatically guarantee citizens' empowerment and translation into public action and participation.

1.5. Strengthening Democratic Governance in Pakistan

South Asia Partnership Pakistan (SAP-PK) has been in consistent deliberation over making democratic governance work in Pakistan. This has resulted in the designing of a *Strengthening Democratic Governance in Pakistan (SDGP)* program. It is a four-year intervention aimed at increasing the participation of rural poor in local governance. This would create spaces for the rural poor to significantly contribute towards decision-making and policies formulated for their development and well being at the local level. According to the program definition, the rural poor include subsistence farmers, peasants, rural workers, and minorities. Women are a cross-cutting group among all these categories.

The program is being implemented in 40 districts and 400 union councils of Pakistan (ten districts from each province and ten union councils from each district), cutting across all tiers of local governance. However, a few are envisaged for at provincial and national levels.

SDGP has been initiated to contribute to an enabling environment for democratic governance and citizens' participation, especially the vulnerable, in political decision-making and other processes. The need of the program was felt against the dismal prevailing socio-political and

³ <http://www.un.org.pk/RCStmPDF.htm>

economical situation in the country. The idea was to propose a program with the capacity to affect the lives of the marginalized sections of the society in a comprehensive way.

At the time of initiation of the program the fate of the local government was in question. The fractured opposition political parties were trying to build up a strong alliance but were unable to reconcile among themselves. The political scene was murky as ever and there was confusion within the political arenas. At the same time, the rapid increase in violence and militarization eclipsed hope to grow and develop especially for the downtrodden regions of the country.

The weakening of the social structure was accelerated by the downward trend in terms of production thus causing hardships, economic crisis for small farmers which constitute almost 67% of the total labour force of the country. The prices of essential on farm inputs have showed upward swing over the last six months whereas market prices of the yield have not increased with the same proportion. Thus the poor monetary returns from land and low farm yield have negatively impacted food security and social milieu of poor rural population.

CCBs were proposed as a structure to have inflow of resources for development schemes and programmes like basic rural infrastructure, rural employment and provision of basic social services at the local level. However, so far CCBs have not been given the required level of support and resources at UC, tehsil and district levels. In most of union councils of focused districts, very limited funds were allocated to CCBs for development schemes. To date budget allocated to CCBs, established in selected districts of the project, namely Bannu, Rajanpur and Layyah, funds have not been released to them. Formation and operational mechanisms of CCBs are made highly complicated by state organs to take the political mileage. Such kind of hurdles and blocks has rendered this three tier governing system inefficient and ineffective to deliver at desired levels.

The military operation in Balochistan was also liable to crop up a situation where a large number of people, elected representatives as well as government institutions found it difficult to undertake their normal activities.

1.6. Goal and Purpose of the SDGP

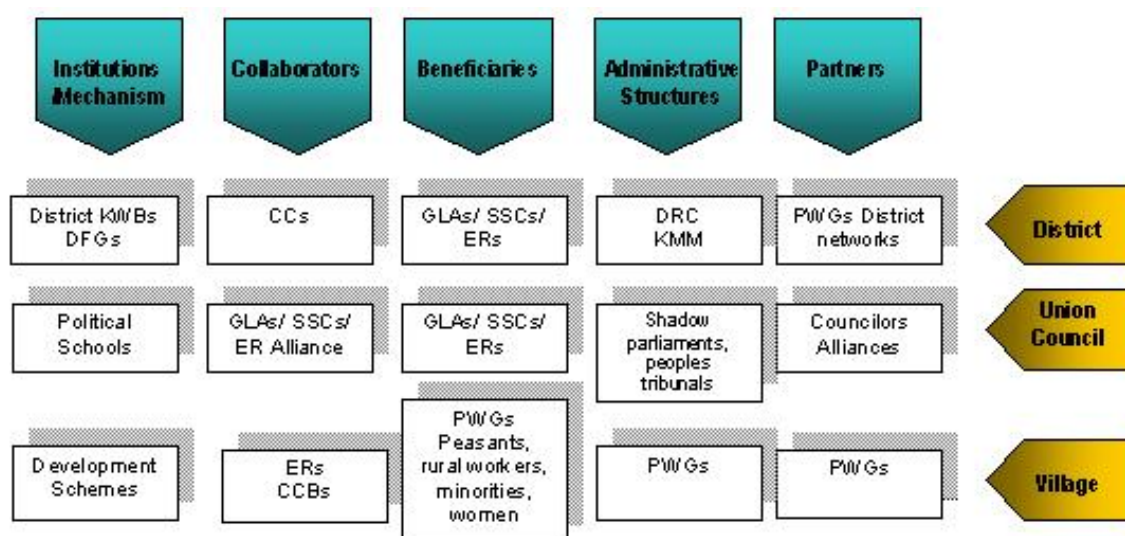
SDGP was started to address multi-dimensional but one of the core issues of the country: to make democratic governance work at the local levels.

The overall goal of the SDGP is *To contribute to an enabling environment for democratic governance and citizens' participation, especially the vulnerable, in political decision-making and other processes.*

The purpose of the SDGP is *Capitalization of democratic and political space in & around local government system by the peasants' and rural workers', especially women and minorities, facilitated in target districts.*

To meet this objective multi-faceted activity were designed and are in progress in 120 UCs in all four provinces.

1.7. Institutional Arrangement at the Grassroots Level



1.8. Output Results within the Districts

- ⇒ Peasants and rural workers are organized and enabled to negotiate their rights and utilize their potential.
- ⇒ Functioning of ERs and LG institutions improved and are more responsive to PWGs' interests. (20 focus districts)
- ⇒ Systems + mechanisms for effective and efficient social service delivery of selected GLAs demonstrated. (20 focus districts)
- ⇒ Enhanced & more equitable participation of PWGs in LG decision-making and accountability supported. (20 focus districts)
- ⇒ Existing local level civil society support and cooperation mechanisms strengthened.

1.9. Targets of Rural Poor for Democratic Governance

1. 400 UCs' PWGs (40% are exclusively women PWGs) established, trained and regularly meeting
2. 100 UCs level CCBs (33% for women) of peasants and rural workers formed
3. 150 small schemes at UC level designed and implemented
4. Knowledge and skills of m/f peasants and rural workers about LG plan, rules of business and other codes of conduct improved
5. At least in 12 UC - 3 in each province, all structures given in LGS are formed and functional
6. 100 UCs all Councillors (esp. women, peasants' and rural workers' representatives) received basic orientation on LG
7. In 100 UCs, pro-poor development schemes submitted by ERs
8. In 100 UCs Peasants' & workers' representatives effectively take part in council sessions
9. Union Council sessions and committee meetings are regularly held
10. Issue based advocacy by ERs conducted in 100 UCs
11. Policy debates, draft bills, amendments presented and discussed at UC to district level
12. Pro-poor policies and budgets submitted and discussed by the councils in focus UCs
13. Profiles and database of 20 districts developed
14. Long-term district development plans for 8 districts developed
15. GLA coordination meetings organized at least every quarter in 20 districts
16. Joint monitoring of development activities by PWGs and ERs conducted
17. Annual UC reports prepared and disseminated
18. Dialogues between PWGs, ERs & Nazims organized for feedback on UC activities
19. 30% of monitoring committees have members from PWGs
20. Open hearing and peoples assembly sessions organized in atleast 60 UCs
21. Policy dialogues and media talk shows, campaigns organized
22. 40 District resource centres (knowledge base) established
23. Trainers pool in 20 districts established and functional

1.10. Key Stakeholders at the Grassroots' Level

- Peasants and workers groups (PWGs)
- Teshil and district level networks of PWGs
- Elected and non-elected officials of UCs
- Kissan and Workers Baethaks (KWBs)
- Political Parties
- Local representatives of media
- CSOs/ NGOs
- Support Organizations

2. PROGRESS OF THE RURAL POOR

Democratic governance and articulation and aggregation of interests of the rural poor through the decentralized structures have been a new idea; there are issues of general political apathy, marginalization, unawareness and skepticism about the political system and capacity of the public to use the system through procedural activism that create reluctance within the rural poor to act for common good.

Following the macro-economic changes happening since 1980s in favour of more privatization of the social services, poor have experienced rapid public disownership of sectors like health, education and agriculture, severely affecting their ability and access to basic social services and damaging their livelihoods.

The situation has moreover continued to deteriorate due to internal conflicts, process of so-called Islamization, the rise of militancy in Pakistan and inappropriate government policies, including declining financial resources for the social sectors and lack of human resource development.

Today, there is a realization that the poor will have to stand for themselves and there is a need of including the poor if we really make democracy work in the country.

The SDGP has come up with a timely proposal to intervene to face emerging challenges as quickly as possible to prevent future damages on the political system. Vanguard of this movement of the rural poor at PWGs, focused UCs and other forums within the 40 districts the grassroots' level measures are being taken to pursue interests of the rural poor within the framework of devolved structures. Following is the details given of the progress made during the reporting period.

2.1. Organization of Peasants and Rural Workers

Organization of the rural poor is informed by the recognition that massive political participation in Pakistan is essential for success and sustainability of the democratic governance - improving responsiveness of national policies and programmes to citizens' needs and ensuring transparency and accountability in policy making and implementation processes.

Genuine participation of marginalized groups, however, goes beyond dialogue with or contracting a few non-governmental organizations. It must engage all citizens beyond elections to active participation in making decisions that affect their lives. Engaging people requires efforts and mechanisms that can empower all, but most especially the disadvantaged members of society, to participate effectively in development processes.

To enable peasants and rural workers to organize and mobilize for their interests, the PWGs, KWBs, UCs and DFGs went through a number of activities, as given below:

First of all, new and already existing peasants and rural workers groups (PWGs) around their issues were identified and established. Once the workers groups were established, the regular activities were started. For these groups 20 training workshops on development planning, management, resource generation, social communication, advocacy, record-keeping, lobbying, leadership, networking and sectoral skills were organised. These activities helped the participants understand different issues and built their confidence.

Another set of 22 training workshops were organized on advocacy, record keeping, lobbying, leadership, PRA, RRA, Networking and sectoral skills.

It is because of this rigorous set of training that now peasants and workers are using skills to improve record keeping, resource generation, fodder, and livestock management.

Moreover, eight 'Rights Education workshops' were organized for the peasants and worker groups, their organizations and networks. It was an important activity for the peasants as it enhanced and improved their understanding level. SDGP focused further on 40 PWGs' and their capacity building in designing and conducting education of peasants and rural workers' groups, networks and representatives on human rights, gender, LG plan, rules rights and procedures on democratic governance.

Training for 60 farmers' committees, groups, networks, CCBs members and provincial level coalitions were also organized and facilitated. For improving their mutual interaction the program also designed 40 networking meetings between VC, NC, CCBs, PWGs and Councils for development schemes; this segment of the program also contained sessions with other donors, SOs and development professionals, etc. throughout the program it was felt by the program organizers that peasants lacked exposure to the other areas of the country. Addressing this issue SDGP organized 36 exposure visits for PWGs from village to district, district to district and district to province.

Another task was to institute CCBs during 2006-07. The task was taken duly and under the program activities 40 CCBs of PWGs were established, and through various activities technical support for proposal writing was provided to them so that they could apply for more funds to initiate different development projects.

Local activism was also a major area to work on. 120 PWGs were facilitated for active participation in local mobilization. Furthermore, 20 district level conventions of peasants & workers—mass mobilization and people to people interaction were also held.

Other than capacity building in various fields giving technical support to the peasants was also one of the prime focus areas. The program facilitated functioning of 4 Kissan Baethaks (peasant centres) & workers institutions, developed and supported 40 districts and tehsil level information and knowledge centres for peasants and workers (e-poor networking). At the same time, it provided technical and/or financial support to 13 PWGs around rural based livelihood (small schemes).

It was also ensured that peasants should be provided with enough opportunities to know the things better through first hand experience. The program organized & facilitated 4 exposure visits of peasants & rural workers groups & networks. The press was also kept engaged and informed about the SDGP activities.

All this has resulted in organization of 44 events and/or campaigns to promote and safeguard peasants' and workers' rights and entitlements, e.g. press conference, media campaigns, walks, rallies, etc. (40 Rallies and Walks, 4 Press Conferences).

This was done after the PWGs identified information needs of key stakeholders of the program, and also developed system and provided support in information management for peasant's centres and worker institutions.

Because of public advocacy done by the PWGs some leverage has been attained in influencing local power relationship. Collective resistance, protest and mobilization have also started challenging basic power relations in focus districts, mostly in places where individuals and groups gain strength from class, caste or and status determinants. In its modest way, the organization of rural poor is indicating to a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systemic forces which marginalize peasants, workers, women, minorities and other disadvantaged sections in the districts.

Activity Chart: Organization of Peasants and rural workers, esp. Women and minorities										
Identify existing Groups and form new PWGs	20 Skill-based Training Workshops	8 Rights-based Training Workshops	Training of 40 Groups in Rights Education	60 Training Sessions	40 Networking Meetings	36 Exposure Trips	Formation of 40 CCBs	120 PWGs for Local Mobilization	20 District Level Conventions	IEC Material
Functioning of 4 Kissan Baethaks			40 district and tehsil level information and knowledge centres				Small scheme support to 13 PWGs			
4 exposure visits						44 events and/or campaigns to promote & safeguard peasants' and workers' rights and entitlements (40 Rallies and Walks, 4 Press Conferences)				
Identification of information needs of the key stakeholders.						Development of system and provision of support in information management for peasant's centres and worker institutions.				

2.2. Enhancing Responsiveness of the LG System

A critical aspect of successful functioning of the democratic governance at the grassroots level is its institutional capacity to respond to the demands made by citizens, who have to be well informed about the government functions and LG procedures. This would systemically prepare the people to make officials accountable.

Accountability pressures is however depended upon pressures imposed on elected officials by citizens, through the way they act, exercise voice and receive information about the actions of officials. If a large fraction of citizens either do not express their opinions or lack proper information or understanding of system, a democracy would create no incentives/ pressures for elected and non-elected representatives to espouse or implement policies in the public interest.

Such a scenario would also witness corruption by officials and hold of special interest groups, often very powerful, without facing any threat of displacement.

The SDGP started its activities by first assessing the capacity building needs and existing knowledge base of 120 UCs & ERs'. Keeping in view their needs 300 training materials (modules) were designed in local languages. Furthermore, 2 ToT workshops of SAP-PK staff

and its focal partners about LGS and its functions were conducted on “challenges and issues; and, the process of formation of village based councils and committees.”

The program assisted 40 councils in the formation of UC level monitoring & other committees, Village and Neighborhood councils, and, sectoral community councils (e.g. SMC, etc.). It also advocated for inclusion of PWGs’ members.

The objective was to make the locals more familiar with the newly introduced LG System and to create understanding between the LG officers and the local people. To that end, following activities were carried out:

- a) The councils’ and committees’ representatives of 1200 ERs were trained about LGS, their role and responsibilities under LG S.
- b) Promoted 160 ERs’ & committees’ interactions (regular meetings/ dialogues) with village based LG structures and PWGs.
- c) Trained and provided technical support to 240 ERs, councils and committees representatives, CCBs in developing pro-poor budgeting and schemes planning and building their linkages with other support organizations.
- d) Trained and assisted 240 ERs, councils’, committees’ and GLAs’ representatives and in introducing the system of transparency and accountability.
- e) Setup 60 “political schools” through holding study circle meetings of ERs from different UCs, Tehsils and Districts; learning/exposure visits; and district to VC (vertical) dialogues.
- f) Introduced 4 annual performance awards for best ER, council/committee.

To further improve the management and working of the program the activities were designed to provide technical support to 12 UCs on project planning and management. At the same time information needs of the 60 key stakeholders of the program was identified. One important assignment was to help establish councils’ database in 16 union councils and conduct follow-ups of 16 ERs, councils and committees to identify performance gaps and provide need based technical support. All this was done within the prescribed time space. Among all focus areas advocacy and networking was the most crucial aspect of the program. Therefore, at all levels of the program networking was given utmost importance.

160 dialogue sessions were arranged between peasants and workers groups, local government institutions and line departments (120 UC level dialogues, 40 district level dialogues). This was an important activity to bring the stakeholders of the local government system together and understand each other.

It further supported 20 ERs/councils to network and advocated the issues of LGS from local to national policy levels by organizing district level dialogues/round-table conferences between ERs, GLAs, etc. this activity proved highly useful as the participants showed great interest in these meetings.

To improve the general understanding of the peasants 120 forums, discussions and dialogues among public representatives in different structures of local government system and 80 tehsil level seminars on policy issues were organized.

Activity Chart: Enhancing Responsiveness of the LG System to PWGs' interests.

Access knowledge base and Capacity Needs of 120 UCs & ERs	300 Training materials (modules) in local languages	2 ToT workshops of SAP-PK staff and its focal partners	Formation of 40 UC level monitoring and other councils	1200 ERs are oriented by LGS	60 Networking Meetings between ERs and PWGs	240 ERs and CCBs members are technically supported	240 ERs are trained in transparency and accountability	60 Political Schools	4 annual performance awards for best ERs, council/committee
Technical support to 12 project planning and management		Identify information needs of the 60 key stakeholders			Help establish database in 16 UCs		Follow-ups of 16 ERs, councils and committee to identify gaps and provide need based technical support.		
160 Dialogues focusing PWGs (120 UC level dialogue, 40 district level)		Support of 20 ERs/ councils for networking and advocacy			Hold 120 forums, discussions and dialogues		80 tehsil level seminars on policy issues		

2.3. Improvement of Social Service Delivery

The rural poor working within the framework of SDGP have been able to play a positive and constructive role to improve mechanism of social service delivery. For that line agencies were trained on relevant issues at the one hand and on the other the PWGs were encourage identifying and rallying for their specific needs in social sectors. This was coupled with creating interface with the line agencies and NGOs.

The SDGP focused on how to improve the social service delivery in the selected GLAs. Effective activities were planned and carried out to work in this particular area.

The first activity which was carried out was to train 60 GLAs and SCCs staffs on improved planning, monitoring, record keeping, and reporting and support in improving organizational systems. This activity proved to be of great use for the participants.

Capacity development programs were accompanied by technical support in this area. SDGP through its activities provided guidelines and technical (data) support to 8 districts. Furthermore, Resource Centers were established for scheme development, proposal writing and linkages to facilitate the resource funding sources. At the same time, 16 long-term district development plans based on VC+UC+Tehsil (bottom-up) participatory planning were developed.

The program also organized 16 joint planning by GLAs, NGOs, SCCs, projects and other service providers for the purpose of synergy and synchrony. This activity was complemented by the 16 joint meetings – GLA, ER, PWG and SCC monitoring of service delivery.

Service delivery situation analysis and assessment of 40 District GLAs and sectoral community councils (SCCs baseline) were also conducted. Then in the next stage 10 District Profiles were prepared and at the same time database was developed. It is continuous process and still going on. The important activity was to prepare and share GLA service delivery status and service needs annual report (fact sheets) for 20 districts included in the program.

Activity Chart: Improvement of Social Service Delivery

Train 60 GLAs and SCCs staffs on improved planning, monitoring, record keeping, and reporting and support in improving organizational systems			
8 Distt. Resource Centers provided guidelines and data support	16 long-term district development plans	Organize 16 joint planning by GLAs, NGOs, SCCs, projects and other service providers	Promote 16 joint meetings – GLA, ER, PWG and SCC monitoring of service delivery
service delivery situation analysis and need assessment of 40 District GLAs and sectoral community councils	20 District Profiles and on going development of database		Prepare and share GLA service delivery status and service needs annual report (fact sheets) for 20 districts included in the program
40 networking meetings	80 dialogues and improved coordination (joint planning) among GLAs and with LGS	44 advocacy meetings with district/provincial governments	40 talk-shows on GLAs' performance and service delivery issues

Like other areas, advocacy and networking held a prominent position. Under the program 40 networking meetings were facilitated between PWGs, GLAs, and NGOs. (20 NWFP & Sindh, 10 Balochistan & Punjab, 10 NWFP & Sindh, 10 Balochistan & Punjab), and promoted 80 dialogues and improved coordination (joint planning) among GLAs and with LGS for promotion of reforms agenda.

The program also concentrated on organizing 44 advocacy meetings with district/provincial governments for adequate resource allocation and for provision of staff and facilities for GLAs' improved service delivery. (40 district level, 4 provincial level). The program also used media in its activity and organized 40 talk-shows on GLAs' performance and service delivery issues.

2.4. Equitable Participation of the Rural Poor in Decision Making

The current institutional arrangement of decentralization recognizes the socioeconomic disadvantage faced by rural poor, especially the women, and incorporates specific provisions to provide quota to disadvantaged groups at the local level. However that would not automatically translate into interest aggregation for the rural poor.

After imparting adequate knowledge of LG system to the peasants and workers the important task was to engage them in the decision making process. However, for this further capacity building of the workers and improved knowledge of the socio-political situation of the country was needed. The following activities remained helpful in achieving the results:

For the workers' and peasants mobilization 40 sensitization events were organized on issues & possibilities vis-à-vis LG system & governance. The events helped the focused groups understand things better and motivated them to become socially active. Other than these activities, three monitoring guidelines and training modules on monitoring, evaluation, record keeping, report writing were developed for further training and capacity building of the PWGs. These modules helped train and assist 120 PWGs and CCBs in "on-the-job monitoring of schemes & reporting".

For the continuity of the activities and long lasting effect of the program resource centers for the peasants were instituted so that they may have a permanent source of information within their locality. Therefore, under the program 4 district and tehsil level information and knowledge centres for peasants and workers were established during the year 2006-07. It is also form of e-poor networking. At the same time through various activities the SDGP workers encouraged and promoted participation of 16 PWGs' representatives in 20 UC sessions.

All the outcomes of communication and monitoring of 16 UCs were made available to other people.

Another achievement of the SDGP was that it organized and facilitated 120 UC, 80 tehsil and 40 district level citizen's forums during and after local government elections. And facilitate 60 PWGs to collectively negotiate with political parties for provincial / national assembly seats in 2007 general elections so that they could monitor 2007 election & adjust strategy to capitalize in 2009 election.

Two thematic papers about agriculture, livelihood, peace, human security, regional cooperation and gender were compiled and disseminated among the focused groups. Moreover, LG performance evaluation score-cards were developed.

To keep all the concerned people updated about the UC activities periodically compile 1 consolidated report of UC activities and decisions and circulated to target communities through PWGs and local media. Moreover, developed and disseminated public messages on the representation of peasants and rural workers in 20 districts at local government. This process of dissemination of the public messages is still going on.

For strengthening the already created network 1200 community based mobilization meetings / forums were organised to sensitize new leadership on the issues of democracy and good governance. At the same time for further involvement of the peasants 2 dialogues were organised with leaders of the political parties and workers during and before the local government elections.

It was a major task of the program that 40 UC level "Awami tribunals" (peoples tribunals) in selected areas were established and 40 talk shows on local electronic / print media at the district level were held.

Activity Chart: Equitable Participation of the Rural Poor in Decision Making

40 Sensitization events for PWGs on issues & possibilities vis-à-vis LG system & governance.	3 monitoring guidelines and training modules	120 PWGs and CCBs trained and assisted in on-the-job monitoring of schemes & reporting		120 follow-up of UCs' and GLAs' decisions/orders by PWGs	
4 district and tehsil level information and knowledge centres for peasants and workers (e-poor networking).	Participation of 16 PWGs' representatives in 20 UC sessions	16 UC supported in publicizing and communication of monitoring outcomes	120 union, 80 tehsil and 40 district level citizen's forums during and after LG elections	Facilitate 60 PWGs to collectively negotiate with political parties for 2007 general elections.	Monitor 2007 elections and strategize for LG elections
2 thematic papers	LG performance evaluation score-cards		1 consolidated report of UC	Develop and disseminate public messages in 20 districts	

			activities/decisions		
1200 community based mobilization meetings/ forums	2 dialogues with leaders of the political parties and workers	Support responsive and equitable decision-making.	40 UC level "Awami tribunals" (peoples tribunals)	40 district-level talk shows on local electronic / print media	40 UC level "Shadow Awami Parliaments"

2.5. Building Bridges at the Local Level

The formal networking and civil society strengthening is another output level results that has to be strengthened under the SDGP. For this various activities were planned as following:

During 2006-07 for the capacity building of the focus groups 4 assessment of capacities, systems, and strategies of partners were carried out. (CCs, DFGs, small networks, local CBOs).

Under the program 300 comprehensive and customized resource kits and training packages for use by partners were designed and developed.

These kits helped tremendously in training groups. Not only this but 4 CCs, 24 CBOs & CSOs were also trained on LG system, negotiation skills, social mobilization, development concepts and themes (gender, rights, peace & human security, livelihood, etc.) gender responsive budgeting, advocacy and networking, etc.

SDGP kept a close link with the partner organizations and concentrated equally on their growth and betterment. Under the same program the program managers provided Rights Education to partner organizations and networks, carried out 6 Gender orientation, training and advocacy of/with all partners and networks, developed 2 adequate monitoring mechanisms and follow-up partners in at least 120 union councils, trained all partners in MIS and reporting formats and methods and held 4 Policy debates and dialogues on gender rights and justice (especially addressing issues of violence against women).

Parallel to this, a pool of 80 individuals trainers in 40 districts was established and linked to various governance related (Govt. & non-governmental) training programs and also kept a check on the trainers' performance. All these activities were well planned and the target was achieved within the desired time.

Technical support was provided by the program officers smoothly and diligently. They supported functioning of 40 District Focal Groups (think-tank with rep. from various target groups, bar, media, political activists, influential, clergy, etc.) and developed system and provided support in information management for peasant's centers and worker institutions.

Without networking and advocacy desired results could not be achieved. Therefore, 40 Peasants and worker coalitions in 40 districts were identified and established. (20 Punjab & Sindh, 20 NWFP & Balochistan).

Moreover, networking meetings in 40 tehsils, 40 districts, 4 provincial, one national and regional level were held. It was decided that National and regional level meeting will be

conducted in next year. However, rapport building measures among CSOs and with Govt., clergy, politicians, through meetings, dialogues, information sharing were conducted, and 40 district dialogues on policy issues with CSOs were organized with elected representatives, government officials and other key stakeholders. At the same time, 20 partners in linkage building were established and also established working partnerships with GLAs and other service providers – as well as market and donors.

Activity Chart: Building Bridges at the Local Level

4 assessment of capacities, systems, and strategies of partners (CCs, DFGs, small networks, local CBOs).	300 customized resource kits and training packages	4 CCs, 24 CBOs & CSOs trained on thematic issues	Rghts education to partner organizations and networks	6 Gender orientation, training and advocacy events	Partners trained in MIS and reporting formats and methods	4 Policy debates and dialogues on gender rights and justice	80 individuals trainers' pool in 40 districts
Functioning of 40 District Focal Groups Supported				Develop system and provide support in information management for peasant's centers and worker institutions			
Identification / Selection & formation of 40 Peasants and worker coalitions in 40 districts		Networking meetings in 40 tehsils, 40 districts, 4 provincial, one national and regional level		Promote rapport building measures among stakeholders		40 district dialogues on policy issues	
						20 district partners established linkages and working partnerships with GLAs and other service providers	
40 district resource centers (DRCs)							

3. BEST PRACTICES OF THE YEAR

There can be many case studies of the rural poor working within the SDGP, which may serve as excellent examples for development actions elsewhere in the country. These cases may also promote innovative and sustainable solutions to problems faced by rural poor both in terms of attainment of their rights and improvement in local service delivery.

From a sample of 20 districts of Sindh and NWFP province, we are briefly narrating 13 best practices in the hope that these empirical and demonstrated solutions would be widely communicated, adopted and replicated. In order to encourage more pro-poor mobilization, all these practices present aspects of creativity and reflect the capacity of the SDGP vanguards – peasants, rural workers, minorities and women.

The summary of these best practices is as follows:

3.1. Public Action for Corporate Social Responsibility

It is challenging for poor peasant and workers to make state responsive for real functioning of democratic governance. However, it can be particularly so, if the corporate sector is made to behave with social responsibility because of the political leverage that it enjoys in Pakistan and due to poor regulatory mechanism within the country.

The rural poor, as a matter of fact, is one of the worst hit groups by the prevailing situation of corporate social irresponsibility. Lack of awareness coupled with low purchasing capacity has put the rural poor a very vulnerable situation. Experts on rural economy make the point that the rural population purchases about Rs100 billion fertilizers, Rs15 billion pesticides, Rs12 billion seeds, Rs30 billion tractors and Rs5 billion other agricultural implements annually.⁴ But no effective organ of the state is there to check the quantity and quality of products like fertilizers, pesticides and seed, and also the monopoly of a few groups in the rural economy sector.

This situation makes work of the SDGP vanguard groups incredibly difficult, and requires a lot of resources in the form of human energy, commitment and willingness to stand against powerful corporate groups who are often backed by the government officials.

Any public action for corporate social responsibility can be easily sidelined and corporate violations can be accepted as an everyday fact of life.

Nevertheless, the rural poor were sensitive towards directing their right-based interventions under the SDGP project to achieve better corporate deliveries, especially in the agriculture sector.

The experience has shown that before involving other rural poor in advocacy initiatives it is necessary to prioritize sectors that are most close to the communities and which need immediate interventions.

⁴ Waleed, Hamid. "Rural Chicaneries", Special Report, The News on Sunday, The News International. Pakistan: Sept 2007

It also seems significant that the rural poor resort to procedural activism and know supportive legalities for their public actions.

Public action, coupled with litigation, has demonstrated plausible results in advocacy done by the rural poor during the reporting period of SDGP.

Case study

Campaign & Legal Action against the sale of Counterfeit Seeds

In Badin (Sindh), an advocacy campaign was designed and carried ahead against the on-going sale of counterfeit seeds to the peasants and growers in the district, particularly in the PWGs villages. The PWGs and District Partner Organization (DPO) at first stage developed a working network at district level with other stakeholders. Through the continuous process of press conferences, protest rallies, marches, and hunger strikes and finally by filing a petition in Sindh High Court, Karachi Bench, the peasants and the small growers succeeded. The judgment of the honorable court came in favor of peasants' plea. Consequently, 1750 local peasants and growers, mostly belonging to the PWGs villages received healthy seeds in lieu of counterfeited ones.

Major skills involved in this successful campaign were advocacy & lobbying, strategic planning, networking duly complemented with legal action.

3.2. Linking Poor with Public Representatives & the Govt.

It has been encouraging that mechanisms to link PWGs with elected representatives and the line departments have been established mainly through capacity building and information sharing sessions.

There has been a series of meetings and dialogues among these three main groups of the project; after their individual training events. PWGs hosted these programmes. These assemblies have been instrumental in bringing together the PWGs, ERs and officials of the government line departments.

The PWGs have learnt that linkages should be formally built and with greater clarity of purpose and transparency of action.

Such linkages are important to pro-poor decision making at the local level and as a secondary benefit they have often resulted in pro-poor resources of allocation and social sector investment by the government.

Case study

Coordination among PWGs, ERs and GLAs

In district Dadu, the PWGs effectively got breakthrough and influenced the government functionaries with the help of Dialogues among PWGs, ERs and GLAs.

As a result of two Districts level dialogues among PWGs, ERs and GLAs two major actions were taken by the GLAs: In first dialogue EDO Health announced to execute DT spray after the PWG members from Peer Gunio village duly briefed him about poor health and the hygiene situation. DT spray was conducted in village on 11 December 2006. In second dialogue Assistant Manager of NADRA, District Dadu announced to host mobile camps in Village Peer Gunio for registration of votes in the area.

Moreover, the PWG arranged an Eye camp in PWG village Peer Gunio under the technical supervision of Layton Rahmatulla Benevolent Trust (LRBT) through linkages with Health Department. Coordination with line departments have also resulted in opening of 4 adult literacy centers of NCHD under its Jugno Program in villages Peer Gunio and Bazmal Khoso.

The PWGs and DFG in district Dadu successfully employed skills of coordination with line departments and linkages building, which resulted in provision of pro-poor services.

3.3. Shifting the Local Power Relations in Favour of the Poor

Peasants and farmers need support of local authorities and elites to have pro-poor decisions been made in their favour. For that, rural poor will have more direct say over their own decisions.

Experience during the SDGP has shown that before people undertake activities, demonstrate their rights and the commitment to take their affairs into own hands; they require analyzing local power relations: Who are the powerful social, economic and political elites? What are their stakes? Who will oppose our pro-poor action at any cost? Who can potentially ally with us? What are the possible scenarios of power relations after our interventions?

When poor are organized and have cordial relationships they are not only safer for their communities, more respected, and having greater opportunities; they can also cause an imbalance in the prevalent power relations within their localities. They are no more clients but also the chooser.

The focus districts of the SDGP are not unique in terms of the feudal hold. They share common social features of most other districts in Pakistan. But what has made them unusual is the presence of PWGs and their advocacy efforts; which have many a time resulted in pro-poor service delivery in far-flung and generally forgotten areas of Pakistan.

Case study

Pro-poor Political Leverage and Service Delivery

Ghotki district in Sindh is highly feudal and tribal in its nature, where land is mostly held by Mahar tribe and largely owned by the tribal chief of Mahar clan who is also the elected district Nazim. It's almost impossible to mobilize peasants in such a tribal district. However, due to continuous community mobilization and political education thousands of peasants and workers gathered at one place and held a district level convention – Harri (peasant) Conference. The district Nazim was also

invited to the event alongwith DCO, DPO and EDOs of the district.

At the occasion of the conference, the district Nazim announced 17 schemes for various PWG villages. Work is under way on these schemes currently. Before this, schemes mostly existed either on papers only or were approved on the recommendation of the sub-tribe's heads.

In other instances in the same district, three PWGs of village Hamzo Mahar, Jewwna Garh and Lohi carried on issue based advocacy against the remittances from the irrigation tax due to crops devastation after the heavy rainfall and the taxes were waved off for one year. Likewise talk show in the district resulted in approval of 1 KM link roads for the villages Ibraheem Mahar, Alam Mahar, and Milan Mahar.

3.4. Self-awareness Leads to Pro-poor Actions

People in the villages have to interact with local councilors on daily basis, who can play a crucial role in representing their local communities and ensuring people receive the top-quality public services they expect and deserve. This has been much true, after the powers have been devolved in Pakistan, but only in promise and theory so far, unfortunately.

The decentralized system recognizes power sharing, collective responsibility, public monitoring of social services, community organization and empowerment.

But the major problem, among other bigger political causes behind, under-functioning of the LG system than its stated aims, is that most of its major stakeholders, especially the councilors are not well-aware of their role in it.

The local representatives have yet to be clear of what they can do and should act under the system. This surely leads to their in-activity or submission before the powerful Nazims or the government officials.

In our pro-poor initiatives, we have to recognize the fact that local councilors can play positive role and there is a need to support decreasing the awareness gap among local representatives. This thinking has obviously paid off. The case study in the box given below will precisely demonstrate that.

Case study

Elected Representatives are Trained and Deliver

In Jaccobabad district, training for ERs was arranged. Prior to that, most of the ERs were unaware of the functions of LG system, role and responsibilities of councilors and particularly pro-poor budgeting. After continuous training of ERs under SDGP, councilors' knowledge regarding LG system has enhanced and their capacities and skills developed. The output of that exercise became visible when the trainee councilors of SDGP first ensured functioning of UC sessions on regular basis and then a councilor of UC Gharhi Chand submitted schemes of Drainage and Link road for village Qadir Bux Mangrio. Both of the schemes were approved due to better coordination and linkages with UC, Tehsil and District Nazim through SDGP.

The training has further been translated into successful action, when PWGs of Village Garhi Khari of UC Alanour arranged a CNIC mobile camp in collaboration with NADRA officials at Jecobabad.

3.5. Mobilization of the Poor

Mobilization of the poor is a major step through which people can achieve their due share at the local level. This makes the government and corporate sectors accountable and results in greater efficiency and effectiveness of community-based services.

According to the Public Safety Website⁵ there are three principle benefits of mobilizing the community:

- expediency and cost-savings;
- the promise of better quality services for poor; and,
- the emergence of local control over decisions

The case study given in the table below would inform to the same effect:

Case study

Mobilization and Relief to the Poor
In Larkana, a tehsil level seminar on crop pricing & village economy was organized and a talk show was held in which PWGs, civil society activists, and UC and tehsil Nazims and tehsil level GLAs participated. After the presentations by local agriculturists and veteran growers, hall was opened for the public discussion, in which participants compared the expenditure over crops and the return they get from the market. They discussed the lack of facilities available in the fields as well as in the villages. As a by product of the discussion over issues, Tehsil Nazim promised people some immediate relief - a Girls Middle School, Drainage Schemes and Water Courses. Soon after that, PWGs pursued the Nazims further and a Girls Middle School, lined drainage and watercourses were constructed. Two schemes were also approved for local CCBs.

3.6. Environmental Justice through Advocacy

Environmental justice and dispute over natural resources is a newly emerging phenomenon that is not only affecting groups but also severing lives of individuals in Pakistan. This is also a major concern for especially farmers.

The PWGs were cognizant of the fact that marginalised and weaker members of our communities should not be forced to deprive of their rights i.e. water. Why should farmers living on subsistence agriculture their sources of livelihood, when powerful are bent upon to usurp their rights.

⁵ Community Mobilization and Crime Prevention: Report to the National Crime Prevention Centre:
http://ww4.ps-sp.gc.ca/en/library/publications/reports/cmp/part1_why_community.html

Case study

Advocacy for Just Distribution of Water

In the mid of 2006, irrigation water shortage for small growers and peasants increased as influential land holders started thieving more water than their due share. PWGs held protest rallies in the Mirpurkhas city. Later, through effective lobbying with GLAs, this issue was resolved and Farm Water Management system was regulated on the basis of rotation.

This mobilization and advocacy work under SDGP caused regulation of Rotation on Farm Water Management, which has a far reaching effect on local agriculture and the organizational capacity of rural poor in the area.

3.7. Safer Entry Points for a Dialogue with Government

Always remember that advocacy is action: It's not just about spreading your message in a traditional way of a secondary action.

During the PWGs' interventions, we have learnt that when we are in advocacy and our aim is to put the government bodies on board, plan a formal public event. This will not only serve your message but can also attract the potential panelists by its visibility and public-affecting capability.

Trying to approach certain individuals within the government officials, so to speak, can provide them excuses not to attend to your call. However, when they know that a citizens' group is behind the invitation they will have to think before refusing you. There is also an incentive for them to speak at the government's behalf and convey its own message to the public.

In this way, a dialogue between the community and government bodies can also be mutually beneficial.

Case study

Talk Show as an Entry Point to link with government bodies

Due to a thematic talk show DPO Matiari established linkages with district government and other line departments. Talk show was telecasted on Sindh TV. This activity has also introduced SDGP in the district with a big way. Because of better linkages created through the talk show, it could become possible that District Government and DCO allowed social forestation in the district. This has been a key issue for which PWGs were carrying out the advocacy campaign since long but to no avail. One important result of the activity was that after the advocacy campaign, District Government took action against drug mafia in the district. Moreover, lobbying in the District Council has also resulted in increase of welfare fund for peasants, laborers and minority councilors from Rs. 300000 to 500000.

3.8. Correcting the Government

Seeking accountability and correcting problems is the cornerstone of democratic governance, well-exercised by the PWGs under the SDGP. The following table will provide us a vivid example of this function:

Case study

Combating the False Electricity Billing by Advocacy

In Nawabshah, Jeay Latif PWG initiated series of protests over false billing by HESCO. After the protests, SDO WAPDA Nawabshah came into dialogue with the PWG and accepted the demands and plea of the PWGs, deputed new meter readers and corrected defected bills.

3.9. Up-lifting Dignity if the Peasants and Workers

SDGP interventions have provided PWG members with an opportunity to lift their faces and the dignity that they deserve as ordinary citizens of Pakistan.

Although the social stratification is said to be quite timid in our contexts, where hierarchal relations rule over conceptions of equality for all, but the exercise of rights have many a times resulted in face-to-face dialogues between the rural poor and local elites and officials under the project.

Historically, people have always look towards those in authority with a distance but the initiatives like the PWG movement would enable poor and marginalized sections to ask for a decent space in the society.

Case study

Peasants and Workers Meet High Officials on Equal Footing

PWG members met with GLAs & ERs in Sanghar district. This has been for the first time that peasants and rural workers could meet high level officials in an area which is center of traditional feudalism. During the dialogue, Tehsil Nazim promised the PWGs for a Girls School in Village Essan Chandio and the scheme of hand-pumps in the village Ayub Khaskheli.

3.10. Advocating for Higher Wages

Under the project, the workers were imparted negotiation skills and rights-based approaches which have sometimes directly impacted their livelihood. For example, the brief case given below would illustrate how workers were able to have higher wages because of their advocacy campaign during the reporting period.

Case study

Advocating for High Wages

An advocacy campaign was designed and carried ahead against the lower wages of Brick Kiln workers in district Umerkot. The continuous process of press

conferences, protest rallies and marches, and hunger strikes finally culminated into negotiation in which PWGs leaders, District Focal Person and DFG members led the team of PWGs. Finally, the Brick Kilns owners agreed to increase the wages.

3.11. First Drop of Rain

How advocacy can deliver the unprecedented results can be explained by the following examples, erstwhile unthinkable in the history of focused district.

Case study

Vaccination for the First Time in Mardan

It has been for the first time for the last 60 years that in Mardan district, the livestock department vaccinated in UC Khazana. This has occurred due to linkages development and also for the same factor it is for the first time in the history of the district that a female councilor could attend UC session.

Case study

Prevention of Gravity Flow Schemes

Rallies & press conferences tremendously helped achieving influencing the decision makers in Haripur district. The partner organizations have performed important role to advocate that “Gravity Flow Schemes” and any other scheme of such nature can turn almost 35 Km area into a dry barren place, and under such conditions farmers will face great loss & water problems for their lands. These campaigns also established that as water coming from Abbotabad is useful for the District Haripur, this water should not be used for any other place. This campaign had a far reaching productive result as this successful advocacy campaign became the real cause of the Prevention of Gravity Flow Schemes.

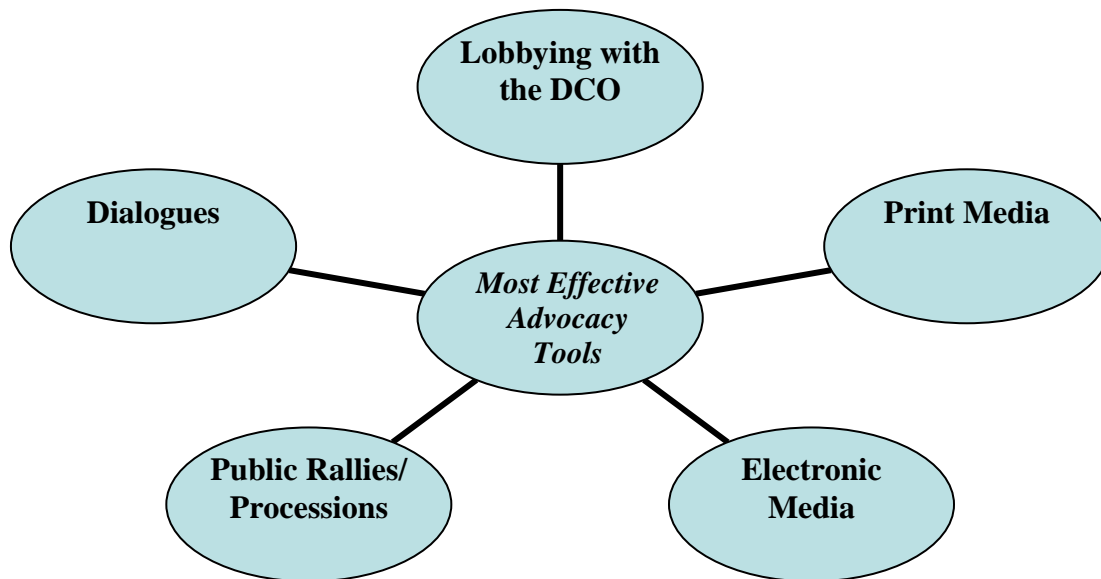
Case study

Barren Land Turns Green Again

A networking meeting in district Dera Ismail Khan and the strike in front of Irrigation Department will remain as one of the important activities of the SDGP.

Due to the strike PWGs were successful in getting bulldozers to prevent from water flowing to the fields and had made 1, 00,000 Canal land barren for the last 9 years. After the PWG intervention, this land was made cultivable.

4. LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE FIELD



4.1. NWFP

Rural poor in NWFP yielded many interesting results. It was learnt that Union Councils Meetings & Resolutions must be performed to highlight community problems to the top management. Furthermore, it was learnt that the involvement of the district nazim in any development project was crucial as District Nazim uses his own decisions to approve most of the schemes. It was also realized through the course of the program that involvement of each tier i.e. UC, TC & DC are important to move governance structure.

Moreover, networking among all the stake holders is necessary and would be more beneficial to rural poor.

Throughout the activities, political influences and gaps between UCs & DCs representatives was a prime concern. Unfortunately, in the districts it was learned that the elected representatives do not know the way to highlight their issues at DC. They also don't have capacity to influence higher ups.

One more glaring outcome of the activities was that there was lack of inter-agency coordination and public access to resources. Moreover, absence of personal interest of top management is big problem for pro poor budgeting. For any better results of any project it was suggested that political interference must be minimized & ERs also need capacity building to highlight community problems at district level.

High level of lobbying is required at top level to pass pro-poor budgeting in districts or amount for developmental budgeting at UC level.

4.2. Balochistan

During and after the completion of activities, the SDGP stake holders came across various findings of economic and socio-political nature. One prominent feature of working in Balochistan was the influence of religious and tribal factors. The rural poor were visibly divided except Naseerabad, Sibbi & Kech districts.

Furthermore, it was heartily felt that the participation from women groups was not satisfactory. That's why it was decided to impart separate trainings for female groups in local language which must focus organizational management & record keeping as women groups may play strong role as CBOs in future also. [The members of PWGs are not traditional peasants. They are the women who work at community level.]

One of the most important constituent of the activities was that the issue of peace and human security was also highlighted by the stakeholders. In some of the districts due to imposition of section 144 in Gawadar, Noshki and Mastung rallies were impossible to be held so only press conferences took place in those districts. In Kech the women group staged sit-ins in front of district Nazim's office on Meerani dam issue and another rally was planned in Karachi so that they may catch the attention of national and international media.

We also learnt that through various capacities building activities of the program, the ERs started engaging themselves in PWGs' village and district level activities. The system of accountability and transparency is introduced and the mechanism of improving the system started taking place. The ERs got awareness about the gaps of existing LG system and their roles & responsibilities.

Throughout the program it was felt that PWGs lacked adequate exposure to the problems faced by their districts. Their hand to mouth living never allowed them to take interest in the social gatherings and problems. Therefore, the exposure visits helped PWGs to increase awareness of other districts' issues and it helped to initiate networking as well. The PWGs learnt new techniques of agriculture through these exposures. Visit of PWGs of Naseerabad to Larkana's (Sindh) nearest villages proved interesting and a rare occasion where rural poor from two different provinces could meet and exchange ideas on their shared plight and deliberate on the ways to change it.

The hallmark of the program in Balochistan was that the PWGs started taking interest in the issues concerning them and the society. It was learnt that exposure trips are useful for all future activities. At the same time it was witnessed that when interacted with the DPOs and Nazims, PWGs put forward very appropriate and relevant suggestion for the betterment. This made it clear that the only thing they lacked was exposure and realization of their status and basic responsibilities.

Training Topics that Worked Most			
Advocacy & Lobbying	Effective Communication	LG System	Print media (Press release, Press Conference)
Dialogues	Electronic media	Lobbying with the DCO	Pro-poor Budgeting
Basic human rights	Financial management	Negotiation	Public Rallies/

activism			Processions
Community Based Resource Management	Fundamental Human Rights	Networking	Record Keeping
Conflict Resolution	Gender development	Networking Management	SDGP Orientation
Democratic Process	Leadership	PRA Tools	

4.3. Punjab

In Punjab too the social system of the areas, where rural poor carried out their activities influenced the smoothness of the program. Chaudries and Numberdars of some villages created problems. It was learnt that it would have been better if the program was discussed with UC nazims and councils before formation of PWGs. In Punjab many things contrasted the realities in Balochistan. Though the participants in the Punjab activities knew their fundamental rights but their knowledge of the general Human Rights was very little.

Moreover, it was quite clear that working for the poor farmers' up-gradation and to solve their matters was not an easy task. Many reasons were involved in it but the first and most heartening was the negligence from the government authorities towards the problems of the farmers. It was not on the government agenda to promote and solve small farmers' issues.

On the whole, PWGs' knowledge of the local government and awareness of the modern new techniques was little. It was learnt that regular workshops and training programs for the farmers on these two issues should be organized for any positive change in the status quo.

Continuous meetings and political education will polish these PWGs members for active participation in democracy and governance. It was seen during the activities that if these farmers are provided opportunities, they would like to participate in the social activities and their participation can bring a massive change in the society.

The activities not only motivated the focused groups but also the concerned authorities to be more responsive to the farmers' problems and issues. In one of the Punjab districts District Nazim promised to spare budget for next District budget plan and NCHD will open literacy centers. Similarly, the SDGP activities laid the foundations for future projects for the betterment of the area.

After the activities it was learnt that PWGs members became much active than before. Their activation was a promising sign for the future progress of their community. However, the Chauhdri system and farmers' dependency on Waderas was proved to be a big hurdle in any advancement of the rural areas. The SDGP on the basis of its overall output remained successful in Punjab in the year of 2006. It was proposed that regular activities, meetings and workshops should be planned for positive results.

4.4. Sindh

In Sindh response to the movement of rural poor was positive; however different lessons were learnt from different districts. It was learnt that the membership criteria for PWGs was

fair enough and clear to all. The members were aware of the SDGP objectives and mission, and they were willing to work as a part of SDGP.

Other than these details, it was learnt that their knowledge of the local government was not up to the mark but still they knew a little about the working of the local government departments.

For some PWGs, it was difficult to understand the link between the activities of the SDGP and the functioning of the Local Government.

It was also known that the record of SDGP allies / opponents within the local government system and line agencies was maintained in some of the Sindh districts. However, it was obvious that membership of PWGs was important for effective relations with the local UCs. And that was the reason that the locals showed interest in becoming part of SDGP.

All the results gathered after the activities reflected that PWGs should be made more active in all the districts. Councilors should be given proper education on pro-poor budgeting. UC sessions should be made functional. District level political leadership should be sensitized and DFG should be involved.

During the course of the events it was realized that the following issues at the local level hinder democratic governance most:

- ⇒ Centralization in decision making on budget issues
- ⇒ Irregularity in frequency of UC sessions, and
- ⇒ Improper representation of peasants and workers in the Local Government

Observations from the grassroots

- ⇒ Orientation meetings should be organized with district Nazim, DCO, EDOs and union council Nazims to seek their support at the field level.
 - ⇒ Meetings with PWGs should be organized in the evenings as most of participants are busy during the day.
 - ⇒ Seasonal engagements of PWGs must be taken into account while workplanning.
 - ⇒ Pictorial resource kit should be developed for barely literate or illiterate for their understanding about the themes & areas of skills.
 - ⇒ Seasonal calendar should developed with help of the PWGs for education on the possibilities of cropping and explorations of the economic potentials, as well as knowing about the sowing, tending and harvesting times for adjustment of the training schedule accordingly.
 - ⇒ The debates of rights need to be simple and contextualized to keep the issues relevant and to seek support of the people in the struggle for improved governance.
 - ⇒ GLAs' engagement is essential to hunt funds for CCBs.
 - ⇒ Local issues of development must be put first on agenda.
 - ⇒ The linkage between PWGs and research institutions/agriculture universities should be encouraged.
 - ⇒ District conventions proved to be an important and effective tool for people to people interactions. These must be encouraged.
 - ⇒ Illustrated material should be developed to assist the illiterate in knowing their rights as constituents and citizens.
 - ⇒ KWBs reflect as center of community services.
 - ⇒ i) Government be pressurized to undertaken long actions for water management; ii) Media should be kept in the loop on water crisis; iii) Walks are helpful in highlighting plight of the fishermen.
 - ⇒ Signing MOUs with UCs is necessary to facilitate each other and to ensure smooth functioning of the union councils.
 - ⇒ Program orientation to district Nazim and DCO/EDOs is necessary.
 - ⇒ The activity result will effect the next election. Thus, able and intelligent people will be selected.
 - ⇒ The councilors can work in more effective manner only if they know their job.
 - ⇒ The discussion on participation of the people in decision making needs to be held with more emphasis.
 - ⇒ Need to deliver more trainings regarding pro-poor budget at UC level. A mock exercise is required to drive the idea home.
 - ⇒ DCOs should be engaged in program activities.
 - ⇒ Political schooling is very important for rural youth especially fresh elected councilors.
 - ⇒ Network/ Pressure group of CCBs is must at district level.
 - ⇒ Technical resource of the GLAs can be tapped through close coordination and linkages building. Information sharing of channels is very important.
 - ⇒ There is a need to highlight gaps of LG system from peoples' point of view.
 - ⇒ UC members need to change their attitude towards women's needs.
 - ⇒ Role of DRC should be recognized among GLAs.
 - ⇒ Consultation process and testing of training manuals are very important.
 - ⇒ CCBs and PWGs are able to monitor any scheme.
 - ⇒ PWGs should network for working collectively in the wake of next elections. Awareness through media on provincial and national level needs to enhance. Talk shows, seminars, rallies & workshops must be organized to train young people. Provide them vocational training. Contact with health, education and ERs departments. Casting votes for right people can change the leadership.
- ⇒ Strategic planning plays important role to set future direction of the activities.